

2024

HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT



Ministry of the Interior and Administration
Republic of Poland

Department for Public Order

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1. Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the human trafficking phenomenon in Poland in 2024, summarises actions taken by state institutions, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations, and identifies key challenges in the area of counteracting this practice. The document is a continuation of annual reports prepared by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration documenting Poland's efforts in combating human trafficking, protecting victims and building an effective prevention system.

2024 brought both a continuation of earlier challenges and new developments in the area of human trafficking. The long-running armed conflict in Ukraine continued to affect the migration landscape in the region, although the inflow of refugees has stabilised compared to 2022–2023. At the same time, a significant increase in the number of migrants from Latin American countries was observed, posing new challenges for Polish services related to identifying and supporting victims coming from remote geographical and cultural regions.

Poland, due to its geopolitical location and membership of the European Union, remains a complex country in the context of human trafficking - it is simultaneously a country of origin, transit and destination for victims of this practice. This multidimensional nature of the phenomenon requires a comprehensive approach, taking into account both the protection of Polish citizens from exploitation abroad and the provision of effective assistance to foreigners victimised in the territory of Poland.

According to the data provided by the National Public Prosecutor's Office, 316 victims of human trafficking were recorded in 2024. The victims were predominantly citizens of Colombia, Poland, Ukraine, Venezuela and other Latin American countries. The analysis of the forms of exploitation shows the continuing prevalence of forced labour as the main form of exploitation of human trafficking victims in Poland. This phenomenon mainly affected foreigners employed in sectors such as agriculture, construction, food industry and services. 2024 has been marked by perpetrators using increasingly sophisticated recruitment methods, often involving social media and fake job offers posted online.

In response to the challenges identified, Polish institutions have undertaken a number of coordinated actions. The key achievement was the adoption of a document entitled the *National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking* by the Inter-Ministerial Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings. This mechanism lays the foundation for cooperation between various actors involved in counteracting human trafficking, precisely defining the criteria for identification of victims and the procedures to be followed.



The establishment of a working group in November 2024 to draft the Act on counteracting and combating human trafficking was an equally significant step. This initiative stems from the need to develop comprehensive legislation that will integrate the currently fragmented regulations and create a coherent system for countering this crime. Work on the act is also aimed at implementing Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council, with a deadline for implementation in July 2026.

The National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking (KCIK) remains the central element of the support system for victims of human trafficking, having provided assistance to 289 beneficiaries in 2024. The centre provided not only shelter and basic life support, but also comprehensive psychological, legal and reintegration assistance, tailored to the individual needs of each victim.

This report is intended to serve as a source of information for decision-makers, practitioners, researchers, the media and the general public, as well as to encourage further discussion and mobilise resources for more effective protection of potential victims. Understanding the multidimensional nature of human trafficking, its underlying causes, manifestations and consequences is the first step towards combating it effectively.

1.1 The global and European context of the human trafficking phenomenon and new trends in 2024

Human trafficking is a global phenomenon, generating huge profits for organised crime groups. It is estimated to be the third most profitable illegal business worldwide, following trafficking in arms and drugs. Global trends are driven by the complex interaction of economic, social, political and environmental factors.

Main drivers of trafficking in human beings

- **Poverty and social inequalities**

A lack of economic prospects, high unemployment and social inequalities in many regions of the world expose people to false promises of a better life and the traps set by human traffickers.

- **Armed conflicts and humanitarian crises**

Wars, violence and political instability result in massive population movements. Refugees and internally displaced persons, deprived of protection and livelihoods, become easy targets for traffickers. The war in Ukraine is a tragic example of this trend, increasing the risk of human trafficking for the Ukrainian population.

- **Globalisation and migration**

The increased mobility of people worldwide, both legal and irregular, creates new opportunities for criminals. Migrants, especially those with irregular status, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

- **Demand for low-cost services and products**

Demand for cheap labour in various sectors of the economy (agriculture, construction, textile industry, household services) and for sexual services is a driver of human trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation.

- **Climate changes and natural disasters**

Environmental degradation and natural disasters can lead to displacement and poverty, increasing the vulnerability of affected communities to human trafficking.

Global Forms of Exploitation

Similar to Europe, two main forms of trafficking in human beings prevail worldwide: sexual exploitation and forced labour. However, depending on the region, specific forms may occur, such as trafficking in children for recruitment into armed groups, forced marriage, human organ trafficking or forced begging.

The Role of the Internet and New Technologies Worldwide

The Internet and digital technologies have revolutionised the modus operandi of traffickers around the world. Social media platforms, dating apps, instant messaging services and online fora are used to initiate contact with potential victims, seduce and blackmail them, as well as to organise transport,

control and sale. Cryptocurrencies and the Darknet ensure anonymity for criminals and facilitate money transfers.

Social media have fundamentally changed the way human traffickers operate. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp have become major recruitment tools, replacing traditional face-to-face methods.

Criminals use a range of manipulative techniques tailored to the specific nature of each platform, e.g:

- Facebook - creating fake profiles of employment agencies, migrant support groups,
- Instagram - showcasing luxury lifestyle, modelling promises,
- TikTok - short videos showing the “success” in a new country, viral job offers,
- WhatsApp - direct contact, building trust, sending “documents”.

Cyber scamming, i.e. forcing victims of human trafficking to engage in online fraud, is the fastest growing form of exploitation within human trafficking worldwide. According to the 2024 UN report, more than 200,000 people are forced to commit online fraud in South-East Asia alone. This phenomenon has intensified dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic, when organised crime groups, deprived of income from closed casinos, reoriented their activities towards cybercrime.

Victims are attracted by fake job offers in the IT industry, promising attractive wages and relocation opportunities. Upon arrival in the destination country, their documents are seized and they are forced to work in specialised centres, where they engage in online fraud for 12-16 hours a day. The most common forms include romance scams, fake cryptocurrency investments and phishing.

Poland in the Context of the European and Global Trends in Human Trafficking

Due to its geopolitical location, history of transformation and membership of the European Union, Poland a specific role in the European and global human trafficking system. It is simultaneously the country of origin, transit and destination for victims of this crime.

Poland as a destination

- Forced labour as the prevailing form

In Poland, unlike the EU average, where sexual exploitation is slightly more common, forced labour is the most frequently identified form of human trafficking. This form of exploitation affects both Polish citizens and foreigners. In 2024, the National Public Prosecutor's Office recorded 223 victims of forced labour among 316 total identified victims.

- Countries of origin of victims exploited for forced labour

For several years, a steady flow of forced labour victims from Latin American countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Mexico, Peru and Argentina has been recorded. These victims are often recruited by dishonest employment agencies via the Internet and social media. Despite the introduction of a visa requirement for Colombian citizens arriving for employment purposes (from 15 August 2024), the trend of exploiting them for forced labour continues, and the regulations are sometimes circumvented, for example, by arrival for educational or tourist purposes. In 2024, an increase was also recorded in identifying victims of human trafficking for forced labour from the countries of Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) and Turkey. Employers in

Poland are increasingly looking for workers from distant Asian countries such as India, Nepal, the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which may also generate risk.

- Highest risk sectors

Victims of forced labour are most often exploited in sectors such as meat processing, agriculture (vegetable cultivation), sawmills, clothing sorting, construction and transport.

- Sexual and other forms of abuse

Although forced labour prevails, victims of sexual exploitation (in 2024, National Prosecutor's Office: 39 victims) and other forms such as forced begging are also identified in Poland (mainly Russian, Moldovan, Romanian citizens, persons of Roma origin, often with visible disabilities).

Poland as the Country of Victims' Origin

Polish citizens are also victims of human trafficking, recruited for forced labour, begging or prostitution abroad. In 2024, the National Public Prosecutor's Office identified 72 Polish victims. In 2023, a considerable number of Polish victims was recorded (680 according to the National Public Prosecutor's Office) in connection with cases involving coercion to extort social benefits in the United Kingdom, which shows that Poles may be the target of various forms of exploitation.

Poland as a Transit Country

Due to its geographical location, Poland is also a transit country for victims of human trafficking moving from Eastern Europe and Asia to Western European and Scandinavian countries. Identification and providing assistance of these victims is particularly difficult as they often do not perceive themselves as victims and their priority is to reach their destination country.

Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022 has caused an influx of millions of refugees into Poland, creating an increased risk of human trafficking, particularly among women and children. Poland has taken a number of preventive and legislative measures, including stricter penalties for human trafficking in the context of conflict and information campaigns targeting refugees. In 2024, Ukrainian victims of human trafficking continued to be identified in Poland (46 people according to the National Prosecutor's Office).

Summing up, in 2024, Poland was in the centre of complex migration processes and dynamically changing trends in human trafficking, both at a European level and globally. The actions taken by Polish institutions and non-governmental organisations sought to respond to these challenges by adapting the legal framework, strengthening preventive and operational measures, and developing international cooperation. However, effective combating of this crime requires constant vigilance, flexibility and commitment from all parties involved.

2. Organisation of the anti-human trafficking system in Poland

2.1. National Action Plan



The National Action Plan against Human Trafficking (hereinafter referred to as NAP) is a main document describing how the system for combating and preventing human trafficking in Poland works. It is a government document adopted by the Council of Ministers, which obliges its addressees to perform certain tasks in order to counteract human trafficking. The addressees of NAP are individual units of the central administration and other institutions and NGOs that are voluntarily involved in anti-human trafficking activities in Poland. NAP's main goal is to provide conditions necessary to effectively counter human trafficking in Poland and support the victims of this crime. In this context, the detailed objectives of the NAP are as follows:

- to raise the awareness of the problem of human trafficking;
- to raise the standards of support provided to the victims of human trafficking (including minor victims of human trafficking);
- to improve the effectiveness of the institutions responsible for prosecuting the crime of human trafficking by improving the legal tools and the structures, and implementing best practices;
- to improve the skills of the representatives of institutions and organizations involved in counteracting human trafficking and supporting victims of this crime;
- to extend the knowledge of the problem of human trafficking and to improve the effectiveness of the actions taken;
- to strengthen international cooperation.

The 2024 NAP for 2022-2024 adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17 November 2021 was in force. At the same time, intensive work on the preparation of a new National Action Plan for 2025-2027 continued throughout the year, coordinated by a standing working group for the preparation of the National Action Plan and monitoring its implementation, established as part of the Inter-Ministerial Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings.

2.2 National Referral Mechanism

On 9 April 2024, the Inter-Ministerial Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings in Human Beings unanimously adopted a document called the National Referral Mechanism by resolution (Resolution No. 2). It is a strategic instrument providing the foundation for cooperation between various actors involved in counteracting human trafficking.

The National Referral Mechanism precisely defines the criteria for the identification of victims of human trafficking and the pre-trial procedures, which translates into more effective detection and prosecution of criminal offences. It is based on the systematic cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders, including the governmental bodies, uniformed services, prosecutors, care institutions and NGOs. The document is available in electronic form in Polish and English on the website dedicated to counteracting trafficking in human beings.

2.3 Institutions involved in the system for combating and preventing human trafficking

Anti-Human Trafficking Team



The Inter-Ministerial Team for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings is an auxiliary body of the Prime Minister appointed pursuant to the Ordinance of the Prime Minister No. 392 of 18 September 2023 on the appointment of the Inter-Ministerial Anti-Human Trafficking Team (M.P. 2023, item 1036). The Team is composed of representatives from central offices, law enforcement agencies, state institutions, and non-governmental organizations. It coordinates the entire policy related to counteracting and combating the trafficking of human beings in Poland, shaping it in the form of national anti-trafficking programmes/plans. The following working groups operate within the Team:

- Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the NAP
- Working Group for the Support for Victims of Human Trafficking

and ad hoc groups established to perform a task indicated by NAP (the ad hoc working group on drafting the Act on counteracting and combating human trafficking established on 15 November 2024).

2.3.1 Institutional level

Ministry of Interior and Administration



**Ministerstwo Spraw
Wewnętrznych i Administracji**

Within the structures of the Department for Public Order of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, the Division for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings, Hate Crimes and Supporting Activities in the EU Internal Security Policy

operates, which is responsible for, among others:

- monitoring the work related to the performance of the tasks provided for in the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking;
- proposing tasks in future editions of the National Action Plan;
- monitoring performance of public tasks concerning support for and protection of victims of human trafficking commissioned by the Minister of the Interior and Administration, (currently the task appears under the name “National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking”);
- supporting the work of the Anti-Human Trafficking Team and the Working Groups;
- raising awareness in the area of human trafficking problems.

Office for Foreigners



The Office plays an important role in the preliminary identification of possible victims of human trafficking among foreigners seeking international protection in Poland. As part of the proceedings granting international protection, the Office’s employees can obtain information indicating that a foreigner has been a victim of human trafficking. A part-time human

trafficking coordinator responsible for coordinating activities and ensuring proper flow of information was appointed at the Office.

Police



The decision of the Commander-in-Chief of the Police of 22 January 2014, established the Anti-Human Trafficking Department of the Criminal Service Office (now Criminal Office) of the National Police Headquarters. The Department's main tasks primarily include combating crime related to human trafficking, sexual exploitation of minors on the Internet, as well as crime against sexual freedom and decency. The Anti-Human Trafficking Department cooperates with judiciary authorities, public administration and state audit bodies, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, and public utility institutions. In addition, the Unit carries out international activities through operational and investigative cooperation with the law enforcement agencies from other countries. The Anti-Human Trafficking Department supervises and coordinates the work of anti-human trafficking units established by the Order of the National Police Headquarters¹ in the criminal departments of voivodeship Police headquarters. The tasks of the anti-human trafficking units include, in particular, detection of human trafficking, supervision and coordination of the tasks performed by district Police headquarters and their subordinate Police units in detecting human trafficking, identification of and support for the process of identification of victims of human trafficking, participation in international operations, in particular in joint investigation teams formed to detect human trafficking, non-police cooperation, as well as organisation and conducting in-service training classes for criminal service policemen in the scope of detection of human trafficking.

In 2024, the Anti-Human Trafficking Department of the National Police Headquarters celebrated the 10th anniversary of its establishment, which was commemorated by a conference organised by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration in cooperation with the National Police Headquarters.

Representatives of the Department participate in the work of international teams/working groups/expert groups, among others, as:

- national expert of the Europol Analysis Work File AWF SOC - AP Phoenix focused on combating the crime of human trafficking,
- national expert of Europol's analytical working project AWF SOC - AP Twins (combating sexual exploitation of minors on the Internet),
- expert on the EU EMPACT THB priority,
- expert on the EU EMPACT CSE priority.

¹ Order no. 14 of the Chief Police Commander of 22 September 2016, on the performance of certain tasks by the Police in the detection of human trafficking (Official Gazette of NPH, item 61).

Border Guard



The Border Guard plays a specific role in the fight against human trafficking with regard to foreigners. The Border Guard officers very often are the ones who make the first contact with victims of this crime and, consequently, they often identify these victims. Similarly, to all the institutions described herein, the Border Guard participates in carrying out the tasks included in NAP. The Operational and Investigative Board of the National Headquarters of the Border Guard coordinates the performance of projects arising from NAP, as well as substantively supervises the activities of the organisational units of the Border Guard that involve combating and preventing human trafficking in Poland.

In addition, the structures of the Operational and Investigative Board of the National Headquarters of the Border Guard include Section I, existing within Department I, which focuses on illegal migration and human trafficking and is responsible for *inter alia*, coordination of and supervision over the actions taken by the Border Guard with the aim to counteract human trafficking. In each Border Guard unit, a part-time anti-human trafficking coordinator was appointed within the Operations and Investigations Department to coordinate efforts and collaborate with relevant units of the Border Guard, the Police, and other institutions involved in combating human trafficking.

Public Prosecutor's Office



PROKURATURA
KRAJOWA

The Department for Organized Crime and Corruption is responsible for combating human trafficking at the National Public Prosecutor's Office. The unit coordinates the actions taken by the Public Prosecutor's Office in prosecuting human trafficking. A special prosecutor-coordinator for human trafficking was appointed. Since 2007, the former Appellate Public Prosecutor's Offices and now each of the Regional Public Prosecutor's Offices and Circuit Public Prosecutor's Offices have appointed prosecutors to act as consultants on human trafficking. In 2014, the *Guidelines for Conducting Proceedings in Human Trafficking Cases* were given to prosecutors handling human trafficking cases.

