

Severe labour exploitation of migrant workers: FRA report calls for 'zero tolerance' of severe labour exploitation

Many exploited workers are often invisible. But the workers' perspectives in FRA's report '[Protecting migrant workers from exploitation in the EU](#)' show how their exploitation contributes to the supply chains of the everyday goods and services we take for granted – from the food on our plates, to the shirts on our backs.

The report reveals that over half of the workers found their jobs by word of mouth but ended up in 'concentration camp conditions' where 'they keep us like dogs, like slaves'.

FRA researchers found that some of the EU's exploited migrant workers are:

- paid as little as €5-a-day;
- forced to pay debts to traffickers before earning a cent;
- working 92-hour, seven-day weeks, with no holiday or time off;
- sleeping in shipping containers, with no water or electricity;
- monitored on CCTV 24/7 by bosses;
- subjected to beatings, verbal abuse and threats of further violence;
- given no protective clothing to work with hazardous chemicals;
- face sexual and gender-based violence or forced into moving drugs;
- threatened of dismissal and deportation when they ask for their wages.

The report outlines 13 actions for EU institutions and Member States to end exploitation:

1. End fraudulent or deceptive recruitment practices.
2. Work with Europol, internet service providers and social media to tackle recruitment websites used by traffickers and exploitative employers.
3. Enforce labour laws to protect migrant workers' rights on pay, conditions and hours.
4. All EU Member States, which have not yet done so, should ratify the International Labour Organization's decent work for domestic workers Convention and include domestic workers in national laws resulting from the EU's Working Time Directive.
5. Ensure all workers, including seasonal and posted workers, have adequate living standards and fair rental agreements and that the rent is not automatically deducted from the wage, when accommodation is provided by the employer.
6. Build labour exploitation into the EU's Occupational Safety and Health Strategic Framework by 2020.
7. Include domestic workers in the EU's Safety and Health at Work Directive.

8. Enable law, inspection and monitoring bodies to identify and tackle labour exploitation through training and sufficient resources.
9. Develop regulated and targeted labour migration programmes to fill labour market shortages.
10. Reduce workers' dependency on employers, by issuing residence permits or visas not tied to a single employer, for example.
11. Enable seasonal workers to freely change employers more than once, under the EU's Seasonal Workers Directive.
12. Inform workers of their rights in a language they understand.
13. Make specialised support services available to all victims of crime, including victims of severe labour exploitation. This includes ensuring organisations supporting trafficking victims also cover victims of labour exploitation.

FRA Director [Michael O'Flaherty](#) says: *"This report shows how exploitation often starts with false promises and fraud, describes the extreme conditions the exploited workers endure, and identifies what facilitate exploitation. But it also outlines what can be done to help exploited workers access justice.*

"We hope that our focus on this issue encourages the responsible national authorities, as well as social partners, to recognise the reality of severe labour exploitation, and to take the steps necessary to create a climate of 'zero tolerance'."

Editor's notes

The report draws on face-to-face and focus group interviews with 237 adult workers who have been victims of severe labour exploitation between 2013 and 2017. It focuses on Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the UK.

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