



Short summary of the results of data collection and pattern analysis, and operational exchange visit

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1. Introduction

THE ELECT THB -PROJECT AIMS to enhance the identification and investigation of trafficking in human beings for sexual and labour exploitation and increase collaboration between law enforcement authorities and other key actors to combat it.

The aim of task 3.1. was to collect data on the latest trends and modus operandi of traffickers and actors involved. This deliverable briefly summarises the results of the data collection vis-à-vis the latest trends and the trafficking situation in light of latest trafficking statistics in Finland, Estonia and Latvia, as well as Poland and Ukraine.¹ The summary highlights the most recent trends concerning identified victims, as well as police and other criminal justice statistics. This data has been collected to showcase recent developments regarding the detection of human trafficking cases and analyse differences and commonalities between the different countries. We also collected briefly data concerning the latest trafficking trends in other Nordic countries, which help shed light on the bigger picture on human trafficking in the Baltic Sea region.

In task 3.1. the ELECT THB partners have also looked into modus operandi of traffickers, as well as routes and recruitment methods and the chain of actors involved (traffickers, brokers, companies, fronts etc.) and financial business models used to launder or hide proceeds of crime from the authorities. This country specific information has been collected via a desk review as well as via conducting interviews with relevant authorities, such as labour inspectors, the police, as well as with trade unions, businesses and employers's associations e.g. in the construction sector and in the agricultural sector. We have also looked into the ways in which different schemes are used to hinder identification and investigation of relevant cases by different authorities, such as the police and the labour inspection authorities. The results of this analytical is part of task 3.2. which is currently being implemented. The outcomes and main findings of this particular work will be summarised in deliverable D15, which is a report summarising the outcomes of WP3.

Furthermore, LaStrada International in cooperation with LaStrada Poland and LaStrada Ukraine, were tasked to conduct an operational background mapping regarding the trafficking situation, key actors and their roles and the latest trends in Poland and Ukraine, as well as to help facilitate operational exchange visit to Poland. It must also be noted that the outbreak of Russian Ukrainian war in February 2022 and the current on-going war have had a major impact on the implementation of WP3, where a case study was supposed to focus on posting of Ukrainian workers via Poland and Lithuania to further Baltic countries and Finland. This case study was rendered obsolete due to the war. To mitigate this, it was decided that the case study would rather focus on the risks of trafficking and exploitation that the Ukrainian refugees face during transit and in the destination countries.

Therefore, the topic of potential trafficking risks faced by Ukrainians have been included in the data collection and analysis concerning modus operandi and trends. This information has been collected

¹ NB. Each project partner and national expert is responsible for their own data collection and analysis.

on the basis of a desk review by each of the partners, as well as LaStrada International and has been discussed also in the expert interviews and other meetings with various relevant stakeholders. The brief summary of the findings of this general level work is discussed in chapter 8. In addition, a small number of Ukrainian exploited migrant workers were interviewed to learn more of their experiences of labour exploitation with focus on topics such as recruitment; travel; terms of employment; and seeking help.

Moreover, an operational exchange visit was supposed to be organised in Ukraine as part of task 3.1. which is not possible to organise due to the on-going war. After consultations with the project officer, it was decided that the second operational exchange visit would be organised to travel to Lithuania instead. The visit will take place in early 2023, and therefore the summary of the operational exchange visit to Lithuania will not be included in this deliverable, which summarises just the findings from the operational exchange visit to Poland, which took place in Warsaw on 29-30 November 2022.

2. Finland – Trafficking trends in 2017–2021

2.1. Introduction

THE SUMMARY OF THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING statistics from Finland gives an overview of the latest trends and patterns detected in the Finnish context. Human trafficking is typically hidden crime which means that most offences are not reported to the authorities and therefore go undetected. There is no comprehensive statistical data available on human trafficking in Finland, but different authorities and NGOs working in the field collect their own data. Here we look at the statistical data compiled by criminal justice actors, the national assistance system for victims of human trafficking and NGOs. The different statistics are not directly comparable since not all victims who have filed a report to the police seek assistance from the service providers and vice versa. (Roth & Luhtasaari 2021, 19, 74; Jokinen et. al 2022, 30.)

2.2. Statistics of the criminal justice system

THE NUMBER OF CASES OF TRAFFICKING in human beings and related crimes² reported to the police has significantly increased during 2017–2021. This is also illustrated in Figure 1. In 2017, 127 cases were reported to the police and in 2021, 205.³ The most common offence labels in these reports have been trafficking in human beings and extortionate work discrimination. It is these same offences but also aggravated trafficking in human beings in which the increase in number of cases is also greatest. The data on pandering and aggravated pandering is integrated from different data source so it is not directly comparable with the other offences. However, there seems to be a slight increase also in the number of reports of pandering and aggravated pandering in 2020.

² Trafficking in human beings, aggravated trafficking in human beings, extortionate work discrimination, pandering and aggravated pandering.

³ Reports of pandering / aggravated pandering are not available and hence not included in the total number of cases in 2021.

Figure 1. Cases of trafficking in human beings and its related crimes reported to the police in 2017–2021. Source: Polstat (17.1.2022); Roth & Luhtasaari (2021, 81) regarding cases of pandering and aggravated pandering*.

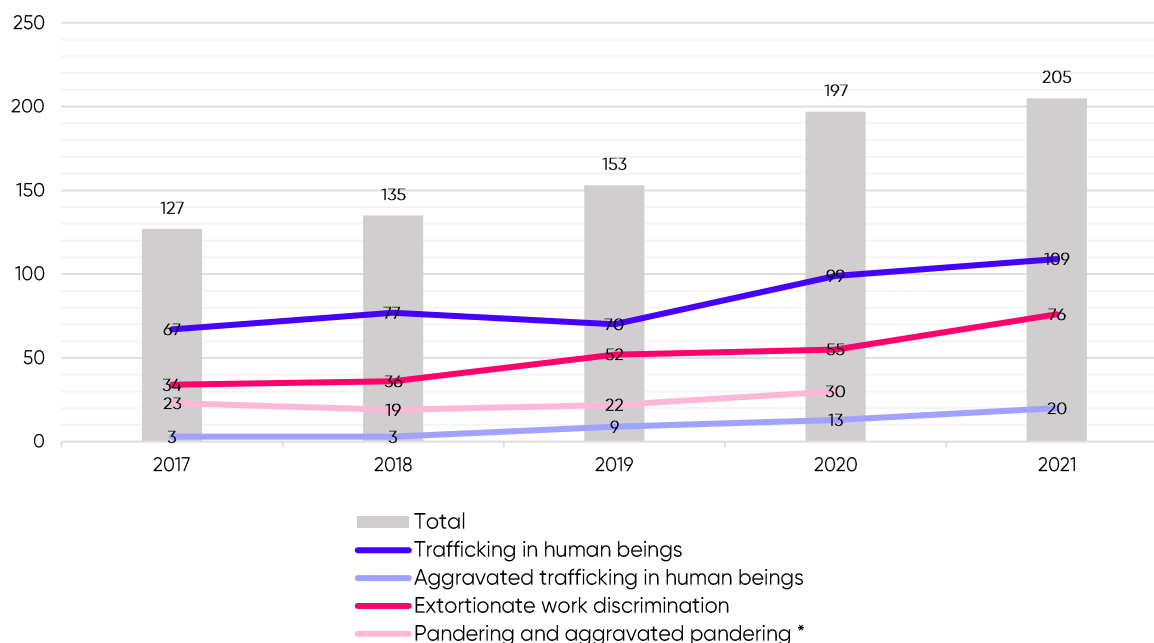


Figure 2. Persons convicted of trafficking in human beings and its associated crimes in district courts (and courts of appeal as first court instance) in 2017–2020. Source: Statistics Finland (2022).

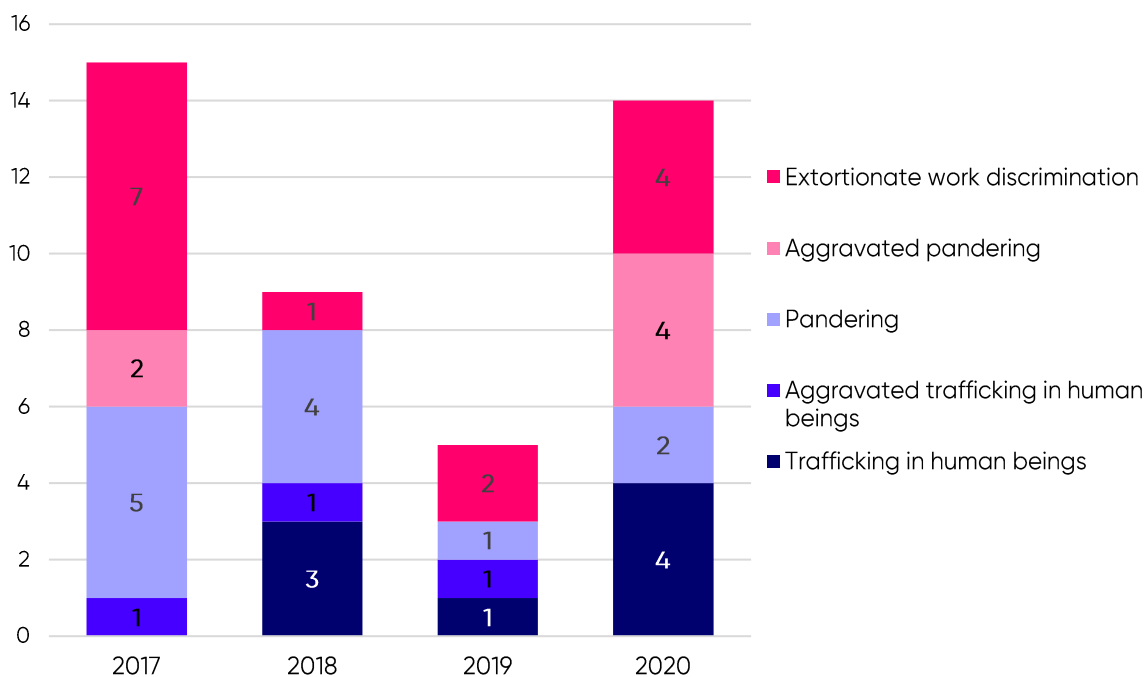
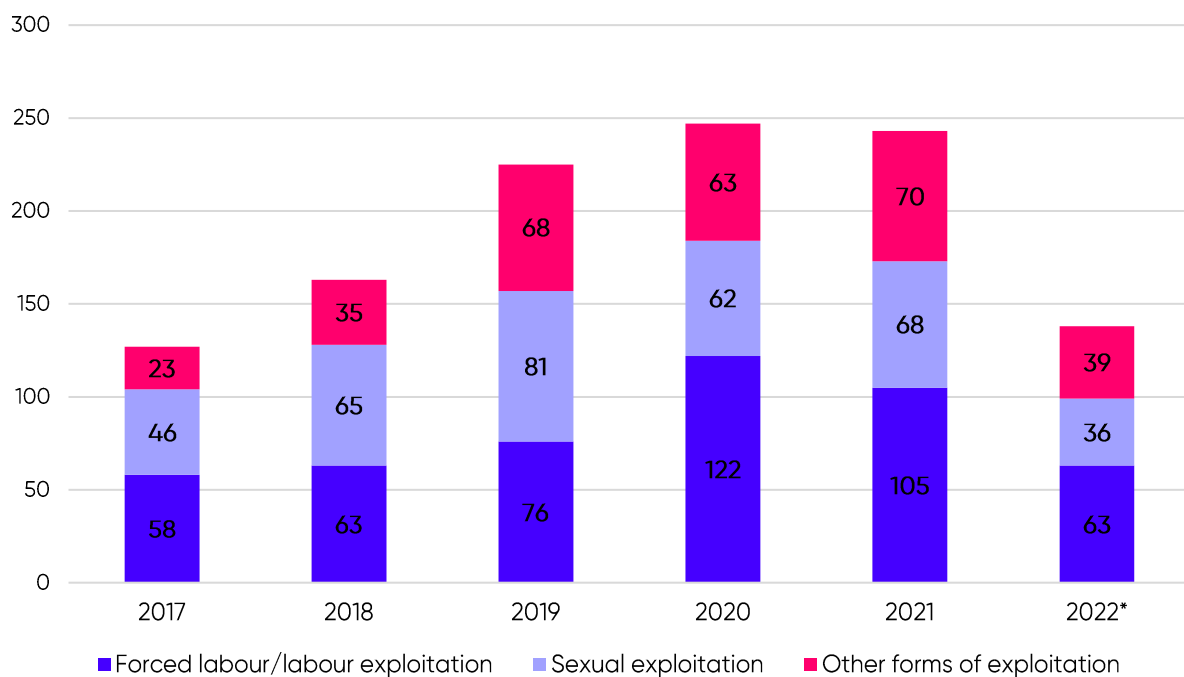


Figure 2 illustrates the number of persons convicted of human trafficking and its associated crimes in district courts (and courts of appeal as first court instance) in 2017–2020. As is shown in the figure, there is a slight decrease in the total number of convictions in 2018 and then again in 2019. The decrease in number is most visible when we compare the convictions given for crimes of pandering and extortionate work discrimination in 2017 and in 2019. However, it is important to note that even though the total number of convictions increases again in 2020, it still remains relatively low during the whole period under examination. (Roth & Luhtasaari 2021, 83–84.)