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy



Ministerstwo Rodziny,
Pracy i Polityki Społecznej

Social assistance plays an important role in supporting victims of trafficking by providing crisis intervention. The Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy (MRPiPS), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), the Border Guard, and non-governmental organizations, conducts an annual series of training sessions for employees of social assistance organizations. These sessions focus on supporting victims of human trafficking and include guidelines and information on cooperation with the National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking. MRPiPS provides participants of a specialised training course on 'Supporting victims of human trafficking' with a training resource - a document titled Safe shelter standards for victims of human trafficking. It has been developed in the Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings as part of the implementation of the task called Implementation of standards to be met by institutions capable and entitled to provide assistance to victims/witnesses of trafficking in human beings, as well as facilities where victims of trafficking may be placed. The safe shelter standards presented are not binding standards but merely guidelines for possible use, and MRPiPS and MSWiA recommend them.

State labour Inspectorate



The State Labour Inspection (PIP) is a body established to monitor compliance with labour law regulations, including occupational health and safety laws, and the legality of employment. PIP's tasks include activities aimed at identifying cases of work performed in violation of applicable laws. Labour inspectors of PIP, within the scope of their competences authorising them to enter work premises at any time, obtain information from employees and other persons on the workplace's premises. Entitled to inspect recruitment and temporary employment agencies and the users' employers, they are able to identify potential victims of human trafficking for forced labour and notify the competent authorities that combat this type of crime. Since foreigners are often the victims of human trafficking for forced labour, the PIP's inspections are conducted - in justified cases - in cooperation with the Border Guard officers. This cooperation is based, inter alia, on the provisions of an agreement on the principles of cooperation between the State labour Inspection and the Border Guard from 10th December 2018 (which replaced the previous agreement of 12 May 2015). The agreement provides not only for the performance of joint inspections concerning the legality of employment of foreigners, but also for joint informational and educational activities addressed both to entities that employ foreigners and to foreigners who work in Poland. Thanks to this cooperation, the Border Guard can investigate human trafficking cases identified for the forced labour. At the central level, representatives of the State Labour Inspection participate in the work of the Inter-Ministerial Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings. PIP's bodies perform - both centrally and at the local level - the tasks included in the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking. The cooperation of the State Labour Inspection with other institutions and organizations within the Voivodeship Teams for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings and cooperation with the LA STRADA Foundation are also important for the implementation of PIP's tasks in the area of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for forced labour.

Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy



Ministerstwo Funduszy
i Polityki Regionalnej

In 2024, the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (MFIPR) continued the work on drafting of the Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDDD). In July 2024, the Directive entered into force and the MFIPR has been the leading institution in the work on its implementation, disseminated the problems of due diligence in human rights (including the measures to reduce the risk of forced labour in the supply chain) through the organisation of webinars and briefings with a wide range of stakeholders and it also established a Working Group on Due Diligence to spread the knowledge of the issue. The promotion of corporate due diligence in responsible business conduct is also supported by the activities of the Polish OECD National Contact Point for Responsible Business, which operates within the MFIPR. The OECD NCP disseminates Polish language versions of the "OECD Due Diligence Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct" and the sector-specific due diligence guidelines through its website.

2.3.2 Regional level

Voivodeship Teams for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings



The Voivodeship Teams include representatives of various public institutions, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs operating at the regional level. The participation of representatives of individual institutions depends on the decision of the Voivode. In the works of teams established so far, participate primarily the representatives of Voivodeship offices, the Police, the Border Guard, the public prosecutor's offices, labour inspections, labour offices, local authorities, educational offices and institutions, and non-governmental organisations.

The representatives of the institutions participating in the work of regional teams improve the effectiveness of their activities through the ongoing exchange of information and coordination of all undertakings, including those of a preventive nature.

In 2024, the Voivodeship Teams organised a total of 27 meetings. The most active teams came from the following voivodeships: Pomorskie (4 meetings), Wielkopolskie (3 meetings), Dolnośląskie (3 meetings) as well as Śląskie, Mazowieckie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Podkarpackie (2 meetings each).

A significant achievement in 2024 was the establishment by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of the shared digital platform for the collection and exchange of information and tools useful for taking preventive and educational measures. The platform was created on a dedicated drive belonging to the Ministry of the Interior and Administration with an access provided to a representative of each Voivodeship Team.

2.3.3 Level of non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations provide support for state authorities and institutions in their efforts to combat human trafficking, assist victims and educate the public.

Nation-wide Network of Non-Governmental Organisations Against Human Trafficking



Non-governmental organisations involved in combating human trafficking form the Nation-Wide Network of Non-Governmental organisations Against Human Trafficking, which was established in July 2014 as part of the implementation of a project funded by the Norwegian Fund. Currently, the Network brings together 19 non-governmental organisations. The main intention of the Network is to create a highly specialized network of anti-human trafficking organisations in order to improve the quality and efficiency of their work, professionalize their activities, and strengthen their potential. Doing so makes it possible for them to become partners of public institutions and law enforcement agencies in joint activities aimed at preventing human trafficking and supporting the victims of this crime. The Network's activities include, among other things, strengthening Voivodeship Teams, developing standards for the provision of services to victims of trafficking, especially in the areas of security and privacy, with respect for the victims' choices, and organising a series of workshops on human trafficking for the non-governmental organisations. Thanks to the Network's activities, selected NGOs from all over Poland are being prepared to work with victims of human trafficking.

La Strada Foundation Against Human Trafficking and Slavery

The goal of the Foundation, established in 1996, is to promote the respect of human rights, combat human trafficking, slavery, and forced labour, and to counteract the exploitation of prostitution, as well as crimes against the freedom and health of individuals. The Foundation has been actively working to help victims since its inception. In 2022, the La Strada Foundation won a competition organised by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration to run the National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking for Victims of Human Trafficking in 2023, providing specialised staff and a shelter for victims in Warsaw.

Immaculate Mary PoMOC Association for Women and Children



The mission of the Association, established in 1998, is to provide comprehensive assistance to women in crisis by providing them with safe shelter, supporting them in the process of personal development, and conducting preventive and educational activities on violence, human trafficking, and forced prostitution. The main goal of the Association is to help women and their children at risk of or affected by sexual, physical, and psychological violence, victims of trafficking in women and their families. The Association is involved in the operation of the National Consulting and Intervention Centre within which it runs a shelter for disadvantaged women and women with children in Katowice.

Empowering Children Foundation



The Empowering Children Foundation (formerly named Nobody's Children Foundation), which has been in operation since 1991, supports children and their families by providing assistance in cases of abuse. Its facilities offer a psychological and legal assistance to children who have experienced abuse (physical violence, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or cyberbullying) and their families. Support is also offered to parents of young children aged 0-6 who, for various reasons, are unprepared to provide safe care and conscious upbringing to their children. The Foundation's goal is to support children in overcoming the traumas caused by the harm they experienced. The Foundation actively cooperates with the Police in combating crimes related to sexual abuse of children. It runs the Helpline for Children and Adolescents (tel. no. 116 111), and is the initiator of the stopsekssturystyce.fdds.pl website, where incidents of sexual abuse of children can be reported directly to the Police.

ITAKA Foundation - Centre for Missing People



This NGO, established in 1999, deals with the problem of missing persons in Poland. The Foundation is a public benefit organisation. Itaka finds missing persons, helps their families, and prevents disappearances. It maintains an online database of missing persons, a 24/7 support line for missing persons and their families, and the *Missing Child Helpline*. Itaka's assistance is free of charge. The

Foundation cooperates with the National Police Headquarters and is a member of the Missing Children Europe Federation.

You Can Free Us Polska (Czas Wolności) Foundation



Czas Wolności Foundation is an organisation whose main goal is to prevent the problem of human trafficking and forced labour, to bring freedom to those who have been victims of slavery, forced prostitution, victims of violence, the oppressed, enslaved and exploited, and to provide them with assistance, care, protection, rehabilitation and development opportunities.

It should be noted that the list of the above non-governmental organisations is not complete. Assistance to victims of human trafficking is additionally provided by dozens of other entities, including Caritas, the Polish Red Cross, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, St. Brother Albert's Aid Society, that provide various forms of support to victims, including those affected by the crime of human trafficking.

