



**Human Trafficking  
for Labour Exploitation:**  
A Public Guide to Recognizing,  
Responding and Preventing

*Guide to public*



## Enhancing pRevention AnD multi-agenCy cooperAtion against labour Trafficking



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## SUMMARY – KEY NOTES

This comprehensive guide outlines the critical issue of Human Trafficking (THB) for Labour Exploitation, emphasizing its violation of fundamental human rights and the necessity for a multifaceted response involving protection, prosecution, and prevention.

It defines THB, highlighting its elements (acts, means, and purpose) in *Section 1*. It distinguishes between THB and human smuggling and underlines factors contributing to labour exploitation (*Section 2*), lists indicators to identify potential victims, emphasizing the importance of a sensitive approach when interacting with them (*Section 3*).

The guide proposes multifaceted prevention strategies, focusing on reducing demand for exploited labour, encouraging ethical consumption, and enforcing corporate accountability (*Section 4*).

It provides practical advice on reporting suspected labour exploitation and supporting victims (*Section 5*), advocating for community awareness, and calling for collective action against labour exploitation (*Section 6*). *Section 7* deals specifically with the risk of labour exploitation among Ukrainian refugees as a currently highly vulnerable group.

In conclusion, the guide underscores the importance of public awareness and collective action in combating labour exploitation, calling for vigilant, informed advocacy to support victims and promote fair labour practices. It directs readers to EU-specific resources for further information, underscoring the breadth of efforts required to address this global issue effectively (*Section 8*).

# 1. Introduction – Definition of THB

Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) is a multi-aspect phenomenon that disrespects human life in the pursuit of profit, a serious form of organised crime, having different root causes such as poverty, inequality, gender-based violence, absence of employment opportunities etc. The eradication of THB calls for a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach, from the protection of victims to the prosecution and conviction of traffickers.

The acts of “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” consider as THB. Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs.<sup>1</sup>

The crime of human trafficking consists of three core elements: **the act, the means, and the purpose**. Physical and sexual abuse, blackmail, emotional manipulation, and the removal of official documents are used by traffickers to control their victims.

Exploitation can occur in a victim’s home country, during migration, or in a foreign country.<sup>2</sup>

ACT	MEANS	PURPOSE
Recruitment	Threat or use of force other forms of coercion	Exploitation of the prostitution of others
Transportation	Abduction/Fraud/Deception/Abuse of power	Sexual exploitation
Transfer	Abuse of a position of vulnerability	Forced labour or services
Harbouring	Giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person	Slavery/Servitude
Receipt of persons		Organ removal
		Other forms of exploitation

<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union, European Parliament (2011, April 14). Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. European Sources Online. <https://shorturl.at/zlb3e>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. Office on Drugs and Crime (n.d.). The Crime. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/crime.html>

## 1.1. Impact of THB on fundamental rights

Exploitative labour practices, abusive treatment, unsafe working conditions, denial of lawful wages or benefits, isolated – undocumented migrants, are some aspects of fundamental rights violation through labour exploitation.

THB, is a gross violation of fundamental rights, serving as a threat to the core principles of human dignity, equality, and freedom, and explicitly prohibited by the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2009)**.



HUMAN  
RIGHTS

- HUMAN DIGNITY (Art.1)

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- RIGHT TO LIFE (Art.2)

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- RIGHT TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSONE (Art.3)

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- PROHIBITION OF TORTURE AND INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT (Art.4)

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- PROHIBITION OF SLAVERY AND FORCED LABOUR (Art.5)

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- RIGHT TO LIBERTY AND SECURITY (Art.6)

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- RIGHT TO EDUCATION (Art.14)

## 1.2. Forced labour<sup>3</sup>

Forced labour, as set out in the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29),<sup>1</sup> refers to “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”

Based on report “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery/Forced Labour and Forced Marriage” **created by “ILO, Walk Free and IOM”**<sup>4</sup>:



**There are 27.6 million people in situations of forced labour on any given day.** This absolute number translates to 3.5 people in forced labour for every thousand people in the world. Women and girls make up 11.8 million of the total in forced labour. More than 3.3 million of all those in forced labour are children.