2.3. Statistics of the National assistance system for victims of trafficking and NGOs

IN FINLAND, VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING receive assistance via the National Assistance System for Victims of trafficking, which works under the Finnish Immigration Service. In addition, several NGOs offer services to victims of trafficking and related crimes.

Figure 3. The number of new clients admitted to the Assistance System in 2017–June 2022*, broken down by purpose of exploitation. Source: Assistance system for victims of human trafficking (2022a, 2022b).



The number of people admitted to the Finnish National Assistance System for victims of human trafficking has grown rapidly during the period under examination (also shown in Figure 3). In 2017, 127 new clients were admitted to the system and in 2021, 243. For reference, in the first year (2006) there were nine clients in the system. Figure 3 indicates the number of people admitted to the system in 2017–2022, broken down by the form of exploitation (please note that the figures

regarding 2022 only represent the first six months of the year). Labour exploitation is constantly the most common purpose of exploitation among the clients, followed by sexual exploitation as the second most common form.

Other forms of exploitation include for example forced marriage and criminal activity, forced begging and benefit fraud. In particular, the number of cases for purpose of forced marriage has increased significantly since 2016 (Jokinen et al. 2022, 32). In 2021, 63 potential victims of forced marriage were admitted to the Assistance system and during the first six months of 2022, 37.

Most of the clients admitted to the Assistance System have legal residence in Finland. In 2021, the majority (61 %) of the clients were asylum seekers, 23 % had a residence permit, 7 % were Finnish citizens and 2 % were either EU citizens or had a visa. Only 7 % of the clients were staying in Finland without legal residence. However, it is important to note that potential victims with no right of residence might not seek assistance in part due to the fear for consequences.

There are also at least four Finnish NGOs providing support and assistance also to the victims of human trafficking. This so-called Four-Leaf Clover Alliance includes MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association, the Finnish Refugee Advice Centre, Pro-tukipiste and Victim Support Finland. These organisations also collect data on the victims they identify and assist. In 2020 these NGOs all together identified 120 (potential) victims of human trafficking, including 67 women and 53 men. According to the organisations, 63 % of these victims also applied for admittance to the Assistance System for victims of human trafficking in 2020 and 58 % of them filed a report with the police. However, 18 % of the victims did not want to pursue their case any further. The most common reason for this unwillingness was the fear of consequences. (Roth & Luhtasaari 2021, 74–76; Jokinen et. al. 2022, 32.)

Victim Support Finland also has its own special support service targeting the victims of human trafficking and related crimes. In 2021 they admitted 221 new clients while the total number of clients using these services was 675. 70 % of these clients had been victims of labour exploitation. (Jokinen et al. 2022, 32.) 15 % of all clients had been subjected to only sexual exploitation and 20 % were victims of forced marriages (NGO meeting 23 Aug 2022). During the first half of 2022, Victim Support Finland admitted 136 new clients (compared to 90 new clients the year before) and of those 22 were potential victims of sexual exploitation. Pro-tukipiste, Finnish organisation offering services for people who work in the sex and erotic industry, came in contact with 14 potential victims of human trafficking and five potential victims of crimes related to it (e.g., pandering and extortion) in 2021. During the first six (?) months of 2022, the corresponding number of potential victims encountered were two (human trafficking) and eleven (related crimes). (NGO meeting 23 Aug 2022.)

2.4. Discussion

EVEN THOUGH THE DIFFERENT STATISTICS presented here are not directly comparable, they all indicate an overall increase in the detection of cases of human trafficking. This is in part due to the growing awareness about human trafficking as a complex crime that needs to be better addressed by

different actors in the society. This includes training of relevant authorities and professionals working in the field. For example, there is a new National Police Unit specialized in investigation of human trafficking crimes that began its work in 2021 (Jokinen et al. 2022, 24–25) and it is likely that this is also reflected in the growing number of cases reported. However, the increase in the total number of cases of human trafficking does not mean all forms of exploitation are detected to the same extent. In particular, relatively few cases of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are reported to the police and other authorities when compared with crimes related to labour exploitation (Roth & Luhtasaari 2021, 30). This finding is also consistent with the number of clients of different forms of exploitation admitted to the Assistance system. The situation in Finland differs from most other European countries where the majority of the identified victims have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (European Commission 2020).

Regarding the other forms of exploitation, the recent increase in number of cases for forced marriage is noteworthy. In 2021, it was also the most common form of exploitation among women and girls (42 %) admitted to the Assistance system. However, it is estimated that this type of exploitation is not often reported to the police, and it rarely results in a criminal justice process (if at all). (Roth & Luhtasaari 2021, 20, 51.)

There were no Ukrainian refugees potentially subjected to exploitation referred to the Assistance system during the first months of 2022. This may be due to the effective prevention measure taken by various authorities, but it is also likely that potential exploitation is detected after some time has passed. The Assistance system has received calls for advice regarding Ukrainian workers in Finland and the amount of these calls has been growing in the summer. However, the calls have not been linked to human trafficking. Also according to Pro-tukipiste, there has been no significant increase in the number of Ukrainian clients using their services. The representative of Victim Support Finland noted the slight decrease in the number of Ukrainians asking for help and pointed out the positive effect of EU's temporary protective scheme might have in this. (NGO meeting 23 Aug 2022.)

3. Estonia – Trafficking trends in 2017–2021

3.1. Introduction

THE DETECTION AND PREVENTION of human trafficking has gotten vast attention in the last few years in Estonia. Despite the attention, many cases and victims of trafficking are still undetected and criminal investigations are terminated, because no perpetrator can be identified. Consequently, these statistics do not provide a complete overview of the factual situation in Estonia. The following overview observes not only the statistics of Estonian trafficking statistics from the criminal justice system (trafficking-related crimes reported to the police and convictions made by the court) but also the number of people admitted to the national assistance systems.

3.2. Statistics of the criminal justice system

POLICE REPORTS ON TRAFFICKING in human beings and its related crimes have varied in numbers over the time period in question, showing no continuous increase or decrease. The total number of reports are as follows: 2021: 42; 2020: 83; 2019: 82; 2018: 46; 2017: 90. The 5-year medium of reports by Penal Code sections are: 0,4 cases in supporting human trafficking (§ 133¹); 0,6 in aiding prostitution (§ 133³); 9 in trafficking in human beings (§ 133); 25,6 in pimping (§ 133²) and 33,8 in trafficking of minors (§ 175). An almost consistent decrease can only be noted in regard to trafficking of minors, as in 2017 there were 67 reports compared to 16 in 2021, although it still holds the highest position in all trafficking-related crimes committed.

Figure 1. Cases of trafficking in human beings and its related crimes reported to the police in 2017–2021. Source: https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2021/inimkaubandus_page.html

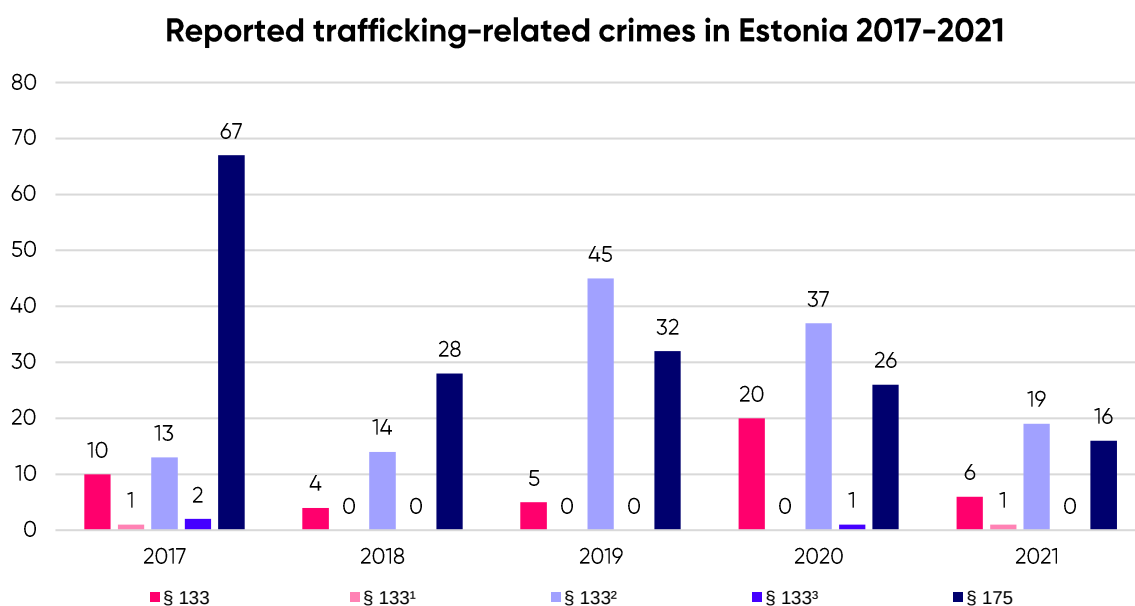
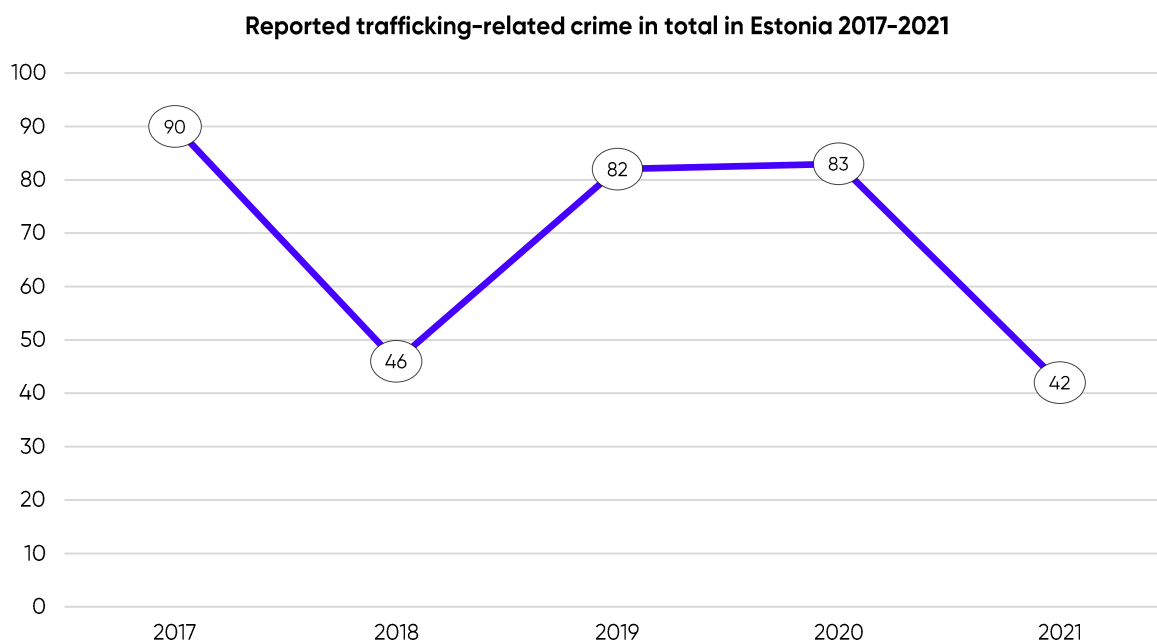


Figure 2. Cases of trafficking in human beings and its related crimes (Penal code § 133 and its sub-sections) reported to the police in 2017–2021 in total. Source: https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2021/inimkaubandus_page.html

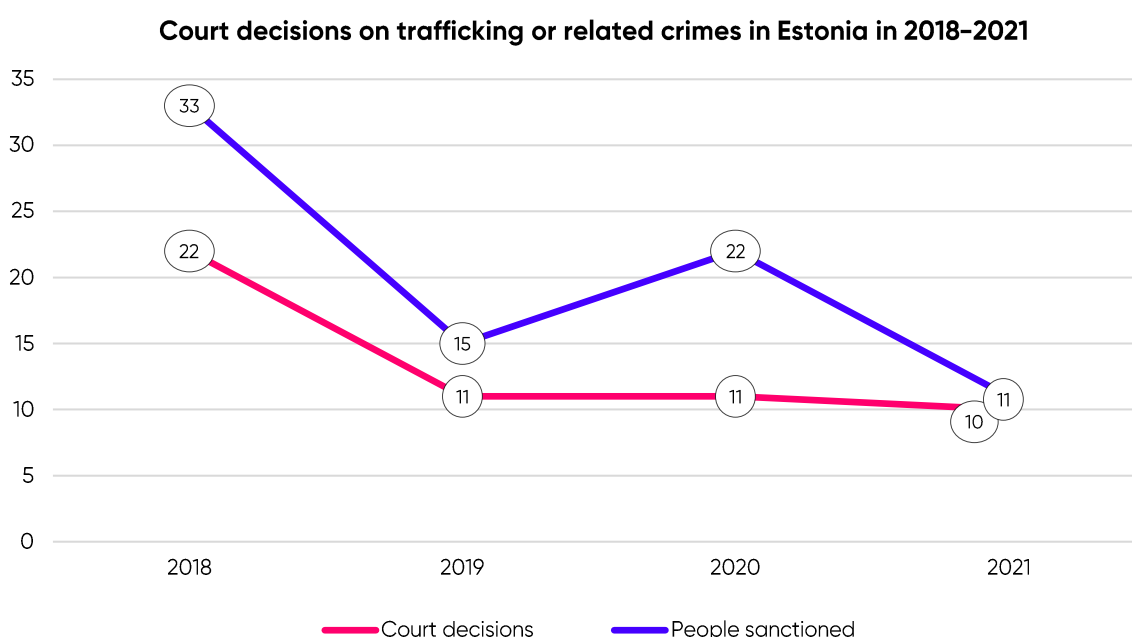


In recent years, the court decisions regarding human trafficking and related crimes have been stable with the exception of 2018. The total decisions are as follows: 2018: 22 decisions (33 people were sanctioned); 2019: 11 decisions (15 people were sanctioned); 2020: 11 decisions (22 people were sanctioned); 2021: 10 decisions (11 people were sanctioned). There is no data about the decisions in 2017.

