



ILO 2012 Global Estimate of Forced Labour

Regional Factsheet

European Union

880,000 persons in forced labour

1.8 per 1,000 inhabitants

Out of the total number of 880,000 forced labourers in European Union Member States, 270,000 (30%) are estimated to be victims of forced sexual exploitation, and 610,000 (70%) are victims of forced labour exploitation. Women constitute the clear majority of victims (58%)¹.

The majority of cases of forced labour exploitation reported in EU Member States included EU citizens, who had migrated from one Member State to another. Other victims came from Asia, Africa and Central and South-Eastern Europe. They were exploited in a range of industries and economic sectors, however, domestic work, agriculture, manufacturing and construction were cited most frequently. Cases of forced domestic workers were identified in almost all Western European countries. Adults and children were also forced into illicit or informal economic activities, including begging. Victims of forced sexual exploitation came primarily from the European Union, Central and South-Eastern Europe, Africa, and to a lesser extent Latin America and Asia.

These findings are consistent with the 2009 UNODC report on Trafficking in Persons, which covered 38 European countries and territories and with the 2011 IOM analysis of data on assisted victims in Europe². Both organizations reported a clear majority of women victims, as well as a majority of victims in labour exploitation, although they reflect a slightly lower percentage than the ILO estimate. This can be explained by the important number of male labour migrants who tend not to report forced labour incidences to authorities or NGOs, or if they do, are not normally categorized by national authorities as human trafficking victims. They are included in the ILO estimate but do not appear in statistics of identified or assisted victims.

¹ Figures are extrapolated based on a capture-recapture methodology. For further information see: ILO, Global Estimate of Forced Labour: Results and methodology, 2012. Forced labour can also amount to human trafficking and slavery-like practices, which are similar but not identical terms in a legal sense.

² UNODC (2009), Trafficking in Persons: Analysis on Europe. UN.GIFT, Vienna 2009. IOM (2012), IOM 2011 Case Data on Human Trafficking: global figures & trends.



Spotlight on the forced begging of children

A specific type of forced labour which is prevalent in EU Member States is that of forced begging. ILO research into the region has found that it largely involves children from Romania, Albania and Kosovo, who are forced to beg in EU countries.

Children from vulnerable and extremely poor social and economic backgrounds (for example Roma or rural dwellers) are abducted, sold by family members to third parties, or forced by their own families into begging, stealing, and other illicit activities. Many are beaten for disobedience, threatened, psychologically abused or starved if they do not bring in a certain quota of money. They are unable to seek help because they may not know the language or the country, or they are reluctant to report their circumstances because their trafficker tends to be someone they know.

Unlike other types of forced labour, it is difficult to obtain detailed accounts of recruitment mechanisms, and methods of exit from forced begging. This is mostly due to the fact that forced begging is still poorly studied and registered.

