



# **The identification of victims of human trafficking in transit and destination countries in Europe**

A pocket guide for frontline workers



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## What is human trafficking?

**Human trafficking is one of the most serious human rights violations of our time and is a threat to adults and children across the world, with migrants being one of the most vulnerable groups.** People are held in exploitative situations by manipulation or use of violence, unaware of their rights and the support they are entitled to. It is critically important that you know how to recognise signs of human trafficking and what particular actions to take to assist trafficked people.

### Context

People who are trafficked were often subject to manipulation, fraud and abusive behaviour. This can often lead to having difficulty trusting and communicating with the support staff. When meeting and supporting potential victims of trafficking it is important to establish conditions and environment that will allow the persons to feel at ease and safe to disclose their experiences and current situation.

## Recommendations for conducting an interview with a potential victim

### Before the interview

- Prepare relevant referral information and possible pathway options
- Ensure the interview will be conducted in a safe and quiet space
- Ensure an interpreter is available if needed and explain her/his role to the victim
- Clearly and simply introduce yourself and explain your and your organization's role
- Explain basic and confidentiality principles
- Respond to immediate needs (i.e. emergency medical, physiological and psychological needs)

### During the interview

- Gather information about different elements of human trafficking (act, means, purpose)
- Point out different indicators (see verso)
- Take clear and detailed notes
- In case of disclosure, explain the procedures that will follow

**Note: To avoid re-traumatization, do not over question the person and do not raise expectations that you cannot fulfil.**

Due to confidentiality principle and the voluntary nature of our assistance, **no measures of assistance and protection should be undertaken without the individual's informed consent.** We should encourage and empower people to contact relevant state institutions and non-governmental organizations, but it is up to them to decide whether they wish to accept the programme of assistance and protection and to initiate further contact with you. Should they decline the support offered then their decision must be respected.

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### **Important**

**Be careful not to endanger yourself or others. Inform the police if you or the potential victim are in immediate danger.**

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Recognizing and identifying potential victims of trafficking is possible during any part of the migration process. Frontline staff has an obligation and a unique position to observe and report signs of human trafficking encountered in their daily work with beneficiaries. Your role is not to formally identify victims of trafficking but to recognize or spot certain signs that may indicate a potential case. **The formal identification is a duty of the police.**

Not all indicators will be present in each case of human trafficking and their presence or absence is not sufficient evidence to indicate exploitative situation. If you notice some of the signs, make sure to raise your concerns and follow the established procedures.

Asking certain questions can help to determine whether or not someone may be a victim of trafficking. In the table below, there are some simple questions which will help you to spot indicators of trafficking.

## Indicators and guiding questions

### Migration experience

#### Indicators

- Remains in a transit country for a long time (Libya, Turkey, Italy, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Serbia, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Has unrealistic or false expectations about life in the country of destination, has been deceived by false promises
- Inconsistencies in the description of the migratory journey, blanks in the story, lack of awareness of the travel route from place of origin to destination
- Changing her/his migration story, evasiveness, denial, minimizing the situation, telling exactly the same story as other migrants from the same area
- Significant debt to smugglers, the debt is higher than initially agreed or increases with time
- Not knowing what country they are in

#### Guiding questions

- Why and how did you leave your country?
- What happened since you left your country?
- What other countries did you cross before arriving here?
- Did you choose/know your destination?
- How did you get to this country?
- Has anyone taken and kept your personal documents such as I.D. card or passport?
- How did you pay for the travel costs?
- Who arranged your travel?
- What did you expect before you came here?
- Were you deceived about your living conditions or about a job here?