In 2021 2 people were found guilty of human trafficking, 6 of pimping and 3 of trafficking of with respect to minors. The average jail time was 2,4 years.

Figure 3. Total court decisions and people sanctioned in Estonia in 2018–2021 for trafficking and related crimes. Source:

https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2021/inimkaubandus_page.html



3.3. Overview of the migration statistics in of Estonia

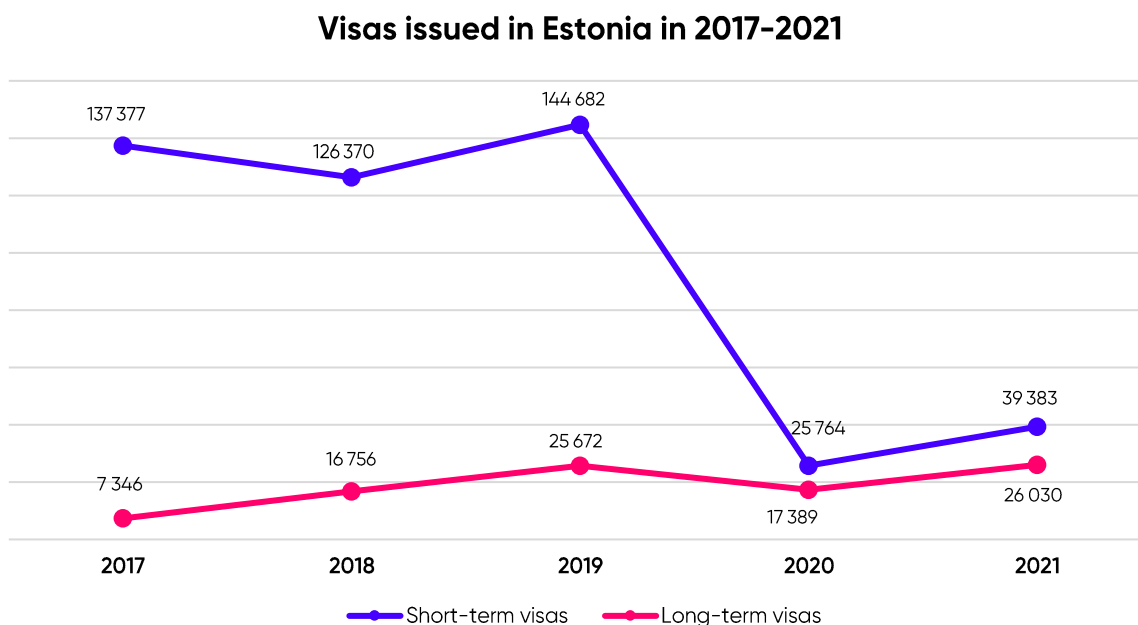
AS TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS is an international crime, a brief overview of Estonian migration policy statistics is given.

The number of long-term visas issued, has increased significantly between 2017–2021. At the same time, the number of short-term visas issued has dropped. It seems that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong impact on short-term visa issuance.

Most popular reasons to apply for a long-term visa are work, studies and relatives. For a short-term visa, the reasons are tourism, relatives and business.

As the war in Ukraine continues, Estonia has given temporary protection to 38,222 refugees.

Figure 4. Visas issued in Estonia in 2017–2021. Source: Overview on migration statistics by Annika Karm in 28 Nov 2022.

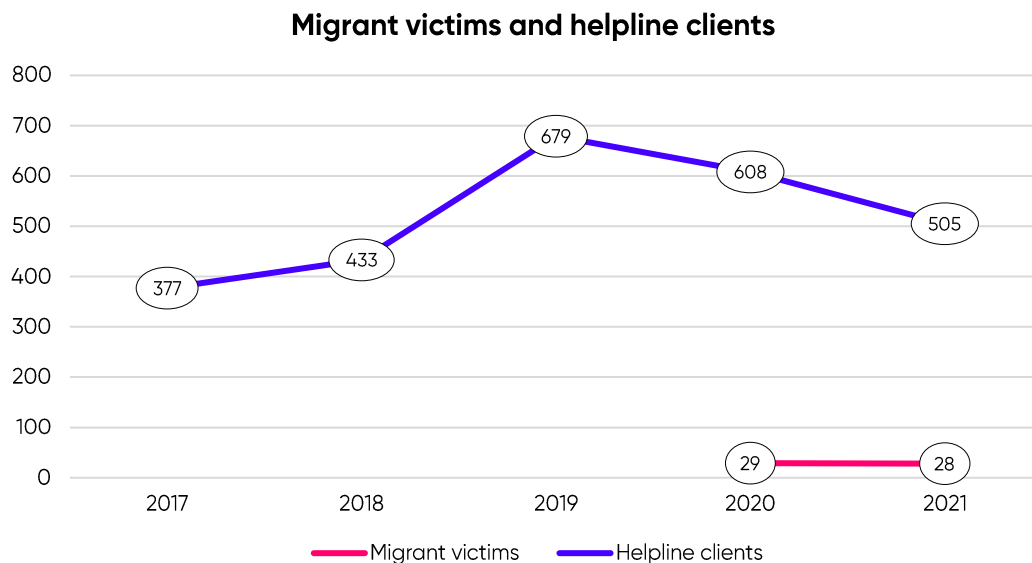


Estonia is one of the ten EU member states that have a relevant national strategy or policy that references migrants' mental health, as well as one of the states, that have a special focus on vulnerable groups of migrants or migrants with specific needs (age, gender, victims of torture, etc.). The Mental Health Strategy was developed and launched in 2020, and it includes migrants and refugees among vulnerable groups at higher risk of experiencing mental health issues. The strategy foresees delivering training modules to front line staff providing primary support. Providing training and support to migrants and refugees aims to increase the awareness of their own mental health and needs. The strategy establishes that the design and provision of services targeting migrants should take into account their mental health needs to the extent possible.⁴

3.4. Victim statistics

DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS, many presumed migrant victims have received aid from the The Social Insurance Board of Estonia – in 2020, 28 victims and in 2021, 29 victims. The number of helpline clients are as follows: in 2017: 377 clients; 2018: 433 clients; 2019: 679 clients; 2020: 608 clients; 2021: 505 clients. The increase in the number of clients suggests an increased legal understanding and greater awareness about national assistance systems.

⁴ Mapping of mental health policies for third-world national immigrants – <https://www.emn.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/emn-mental-health-inform-20072022.pdf>

Figure 5. Number of migrant victims and helpline clients. Source:https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/kuritegevus2021/inimkaubandus_page.html

77% of all the people receiving aid and counseling from The Social Insurance Board of Estonia have indications of labor exploitation, and 6% have indications of sexual exploitation (signs that they have had to engage in prostitution against their will). The remaining 17% were specialists and officials who sought advice.

3.5. Sexual service customers

WITHIN THE SPSV PROJECT, which aims to reduce the demand for human trafficking and prostitution, a survey about customers of sexual services was conducted. The survey provides valuable information about the mindset of customers seeking sexual services. Fifty males took part in the survey. The average participant was a 43-year-old male, who has a secondary or vocational education, and whose income is rather fair. The results show that 39,1% of the customers had had their first experience of paying for sexual services at the age of 25-34.

The most concerning part of the survey was the availability of sexual services – 95,4% of all customers said that it is very easy to acquire sexual services today in Estonia. The participants linked their desire to buy sexual services with depression or alcohol, which clearly indicates the need to deal with the mental health problems of these customers overall. The survey showed that the knowledge of customers on human trafficking is superficial, and the ability to recognize victims is poor.

3.6. Discussion

THE NUMBERS OF REPORTED CRIMES ON trafficking in human beings and related crimes have varied over time, but no overall conclusion can be drawn from the 2017–2021 reports. From 2019 to 2021, we can observe a decrease in the crimes related to pimping and trafficking of minors. Since 2018, court decisions regarding trafficking and related crimes have been stable with the exception of the year 2018. These numbers suggest that no significant breakthrough has been accomplished in the last few years regarding legislation or detection methods. 2022 statistics are yet to be obtained, so no conclusions can be drawn concerning last year's efforts.

To raise awareness about sexual and labor exploitation and prevention, to lower the demand for sexual services, and to raise awareness about trafficking in people with disabilities and more vulnerable people, multiple campaigns have been conducted. This is also reflected in the number of trafficking helpline clients, which has increased since 2017 (still, there has been a slight decline in the number of clients in the last two years). In the last few years, many presumed migrant victims have received aid from The Social Insurance Board of Estonia, but as there is no data before 2020, no conclusions can be made. Still, there are efforts to be made, as the survey of sexual customers showed a lack of knowledge about human trafficking problems and detecting victims.

The statistics show that most of the clients who seek aid and counseling from institutions are victims of labour exploitation. Consequently, the focus should be on processing these crimes. The aforementioned argument is supported by the fact that from 2017 until 2021, the long-term visas that have been issued in Estonia have increased significantly, and the most popular reasons for applying for a long-term visa are work-related.

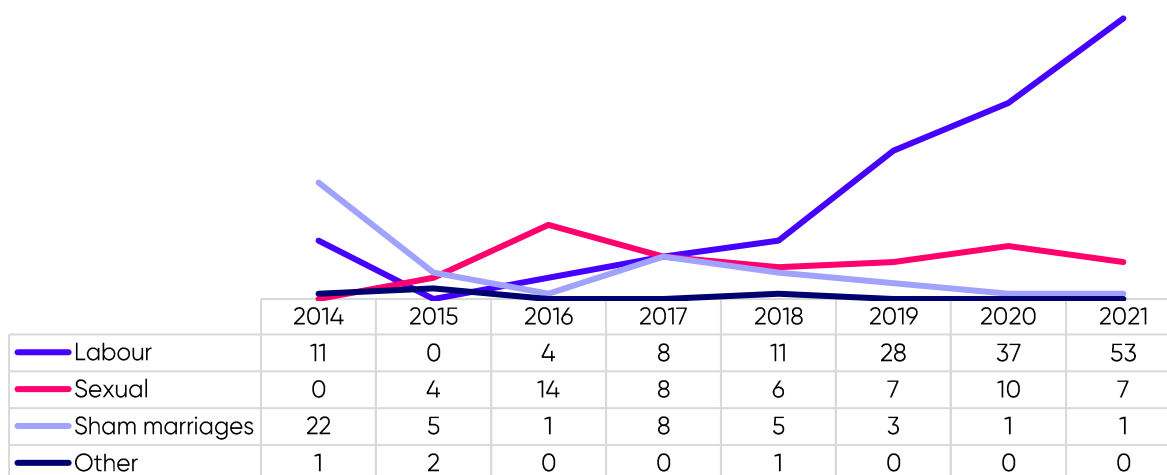
4. Latvia – Trafficking trends in 2017–2021

4.1. Latest victim statistics

DATA ON IDENTIFIED VICTIMS in Latvia is collected from three sources – the State Police and two service providers (Centre MARTA and Shelter Safe House). The State Police identifies a person as a victim of trafficking in human beings within the framework of criminal proceedings. Also service providers can formally identify a person as a victim through a special commission, in accordance with the regulation No. 344 of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted 16 July 2019 on the "Procedures by Which the Victims of the Trafficking in Human Beings Receive Social Rehabilitation Service, and the Criteria for the Recognition of a Person as a Victim of the Trafficking in Human Beings".⁵ This regulation defines a number of criteria that is taken into account when identifying potential victims.

As seen in Figure 1, the number of identified victims in Latvia has been increasing since 2019 and reached a record high in 2021 when both the State Police and the service providers identified 61 victims in total.

Figure 1. The number of identified victims in Latvia by form the purpose of exploitation, 2014 – 2021. Source: The State Police, the Centre MARTA, Shelter Safe House 2022.