**Forced labour has grown in recent years.**



**No region of the world is spared from forced labour.**



**Most forced labour occurs in the private economy.**



Combatting labour exploitation requires a comprehensive approach involving legal protections, enforcement of labour standards, support for victims. The most common forms of trafficking in the EU are **sexual exploitation** and **labour exploitation**. Both forms of exploitation amount to an equal share of victims. Most **traffickers** in the EU are EU citizens and often of the same nationality as their victims. More than three quarters of perpetrators are men.<sup>5</sup>

The prevalence of labour exploitation is almost equal that of sexual exploitation. Meanwhile, exploitation by forced labour and services reached the highest prevalence in 2022, at 41.1%.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions: Specifically, the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105), and the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), among others, set standards for the treatment of workers and the prevention of forced labour. [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx\\_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO:P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO:P12100_ILO_CODE:C029)

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization (2022, September). Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage>.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2024, April 23). Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings. [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime-and-human-trafficking/together-against-trafficking-human-beings\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime-and-human-trafficking/together-against-trafficking-human-beings_en)

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat (2024, January 1). Trafficking in human beings statistics. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings\\_statistics#The\\_prevalence\\_of\\_labour\\_exploitation\\_is\\_almost\\_equal\\_that\\_of\\_sexual\\_exploitation](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Trafficking_in_human_beings_statistics#The_prevalence_of_labour_exploitation_is_almost_equal_that_of_sexual_exploitation)

## 2. Familiarizing with THB for labour exploitation

THB for labour exploitation is a complex issue and it usually expresses a transnational aspect. It is essential to begin by understanding its components, impact, and the global efforts to combat it.

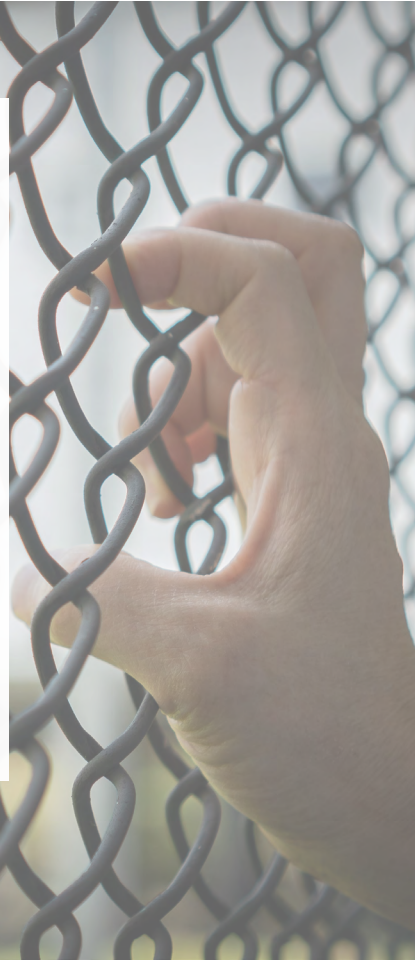
Labour exploitation occurs when individuals are coerced into working under inhumane conditions, often receiving little to no compensation. It's a form of human trafficking where the victims are exploited for their labour, and it's characterized by the use of force, fraud, or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, provide, or obtain a person for labour or services.

### 2.1. Trafficking in Human Beings vs Smuggling of Migrants

It is crucial to distinguish THB from human smuggling. While both are illegal activities, they differ significantly:

**THB** involves exploitation and is considered a crime against the individual. It does not require crossing international borders and can occur within a country's boundaries.


**Smuggling of Migrants** involves the illegal movement of people across borders, typically with their consent, and ends once the smuggled individual reaches their destination.



## 2.2. Pull factors to THB for labour exploitation

Pull factors for THB, specifically for labour exploitation, refer to a variety of circumstances that attract individuals to certain, countries, locations, industries where they are vulnerable to exploitation.

The follow list is **indicative** not exhaustive of key pull factors:



**Understanding** these factors is **crucial** to be able to address **the root causes** of **labour exploitation** and develop **effective strategies** to **combat** it.

Demand for cheap labour.

Economic Inequality/Discrepancies.

Lack of Awareness and Regulation.

Conflict and Instability.

Social Discrimination.