## Daily life linked to exploitation

### Indicators

- Lifestyle contrasting with their social situation: expensive phone or belongings, dresses above their financial resources
- Person often leaves the accommodation in different cars or with different people, or is unable to leave her/his workplace
- Offset rhythm of life: sleep schedule, punctuality at appointment and/or missed appointment, repeated and unjustified absences, etc., resulting in fatigue and concentration problems
- Has a lot of money in cash
- Does not appear to worry or ask questions about accommodation solutions
- Is present in a place commonly known to be a place of exploitation
- Regularly changes housing
- Neighbourhood (or guardian) complaining, for instance about noise, too many people visiting or any other element that could indicate sex work or suspicion of criminal activities
- Receives social benefits or payments but is told to hand it over to another person and/or does not have access to the benefits him/herself

### Guiding questions

- Have you ever seen a doctor here?
- Do you have any particular health problems?
- What are your means of subsistence here?
- Do you work? If yes, do you have any days off?
- Have you agreed with your employer on your working hours? Are you forced to work for more hours than initially agreed? Do you have somewhere to sleep?
- Who provides you with accommodation? Do you live with other people?
- Do you have your own private space to sleep?
- Do you know your address?
- Do you know any places here (organisations, doctors, shop, etc.)?
- Do you know anyone here?
- Do you have any information about your rights here?
- Does someone prevent you from going to organizations or social services?

## Means of control used by traffickers

### Indicators

- Always accompanied by a person or a group, reluctant to one-to-one interviews (for minors, permanent accompaniment by adults and prohibition to speak to unknown adults)
- Signs of control by another person (limited freedom of movement, someone else possesses the person's personal documents or s/he has been given false documents)
- It seems that the person previously received instructions on what to say
- Incessant phone calls, owns multiple phones
- Cannot speak alone and freely, always is accompanied by someone who speaks on their behalf
- Seems to be engaged in an unhealthy or abusive relationship with her/his partner
- Is told to sign a contract with companies that provide services (financial, telecommunications services) or offer goods (car, mobile phones etc.), is forced to hand it over to another person, and does not benefit from these services or goods

### Guiding questions

- Were you forced by someone to perform certain tasks or offer services against your will?
- Has anyone threatened you or your family if you try to leave or if you disclose about your work? Have you been injured in any way?
- Do you have access to the money you earn? Is it used to repay a debt?
- Do you have a mobile phone? Who has bought the SIM card? Can you change the SIM card whenever you want?
- Are you allowed to go out by yourself or talk to other persons? If yes, are there any conditions? Can other people visit your workplace or is the access restricted?
- Are the doors and windows locked so you are unable to leave by yourself from the place you work/live?
- Are you hosted by someone? If yes, are there any conditions? Have you been deprived of food, water, or sleep? Do you have to ask for permission to eat, drink, sleep or go to the bathroom?

## Observable signs

### Indicators

- Hyper vigilant/suspicious
- Extreme and/or inappropriate behaviour with others
- Shortens interactions and appointments, and shows distrust in authorities
- Attitude of avoidance: looks away, avoids authorities and does not want to report any violation committed against her/him
- Shows signs that her/his movements are being watched, constantly looks at someone who seems to be watching her/him
- Addictions to various substances
- Negative feelings affecting her/his behaviour (anxious, frightened, isolated, ashamed, hopeless, guilty) and reluctant to talk about it
- Signs of visible injuries (bruises, cuts, burns, specific tattoos, work related injuries etc.) without previous access to medical care to treat them, reluctant or unable to explain how s/he had been hurt

### Guiding questions

- How do you sleep?
- Do you get easily angry/Does your mood change often?
- Do you need alcohol or other substances to get through the day?
- Is anybody making you feel scared?



## Closing and taking further steps

As a frontline worker your role is not to determine whether a person is a victim of human trafficking. Your role is to report your suspicion through the established procedures and to provide support to the individual upon their consent.

- In case of disclosure, ask if you are the first person to hear this information. If not, see whether the victim is being assisted by any other organizations or agencies
- Inform the person of her/his rights and explain other services that can provide relevant support
- Ask the person if she/he wants to report to the police. If yes, offer your support to do so
- Ensure (preferably written) informed consent for future actions
- Agree on how you will stay in contact
- Follow internal procedures for your organization (i.e. inform your manager/ human trafficking focal point)
- With informed consent, refer the person to relevant specialized service providers
- If your organization provides an assistance programme, appoint a caseworker

**Notes**

**Notes**

This document serves as an extension to  
'The Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking  
in Transit and Destination Countries in Europe –  
A Practical Guideline for Frontline Workers'

Cover photo: Calais camps, 2015 © Sonia Kerlidou.