



**FOR A BETTER PROTECTION
AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS
OF ALL PERSONS
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS
OSCE - Vienna/ Austria - 6 April 2022**

- People who can fall victim to human trafficking have **various profiles**. Millions of them are now seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine. Today it is necessary to be concerned about all the people at risk of exploitation and trafficking, and all the minors at risk of disappearing.

What is being put in place in the framework of the Ukrainian crisis must make it possible to improve the prevention and the fight against human trafficking in a sustainable way by focusing on all victims of exploitation of all forms: sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced labour, domestic slavery, forced begging, being forced to commit crimes...

- The European Union and in particular France, which currently holds the rotating presidency, must ensure that international law is respected by guaranteeing that Ukrainians, as well as the many foreigners who study or work there and are refugees, will obtain protection in the countries of the European Union.

This protection must not exclude other asylum seekers and refugees already present in France who are not Ukrainian nationals.

- To date, in France, there is **no national telephone line** dedicated to human trafficking available 24/7

Giving more resources to existing systems or creating additional ones would facilitate the identification of victims and allow for better orientation towards specialised structures throughout the country.

- **Citizen accommodation** is favoured by the authorities to deal with the influx of migrants. Internet platforms have been set up to facilitate contact between individuals and people seeking accommodation. These connections **can cause difficulties**: both for the **host families**, who find themselves accompanying the people they are hosting in their administrative procedures, all too often, without professional help; and for **the people hosted**, who can fall victim to ill-intentioned citizens and be subjected to human trafficking.

We are asking for more resources for charities that promote the supervision of hostels in order to provide professional support and increased security

- Faced with the crisis situation, **immediate responses are necessary, the internet and social networks** are precious spaces for information, exchange and mutual aid, but they are also spaces with a high risk of false information and recruitment by ill-intentioned people, taking advantage of the crisis and the distress of adults and children.

We recall the need to inform people at risk of the dangers existing on the internet and social networks. We recall the responsibility of sites and platforms to monitor and report proposed content that endangers or involves children.

- **Hotel accommodation** can be a place of **risk** for refugees. There are various points of vigilance: the presence of pimps in the vicinity of hotels, requests from hoteliers to help with household chores, acts of sexual exploitation suspected by hotel staff but not reported.

We call for hotel staff to be made aware of the problems of human trafficking and for the conditions under which refugees are received in hotels to be monitored more closely.

- The **health** of refugees is a major concern, both physically, given the context of violence, the conditions of departure and travel, and psychologically. We know that psychological fragility and exposure to a highly traumatic environment alter people's ability to discern and risk putting them in a state of psychological distress thus making them vulnerable to situations of exploitation.

It is important that psychological support by trained professionals is systematically offered as well as responses to primary needs (accommodation, food, medical care). We know that offering a place to listen and talk to vulnerable people has a preventive and capacity-building dimension in the face of potential future situations of violence. To this end, it is necessary to systematically refer child victims to multidisciplinary structures that can receive the child, listen to what he or she has to say and provide medical and psychological care.

- According to government figures, 36,000 Ukrainians arrived in France on 2 April 2022. This rapid increase has led to the setting up of several **reception points by institutions with charities**. This is the case at the Gare de l'Est and Gare du Nord in Paris, or at Beauvais airport, for example. They provide **refugees with administrative, human and medical care, as well as help in finding accommodation**. However, these places are also the favourite haunts of ill-intentioned people and even exploitation networks that abuse the vulnerabilities of refugees.

Therefore, we are seeking financial support to carry out awareness-raising activities on the fight against human trafficking among carers in these reception points. It is necessary that volunteers and professionals in direct contact with Ukrainian migrants upon their arrival in France can, with the help of adequate means, warn them about the risks linked to exploitation.

At the same time, it is important that the people who monitor them over time can use **indicators to identify potential victims and direct them to specialised charities**. We would like to draw your attention to the organisation and expertise of these human trafficking networks, whose existence and modus operandi are often unknown.

The authorities, institutions and associations involved in the reception of refugees must provide a coordinated, fluid and secure response in providing shelter to victims or potential victims.

- The current shortage of candidates for jobs as housekeepers, or personal assistants, in catering, company cleaning, textiles, agriculture, etc., gives rise to fears that some people are taking advantage of the **vulnerability of people fleeing Ukraine and looking for work**.