2.4 Institutional support

National Consulting and Intervention Centre for Polish and foreign victims of human trafficking



The National Consulting and Intervention Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking (hereinafter referred to as KCIK) is a public task implemented and financed by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, addressed to Polish and foreign victims of human trafficking. Each year, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration announces an open contest to run KCIK. In 2023, the Centre was run by the La Strada Foundation Against Human Trafficking and Slavery and Mary Immaculate Association for Women and Children.

KCIK was established to help victims of human trafficking in Poland. Its tasks include identification of human trafficking victims, intervention, preventive counselling, consultation for institutions and organisations, and running a specialised shelter for victims. The staff from KCIK provide counselling not only to victims of human trafficking, but also to their relatives, organisations, and institutions involved in counteracting human trafficking and aiding the victims, and people at risk of human trafficking.

Crucial in assisting victims of human trafficking is the initial identification, which in most cases, is done by law enforcement agencies. Once a victim is identified, it is necessary to ensure their safety, isolate them from the perpetrators, and place them in a safe place. This is the most important objective of the work carried out by KCIK: comprehensive assistance to victims of the crime, provided by NGOs. The person who benefits from the assistance can count on full support, including safe accommodation, medical and psychological care and legal aid.

National Office of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Warsaw



The International organisation for Migration (IOM), based on the Agreement concluded in 2005 with the Minister of the Interior and Administration and annexed in November 2011, implements a programme of assistance in voluntary return and reintegration. Under the program, people identified as victims of human trafficking can receive support in returning to their country of origin and reintegration assistance. The IOM provides, among other things, return counselling to facilitate an informed return decision, individualised return risk assessments, medical assistance, assistance in obtaining travel documents and organising the necessary return formalities. The IOM offers lodging and meals before and during the trip, as well as return travel arrangements and financing. Upon their return to the country of origin, the beneficiaries can receive reintegration assistance to satisfy their most urgent needs and support in taking up employment or starting business as well as vocational training. In 2024, IOM provided assistance in voluntary return to 13 victims of human trafficking and 4 Polish citizens identified as potential victims in Sweden. IOM carried out education and training activities addressed mainly to law enforcement authorities and social services, as well as ToT training for LOT trainers (in total, 744 people were trained in 2024). IOM employees were present in guarded centres, reception centres of the Udsc (Office for Foreigners) and collective accommodation centres, offering their competence in the scope of early identification/referral of potential victims and building awareness of the risk of human trafficking (information leaflets were prepared and distributed among residents) as well as educational activities targeting vulnerable groups at risk of exploitation, including children (also foreign children) in foster care.

Key changes in the system in 2024

In 2024, significant systemic changes were introduced in the area of combating human trafficking:

- Adoption of the National Referral Mechanism – a document providing a strategic instrument for cooperation between entities involved in combating human trafficking
- Establishment of a working group to draft an act – commencement of work on a comprehensive legal act regulating the prevention of trafficking in human beings
- Creation of a digital information exchange platform – a tool supporting the cooperation of Voivodeship Teams

The anti-human trafficking system in Poland has a multi-level structure including central, regional institutions and NGOs. Ensuring effective coordination between all stakeholders and further development of mechanisms for identifying and supporting victims remain key challenges.

3 Statistical picture of the problem

3.1 European Union



The European Union has been taking intensive measures to combat trafficking in human beings for years, but the problem still poses a serious threat within its territory. The latest available data and legislative initiatives of 2023 and 2024 shed light on the current trends and challenges.

Extent of the phenomenon in the EU

According to Eurostat data for 2023 published in 2024, 10,793 victims of human trafficking were registered in the European Union. It means an increase of 6.9% compared to 2022 and it is the highest value recorded in the monitoring period from 2008 to 2023. These figures, although alarming, probably do not reflect the full extent of the problem, as many cases remain undetected.

Characteristics of Victims in the EU

- Gender: Women and girls still account for the majority of registered victims in the EU - 63.3% in 2023. This is a stable result compared to the previous year (62.8%). Nevertheless, a gradual increase has been recorded in the number of men and boys among the victims, indicating the evolution in the nature of this crime.
- Age: The number of children among victims remains a concern, although 2023 has seen a decline in this trend. In 2023, children accounted for 13% of registered victims, compared to 19% in 2022. Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including online, forced labour and forced begging.
- Origin: The majority of victims identified in the EU are third-country nationals. In 2023, 64% of the victims were non-EU nationals (an increase of 1% compared to 2022). Nationals of the reporting country accounted for 28% of the victims and citizens of another EU Member State for 7.8%. The five major nationalities of non-EU victims include Nigeria, Colombia, Morocco, Brazil and Pakistan. This indicates a growing number of victims originating from Latin America. Significantly, efforts to protect Ukrainian nationals from exploitation seem to be effective as 176 Ukrainian victims were registered in 2023, compared to 421 in 2022.

Forms of exploitation in the EU

- Sexual exploitation remained the prevailing form of exploitation in 2023, accounting for 43.8% of all cases.
- Exploitation for forced labour accounted for 35% of cases. It is a form of exploitation that is steadily increasing in the EU, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, construction, care services and catering.
- Other forms of exploitation, such as forced extortion of welfare benefits, removal of human organs, forced criminal activity or forced begging, have also increased and accounted for the total of 20.2% in 2023.

Response of EU law enforcement authorities

2023 saw a 5% increase in the number of suspects in human trafficking cases (8,471 compared to 8,064 in 2022). The number of convicted traffickers increased by 10.1%, from 2,097 in 2022 to 2,309 in 2023. An increase in the number of convicts was recorded in 15 Member States.

Conflicts and humanitarian crises, such as the war in Ukraine or instability in the Sahel region, increase the risk of human trafficking among refugees and migrants. Difficulties in identifying victims continue to be diagnosed, especially among non-documented migrants and in cross-border contexts, despite continuous efforts to improve identification mechanisms.

Summing up, the trends in human trafficking in the EU indicate a persistently high scale and increasing complexity of the problem. Effective counteracting requires an integrated approach taking into

account the changing dynamics of the phenomenon, with special emphasis on the use of new technologies, combating forced labour and protecting the most vulnerable groups, including children, refugees and migrants.

3.2 Poland

The analysis of statistical data on human trafficking in Poland in 2024 allows to outline the extent of the problem, identify the main forms of exploitation and characterise the victims and perpetrators. However, it should be borne in mind that the figures presented refer only to the cases identified and recorded by law enforcement agencies and aid institutions, therefore, the real scale of the phenomenon, the so-called “dark figure” is probably higher.

Due to the different data collection methodologies adopted by entities dealing with human trafficking, the following statistics are presented separately for clarity. Information from non-governmental organisations working with law enforcement and the judiciary in supporting victims of this crime is also an important supplement to the current picture of the phenomenon.

Police

The Police, as the law enforcement agency, makes every effort to detect and prosecute the perpetrators of crimes. In 2024, the activities of the Police resulted in the initiation of 11 proceedings concerning human trafficking and the disclosure of 17 crimes. 11 people were charged with the crime of human trafficking. 23 alleged victims were identified.

Figure 1. Number of pending proceedings, confirmed criminal offences, suspects and identified alleged victims in 2024.