Improved standard and quality of life.

Less discrimination or abuse.

Better employment opportunities.

Higher salaries and better working conditions.

Established migrant communities/diasporas.



## 3. Identifying the signs of labour exploitation – vulnerable groups

Being familiar with the signs of THB for labour exploitation is crucial in identifying potential victims and taking appropriate reaction to help them. This chapter aims to equip readers with the knowledge to notice “red flags” in various settings, including workplaces and communities. Awareness of these indicators can lead to timely interventions, potentially saving individuals from further exploitation.

### 3.1. General indicators of labour exploitation

Labour exploitation can be detected through various indicators, not all of which are immediately apparent. These signs can be observed in the physical and emotional state of the workers, in the conditions of the work environment and in the behavior of the employer. Key indicators include:

- ▶ Poor hygiene condition indicates specific work.
- ▶ Visible signs of physical abuse (e.g. bruises, burns, scars)
- ▶ Isolation, constantly under surveillance.
- ▶ Very bad working conditions.
- ▶ Under restriction of movement.
- ▶ Lack of safety equipment and work appropriate clothes and uniforms
- ▶ Person crossed the borders with false documents.
- ▶ No possession of travel documents.
- ▶ No possession of ID documents, or possessing false IDs.
- ▶ Difficulties in answering questions.
- ▶ Reluctant to speak to the Authorities.
- ▶ Uncertainty about the place where he/she is.
- ▶ Workers live where they work.
- ▶ Signs of exploitation related to various industries, such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, and manufacturing.

### 3.2. Questions to be asked to identify potential victims for labour exploitation

Interacting with someone you suspect may be a victim of labour exploitation requires a sensitive approach. Here are some questions that might help in identifying potential victims, avoiding further victimization:

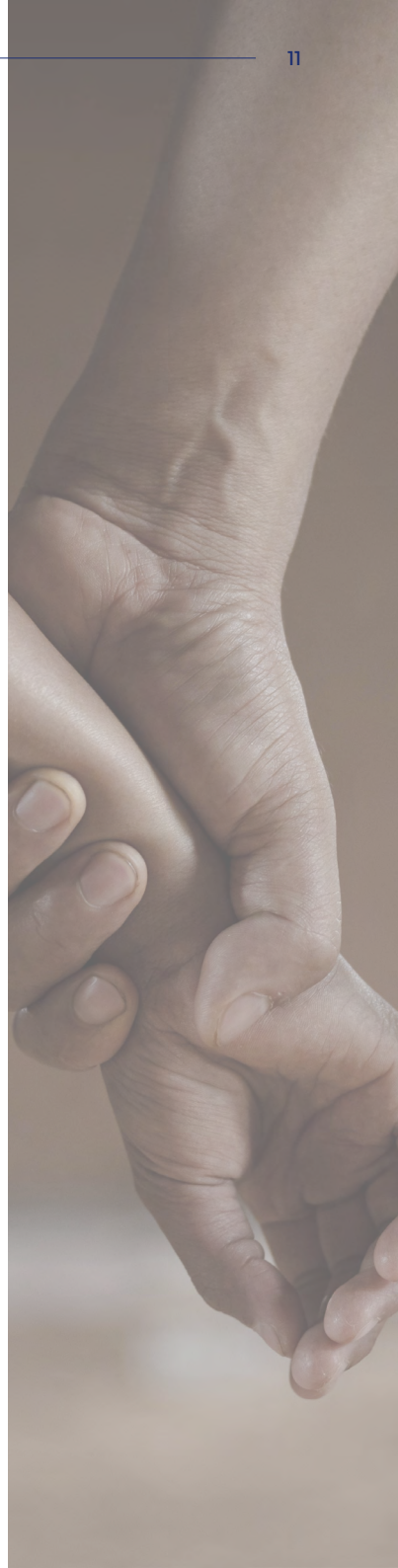
***Can you leave your job if you want to?***

***Do you own your identification documents, or does someone else hold them?***

***Have you been threatened if you try to leave your job?***

***Are you being paid regularly, and is it what you were promised?***

Establishing the first approach with empathy, out of any stereotypes and prejudices, is the best foundation for a trustworthy relation, which can make someone feels safe and supported.