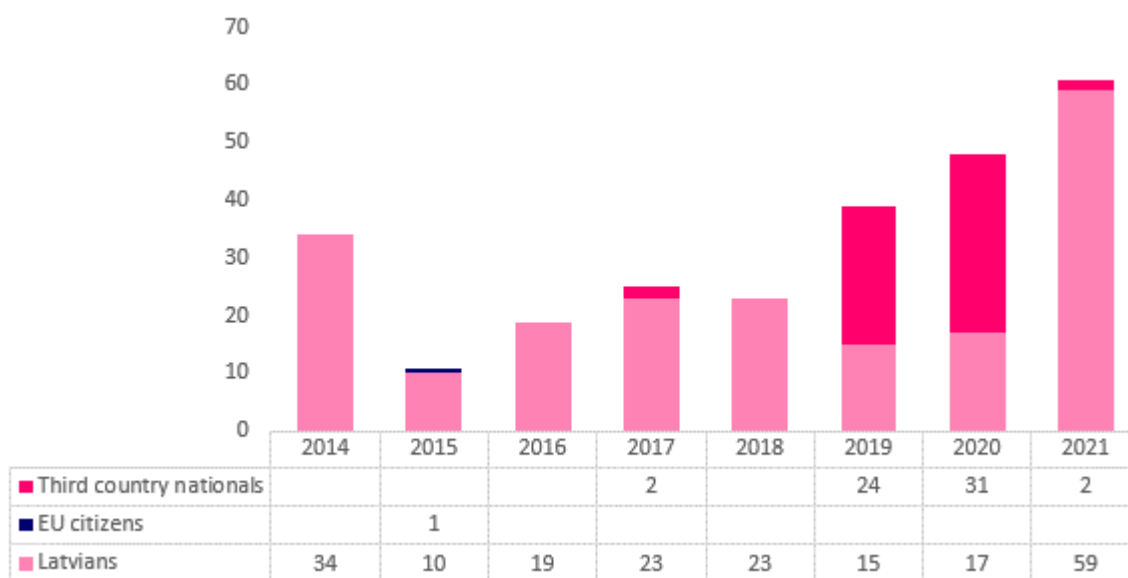
⁵ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/308253-regulations-regarding-the-procedures-by-which-the-victims-of-the-trafficking-in-human-beings-receive-social-rehabilitation-service-and-the-criteria-for-the-recognition-of-a-person-as-a-victim-of-the-trafficking-in-human-beings>

The number of identified victims has mainly increased due to law enforcement activities and the detection of large-scale labour exploitation cases with several victims in each case. Still, the number of criminal proceedings has not changed considerably.

Currently, exploitation of both Latvian citizens and third-country nationals can be observed in Latvia, thus indicating that Latvia is both a country of destination and a country where local people are being exploited. In addition, Latvia is still a country of origin, because there are cases each year where Latvian citizens have been exploited in other countries, mainly in the EU.

As shown in Figure 2, regarding the nationality of identified victims, the number of foreign nationals in 2019 and 2020 was greater than or similar to Latvian citizens. In 2019, among identified victims from third countries, 15 were Tajikistan nationals, 8 Uzbekistan nationals, and 1 Indian nationals. In 2020, 18 victims were from Tajikistan, 6 from Uzbekistan, and 7 from India.

Figure 2. Nationality of identified victims, 2014–2021. Source: The State Police, the Centre MARTA, Shelter Safe House, 2022.



The increase in the number of trafficking victims who are third country nationals could be explained with improvements in the socio-economic situation of Latvia, thus indicating a shift from the country of origin to a country of destination.

Sectors where trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation are most frequently detected are agriculture, forestry, and (food) manufacturing. However, experts assess that construction and

logistics are also risk areas, because of unregistered employment and the fact that people are reporting violations, breaches of contracts and unlawful activities by the employers.

As regards sexual exploitation, recent cases are often related to online services. The risk area concerning prostitution is related to the exploitation of women from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, which was seen already before the war in Ukraine.

Sham marriages involving exploitation have been detected rather rarely in recent years. Sham marriages between Latvian citizens and third country nationals, mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, being reported and detected quite frequently, but these cases cannot be classified as trafficking.

Most of the victims identified in Latvia were also exploited in Latvia, however, there are also cases in which the victims identified in Latvia were exploited in other countries. In 2021, 56 of the 61 identified victims were exploited in Latvia and 5 in other EU countries – the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland and Poland. It is likely that the exact number of Latvian victims exploited in other countries is not known and could be higher, because Latvia still remains a country of origin. As regards Latvian citizens being exploited in other countries, the Consular department of the Ministry of Foreign affairs has reported several suspicious cases with risks of trafficking. In 2022, there was a case where a homeless Latvian citizen with psychological disabilities was exploited in forced begging in Poland. In another case, four Latvian citizens with heavy substance use disorders were promised work in Denmark, but on the way in Germany, their passports were stolen to establish fake enterprises and take loans, and they were left in Germany with nothing.

There is a visible gender divide in the purpose of trafficking. Men are mainly subjected to labour exploitation, while women are subjected to sexual exploitation. For example, in 2021, out of all 61 identified victims of trafficking 12 were women and 7 of them had been subjected to sexual exploitation, 1 in an exploitative sham marriage and 4 in labour exploitation, while all 49 identified male victims were subjected to labour exploitation.

4.2. Police statistics

THE POLICE STATISTICS REVEAL the latest trends concerning launched criminal cases in Latvia.

Table 1. Launched criminal proceedings between 2017 and 2021 after Criminal Law (CL) articles 154.1, 164, 165 and 165.1. Source: The State Police, 2022.

CL article	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Article 154.1 (trafficking in human beings)	7	4	2	7	4
Article 164, second part (involvement in prostitution)	6	1	2	1	4

Article 165 (pimping)	8	5	8	6	12
Article 165.1 (sending a person for sexual exploitation)	8	2	1	0	2

The number of suspects and victims depends on the case, because some cases can involve one to two victims and one suspect, while other cases are large and involve several suspects and a number of victims. The largest case was registered in 2021, with 12 identified victims and 9 suspects.

The so-called risk articles related to sexual exploitation risks are always included in the statistics. Overall, as seen in the statistics, the cases of "sending a person for sexual exploitation" are not as common as years ago, when Latvia was more seen as a country of origin. On the other hand, at the same time the number of pimping cases (CL article 165) has increased due to the increasing number of the involvement of third country women in prostitution.

In recent years, the suspects in trafficking cases have mainly been Latvian nationals. There was, even a case in the UK in 2017, where the suspects were Latvian citizens. However, in pimping cases suspects are mainly Ukrainians, Latvians and Russians to a lesser extent.

4.3. Conviction statistics

THE PROGRESSION OF PROCESSES after the pre-trial investigation is rather challenging, especially when cases are sent from the prosecution to the court. Trafficking cases are often sent from one instance to another and due to defendants' activities, court hearings are often delayed, and the court process can take several years. For example, in 2022 after several appeals, the Supreme court made a final decision (acquittal) in a case from 2016. However, it is important to note that this is an issue of Latvian courts in general, not only regarding trafficking cases.

Table 2. The number of cases concerning CL article 154.¹ submitted to the court and cases reviewed by the court between 2014 and 2021. Sources: The General Prosecutor's Office and Court Administrations Systems, 2022.

	CASES SENT TO THE COURT	CASES THE IN FIRST INSTANCE AND APPEAL
2014	0	1
2015	3	3
2016	4	0
2017	2	0
2018	1	2

2019	3	2
2020	2	4
2021	2	1

In the last couple of years, there have been no final convicting decisions for trafficking in human beings. Cases are in the court system, but court hearings are delayed, cancelled, and sent from one instance to another. Therefore, there is currently no trafficking case law with a final conviction that could serve as an example in forthcoming court proceedings.

5. Poland – Trafficking trends in 2017–2021

5.1. Statistics from the criminal justice system

ARTICLE 189A OF POLAND'S PENAL CODE criminalises human trafficking and prescribes penalties of three to 15 years' imprisonment. In March 2022, the Polish government enacted legislation increasing the penalties under Article 189a for trafficking crimes committed during Russia's war on Ukraine to between 10 to 15 years' imprisonment or 25 years' imprisonment for severe cases⁶.

The number of initiated proceedings related to human trafficking initially significantly decreased, then went up and then decreased again. Firstly, the number of initiated proceedings, based on information provided by the Polish authorities, decreased from 126 initiated proceedings by the prosecutor's office in 2017 to 67 initiated proceedings in 2019, in 2020 this figure further decreased to 46, then increased again to 57 in 2021. Figures for 2020–2021 were not provided by the authorities for the GRETA monitoring, and are only to be found in the TIP report.

As for initiated proceedings by the police also these have reported to be decreased from 27 till 16, then increased to 32 cases in 2020, dropping again to 22 cases in 2021. For the border guards the same situation goes, a drop from 14 to 6 cases. For the border police no figures were yet found for 2020 and 2021.

Table 1. Number of initiated proceedings under Art. 189a of the Penal Code by the Prosecutor's Office in 2017–2020.⁷

2017	136
2018	79
2019	67
2020	46 ⁸
2021	57

⁶ Various sources: US TIP report 2022, media articles, oral information received.

⁷ Source: Polish governmental report to GRETA, 2022.

⁸ US TIP report states: Prosecutors initiated 57 investigations from cases referred by police and border guards (46 in 2020).

Table 2. Number of initiated proceedings under Art. 189a of Penal Code by the Police in 2017–2021.⁹

2017	27
2018	33
2019	16
2020	32
2021	22

Table 3. Number of initiated proceedings under Art. 189a of the Penal Code by the Border Guard in 2017–2019.

2017	14
2018	5
2019	6

It is difficult to compare the information above, with the number of prosecutions in THB cases which have been reported by the Polish authorities, also as these might relate to cases that started in earlier years. For the year 2019, you see that the number of prosecuted persons slightly increases and then drops again. As for the number of convicted persons the number this figure dropped, from 24 in 2017 to 10 in 2018.

⁹ The figures for 2017–2019 come from a report by the Polish authorities to GRETA in 2022. The figures for 2020 and 2021 that were absent in the mentioned report, were reported by the US state department in the latest US TIP report. US TIP report states: Law enforcement authorities initiated 32 investigations under Article 189a (22 in 2020); nine were for sex trafficking, 11 for forced labor (including two for forced begging), and 12 were for unspecified forms of exploitation.

Table 4. Number of prosecutions in THB cases in 2017–2021 (disaggregated by type of exploitation, with an indication of the number of victims and defendants concerned).

	NUMBER OF INDICTMENTS	NUMBER OF PERSONS ACCUSED
2017	17	47
2018	23	47
2019	17	51
2020		20
2021		25 ¹⁰

Table 5. Number of persons convicted for human trafficking crimes in 2017–2018.

2017	24	2 Female – 22 male
2018	10	2 Female – 8 male

5.2. Victim statistics

Identified victims

ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SOURCES, men, women and children with Polish nationality are trafficked within Poland and to other countries. Women and children are trafficked from Poland in particular to France and Germany and men and women from Poland are trafficked for forced labour primarily to Western and Northern Europe and in particular Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the UK.

Statistics show further that women and children from South America and Eastern Europe – in particular from Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine – are trafficked for sexual exploitation in Poland. Trafficking for labour exploitation is the predominant form of trafficking in Poland, and traffickers increasingly use coercion and fraud instead of physical violence or threats of violence. The victims originate from Europe, Asia, Africa, and increasingly from South America. Traffickers have been

¹⁰ 25 defendants were prosecuted under Article 189a (20 in 2020); 21 were for sex trafficking, one was for forced labor, and three were for unspecified forms of trafficking (US TIP report 2022, chapter on Poland, p. 450–453).

reported to recruit Romanian men, women, and children, particularly from the Roma population, for forced begging in Poland; persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. No information is provided on cases of human trafficking related to forced marriages.

The number of cases of trafficking in human beings reported by the national police and border guard has decreased since 2019. Due to pandemic-related restrictions, authorities were expected to have conducted fewer operations to screen workplaces and regular and irregular employment sectors for potential victims. Also training for police officers has been limited during the pandemic which might be a further reason for the decrease.

For several years, labour inspectors did not identify any victims, including also for the year 2021. Observers have previously noted labour inspectors' challenges in determining whether an offense constituted a violation of workers' rights or forced labour.

Table 6. Reported identified victims of trafficking Poland in 2017–2021.

	IDENTIFIED VICTIMS BY GOVERNMENT (NATIONAL POLICE AND BOARD GUARD)	KCIK ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO (POTENTIAL) VICTIMS	LABOUR	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION	OTHER
2017	155 ¹¹	169 ¹² /187 ¹³	109	41	18 ¹⁴
2018	162	168/181 ¹⁵			
2019	221	168/226 ¹⁶			
2020	82	166 ¹⁷	70 ¹⁸	40 ¹⁹	56
2021	94 ²⁰	210 ²¹	87 ²²	52	71

¹¹ According to the governmental response to GRETA 84 by police and 43 by border guard, this would mean a total of 127 reported by the government which is different than the amount provided by the US TIP report for 2017.

¹² US TIP report 2019 specifies only 168 cases, not 169 cases.

¹³ Response of the government to GRETA in 2022, states 187 cases for 2017 that received assistance by KCIK.

¹⁴ Including four domestic slavery; four forced begging; three forced criminality; two combined sexual exploitation and domestic servitude; two combined forced labor and sexual exploitation; one degrading treatment; one forced begging and sexual exploitation; and one forced marriage.

¹⁵ Polish government reported 181 cases for 2018 (response of the government to GRETA, 2022) – however TIP report mentions 221 cases.

