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**UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN POLAND:  
PREVENTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

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The problem of human trafficking is considered the slavery of the 21st century. It is also often called «the slavery of our days», given that in both cases man is seen only as a tool or a thing. The victims of human trafficking most often become those people who want to avoid difficult living conditions at all costs and, for this purpose, often recklessly agree to leave their homeland, naively believing empty promises about a quick increase in their income level. As a result, many of them fall into difficult situations, become victims of merciless physical and moral exploitation, are forced to perform hard, unpaid work beyond their capabilities, and are also subjected to beatings, threats and humiliation. The problem of human trafficking has become a matter of concern for all civilized mankind. Despite the fact that more and more countries are joining their efforts in the fight against this phenomenon, modern slavery continues to be a harsh reality of our days. Although

there are no exact estimates today, various sources suggest that between two and a half to four million people are victims of human trafficking every year. According to various estimates, the annual profit made by criminals from human trafficking is measured in the billions of US dollars.

The war in Ukraine, and with it the flow of refugees abroad, caused threats related to human trafficking.

History teaches us that war unfortunately creates ideal conditions for human trafficking. Traffickers exploit these vulnerabilities by exploiting crisis situations through force, fraud or coercion for sexual exploitation. Human trafficking is perhaps one of the most pressing human rights issues of our time – and the war in Ukraine brings this issue to the fore.

Many of the traffickers are part of well-organized transnational organized crime syndicates, which, in addition to trafficking, are often involved in other criminal activities, such as drug and arms trafficking.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, more than seven million Ukrainians fled the war to neighboring countries. Most of them – to Poland. Among these people there are many women, children and elderly people.

According to the Polish police, human trafficking is the third most profitable crime in the world after arms and drugs. Poland, as a rule, is a transit territory through which criminals try to transport victims – most often from the countries of Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania) and Asia (Thailand, China) to the countries of Western Europe: Great Britain, Ireland or Germany.

The educational campaign «Safe in Poland» was recently launched here, as part of which, in particular, Ukrainian refugees are informed about safety measures: how not to become a victim of human trafficking, what parents should know about the safety of children and where to turn for help [1]. In connection with the wave of refugees from Ukraine, GRETA (Group of Experts on Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings), a body of the Council of Europe, issued a new instruction.

The instruction was taken into account by the Polish authorities. The instructions, in particular, state that in connection with the unprecedented movement of people forced to flee Ukraine since the beginning of the war, 90% of whom are women and children, non-governmental organizations and the media sounded the alarm due to suspicions of human trafficking [2].

In a new document, GRETA explains what European states can do to implement structural reforms quickly and without the need to provide immediate assistance to people fleeing Ukraine, as well as to identify potential victims and traffickers.

In particular, the recommendations emphasize the need to ensure proper registration of all persons, including those without documents confirming their identity or last place of residence in Ukraine, as well as to ensure the continuity of the registration system in transit and destination countries.

In order to prevent and deter crime, it is also recommended to increase the presence of specially trained law enforcement officers at checkpoints, railway stations and bus stations.

Equally important is the establishment of official and safe routes, including through humanitarian corridors that allow safe and legal entry and transit, free public transport or transport organized by trusted organizations funded by the state.

Appropriate screening and formal registration of all volunteers, individuals, organizations and private companies offering and providing assistance and promoting safe recruitment. Reception and accommodation points should be located in safe places. It is necessary to guarantee simplified and free access to medical services and psychological support for adults and children.

The recommendations state that clear information about the risks of human trafficking should be provided at all stages in different languages, including Ukrainian and Russian. In addition, 24-hour hotlines should be strengthened or established. Easily accessible information about labor rights and employment procedures in the host country should be provided, and the importance of an official employment contract drawn up in a language easily accessible to the employee should be emphasized.

Labor inspectors should strengthen supervision of high-risk sectors (such as hospitality and agriculture, couriers, food delivery, cleaning, home care, car washes, massage parlors), and early identification of new places where people fleeing war will Ukrainian work, and strengthen inspections there. In addition, as online human trafficking increases, police and labor inspectors should develop digital literacy, strengthen their online presence and systematically monitor the Internet, including by checking job offers and sex sites, to more effectively identify potential victims and human traffickers

In order to prevent the disappearance and abuse of children, GRETA recommends that all unaccompanied and separated children be registered and immediately put into effective protection measures, including safe and specialized housing, with trained staff and warnings about the risks of trafficking. Special checks are required if children are traveling with unrelated adults or if there are doubts about the relationship between the child and the accompanying adults [3].

Many victims of human trafficking do not know where to seek help, especially in unfamiliar countries. It is vital to have mechanisms for raising awareness, training and conducting quality information campaigns.

Data from Thomson Reuters show that since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the number of derogatory search terms of a sexual nature related to Ukrainian women has increased by 300%. According to the OSCE Special Representative on Human Trafficking, the demand for sexual exploitation of Ukrainian women is an incentive for human traffickers to recruit and exploit Ukrainian refugees on a large scale.

Social media is the main channel used by traffickers to search, lure and advertise. Forced to leave their homes, Ukrainian women, especially young women, should be as careful as possible in their contacts, in particular online – both with potential employers and with persons offering accommodation or transportation services.

Since August 2015, the Pomeranian Voivodeship Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings has been operating – appointed by the Order of the Pomeranian Voivode. The functioning of the Team is authorized by law, as defined in art. 22 point 15 of the Act of March 12, 2004. The team is an advisory and opinion-forming body of the Pomeranian Voivode in the field of coordinating, within the social assistance system, activities in the field of preventing trafficking in human beings, and support provided to the victims of this practice. It is also a platform for effective exchange of information on counteracting trafficking in human beings in the Pomeranian Voivodeship.

The main objective of the Team is to improve the organization of preventive activities, support and reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings, to stimulate the activity of local governments, foundations and associations, as well as to undertake activities aimed at raising public awareness of the practice of trafficking in human beings.

For seven years of operation, the Pomeranian Voivodeship Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings: conducted a number of information campaigns on safe trips abroad, using the experience of the Voivodeship Labor Office in Gdańsk, gathered in this regard, in particular on the functioning of legal employment agencies and the scope of services of Public Employment Services under EURES; created a network of links between institutions involved in the prevention of trafficking in human beings in order to improve support mechanisms and reintegration of victims of trafficking in human beings.

People who left Ukraine are in the zone of special interest of criminal organizations. Therefore, raising public awareness of this global problem, encouraging people to actively help and oppose this crime is a very important task today.

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