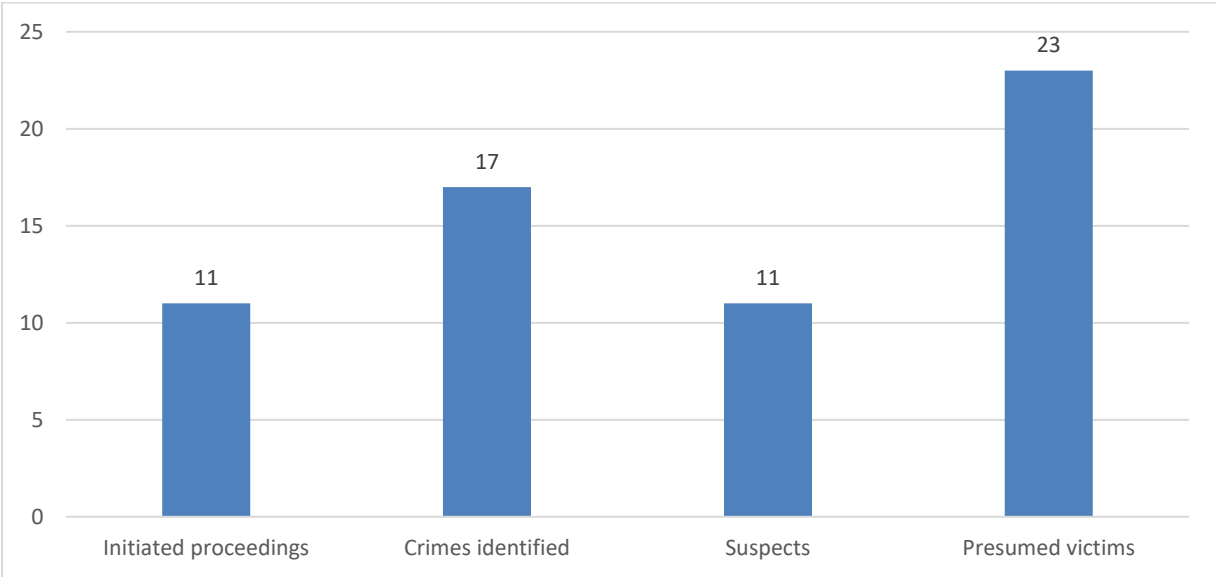
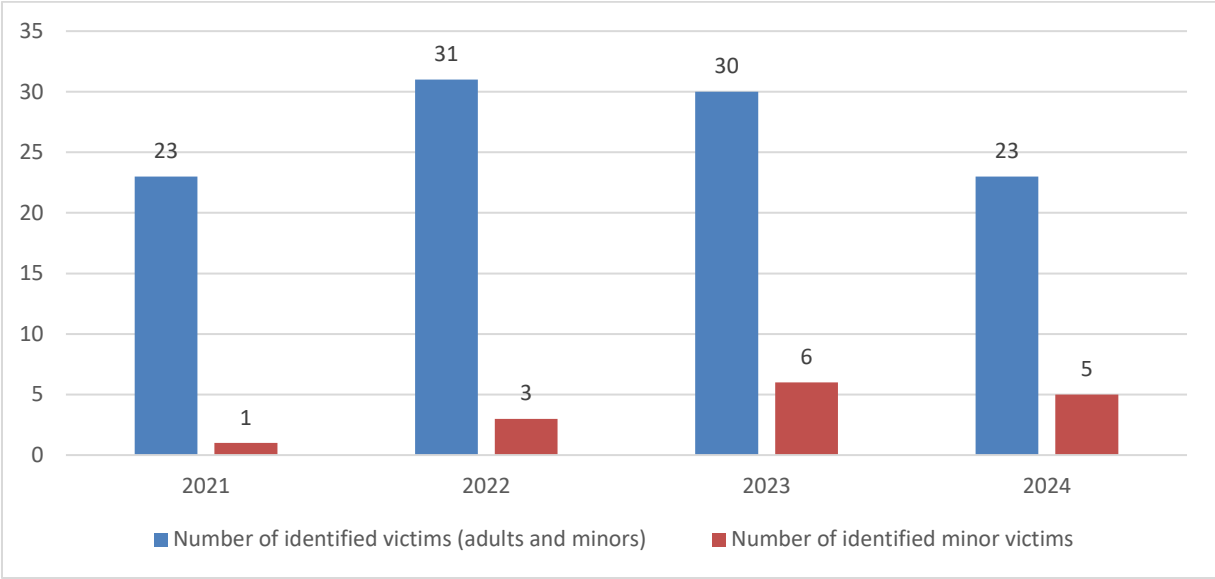


Figure 2. Number of identified alleged victims of human trafficking in the years 2021-2024.



In 2024, the Police identified 23 victims of alleged victims of human trafficking in Poland. They comprised 11 women and 12 men, including five minor victims. Most of the victims identified were Polish citizens (9 individuals), while 14 persons were foreigners. Regarding the forms of exploitation, 5 persons were victims of sexual exploitation, 15 persons were victims of forced labour and 3 individuals experienced other forms of exploitation.

Figure 3. Number of alleged victims of human trafficking by form of exploitation.

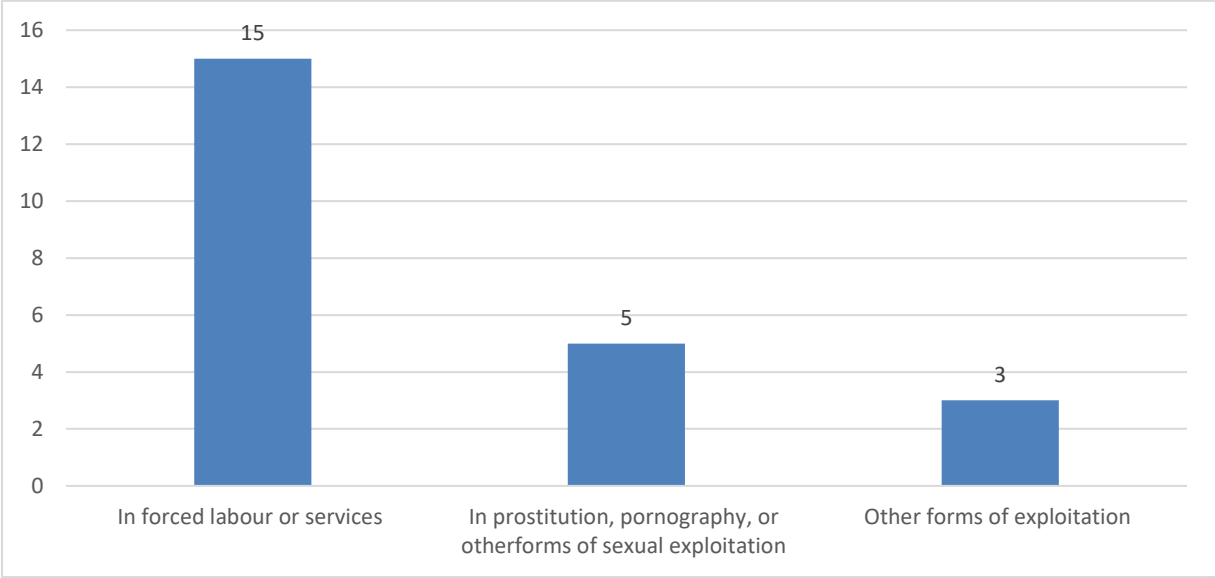
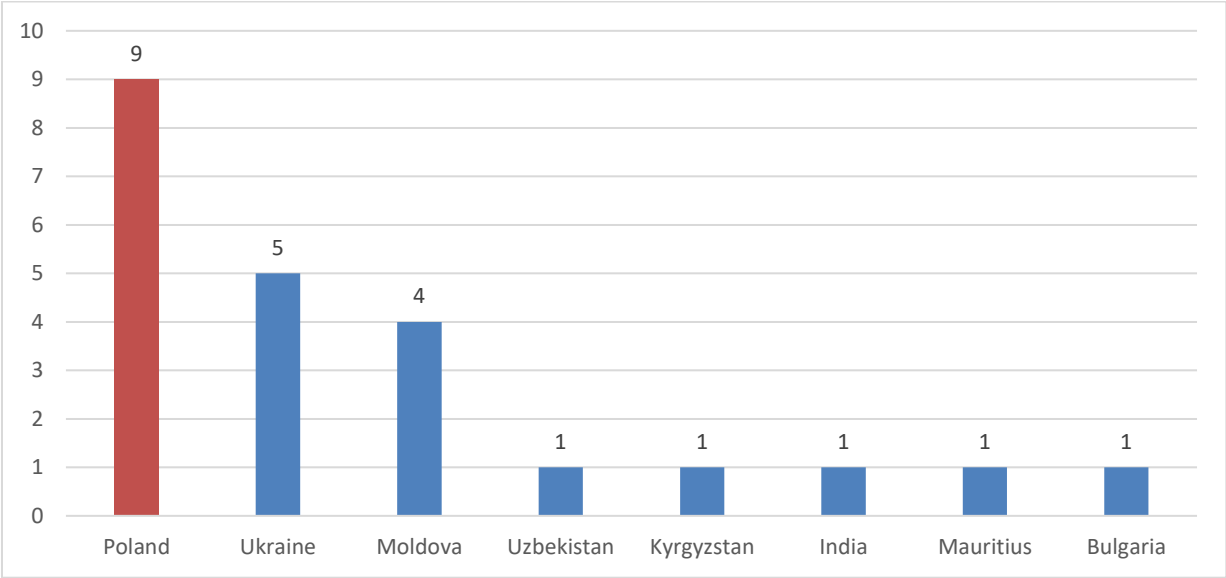


Figure 4. Number of alleged victims and country of origin. Data for 2024.