¹⁶ Polish government reported 226 cases for 2018 (response of the government to GRETA, 2022).

¹⁷ US TIP report is not consistent, it mentions 226 potential victims; three of domestic slavery, two of degrading treatment, two of forced criminality, and 26 of other types of exploitation.

¹⁸ Including three for forced criminality, one for domestic service, and one for forced begging – TIP reports are not consistent, 2020 report mentions different figures than 2021 report for 2020, e.g. 2020 report states 154 were victims of forced labour; 2021 report instead mentions only 40.

¹⁹ US TIP reports are not consistent, 2021 report mentions 40 and 2020 reports mentions 39.

²⁰ US TIP 2022 report states: The government identified 94 victims (70 for labor trafficking, including one for forced begging, and 24 for sex trafficking).

²¹ US TIP reports 2021 and 2022 differ on this.

²² Including two for forced begging, two for forced criminal activity, and one for domestic servitude.

In 2021, the government identified 94 victims (70 for labour trafficking, including one for forced begging, and 24 for sex trafficking). The National Intervention–Consultation Center for Victims of Trafficking (KCIK), run by La Strada Poland and PoMOC that receive annual funding from the government, provided assistance to 210 potential victims, including 52 victims of sex trafficking, 87 victims of forced labour, and 71 victims of other types of exploitation related to trafficking.²³

KCIK provided Polish and foreign national adult and child victims with medical and psychological care, shelter, legal counseling, welfare support, reintegration services, and referrals to orphanages and foster care for child victims. KCIK operated two shelters for adult female victims, including one for women with children and a small shelter for men, and it rented apartments for victims who did not prefer shelters.

5.3. Discussion

SUMMARY:

- There is a clear decrease in number since 2019 in governmental figures related to identified victims but stable figures and a sharp increase for 2021 noted in statistics of assisted victims by KCIK – differences in the number of identified and assisted victims.
- Trafficking for labour exploitation is the most common form of trafficking identified in Poland.
- For multiple years, there has been no identification of cases by labour inspectorates.
- No trafficking cases yet related to Ukraine have been identified in Poland (2 potential cases were earlier reported but both have not been further investigated as trafficking cases to our knowledge).

Even though the different statistics presented are not directly comparable, it is interesting to note that the figures provided by the government show a decrease, while the statistics of KCIK show increases. A reason for the decreases, as noted from the governmental figures, might be the lack of capacity and resources, and changes in the national structures²⁴.

It is worth noting that labour inspectors did not identify any trafficking victims, and overall victim identification efforts remained inadequate, according different actors.²⁵ Observers reported that prosecutors and judges lacked familiarity with victim-centered approaches, the impact of trauma on victims, and the severity and complexity of the crime. Observers also reported that the frequent

²³ US TIP report 2022, but based on statistics from La Strada Poland.

²⁴ However, the US TIP report 2022 states: The National Police maintained an anti-trafficking department with 11 officers, along with 17 regional offices, each with three to eight officers investigating trafficking, child pornography, and child sexual abuse. The Central Bureau of Investigations maintained an anti-trafficking coordinator at its headquarters and in each of its 17 regional branches, and the Border Guard operated a specialized central team and had 10 regional anti-trafficking coordinators.

²⁵ Including a conclusion from the US TIP report 2022.

rotation of officials focused on trafficking, both at the national and provincial levels, negatively impacted the government's understanding of the complexity of the crime²⁶.

According to the US TIP report (2022), the Government of Poland does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so.²⁷ Moreover, it is reported that the government did not increase resources for victim services and Poland still has no formal National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

While Poland received the largest groups of Ukrainian refugees, no Ukrainian refugees potentially subjected to exploitation were referred to the Assistance system during 2022. This is also confirmed by IOM²⁸. This may be a result of all the attention and effective prevention measures taken by various authorities and practitioners. In particular, it is likely that the application of the EU Temporary Protection Directive considerably reduced the risks of human trafficking for refugees from Ukraine.

While there are no formal cases identified, it should be noted though that quite a lot of anecdotal information was received related to potential exploitation of Ukrainians through the hotline of La Strada Poland and other sources. The calls to the hotlines increased considerably since the war in Ukraine, but it is however difficult to judge for how many of these anecdotal reports there will be sufficient evidence later on to prove exploitation or human trafficking. In general NGOs in Poland as well as in other European countries expect that it will take some time before cases of human trafficking related to Ukraine are reported and requests for assistance reach the support structures.

²⁶ US TIP report 2022

²⁷ US TIP report 2022 – chapter on Poland.

²⁸ Interview IOM Regional office, Vienna – 13 November 2022



6. Ukraine - Trafficking trends in 2017-2021

6.1. Introduction

SINCE 2014, THE ARMED CONFLICT and the occupation of the Donbas region and the Crimea have posed grave threats to civilian safety in Ukraine. It is reported that Russia-backed armed groups in Donetsk and Luhansk regions have tortured and arbitrarily detained civilians and that there have been enforced disappearances, next to denying civilians access to medical care.²⁹ As a result of these severe rights violations and the general poor economic situation of the country, specifically in the occupied parts, many Ukrainians left the country already before 24 February 2022, for other European and non-European countries.

According to UNHCR approximately 1,5 million people have been displaced due to the armed conflict and the occupation of the Donbas region and the Crimea in 2014.³⁰ This population has been especially vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse.³¹ For example, from 2014-2017, hundreds of people have become victims of conflict-related sexual violence committed by Russian soldiers.³² In areas controlled by Russian forces, international humanitarian aid intended to help meet civilian needs is restricted. Also, employment options are limited. The IDPs living in Russia-controlled territory face significant barriers to obtaining or renewing identification documents, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.³³

Yet, also in other parts of Ukraine, human rights violations have been reported before the outbreak of the war, putting specific vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI+ people, rights activists and ethnic minorities like Roma at risk of further violations, exploitation and abuse.³⁴ In response to violence against Roma, the government approved in July 2021 a national strategy to 2030 to address discrimination against the Roma communities.³⁵

Gender-based and domestic violence and discrimination against women have also been widespread, although 'a new law removed legal obstacles to prosecuting military personnel and police for domestic violence'.³⁶ Support services for victims of domestic violence as well as

²⁹ Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/ukraine>

³⁰ UNHCR, Internally displaced persons Ukraine (<https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/internally-displaced-persons>)

³¹ US TIP report 2021.

³² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/conflict-related-sexual-violence-ukraine-14-march-2014-31-january-2017>

³³ TIP report 2021.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch World Report 2022.

³⁵ Amnesty International report 2021/2022.

³⁶ Amnesty International report 2021/2022.

legislative and policy measures intended to combat it, remained insufficient.³⁷ While Ukraine adopted a National Strategy for Human Rights and a related Action Plan in 2021, the government failed to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). La Strada Ukraine and other civil society actors have been lobbying for the ratification of this Convention since 2011 without success.

Conflict, inequality, violations of human rights, gender-based and domestic violence, discrimination and the absence of viable employment opportunities or social support are major root causes for human trafficking and labour exploitation.

6.2. Human trafficking of Ukrainians before the outbreak of the war

SINCE 2014 UNTIL THE WAR STARTED IN 2022, Ukrainians (men, women, and children) have been exploited and trafficked within Ukraine and across borders, for sexual exploitation and most recently in particular for labour exploitation.³⁸ Labour exploitation has taken place in a variety of sectors including construction, manufacturing, agriculture, as well as in the illegal production of counterfeit tobacco products.³⁹ Ukrainian children and vulnerable adults have also been trafficked for forced begging or for conducting criminal activities.⁴⁰

Globally, the most recent figures of the UNODC in 2018 suggest that Ukrainian victims have been identified as being trafficked to a total of 29 countries, including Russia, Poland, Germany, China, Kazakhstan, and countries in the Middle East. Over half of the total identified Ukrainian victims of human trafficking were identified in the Russian Federation and a quarter in Poland⁴¹, two countries who are now among the top 3 countries hosting refugees from Ukraine.⁴²

In the EU, Ukraine ranked 9th in the list of countries of origin with the highest identified victims of human trafficking in the 27 EU countries, with a total number of 162 Ukrainian nationals in 2018 in the latest Eurostat report.⁴³ However, although Ukraine is ranked 9th, it should be noted that Ukrainian victims comprise 'only' two percent of the total identified victims in the EU.⁴⁴ Of the 162 identified

³⁷ Idem.

³⁸ Data from LS Ukraine and IOM Ukraine.

³⁹ See US TIP report 2021, see IOM data and LS Ukraine data.

⁴⁰ TIP report 2021 chapter on Ukraine.

⁴¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/conflict-ukraine-key-evidence-risks-trafficking-persons-and-smuggling-migrants>; UNODC 2020.

⁴² According UNHCR figures, Poland received most refugees, followed by Romania and Russia – see operational data Portal UNHCR. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁴³ Published by the European Commission in October 2020 covering the period 2017–2018, Eurostat report 2020, European Commission, 4.6.3. on-EU registered victims, see Table 4.4 Victims of trafficking in the EU by non-EU citizenship, top 10 https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/system/files/2020-10/study_on_data_collection_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_in_the_eu.pdf

⁴⁴ At the EMN conference or at the meeting with EU Civil Society Platform, the EU ATC mentioned that Ukraine was in the top 5 countries of identified victims.

victims of human trafficking, 71 were women (44%) and 43 were men (26%). In the other cases the gender was not reported.⁴⁵

In recent years there has been a clear growth of Ukrainian men (and to a lesser extent Ukrainian women) that came to EU countries to work. The visa-free regime made it easier for Ukrainians to travel to EU countries⁴⁶ and the Polish government offered an easily accessible work visa to Ukrainians.⁴⁷ Many of those employed in Poland, ended up working in other EU countries via posting and other constructions. In 2019 it was expected that around two million Ukrainians came to Poland on these work visa and in 2022, when the war started, there were still around 1 million Ukrainians living and working in Poland.⁴⁸

Within Ukraine, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) assisted 1,680 victims of human trafficking in 2020, compared to 1,345 in 2019, of which the large majority was exploited for labour exploitation/forced labour (97% in 2020 and 93.3% in 2019).⁴⁹ Many of these assisted trafficked persons included persons exploited and returned from other European and non-European countries. The Ukrainian police identified and provided assistance to 146 victims in 2020, a decrease compared to 262 victims in 2019. Authorities approved 134 of 235 applications requesting official victim status, compared to 185 of 283 in 2019.⁵⁰

Pandemic-related movement restrictions and border closure seem to have an impact on the character of trafficking within Ukraine, as a larger number of Ukrainians are trafficked for labour exploitation within the country. The same goes for an apparent increase of trafficking for the purpose of commercial online sexual exploitation in Ukraine.⁵¹ At the same time, the number of foreign victims in Ukraine fell dramatically since the beginning of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Since 2014, women and girls from conflict-affected areas have reportedly been trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation in Ukraine, Russian controlled territory, and Russia.⁵² Further, it is noted that since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, the demographics of Ukrainian trafficking victims has shifted to more urban, younger, and male victims exploited increasingly in forced labour and criminality.

⁴⁵ For 48 persons, the sex was unknown or not reported to the European Commission (30% of the cases).

⁴⁶ Ukrainian passport holders can enter visa-free into a total of 90 world countries, including almost all EU/Schengen Area countries. See <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com>

⁴⁷ Simplified procedures for obtaining a work permit in Poland were introduced for citizens of former Soviet Union countries by decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. National citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Armenia have been allowed to work in Poland – initially for up to six months in a year period – but for seasonal work extended to nine months – based on an employer's statement they can quickly – within a couple of days – obtain a Polish (work) visa.

⁴⁸ Interview on 13 April with border police, police and Ministry of Interior.

⁴⁹ Source: IOM 2021.

https://ukraine.iom.int/sites/default/files/iom_counter_trafficking_programme_2021.pdf

⁵⁰ According the report, the Ukrainian government did not grant official victim status to individuals incarcerated abroad in 2020, compared with 40 in 2019 – see US TIP report <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/ukraine/> –

⁵¹ "Some Ukrainians have been subjected to forced labour on territory not under government control, often via kidnapping, torture, and extortion", US Department of State, 2021 TIP report 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report>

⁵² US TIP report 2021.

6.3. Trafficking-related risks to Ukrainian refugees

SINCE THE WAR BROKE OUT, international and national stakeholders have been raising awareness for the risks of human trafficking related to refugees from and IDPs in Ukraine. Also, the media have been vocal about these risks and started to report about signals of exploitation and abuse. Organisations in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries including La Strada member organisations and IOM started to monitor the situation and received calls and information increasingly from Ukrainians, as well as national European citizens, volunteers and others about signals and potential exploitative practices.

A risk reducing factor is the fact that the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive, to offer quick and effective protection to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. This Temporary Protection should provide immediate protection to Ukrainians to avoid overwhelming Member States' asylum systems. It applies to Ukrainian nationals and other non-EU nationals with a legal stay in Ukraine, as well as their family members displaced by the conflict. It also applies to non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless people legally residing in Ukraine who cannot return to their country of origin, such as asylum seekers and refugees, and their family members. Moreover, those persons that fall outside these categories must be allowed access to the EU to transit prior to returning to their countries of origin.⁵³ Yet at the same time, for some, the limited scope of the Temporary Protection Directive makes them vulnerable to trafficking.