### 3.3. Target groups - vulnerable populations

Conceiving who is most at risk of labour exploitation and the factors that contribute to their vulnerability is essential for as earlier as possible identification.

Certain groups are more susceptible to labour exploitation due to a variety of factors, including economic conditions, social status, and lack of legal protections. These populations often include:



#### **Migrants and refugees:**

Individuals who have moved across borders in search of better opportunities.

#### **Low-income individuals and families:**

Economic necessity may force people into accepting risky job offers without the ability to negotiate terms or seek legal recourse.

#### **Children and adolescents:**

Especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, may be coerced into labour under the guise of providing for their families or through abduction and trafficking.

#### **Minority groups:**

Discrimination and social exclusion can limit access to formal employment, education, and legal protection, making these groups more vulnerable to exploitation.

#### **Women and girls:**

In certain contexts, they may be particularly susceptible to exploitation in domestic work, caregiving, and informal sectors where oversight is minimal.

## 4. Preventing labour exploitation

Preventing THB for labour exploitation calls for a multifaceted approach that involves all the relevant actors (law enforcement, labour inspectors, communities, businesses, state's agencies and international organizations). By addressing the root causes and implementing protective measures, we can significantly impact the fight against labour exploitation.

### 4.1. Reducing demand for exploited labour

A critical aspect of prevention is reducing the demand for products and services produced by exploited labour. This involves:

**Consumer awareness and ethical purchasing:**

Encouraging consumers to make informed choices by supporting companies that adhere to ethical labour practices.

**Awareness campaigns** can highlight the importance of fair trade and ethical certification labels.

**Corporate accountability:**

Implementing and enforcing policies that require businesses to conduct thorough due diligence on their supply chains to ensure freedom from exploitation. This includes regular audits, transparent reporting, and ethical sourcing initiatives.

### 4.2. The role of businesses

Businesses play a pivotal role in preventing labour exploitation by adopting responsible practices:

**Fair labour standards:**

Establishing and adhering to fair labour standards that include decent wages, safe working conditions, and reasonable working hours.

**Worker education and empowerment:**

Providing workers with education about their rights and access to grievance mechanisms without fear of retaliation.

**Supply chain transparency:**

Building transparency into supply chains by mapping sources and ensuring all levels adhere to ethical practices.

## 5. What to do if you suspect labour exploitation

Recognizing the signs of labour exploitation is the first step in making a difference. However, knowing how to safely and effectively respond when you suspect someone is being exploited is crucial. This chapter provides guidance on the actions individuals can take to report suspected exploitation, support victims, and engage with authorities in a way that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all involved.



### 5.1 How to safely report suspected cases

If you believe someone is a victim of labour exploitation, taking prompt action can significantly impact their safety and future. Here's how to report safely:

#### 1 **Contact local authorities:**

Understand the appropriate local authorities to contact – this could be the police, specialized anti-trafficking units, or labour inspection offices. Always consider the safety and wishes of the suspected victim before proceeding.

#### 2 **Use national hotlines:**

Many countries have dedicated hotlines for reporting human trafficking and labour exploitation. These hotlines can provide advice on necessary steps and facilitate the involvement of law enforcement and support services.

#### 3 **Engage with NGOs:**

Non-governmental organizations specializing in anti-trafficking efforts can offer guidance and assistance in reporting and can act as intermediaries with authorities if necessary.

## 5.2. Supporting Victims: Do's and Don'ts

When interacting with potential victims of labour exploitation, it's essential to approach the situation with sensitivity and respect for their autonomy and safety. Here are some guidelines:

### Do's

#### **Do listen without judgement:**

Offer a safe space for them to share their story if they choose to, without pressuring them for information.

#### **Do provide information:**

Share information about resources, support services, and their rights as you understand them.

### Don'ts

#### **Don't confront the exploiter:**

Direct confrontation can escalate the situation and put both you and the victim at risk.

#### **Don't promise actions you can't deliver:**

Avoid making promises about legal outcomes or specific forms of assistance that may not be guaranteed.