It is important to raise awareness and inform exiles about their right to work, to health and to accommodation. A better knowledge of the French system and how it works helps to avoid the risks of exploitation. Give them the tools to identify for themselves what is legal and what is not (What is an employment contract? What is health insurance? What are the procedures and structures for accessing them?)

Make people aware that it is illegal to force someone to sell sexual acts. Publicise the sexual and gender-based violence hotlines and other emergency numbers and provide the financial possibility for these hotlines to use translators in Ukrainian and Russian.

- The majority of refugees currently fleeing the conflict are **women and children**. Their protection must be a real concern. While the many outpourings of solidarity and generosity are to be welcomed, getting into

a strangers car or staying in a house with a stranger creates risks, especially for women and girls travelling alone, not speaking the language of the host country. These women and girls arrive exhausted and disoriented, they are far from their loved ones, so sexual exploitation is a real danger.

There is an urgent need for solid protection and coordinated services to accompany Ukrainian refugees, as with all refugees, especially women. It should be added that Eastern European sexual exploitation networks based in France are very active and organised.

- **The sexual exploitation of minors** has increased drastically over the last few years in France. We note in particular that the ASE does not have enough means to ensure the protection of sexually exploited minors, and to prevent the recruitment that can be made within reception and accommodation structures. The influx and vulnerability of new unaccompanied minors from Ukraine may fuel this phenomenon.

The fight against the sexual exploitation of minors must be considered a real point of vigilance. This is all the more true as escorting and the phenomenon of prostitution make it difficult to identify and refer victims.

It is therefore important to inform minors that coercing them into paid sexual acts is prohibited by French law.

It is also important to let them know that there are free family planning and education centres where they can be listened to and obtain care and advice for their health.

- Ukraine allows **surrogate motherhood, GPA**. During the COVID-19 health crisis, many babies were stranded in the country and, even after the restrictions were eased, dozens of babies were not reclaimed by the intended parents. A similar fate could befall babies born in this month or in the coming months. Women in distress may decide to become surrogate mothers, with the risk of having to leave the country at any moment by fleeing to a third country and falling prey to other forms of exploitation, if they have no economic resources to rely on. Ukrainian law provides that the birth certificate of children born to surrogate mothers shall indicate the intended parents as parents. Thus there is a high risk that children born under these conditions will be deprived of the fundamental right of every child to have an identity. This dramatic situation highlights the worrying aspects of the regulatory framework of surrogate motherhood in some countries, of the issue from a transnational perspective, with regard to the protection of children and the risks of trafficking.

The public, and couples in particular, should be informed of the realities of surrogacy /surrogate motherhood and the risks involved: placement in an orphanage if the intended parents / clients of surrogacy agencies change their plans. For children placed in orphanages, there is a consequent risk of neglect, sale with a high risk of exploitation (e.g. sexual exploitation, domestic exploitation, removal and sale of organs, etc.); for surrogate mothers: if the intended parents decide that they no longer want the child, they may be obliged to have an abortion and, if they do not do so, may have to return payments; they may not be able to flee from a dangerous place before giving birth under current legislation, children born through surrogacy are extremely vulnerable and unprotected from birth. The financial dimension of surrogate motherhood and the commercial practices of specialised agencies should be more closely monitored and known by couples engaging in this process. Ukrainian women refugees in France must be informed of the prohibition of surrogate motherhood in France to prevent them from being solicited for this purpose.

**Members of the Collective «Ensemble contre la traite des êtres humains»
(Together against trafficking in human beings):**

Action Catholique des Femmes, AFJ, Agir Contre la Prostitution des Enfants, Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme, Amicale du Nid, Armée du Salut, Association pour la Réadaptation Sociale, Aux Captifs la libération, Comité Contre l'Esclavage Moderne, Comité Protestant évangélique pour la Dignité Humaine, Congrégation Notre Dame de Charité du Bon Pasteur, Conseil Français des Associations pour les Droits de l'Enfant, ECPAT France, Fédération des Acteurs de la solidarité (FAS), Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante, Espoir CFDJ-Service Jeunes errants, Fondation Jean et Jeanne Scelles, Hors la rue, Justice et Paix France, Koutcha, La Cimade, La Voix de l'enfant, Les Champs de Booz, Mouvement du Nid, Organisation Internationale Contre l'Esclavage Moderne, Planète Enfants et Développement, SOS Esclaves, and Secours Catholique Caritas France which is co-ordinating the Collective.

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