6.4. Statistics of the criminal justice system

ARTICLE 149 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE criminalised trafficking for sexual exploitation and labour exploitation and prescribes penalties of three to eight years' imprisonment.

Labour inspectors conducted 7,231 inspections in 2021, compared with 14,803 unscheduled inspections in 2020; the government did not report if inspectors identified any potential trafficking victims in 2021.⁵⁴

Table 1. Number of investigated trafficking cases in 2017–2021.

	INVESTIGATED CASES	PROSECUTED PERPETRATORS	CONVICTED
2017	346 ⁵⁵	66	23 ⁵⁶

⁵³ <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/attachment/871767/Temporary%20Protection.pdf.pdf>

⁵⁴ US TIP report 2022.

⁵⁵ These included 142 instances of sex trafficking, 17 for labor trafficking, 163 for forced involvement in criminal activity, and six for forced begging. Authorities initiated prosecutions of 66 cases in court in 2017 (TIP report 2018).

⁵⁶ Of the 23 convicted traffickers sentenced in 2017, only seven (30 percent) received prison sentences, which ranged from three to five years, and the government confiscated assets from two defendants.

2018			
2019	297		35
2020⁵⁷	203 ⁵⁸	51 cases ⁵⁹	29
2021	222 ⁶⁰	101	24

Moreover, law enforcement referred 159 notices of suspicion, a necessary precursor to a court trial, involving 92 suspects in 2020, compared with 233 cases involving 120 suspects in 2019. Prosecutors pursued 51 of these referrals in court, compared with 201 in 2019, and the courts considered 32 cases in 2020 compared with 35 cases in 2019. In 2020, 122 cases remained ongoing in the courts, compared with 85 in 2019. The government reached final judgment on 25 cases and convicted 29 traffickers in 2020 under Article 149, compared with 35 traffickers in 2019. Of the 29 convicted traffickers sentenced in 2020, only five (17 percent) received prison sentences, of which four received terms of three to five years and one received a term of five to 10 years; 23 of the remaining convicted traffickers received probation, and one was fined.

The government convicted 24 traffickers in 2021, compared with 29 in 2020 and 35 in 2019. Of the 24 convicted traffickers sentenced in 2021, only five (21 percent) received prison sentences, all for a term of five to 10 years; nineteen traffickers received suspended sentences.

This was similar to 2020 when courts sentenced only 17 percent of convicted traffickers to imprisonment (US TIP report 2021). Law enforcement investigated 222 trafficking cases in 2021; 203 cases in 2020 297 in 2019 and 346 cases in 2017.

6.5. Identified and assisted victims

BOTH UKRAINIANS AND MIGRANTS are reported to be trafficked in Ukraine. Persons with a Ukrainian nationality have been trafficked for sexual exploitation and labour exploitation in Ukraine as well as in Russia, Poland, Germany, other parts of Europe, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Kazakhstan, and the Middle East. Ukrainian children and vulnerable adults have been also trafficked for forced begging.

Over the last years, Ukrainian victims have been increasingly exploited in EU member states, in particular for labour exploitation. Sectors where Ukrainians have been exploited both within the country and abroad include construction, manufacturing, agriculture, criminal activity including the illegal production of counterfeit tobacco products, and well-established criminal groups force some

⁵⁸ These included 87 cases for sexual exploitation 116 for labour exploitation of which 36 were for forced criminal activity and 12 for forced begging.

⁵⁹ With an unknown number of defendants in 2020 (US TIP report 2021).

⁶⁰ These included 85 new sex trafficking cases and 137 new labor trafficking cases, of which 54 were for forced involvement in criminal activity (US TIP report 2021).

Ukrainian victims to engage in other illegal activities abroad. In 2020–2021, pandemic-related movement restrictions and border closures resulted in traffickers exploiting a larger number of Ukrainians within Ukraine.

Table 2. Identified victims by LS Ukraine in 2017–2021.

	POLICE	NGO	IOM (ASSISTED CASES)
2017	349	80	1256
2018	275 ⁶¹		1265
2019	226	115	1345
2020	146 ⁶²	77	1680
2021		75	

In 2020 the Ukrainian authorities approved 134 of 235 applications requesting official victim status, compared with 185 of 283 in 2019. In 2019 authorities approved 214 of 266 applications requesting official victim status, compared with 195 of 273 in 2017 and 110 of 124 in 2016.

6.6. Discussion

Ukrainians have been victims of trafficking and exploitation for labour and sexual exploitation both in Ukraine as well as abroad. Ukrainians displaced due to the armed conflict, which began in 2014, have been at a particular risk for human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The countries with the largest number of identified Ukrainian victims were Russia and Poland, both of which are now among the largest recipients of refugees from Ukraine.

In recent years, Ukrainian men in particular have increasingly migrated to EU countries for work. Poland has offered accessible work visas to Ukrainians, and many have ended up working also in other EU countries as posted workers. Cases of labour exploitation of Ukrainian workers have been uncovered within and outside Ukraine, in sectors such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing.

Trends regarding trafficking in Ukraine include the changing demographics of trafficking victims, who tend to be younger, more urban and male, and exploited in forced labour and criminality. More cases of forced criminality have been detected in Ukraine than in the other countries observed in this report. The

⁶¹ According to the US TIP report, the police identified 275 victims in 2018 (349 in 2017).

⁶² The government reported that 38 victims were identified and referred to services, 13 of whom received temporary shelter.

current and future impacts of the war have raised concerns among Ukrainian and international actors. Not only does the war put civilians lives in danger, but it also exacerbates other (pre-existing) problems such as discrimination, inequality, the absence of employment options and social support, and the deterioration of the socio-economic situation. Many of these issues may contribute to trafficking and exploitation victimization particularly in the long run.

It has been estimated that since the start of the war in 2022, an important factor reducing the risk of exploitation of Ukrainian refugees was the activation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive.



7. Trafficking trends in the Nordic countries

7.1. Denmark

HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR THE PURPOSE of sexual exploitation continues to be the most commonly identified form of exploitation in Denmark. However, the number of victims subjected to this kind of exploitation has decreased during the last five years. In 2021, 33 victims of sexual exploitation were identified⁶³, compared to 112 and 86 victims identified in 2016 and 2017. Most victims were female, and they were usually trafficked for the purpose of prostitution. When looking at the countries of origin of the victims, Nigeria and Thailand stand out. Nigerians have for over a decade made up most of the victims, but recently there has been a decrease in this number. The number of identified victims from Thailand has stayed relatively stable and low during the last few years but the number of inquiries made to the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking regarding potential Thai victims has increased. When it comes to human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation in Denmark, the number of victims identified has increased lately. In 2021, 19 victims were identified (in 2020, 9 and in 2019, 17). Majority of the victims were men, and the exploitation happened most often in the restaurant or the construction sector. Around half of the victims came originally from either Romania or China. Regarding the other forms of exploitation, the number of victims trafficked for forced criminal activities has also increased: in 2021, 18 victims were identified (in 2020, 9 and in 2019, 5). Exploitation in criminal activity usually includes forced thefts and crimes related to drug business. All the victims that have been identified are male and they mostly come from Morocco, Vietnam and Nigeria. In particular, the number of Moroccan boys and men trafficked has increased significantly since 2018. Also, in 2021 for instance, all Moroccan victims were under the age of 25, a few of them being underage. (Center Mod Menneskehandel 2022, 10–11.)

7.2. Norway

THE OVERALL NUMBER OF NEW TRAFFICKING VICTIMS identified⁶⁴ in Norway decreased slightly in 2021: there were 86 new victims who received assistance, compared to 148 new victims the year before. Victims came predominantly from Eastern Europe or Africa, Asians being the third largest group. Most of the identified victims have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. For instance, 116 of all 197 potential trafficking victims receiving some kind of assistance in 2021 had been sexually exploited (this number includes both new and old clients/victims). Most victims of this type of exploitation are

⁶³ Victims are identified by the Danish authorities, including The Danish Immigration Service, The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking, courts and prosecution authorities, see Center Mod Menneskehandel (2022) for more information.

⁶⁴ 'Identified victim' refers to a person who has received some type of assistance based on the assumption that they are potentially human trafficking victims, see Koordineringsenheden for Ofre for Menneskehandel (2022, 50) for more information.

female and particularly the more organised/professional prostitution networks involve/target mostly third country nationals. The number of victims exploited for labour purposes among those receiving assistance in 2021 was 68. The most at-risk sectors regarding labour exploitation in Norway include construction industry, seasonal work in agriculture, car repair and maintenance, fishing and transport industry. Victims of this type of exploitation are mostly migrant workers, both EU- and EEA-citizens and third country nationals. In 2021, 10 out of all identified victims were also subjected to multiple forms of exploitation. (Koordineringsenheten for Ofre for Menneskehandel 2022, 51, 84–85).

7.3. Sweden

ACCORDING TO THE SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY AGENCY, the total number of identified trafficking victims has stayed relatively stable the last few years. The clear majority of the victims identified have been exploited for sexual exploitation. In 2021, 240 potential victims of sexual exploitation were identified, most of them women, whereas the majority of the identified 142 victims of labour exploitation were men. (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten 2022). According to the Swedish police, most victims of sexual exploitation come from Romania and Nigeria. The majority of victims exploited for labour purposes in Sweden come from outside the EU, e.g. Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Lebanon, Morocco, Iran, Bangladesh and Uganda. (Polismyndigheten 2021.) Different Swedish anti-trafficking actors have also noted the relatively high number of children trafficked. In 2021 for instance, 54 children were identified as potential victims of exploitation. The majority of them came from Romania and these children were used for forced begging. Other common countries of origin include e.g. Bulgaria and Morocco. (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten 2022.)

7.4. Iceland

THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE in the number of potential trafficking victims identified by Icelandic authorities: in 2021, 46 potential victims were identified, compared to nine and seven victims in the previous years. Also, for the first time in over a decade, there was both a criminal prosecution and a court conviction related to human trafficking in Iceland. (TIP Report 2022, 277–278.) Iceland differs slightly from other Nordic countries (Finland excluded) in that the trafficking for labour exploitation purposes has been the larger concern. During 2016–2018 for instance, there were 38 potential victims of labour exploitation identified, compared to 21 victims of sexual exploitation. At-risk sectors include e.g., tourism and construction business, and the victims are mostly migrant or “posted” workers from e.g., Eastern Europe and Baltic countries. Victims of sexual exploitation often come to Iceland from Africa and Eastern Europe. (CBSS 2020, 82, 85.)

8. Case study concerning the risk of exploitation and trafficking faced by Ukrainian refugees

THE RUSSIAN ATTACK TO UKRAINE on 24 February 2022 brought war to the doorstep of the Baltic Sea region and resulted in a geopolitical change which has had major impact on the regional trafficking situation, modus operandi and routes used and on the overall migration flows.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a research paper about the risks of exploitation among Ukrainian refugees already in March 2022. Previous research has shown that refugees fleeing a conflict are especially vulnerable to human trafficking and according to UNODC the risks of exploitation are high for Ukrainian women and children. (UNODC 2022.) Prolonged conflicts also often lead to increases in all criminal activity.

However, the region around Ukraine has been known for high levels of corruption and trafficking crimes before and there are known criminal networks operating in the area. Prior to the war, Ukraine also had one of the lowest minimum wages in Europe and a higher-than-average unemployment level. The prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence was high. Both the lack of sufficient financial means and being a victim of domestic violence are also known to be push factors for human trafficking and exploitation. (La Strada International 2022, 12–13.)

According to UNCHR, as of November 22, close to eight million (7,865,619 to be exact) individual refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe and more than 4.7 million of them have registered for Temporary Protection or another national protection schemes in Europe (UNCHR 2022). Most refugees initially fled to neighbouring countries. For example, within the first month of war, the majority of refugees (2.1 million people) arrived in Poland. Other countries in the vicinity, including Romania, Russia, Hungary, Moldova and Slovakia also received a great number of refugees at the time. (UNODC 2022.) However, the border policies and temporary protection provisions have allowed Ukrainian refugees (Ukrainian nationals in particular) to travel to other European countries. Some refugees still decided to stay closer to home and some have also returned to Ukraine despite the fact that the war there is not over. (IOM 2022.) However, most returnees are moving inside the country, and it is estimated that only 10 per cent of people returning to their homes are coming from abroad.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ IOM News: Returns Increase in Ukraine, but 6.2 Million People Remain Internally Displaced, 28 June 2022, <https://www.iom.int/news/returns-increase-ukraine-62-million-people-remain-internally-displaced>

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the current situation regarding the number of refugees recorded in the countries near to Ukraine and in the Baltic Sea Region.

Table 1. Number of Ukrainian refugees recorded in neighbouring countries (22.11.2022). Source: UNHCR (2022).

COUNTRY	REFUGEES, NO
Russia* (3.10.2022)	2 852 395
Poland	1 507 893
Romania (20.11.2022)	92 076
Moldova	96 646
Slovakia	101 434
Hungary	32 271
Belarus	16 433

* An estimate as potential further movements / returns cannot be factored for the time being.

Table 2. Number of Ukrainian refugees recorded in the Baltic Sea region (22.11.2022). Source: UNHCR (2022).