## 5.3. Hotlines for Help and Further Information in Greece

### **Hellenic Labour Inspectorate,**

by dialing **1555** or through report complaint at <https://www.hli.gov.gr/epikoinonia/>

### **National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Trafficking Victims,**

by dialing **197**

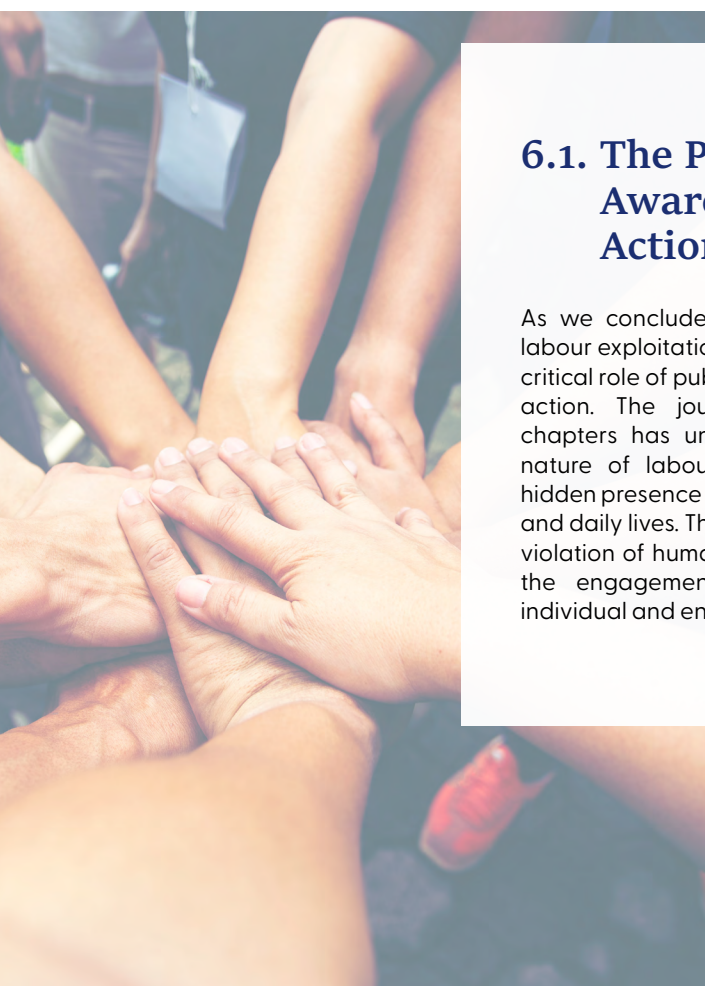
### **Hellenic Police,**

by dialing **100**

## 6. Building awareness in your community

Raising awareness within your community can help prevent labour exploitation by educating others on the signs and how to respond. Organize or participate in workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns to spread knowledge and resources.

Taking action against labour exploitation is a responsibility that falls on all members of society. By being informed, vigilant, and compassionate, we can make a significant impact in the lives of those affected by this egregious violation of human rights. This chapter aims to empower readers with the knowledge and tools needed to stand against labour exploitation and advocate for the rights and dignity of all workers.



### 6.1. The Power of Awareness and Action

As we conclude this manual on combating labour exploitation, it's imperative to revisit the critical role of public awareness and collective action. The journey through the various chapters has underscored the multifaceted nature of labour exploitation, revealing its hidden presence in our communities, industries, and daily lives. The fight against this egregious violation of human rights and dignity requires the engagement and vigilance of every individual and entity within society.



## 6.2. A call to action

This guide serves as a call to action for readers to become informed advocates and active participants in the fight against labour exploitation. By staying vigilant, reporting suspicious, supporting victims, and advocating for fair labour practices, each one of us can make a difference. The path to eradicating labour exploitation is long and fraught with challenges, but with sustained effort and solidarity, it is a fight that can be won.