Border Guard

In 2024, the Border Guard identified 74 victims of human trafficking in Poland. They comprised 19 women and 55 men. No minor victims were identified during this year. All identified victims are foreigners. Regarding the forms of exploitation, as many as 66 persons were victims of forced labour, while 2 persons were victims of sexual exploitation and 6 individuals experienced other forms of exploitation.

Figure 5. Number of identified alleged victims of human trafficking in the years 2021-2024.

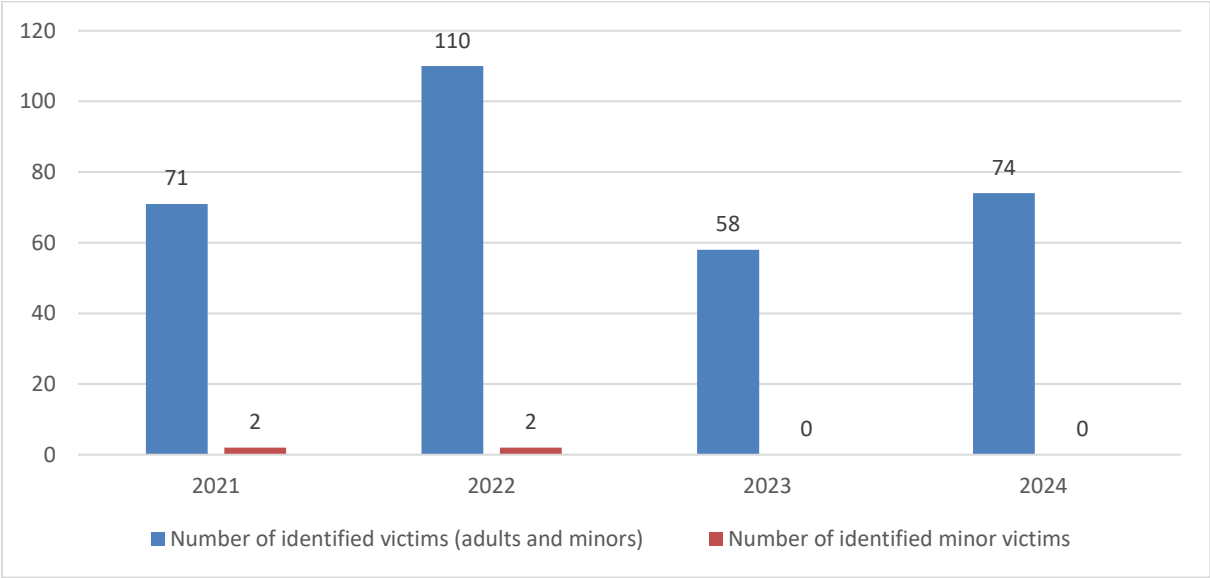


Figure 6. Number of alleged victims of human trafficking by form of exploitation.

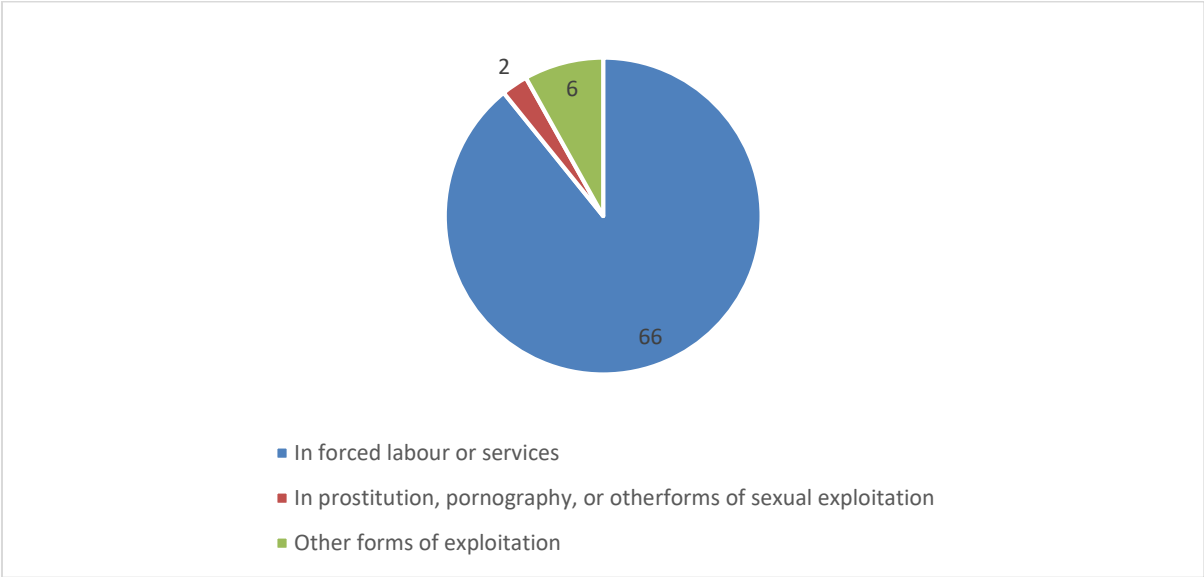
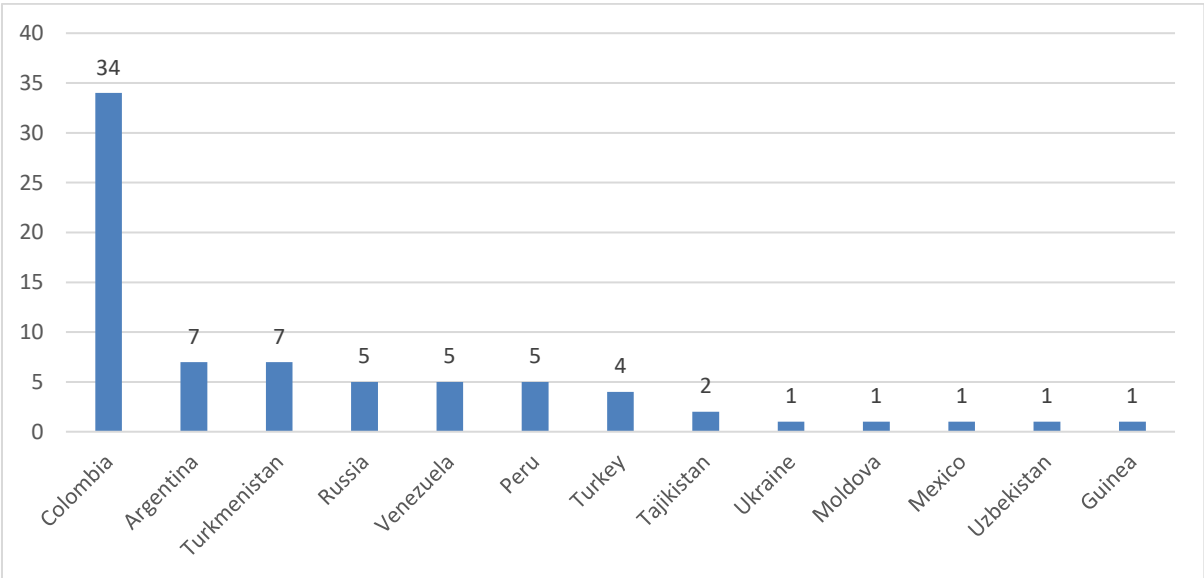


Figure 7. Number of alleged victims and country of origin. Data for 2024.