COUNTRY	REFUGEES, NO
Germany	1 021 667
Czech Republic	462 622
Lithuania	70 667
Estonia (15.11.2022)	62 239
Sweden (15.11.2022)	48 360
Latvia (15.11.2022)	35 283
Denmark (15.11.2022)	36 983
Finland (15.11.2022)	38 588
Norway (15.11.2022)	32 102

Women and children make up most of the refugees fleeing from Ukraine (as Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are not allowed to leave the country). It is estimated that around half of the refugees are adult women, 40 per cent are children and ten per cent are adult men (UNODC 2022). In addition to Ukrainian nationals, these refugees include people who had a legal residence in Ukraine before the war, e.g., students and workers from all around the world. There were also tens of thousands undocumented and stateless people living in Ukraine. (La Strada International 2022, 10). There is no official data on the total number of people involved in the conflict but according to IOM, as of 10 June 2022, 262,186 third country nationals had arrived in countries neighbouring Ukraine (IOM 2022).

Since the beginning of the war, international organizations, institutions and media have been highlighting the risks of trafficking for sexual exploitation among Ukrainian refugee women and children. For example, according to the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is turning into a human trafficking crisis.⁶⁶ According to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, there has been a significant increase in online demand for “explicit content and sexual services from Ukrainian women and girls” since the beginning of the war and this demand may also serve as an incentive for trafficking and exploitation of female refugees (OSCE 2022).

Despite the international focus on risks of sexual exploitation it is important to note that women and children fleeing Ukraine are also vulnerable to trafficking for labour exploitation. Labour exploitation may include domestic and care-giving work or work in agriculture, tourist and cleaning sector. However, the The European Union’s Temporary Protection Directive does offer some

⁶⁶ USIP: Russia’s War Has Created a Human Trafficking Crisis, Says U.N. Envoy, 7 June 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/06/russias-war-has-created-human-trafficking-crisis-says-un-envoy>

protection for the refugees who are able to apply for it, since the protection scheme provides them residence, medical and social welfare assistance, access to the (official) labour market and housing. (La Strada International 2022, 8.)

For children, the risks of exploitation are higher if they are fleeing alone or have been living in institutional care pre-war. Other risk groups include different minorities and marginalized communities, e.g., chronically ill, disabled and elderly people, Roma and LGBTQI+ people. Another group particularly at risk of being trafficked and exploited consists of refugees who are excluded from the EU's temporary protection scheme and hence fall outside the official services and support systems. This is also true for the people who are reluctant to register for the scheme due to incorrect information about it. It is also important to note that people with non-Ukrainian nationalities (this includes also undocumented and stateless people) who were living in Ukraine prior to the war are not always offered the same level of protection regardless of their legal status due to discriminatory practices. (Ibid.)

In addition to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, women and girls are also at risk of getting abused in other ways, e.g., being forced to offer sexual services in exchange for things like food, accommodation or transportation. Survival sex is common in humanitarian crises and conflict situations (see e.g., ICMPD 2015).

At the moment, there is a little anecdotal evidence of Ukrainian refugees offering sexual services as a survival strategy. For example, different organizations working with sex workers have received new information about Ukrainian sex workers in Poland and Romania. However, there is no official data or information on the situation yet. (La Strada International 2022, 11.)

In Sweden, a police operation targeting sex buyers gained a lot of media attention in April 2022 when it was revealed that the majority of the arrests involved Ukrainian women, including refugees. The statements given by the police indicate that for most of these women offering sexual services was a survival strategy.⁶⁷

There is no concrete data on the attempts to recruit Ukrainian refugees. However, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of these cases reported by different organizations working in the field. For example, according to the research and interviews done by Human Rights Watch in Poland, some women refugees had been approached by potential abusers. They had received suspicious offers of housing, work or transportation from unknown men. Volunteers and other staff working at the border and refugee reception points had also witnessed incidents in which they identified potential risks of exploitation.⁶⁸

In Berlin, Germany, the police received reports of suspicious behaviour at the main stations where refugees started arriving in the early weeks of war. The city government also issued a warning

⁶⁷ SVT Nyheter: 30 av 38 män köpte sex av kvinnor från Ukraina, 11 April 2022, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/30-av-38-man-kopte-sex-av-kvinnor-fran-ukraina>

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch: Poland: Trafficking, Exploitation Risks for Refugees, 29 April 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/29/poland-trafficking-exploitation-risks-refugees>

regarding the possible criminals wanting to profit from the situation and instructed female refugees to not accept any suspicious offers of help.⁶⁹ The anti-trafficking authorities in Lithuania and Norway have also received reports about attempts to recruit and exploit Ukrainian refugees since they started arriving in these countries.⁷⁰

In the UK, the “Homes for Ukraine” programme has raised concern about the safety of the refugees and the potential risks of exploitation. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UK government announced a new housing scheme allowing anyone to host Ukrainian refugees if they agreed to certain background checks. However, since connecting refugees and sponsors happens largely in Facebook groups set up by local networks or individuals, there is no way to properly monitor all accommodation offers. There are reports of potentially abusive men taking advantage of this system and posing as sponsors.⁷¹ The UNHCR also released a statement highlighting the possible risks arising from this system and called for “adequate safeguards and vetting measures to be in place against exploitation”.⁷²

Ukrainian refugees are exposed to different risks of exploitation also online. According to the OSCE, many Ukrainians use social media for finding help and support and the information they share and reveal about themselves may be used by potential traffickers and abusers. In addition, the recruitment and advertisement of victims for sexual exploitation happens increasingly online these days. There has also been a significant increase in online demand for explicit content and sexual services from Ukrainian women and girls since the beginning of the war. (OSCE 2022.) However, there are also numerous offers for work in other sectors posted online, some of them being offered specifically to Ukrainian refugees. Since there are often no safeguards or proper vetting processes on these recruitment websites, some of these offers may potentially be fake and result in exploitation. (La Strada International 2022, 15.)

The law enforcement and other authorities have been actively warning the public and the refugees about the possible risks of exploitation since the beginning of the war, on national (as mentioned

⁶⁹ Reuters: Berlin warns Ukrainian refugees about trafficking danger, 14 March 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/berlin-warns-ukrainian-refugees-about-trafficking-danger-2022-03-14/>

UPI: Police warn female Ukrainian refugees about harassment, luring at Berlin train station, 12 March 2022, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/03/12/germany-police-warn-ukraine-refugees-harassment-luring-trafficking/1181647128154/

⁷⁰ LRT: Ukrainian refugees become target for human traffickers in Lithuania, 2 April 2022, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1658515/ukrainian-refugees-become-target-for-human-traffickers-in-lithuania>

Norway Today: Norwegian police received several tips about Ukrainian refugees being exploited, 18 April 2022, <https://norwaytoday.info/news/norwegian-police-received-several-tips-about-ukrainian-refugees-being-exploited/>

⁷¹ BBC: Homes for Ukraine: Housing scheme called danger to refugees, 4 May 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-61311046>

The National: Homes for Ukraine: Housing scheme called danger to refugees, 29 April 2022, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2022/04/28/ukrainian-refugees-in-uk-at-risk-of-human-trafficking-and-exploitation/>

⁷² UNHCR Statement on the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme, 13 April 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2022/4/6256b5144/unhcr-statement-on-the-uks-homes-for-ukraine-scheme.html>

before) but also on international level.⁷³ National law enforcement authorities have also strengthened their mutual cooperation and increased collaboration also across state-borders (see box 1). However, there have been reports of inconsistent protection and screening measures at the borders. According to the interviews and research done by Human Rights Watch at the Polish-Ukrainian borders, there were no systematic security measures in place and the means to detect victims and cases of trafficking or exploitations were lacking. In addition, when it comes to the work done at the refugee reception points, the problem is that most of the workers are volunteers and not properly trained to detect different warning signs related to trafficking and exploitation.⁷⁴ There is clearly a need for better training and capacity building of these volunteers and other staff at the borders and in the reception centres on this matter.

So far there have been no or very few reports of confirmed human trafficking cases involving Ukrainian refugees. However, a recent joint action day coordinated by EUROPOL resulted in identification of a dozen potential victims and traffickers (see box 1). Recently it was also reported that Ukrainian authorities had uncovered a criminal organization allegedly recruiting Ukrainian women abroad with fake job offers and then forcing them into sex work.⁷⁵

Info box 1 – Joint action day to identify human traffickers targeting Ukrainian refugees

On 23 May 2022, 93 law enforcement officers from 14 EU member states took part in a joint action day to detect criminal networks trying to recruit Ukrainian refugees for sexual and labour exploitation via different online platforms. These platforms (125 in total) included e.g., dating sites, recruitment websites and platforms offering sexual services. The focus of the investigation was in monitoring the online offers to help Ukrainian refugees with transportation, accommodation and work.

These joint investigations revealed new trends and produced more precise information on the risks of exploitation of Ukrainian refugees. Despite the efforts made by different online platforms themselves to combat the trafficking and exploitation of Ukrainian refugees, the investigators still identified a significant number of suspicious recruitment offers, usually targeting Ukrainian women and likely for the purpose of sexual exploitation. A dozen possible victims and suspected traffickers were identified, and 15 new investigations initiated.

Source: EUROPOL (2022). <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/human-traffickers-luring-ukrainian-refugees-web-targeted-in-eu-wide-hackathon>

⁷³ Europol Early Warning Notification: War in Ukraine – refugees arriving to the EU from Ukraine at risk of exploitation as part of THB, March 2022, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Early_Warning_Notification_War_in_Ukraine_%E2%80%93_refugees_arriving_to_the_EU_from_Ukraine_at_risk_of_exploitation_as_part_of_THB.pdf

⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch: Poland: Trafficking, Exploitation Risks for Refugees, 29 April 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/29/poland-trafficking-exploitation-risks-refugees>

⁷⁵ The Guardian: Ukraine prosecutors uncover sex trafficking ring preying on women fleeing country, 7 July 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/07/ukraine-prosecutors-uncover-sex-trafficking-ring-preying-on-women-fleeing-country?s=09>

9. Operational exchange visit summary

9.1. Poland

THE OPERATIONAL EXCHANGE VISIT visit to Poland took place on 28–30 November 2022 in Warsaw. The ELECT THB-project partners brought together representatives from the police, prosecution service and the labour inspection authorities to learn more about latest trends, challenges, solutions, case examples and modus operandi and routes identified by the Polish stakeholders, practitioners and experts.

NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Anniina Jokinen	HEUNI	Finland
Natalia Ollus	HEUNI	Finland
Katja-Pia Jenu	Labour inspectorate of Southern Finland	Finland
Nils Majewski	Helsinki police	Finland
Heidi Savurinne	National Prosecution Authority	Finland
Agnese Zile-Veisberga	Ministry of the Interior of Latvia	Latvia
Jurijs Misjuns	The State Police	Latvia
Daiga Gavariņa	The General Prosecutor's Office	Latvia
Maris Indrikovs	Labour inspectorate	Latvia
Anna Markina	University of Tartu	Estonia
Igor Krotenko	Estonian Police and Borderguard Board	Estonia
Margo Kivila	Estonian Police and Borderguard Board	Estonia
Janis Miilits	Labour inspectorate	Estonia

The agenda of the visit is in Annex 1.

First day

The first day of the operational exchange visit consisted mainly of meetings with representatives of the Polish authorities. We first met with representative of the police anti-trafficking unit, Ms. Magda Potentas from Police Headquarters. She outlined the police structures working to combat trafficking in Poland and shared the latest trends. She also outlined recent modus operandi through concrete

case studies, incl. the sexual exploitation of a young Ukrainian woman in Poland and Polish Roma exploited in the UK in poultry farms, scrap metal plants and in waste sorting. We then met with representatives of the Polish border guard, Ms. Karolina Chmura and Mr. Sebastian Kras who shared information regarding their mandate to investigate trafficking cases also within Poland as well as case examples on successful investigation into cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour. There are currently 5 large pending cases of human trafficking that have been investigated by the Polish border guards, all related to forced labour. Cases uncovered by the border guard include e.g., sexual exploitation of Polish women, Ukrainian nationals forced to work in bakeries, Filipino men used as truck drivers, and nationals of Yemen forced to work in kebab restaurants

In the afternoon we first met with prosecutor Michał Kurowski, who explained the national structures within the prosecuting authority responsible for handling human trafficking cases. Trafficking cases are complex from the perspective of prosecution, but Mr Kurowski stated that prosecutors and judges receive sufficient training on trafficking. Participants were intrigued by the role of judges in Poland in interviewing minors who have been victims of crimes such as trafficking, and this raised discussion. Next, Ms. Irena Dawid-Olczyk, the President of LaStrada Poland shared insights regarding latest trends and case examples that have come to their attention. She also discussed challenges in terms of awareness, investigation and prosecution of cases and attitudes. She highlighted e.g., the risks related to young people running away from institutions of care as a potential risk group for trafficking, and explained how the recent trend of recruitment of Latin American persons ending up in situations of forced labour in Poland. The final presentation of the day was given by Dr. Witold Jakimko who is a judge. He discussed the challenges related to the definition of human trafficking, in particular from the perspective of international joint investigations and judicial cooperation in situations when the national definitions of trafficking differ from each other. He proposed to revise the definition of trafficking by splitting it into smaller pieces, so as to make the crime easier to investigate, and ultimately hold more perpetrators accountable.