## 7. Public awareness of the risk of THB for refugees from Ukraine

The ongoing war in Ukraine has forced millions of people to flee their homes, creating one of the largest humanitarian crises in recent history. Among those most affected are women, children, and other vulnerable groups, who are often thrust into precarious situations that expose them to heightened risks of exploitation and abuse. The breakdown of societal structures, loss of economic stability, and chaotic displacement conditions have created fertile ground for human traffickers to exploit the desperation of those seeking safety. Many refugees face uncertainty at border crossings and in temporary shelters, where traffickers may pose as aid workers or offer fraudulent promises of assistance, compounding their vulnerability. International organizations and governments are working tirelessly to address this alarming situation, but the scale of the crisis highlights the urgent need for robust anti-trafficking measures and targeted support for those most at risk. This part outlines the dangers faced by refugees (from Ukraine) and provides key indicators to help identify and support potential victims of THB.

### 7.1. Understanding the risks

Understanding the risks associated with THB reveals the alarming vulnerability of certain groups (here especially among Ukrainian refugees).

- ▶ Key at-risk populations include women and children, especially unaccompanied minors, as well as individuals with limited resources, lack of documentation, or no support networks.
- ▶ Those who do not speak local languages, are unfamiliar with their rights, or have pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as disabilities or previous displacement, are also highly susceptible.
- ▶ Common types of exploitation range from sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution and pornography, to labour exploitation in areas like domestic servitude, agriculture, construction, and illegal activities.
- ▶ Children are particularly at risk of forced begging, adoption fraud, and trafficking for sexual or labour purposes.

Other forms of exploitation include forced marriages and organ trafficking.

- ▶ Criminal networks prey on refugees throughout their journeys, using deceit, coercion, or false promises of safety, jobs, or housing to manipulate them. Social media and online platforms have become common tools for recruitment, further complicating efforts to combat these crimes.



## 7.2. Recognizing the signs of THB in (Ukrainian) refugees

- ▶ General indicators include individuals who appear isolated, controlled, or are accompanied by someone speaking on their behalf, along with lacking personal documents such as passports.
- ▶ Physical signs like abuse, malnutrition, neglect, and an evident fear or distrust of authorities are common.
- ▶ For children, additional red flags include traveling unaccompanied with unrelated adults, signs of neglect, poor hygiene, or a lack of access to education or caregivers.
- ▶ Employment exploitation often involves the absence of contracts, unpaid wages, hazardous working conditions, or dependence on employers for essentials like housing or transport.
- ▶ In cases of sexual exploitation, individuals may wear inappropriate clothing for the season, display tattoos or branding indicative of ownership, or have their movements restricted by handlers.

Recognizing these patterns is essential for identifying and helping victims.



## 8. EU-Specific Sources

These sources (indicative not exhaustive) offer a wealth of information for anyone looking to understand the scope, impact, and responses to labour exploitation and human trafficking within the European Union. They can serve as a foundation for research, policy development, advocacy, and educational efforts aimed at combating these issues.

### European Commission - Anti-Trafficking

 [ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking)

The European Commission's official page for anti-trafficking efforts in the EU, providing access to legislation, policy documents, and a wide range of resources and reports on trafficking in human beings.

### Eurostat - Trafficking in Human Beings

 [ec.europa.eu/eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat) (Search for "Trafficking in Human Beings")

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, offers comprehensive statistics and analysis on trafficking in human beings, including victims' profiles, traffickers, and types of exploitation.

## FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights)

 [fra.europa.eu](https://fra.europa.eu)


Provides data, research, and reports on various aspects of human rights in the EU, including labour exploitation and human trafficking. Their work includes surveys and studies on the rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable groups.

## EMN (European Migration Network)

 [ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/european-migration-network_en)

Offers studies, reports, and policy analysis related to migration and asylum, including topics on trafficking and labour exploitation within the EU.

## Europol - Trafficking in Human Beings

 [www.europol.europa.eu](https://www.europol.europa.eu) (Search for "Trafficking in Human Beings")

Europol provides insights into the crime of trafficking in human beings in the EU, including operational successes, research, and analysis of trends and patterns in trafficking.

## Further Reading and Research

### GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) Reports

 [www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/greta](https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/greta)

GRETA, part of the Council of Europe, publishes country-specific reports evaluating the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the parties.

### OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

 [www.osce.org/secretariat/trafficking](https://www.osce.org/secretariat/trafficking)

The OSCE provides resources, reports, and action plans focusing on combating human trafficking, with a geographical focus that includes several EU member states.