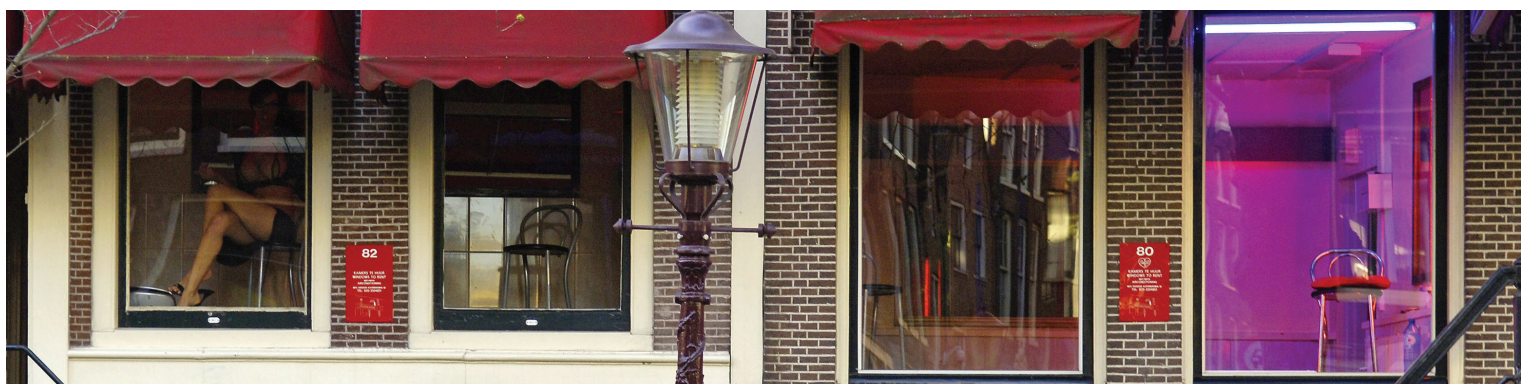
Spotlight on agriculture

Agriculture is another sector with a high incidence of forced labour. Farmers in the EU frequently recruit workers in neighbouring countries at much lower cost; hence many victims come from Central and South-Eastern Europe or Africa. Cases of Portuguese victims who have been lured into Spain and forced to work in agriculture under highly abusive conditions were also detected. In all instances, they are offered well-paid jobs but many end up being threatened, unpaid, poorly fed and abused.



Recruitment into forced prostitution

Women victims from South-Eastern Europe and Africa are deceptively recruited by acquaintances with false offers of employment in the EU. Once they arrive, they are threatened and beaten and then coerced into prostitution. A large number of victims are being assisted by clients and released by the police. Victims from Asia Pacific pay steep recruitment fees (by selling land or asking for loans) to agencies or 'snakeheads' in order to secure employment. They end up in forced prostitution in brothels or locked apartments and are saddled by insurmountable debt back home. Many victims are moved from country to country and some end up being re-victimised after they escape.



Responses and ILO activities

Given its mandate to promote decent jobs for all, ILO seeks to address trafficking for forced labour from a supply and demand side. At the supply side, ILO works with governments, workers and employers' organizations and business to promote ethical recruitment standards. ILO has various means at its disposal to address the vulnerability of certain groups of workers, such as through skills training, employment promotion and legal literacy programmes. A key aspect of ILO's work is to support the organization and empowerment of workers, including migrant workers, to ensure that their voice is being heard and that they have access to remedies. Across Europe, in source and destination countries, ILO has worked in partnership with national labour inspectorates to enhance identification and investigation of forced labour cases and abusive recruitment practices. Through its wide network of employers and business, ILO promotes the elimination of forced labour across global supply chains. European business has a key role to play in the prevention of forced labour within EU member States and in countries from which they source goods and labour. ILO conventions offer standards and guidance on the elimination of forced labour and trafficking. ILO Forced Labour Convention, No. 29, requires Member States to make forced labour a penal offence. ILO Convention No. 182 urges Member States to take immediate action against the worst forms of child labour, including the forced begging of children. Both conventions have been ratified by all EU Member States.

On April 2011, the European Parliament and Council adopted the European Union Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The Directive sets common standards to prosecute all forms of trafficking, protect victims, with due regard to the special needs of children, and prevent trafficking through a wide range of measures. ILO worked closely with other UN agencies to develop a commentary on the Directive which puts human rights at the centre of anti-trafficking work.



Contact details

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Websites and Multimedia

ILO Special Programme to combat Forced Labour
www.ilo.org/forcedlabour

EU anti-trafficking website
<http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking>

Useful resources

Joint UN Commentary on the EU Directive – A Human Rights Based Approach, 2011

ILO: Hard to see, harder to count. Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children, 2012

ITUC Guide: Never work alone: trade unions and NGOs joining forces to combat Forced Labour and Trafficking in Europe, 2011 (in cooperation with Anti-Slavery International)

ILO: Combating Forced Labour. A Handbook for Employers and Business, 2008



ILO Special Action Programme to combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL)

Programme for the Promotion of the Declaration
on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

4, route des Morillons
1211 Geneva - Switzerland