Picture 1. Participants in the operational exchange visit in Poland listen to the presentation by Ms. Magda Potentas from Police Headquarters

Second day

The second day of the operational exchange visit started with a discussion regarding reflections on the basis of the first day. Participants were intrigued by the many trends of trafficking in Poland, in particular the recruitment and modus operandi related to victims from Latin America. Also, the fact that relatively few victims of trafficking from Ukraine have so far been uncovered in Poland raised discussion. Participants mentioned that many of the mechanisms of exploitation and modus operandi relating to cases of trafficking in Poland seem similar in the participating countries. The cooperation in particular between the police and border guards was perceived as an interesting practice, as was the “algorithm” mentioned by law enforcement officials as a tool to identify potential victims of trafficking in Poland.

We then met with Professor Zbigniew Lasocik from the Human Trafficking Studies Center of the University of Warsaw, who gave a critical overview regarding the Polish approach to the fight against human trafficking and difficulties in defining forced labour. According to his analysis, the challenges are related to insufficient government interest in human trafficking, combined with a low level of general awareness, and a lack of research and media coverage. Next, we met with Ms Barbara Surdykowska of the Social Policy Team at the Solidarność Trade Union. She emphasised that there are two major groups who experience forced labour: Polish persons who become victims abroad, and this is often related to temporary work agencies, agricultural work and the meat industry; and secondly, people from other countries who become victims in Poland. She highlighted that there is overall an insufficient focus on labour migration in Poland, and that labour inspectors need a stronger mandate and more resources to strengthen their efforts against exploitation.

Dr. Marek Benio, Vice President of the European Labour Mobility Institute discussed challenges related to posting of third country nationals via Poland. Currently there are e.g., Polish agencies recruiting Filipino workers in Qatar and the Arab Emirates. The main problems related to posted workers relate mostly to third country nationals, who are the most vulnerable group among posted workers in Poland.

Lastly, we met with a representative of the Polish labour Inspectorate, Mr. Dariusz Górski, Director of the employment legality department who discussed the role of labour inspectors in controlling the use of undeclared work. He outlined the cooperation between labour inspectors and border guards, which is currently the only institution that carries out joint inspections with labour inspectors. Border guards control the legality of stay of foreign workers, while the labour inspectors control the legality of employment.



Picture 2. Participants in the operational exchange visit in Poland listen to the presentation by Mr. Dariusz Górski, Director of the employment legality department at the Polish labour Inspectorate

Finally, some concluding remarks were presented by HEUNI. The first day of the visit focused more on existing practices from the perspective of the authorities, while the second day presented more critical views by civil society and researchers. The various viewpoints provided participants in the operational exchange visit with a comprehensive picture of the Polish approach to human trafficking, including both good practices as well as challenges. Participants also voiced that they could identify with many of the challenges raised, and that there is much to learn, share and exchange in order to strengthen the national approach to combating human trafficking. The visit was perceived as very useful and fruitful.

10. Conclusions

THE AIM OF TASK 3.1. WAS to collect data on the latest human trafficking trends and to uncover more information regarding the differences and commonalities between the project countries and their overall trafficking situation.

Statistical information was collected in each country related to the criminal justice system as well as the organizations that offer assistance to victims of trafficking. Trafficking in human beings is largely a hidden form of criminality, and therefore the statistics are not representative of the actual prevalence of the crime, rather, they portray the number of identified cases in each country. They also show what form of trafficking and how much of it is detected. The number of identified cases in each country may be related to underlying conditions such as the awareness or prioritization of the authorities regarding trafficking criminality, but this cannot be deducted from this type of data only. Nevertheless, statistical information can help with the identification of most recent patterns and trends related to the phenomena of human trafficking.

In Finland, the number of cases of trafficking in human beings and its related crimes⁷⁶ reported to the police has increased significantly during 2017–2021, from 127 reported cases in 2017 to 205 cases in 2021. The situation in Estonia and Latvia is different. In Estonia, the number of police reports has fluctuated in recent years, showing no continuous increase or decrease. Between 2017 and 2021 the highest annual number of trafficking-related⁷⁷ cases in Estonia was 90 (in 2017) and the lowest 42 (in 2021). Similarly, the number of launched trafficking-related⁷⁸ criminal proceedings in Latvia has varied in 2017–2021, but overall is low, ranging from 12 cases in 2018 to 29 cases in 2017. The figures may suggest an upward trend in the authorities' capabilities to detect cases of trafficking and related crimes in Finland, however this seems not to be the case in Estonia and Latvia. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in place may have had direct impact on the statistics and identification of trafficking criminality in different countries. The number of court decisions on crimes related to trafficking has remained quite low in the countries observed.

The number of people admitted to the Finnish National Assistance System each year has grown during the period under examination, from 127 new clients in 2017 to 243 in 2021. Victim Support Finland, an NGO with its own special support service targeting victims of human trafficking, took on 221 new clients in 2021, while the total number of clients using their (trafficking-related) services was 675. In Estonia, 28 migrant victims of trafficking in 2020 and 29 in 2021 received assistance from the Social Insurance Board. More than 500 clients contacted the Estonian trafficking helpline in 2021. An increase in the number of clients of NGOs and service providers may suggest that victims of

⁷⁶ Finland: trafficking in human beings, aggravated trafficking in human beings, extortionate work discrimination, pandering, and aggravated pandering

⁷⁷ Estonia: trafficking in human beings, supporting human trafficking, aiding prostitution and pimping

⁷⁸ Latvia: trafficking in human beings, involvement in prostitution, pimping, sending a person for sexual exploitation

trafficking – as well as practitioners – are more aware of exploitation and from where to seek help. The Latvian data combines the numbers of identified trafficking victims from the State Police and two service providers (Centre MARTA and Shelter Safe House), showing an increase in figures, particularly from 2018 onwards: in 2018, 23 victims, and in 2021, 61 victims were identified.

Labour exploitation is the most common form of exploitation among the clients of the National Assistance System in Finland as well as among the clients of Victim Support Finland. Similarly, in Latvia, a clear majority of the identified victims were subjected to labour exploitation, as were most people receiving aid and counselling from the Social Insurance Board of Estonia. The situation in the three countries differs from most other European countries where the majority of identified victims have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This raises the question, whether trafficking for sexual exploitation is less common or less often detected in the countries examined.

Regarding Estonia, it was noted that over the past few years, based on the increase in long-term visa applications, a growing number of migrant workers from outside the EU have arrived in the country, which may also be reflected in the number of migrant labour exploitation victims seeking help. The statistics show that the trafficking situation has changed at least to a degree in Estonia and Latvia, as they used to be countries of origin for victims of trafficking, but now they are also becoming countries of destination and transit for victims originating from so-called third countries as well other EU-countries.

Statistics from each of the three countries shows signs of trends that differ from one another. In Finland, the number of cases of forced marriage has increased, and in 2021 it was the most common form of exploitation among women and girls admitted to the Assistance system. In contrast, in Latvia, the detection of what is categorized as sham marriages involving exploitation has decreased, and few victims have been identified in recent years. In Estonia, a clear decrease can be seen in the number of reports involving the trafficking of a minor, from 67 reports in 2017 to 16 reports in 2021, although it was still reported more often than trafficking involving adults (6 reports in 2021). There was little data available from the on-going year 2022 at the time of the data collection, so it was not possible to examine whether Ukrainians seeking refuge in the countries observed appear in any of the data related to exploitation.

The Polish and Ukrainian statistics were compiled by La Strada International, La Strada Poland and La Strada Ukraine. Polish and Ukrainian victims of trafficking and exploitation have been identified both within each country as well as abroad. Poland has also increasingly become a country of destination for labour migration and trafficking.

In Poland, the number of trafficking proceedings initiated by the Prosecutor's Office between 2017 and 2021 was at its highest in 2017 with 136 cases, whereas the numbers for 2020 and 2021 were 46 and 57 respectively. The number of police proceedings from the five previous years is at an even lower level, between 16 and 33 cases annually, which suggests that the number of prosecutions may follow suit and keep on declining. Potential reasons behind this include a lack of capacity and resources, and changes in the national structures.

It is also noteworthy that unlike in many other countries, in Poland the labour inspectorate has not identified any victims of trafficking in several years. The number of trafficking victims identified has fluctuated somewhat but does not seem to suggest a similar downward trend with e.g., 210 potential victims assisted in 2021 by the National Intervention–Consultation Center for Victims of Trafficking (KCIK). Polish nationals are mainly trafficked to Western and Northern Europe, whereas those trafficked to Poland originate from e.g., Eastern Europe and South America. No cases related to the exploitation of Ukrainian refugees have been identified in Poland, although anecdotal information from NGOs suggests that cases may be unfolded at a later stage.

In 2018, Ukrainians were the 9th largest nationality of trafficked victims in the EU with 162 identified victims, however comprising only 2% of the total number of identified victims in the EU. Ukrainian victims have been trafficked to e.g., Russia, Poland, Germany, China, Kazakhstan and the Middle East. Within Ukraine, the IOM assisted 1,680 trafficking victims in 2020, many of whom were returnees who had been exploited abroad. 97% of those assisted had been victims of labour exploitation. The number of cases investigated by the police has declined from 346 cases in 2017 to 203 and 222 cases in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Due to the pandemic and subsequent border closures and restrictions it was observed that more Ukrainians were trafficked within the country, both for the purpose of labour exploitation as well as online sexual exploitation.

As another trend, the demographics of Ukrainian victims have shifted to younger, more urban male victims exploited in forced labour and criminality: the number of cases of forced criminality in Ukraine is clearly higher than in the other countries observed, with 54 cases investigated in 2022. Awareness of the risks to Ukrainian refugees has been raised by stakeholders since the beginning of the war, and a key factor in the reduction of the risk of exploitation has been the activation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive.

The summary of the case study concerning the risks of exploitation and trafficking of Ukrainian refugees shows the complexity of the issue. Previous research has made it apparent that conflict is a driver and root cause of trafficking, and in particular women, children and persons belonging to minority groups are at risk of exploitation. However, it has been difficult to identify concrete cases of trafficking and exploitation, which would involve Ukrainian refugees and which would have taken place in 2022. Different authorities cannot of course discuss on-going investigations, but so far it seems that Ukrainian refugees have not been exploited at least to a large degree in Finland, Estonia or Latvia, nor Poland.

However, it is very important for authorities and different service providers to keep their eyes open also in the future and openly discuss the risks in various fora. It is also very important to disseminate information to Ukrainian refugees about their rights and obligations e.g. in the labour market, so that they would not accept work on any terms, end up in situations of exploitation and would know where to seek assistance if they end up having problems. This will help to lower the risks of exploitation and trafficking.

Ultimately, the analytical work undertaken in task 3.1. shows the importance of maintaining a situational picture of the trafficking criminality and modus operandi in use in different countries. The

features and types of exploitation are often the same, but the national context, priorities and awareness vary. Therefore, it is important to bring experts from different authorities and organisations from different countries together and to offer them opportunities to share their experiences and learn from one another about solutions they have developed to tackle challenges. This is something which we will take into account in developing the training component in work package 4.



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Annex 1

ELECT WP3 Operational Exchange Visit to Poland – Agenda

Venue: Hotel Mercure Warszawa Grand – Grand Krucza 28, 00-522 Warszawa, Poland

28 November – arrival of participants

29 November 2022

09.00 – 09.15 Welcome words by Ms. Anniina Jokinen from HEUNI and round of introduction of participants

09.15 – 12.15 Meetings with Polish experts involved in counter trafficking

- 9.15 – 10.15 Police: Ms. Magda Potentas, the Anti trafficking unit, Police headquarters
- 10.15 – 11.30 Border Guard representatives: Ms. Karolina Chmura & Mr. Sebastian Kras

Lunch 12.15 – 13.15

13.15 – 17.00 Meetings with Polish experts involved in counter trafficking continued

- 13.15 – 14.15 Prosecutors office: Mr. Michał Kurowski, Prosecutor
- 14.15 – 15.15 La Strada Poland, Ms. Irena Dawid-Olczyk, President

Coffee break 15.15 – 15.45

15.45 – 16.45 The Courts, Mr. Witold Jakimko, Judge

30 November 2022

09.30 – 10.15 Reflections on the basis of the first day and group discussion moderated by Ms Anniina Jokinen, HEUNI

10.15 – 10.30 Coffee break

10.30 – 12.45 Meetings with Polish experts involved in counter trafficking continued

- 10.30 – 11.15 Professor Zbigniew Lasocik, Human Trafficking Studies Center University of Warsaw.
- 11.15 – 12.00 Ms Barbara Surdykowska of the Social Policy Team at the Solidarność Trade Union
- 12.00-12.45 Mr. Marek Benio, Vice President of the European Labour Mobility Institute <https://labourinstitute.eu/>

12.45 –13.45 Lunch

13.45 – 14.45 Labour Inspectorate: Mr. Dariusz Górski, director of employment legality department

14.45 – 15.00 Reflections on the basis of the two days and concluding remarks by Dr Natalia Ollus, HEUNI.

15.00 Closing – end of the visit and departure of participants