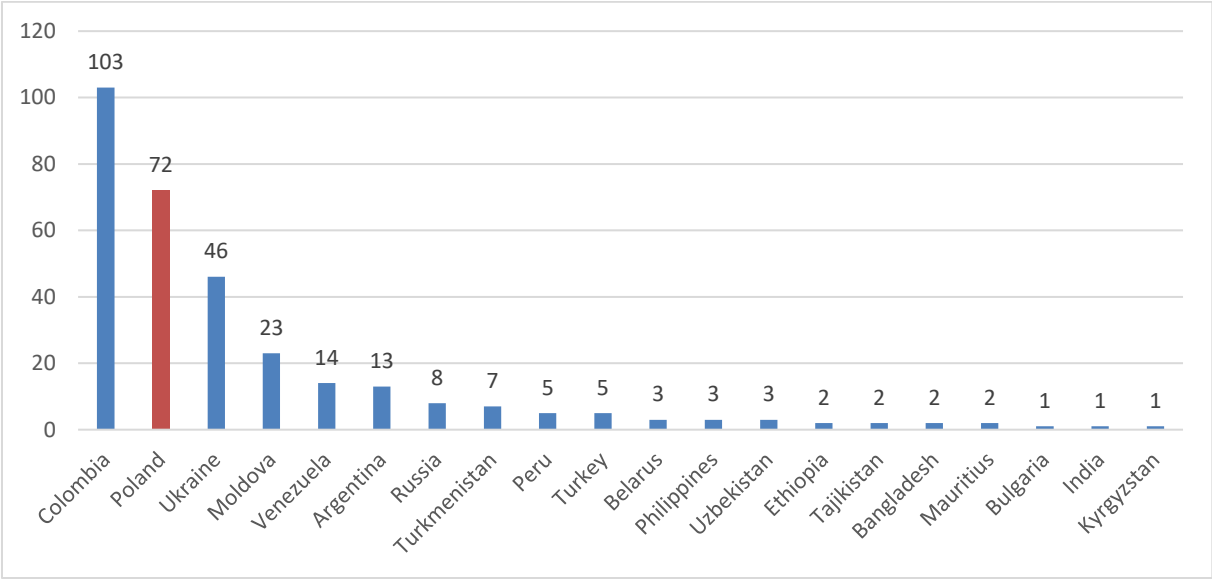


In 2024, 12 new preparatory proceedings in cases of human trafficking were initiated: 8 from the area of exploitation for forced labour, 3 from the area of forced begging, 1 from the area of sexual exploitation.

National Public Prosecutor's Office

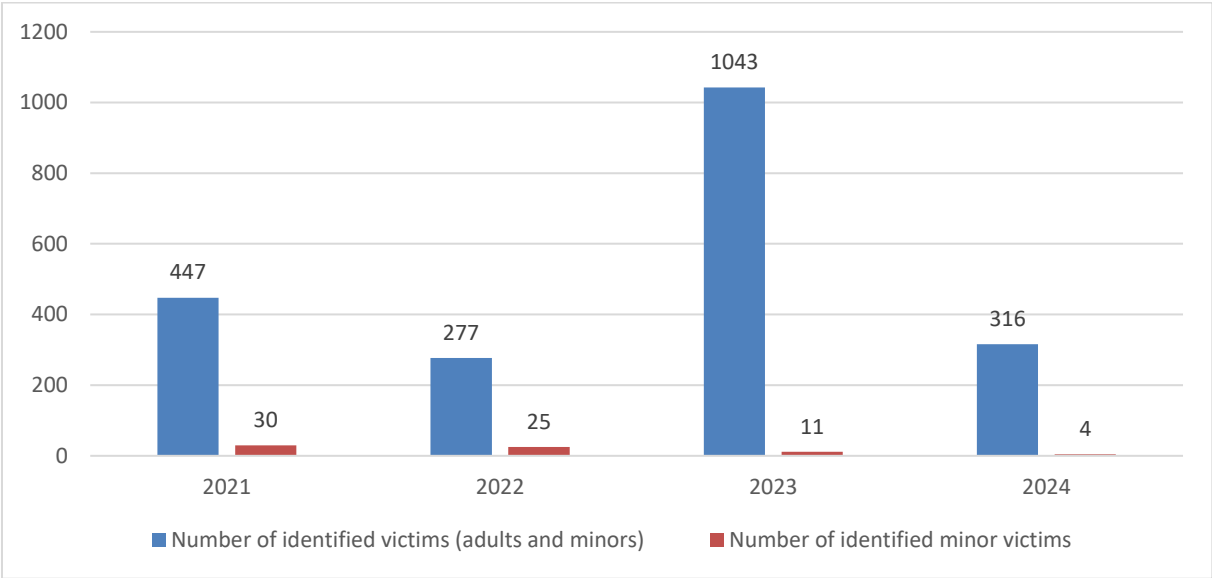
In 2024, the National Prosecutor's Office identified 316 victims of human trafficking in Poland. The group of identified victims included 4 minors. Data on the forms of exploitation and the country of origin of the victims show a prevalence of Colombian (103 persons) and Polish (72 persons) nationals among the victims. In 2024, 26 proceedings were initiated under Article 189a of the Criminal Code.

Figure 8. Number of victims and country of origin. Data for 2024.



Analysis of the 2022-2024 data shows significant fluctuations in the number of victims identified. The increase in the National Prosecutor's Office data, related to a large case involving the use of Polish citizens to extort social security benefits in the United Kingdom in 2023 was particularly noticeable. In 2024, the number of identified victims stabilised at a level close to the multi-annual average.

Figure 9. Number of identified alleged victims of human trafficking in the years 2021-2024.



Ministry of Justice,

According to data provided by the Ministry of Justice, in 2024, 21 victims affected by the crime of human trafficking were granted assistance by the Justice Fund.

The assistance included:

- legal aid of 87 hours,

- psychiatric, psychological, psychotherapeutic and support group assistance - the total of 68.5 hours,
- in-kind aid in the total amount of PLN 6,653.00.

In 2024, pursuant to Articles:

189a §1 of the Criminal Code:

- final convictions in 2024: **12**
- sentences with probation: **2**
- amount of penalties:
 - up to 2 years: **8** sentences including 2 with probation;
 - 3 years: **1** sentence;
 - over 3 years below 5 years: **3** sentences;
- convicts: **12** (4 women, 8 men)

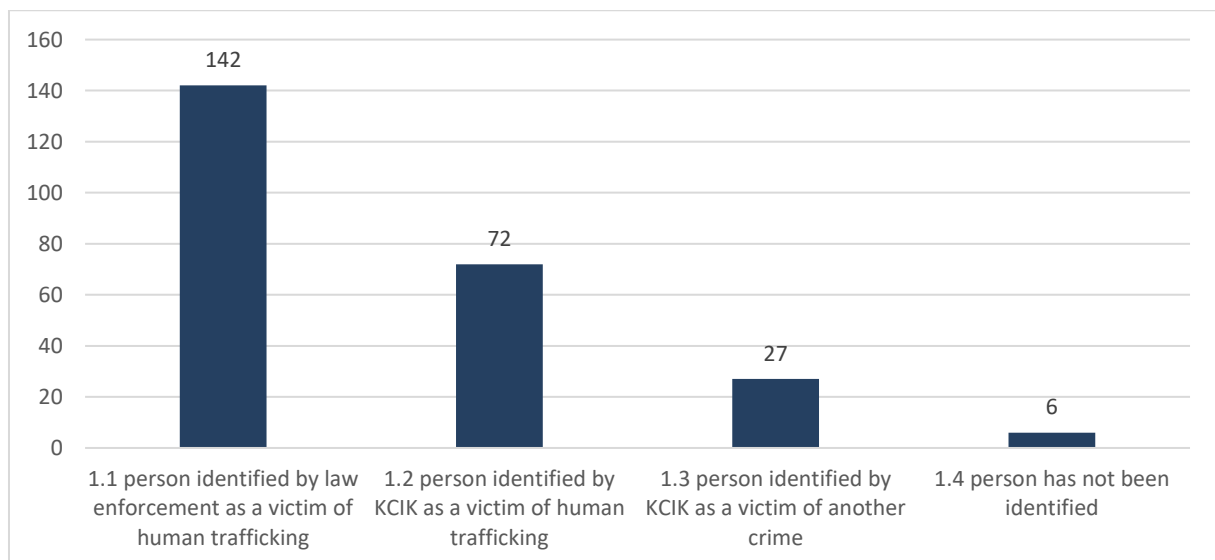
Article 189a §2 of the Criminal Code:

- final convictions in 2024: **2**
- suspended sentences: **0**
- amount of penalties:
 - 3 years: **1** sentence;
 - over 3 years below 5 years: **1** sentence;
- convicts: **2** (1 woman, 1 man)

Statistical coverage of beneficiaries of the National Consulting and Intervention Centre for victims of human trafficking (KCIK)

In 2024, the KCIK provided assistance to 247 individuals, most of whom (236 persons) were foreigners, 10 were Polish citizens.

Figure 11. Victim status - identification



142 people were identified by law enforcement, 72 by KCIK and 27 as victims of another crime.

