

Podcast Series: Forced Labor and Migration



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Protection of migrant workers in the EU and beyond

- Good afternoon!

- Thank you for the opportunity to talk about labor migrants in the region, whether companies respect their rights. May I ask you to share your views on the key issues and dangers for migrants that you face, perhaps that you are opposing, that you work with.

- Thanks for the questions! Good afternoon!

Ukraine, unfortunately, has always been a country of origin for victims of human trafficking, that is, we have a lot of cases when people, labor migrants go to work or to different countries. Over 20 years of experience, we have helped more than 19 thousand victims of human trafficking, that is, they left for more than 60 countries of the world. These may be different countries, countries that are looking for guest workers, but the situation is such that when people leave, they go to work, that is, they need to receive funds. They agree to travel on different routes, they are offered different conditions for employment.

But, unfortunately, the danger is near. Unfortunately, there are many people, companies, owners who use this and use our citizens. This is happening in different countries, and, unfortunately, this is also happening within the country, in Ukraine.

How can these problems be dealt with? How can they be overcome or at least mitigated? What can be done?

- Thank you. We work in different directions. That is, we provide assistance to such people, we protect their rights, we help them, if such a situation happened to them, we work preventively. We have various events, we work with law enforcement agencies. We cooperate with the state, that is, we help the state in this direction in order to overcome this situation.

We have a 5-27 hotline for safe travel and safe employment. People, when they call 5-27, they find out, for example, if people know what country they are going to and what company

is hiring them, then they can find out how to check this company. Is it safe or not, and what are the minimum safety rules to follow. For example, whether to give the passport to the employer, to whom to leave a copy of their documents, for example, to their close relatives, consular phone numbers. You need to know who in this country can help if something like this happens.

We already have cases where a person, an internally displaced person, moved and was offered free accommodation. She lived, lived, and later this person decided to use it, and says: "Listen, you live here for free, you can do something for me, for example, work in the garden or do something around the house. Perhaps even providing sexual services is different." There are such facts. And a person in this situation does not know what to do, because, firstly, he does not know where to return, if there is nowhere. She's desperate plus she's dependent on this person. Where to go if she has no money.

Unfortunately, such situations also happen abroad. That is, when free housing is provided, people live there for a while, and later they are told who you are by profession; for example, a builder. Okay, then you fix something for me and so on. That is, people do not understand that this is already the use of a vulnerable state, because a person cannot refuse.

Unfortunately, there are many employers taking advantage of this situation.

- Thank you for the examples and your work with law enforcement agencies, with the state, for this line at number 527. And who else can be involved in your opinion to counteract this situation? Perhaps some other state bodies, perhaps civil society, non-state institutions?

- Well, look, protection is everyone's responsibility. That is, the state, different institutions, different people, different businesses should be involved. It's all connected, there is no such thing that someone alone is to blame, exploits people. People do business, such as a farm or a factory. People hiring people should, in principle, even check who exactly they are recruiting and who is recruiting, because we had such cases when a person worked at a poultry farm in Ukraine, and the director of this factory knew that he had victims of human trafficking. I'm not sure who hired this man unofficially. That is, it is the responsibility of everyone to monitor, check the conditions in which people work, receive a salary or not.

People can go to a psychologist or medical facilities. Not all doctors know that there is such a state program in Ukraine and where exactly to turn if people, when they come to doctors or a psychologist, tell the information that happened. Then doctors or psychologists can also refer people for help.

People don't treat themselves very well now, especially when there is a war in the country. They have a low level of problem identification because they see other people suffering. They think that their misfortune is not as terrible as that of others, but this is also wrong, that is, if such a situation has happened, then the person needs to be helped, because if we do not help, this can lead to any consequences. Further, a person can close in on himself, a person can stop believing in people, a person will not be able to find a job, a person will not be able to support his family. Then after that, she can be aggressive towards her family. The consequences may be different.

- Thank you.