The vast majority of beneficiaries self-referred directly to the KCIK (158), while 46 persons were referred to the KCIK by law enforcement agencies (i.e. Police, Border Guard). Beneficiaries were also reported by other NGOs (1 person), international organisations (8 persons) or third parties, including: family member (7), social worker (3 persons), hospital worker (2), consulate/embassy worker (2), cohabitant (1), acquaintance (1), other potential victim (1), other unspecified person (10). 143 people were male, 103 were female, while gender details were not provided for 1 person. As can be seen, the majority of the beneficiaries are men of Latin American origin and exploited in forced labour. The vast majority of people are adults (241). 3 cases were minors, while no age information was provided in 3 cases. The beneficiaries of the KCIK are mainly adults, for whom the average age is, respectively - 32 years for women and 34 years for men.

The KCIK beneficiaries most often come from Latin American countries (72%), including primarily Colombia (113 people), Venezuela (31) and Argentina (19). 12% of the KCIK beneficiaries are European citizens, with the highest percentage from Ukraine (41%), Russia (28%) and Moldova (17%). They come to Poland legally (234 people), often under visa-free traffic.

Figure 12. Origin of victims

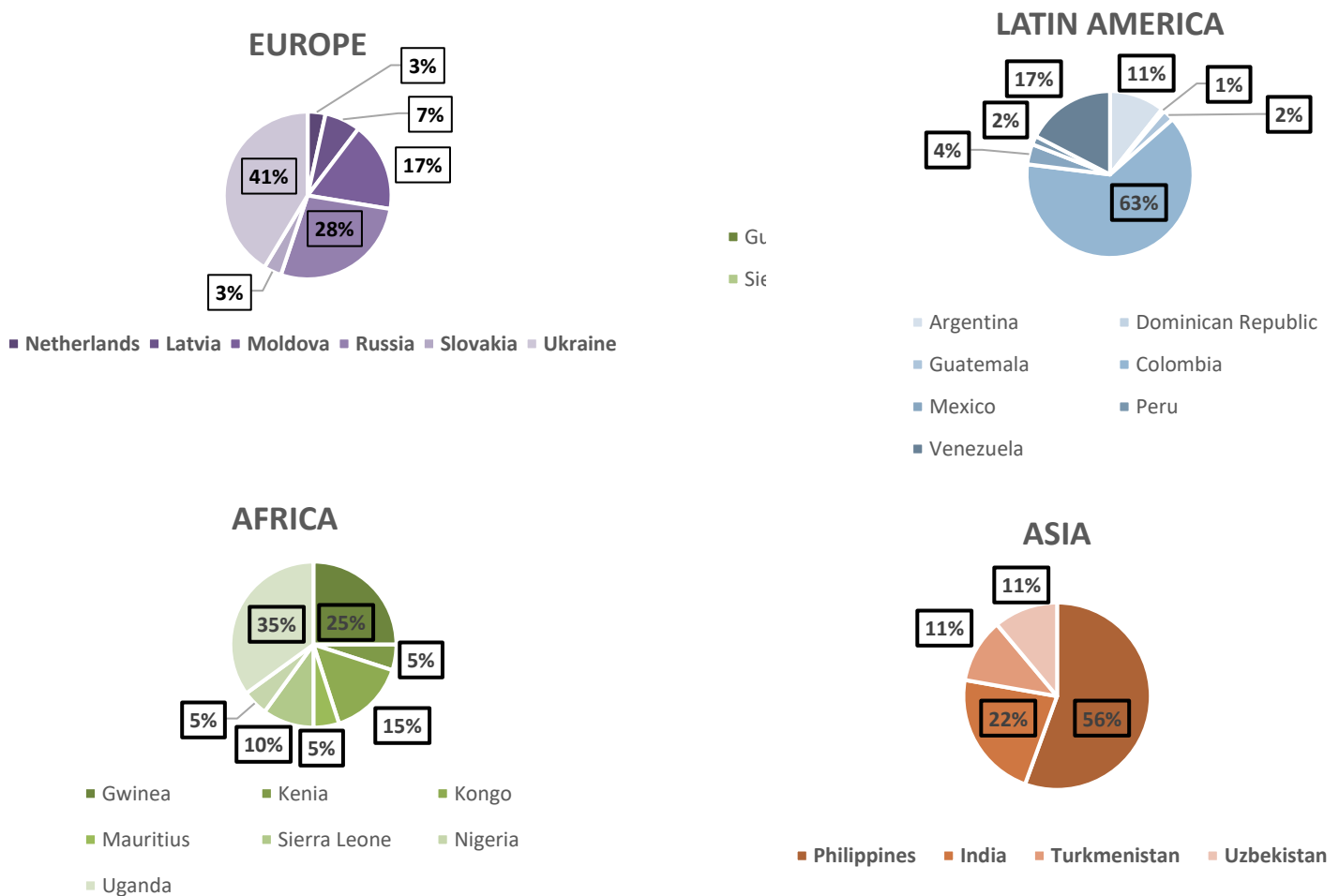
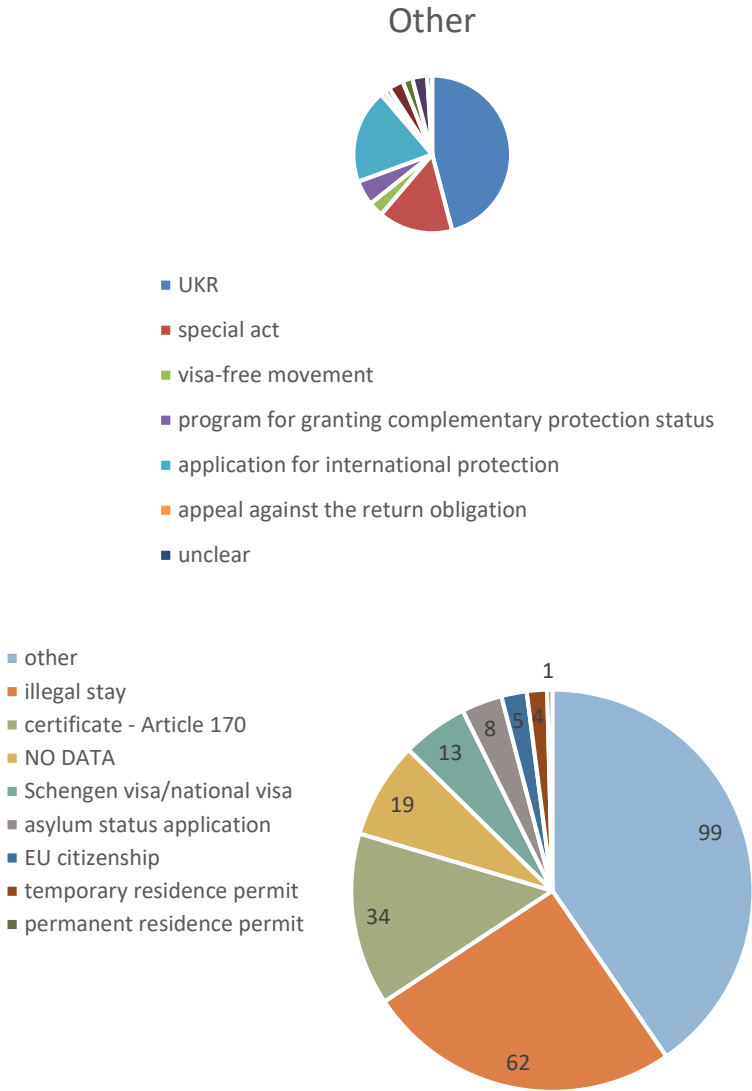


Chart 13. Victim's residence status



When reporting to the KCIK, they most often stay in Poland legally (on the basis of residence applications - 45, residence card - 15, visa-free traffic - 19), but it happens that their stay is already illegal (62). The vast majority of victims are recruited at their current place of residence.

The majority of KCIK beneficiaries resided in the countries where they were recruited. In isolated situations, it happens that the victim is recruited in a country completely different from their country of residence. Polish citizens were recruited exclusively in our country. In the case of Colombians, they were also recruited, among others in Poland (3), Spain (2), Chile (1) and the United Arab Emirates (1). On the other hand, Venezuelans were recruited, among others in Colombia (3), Peru (1), Poland (1) and the UK (1).

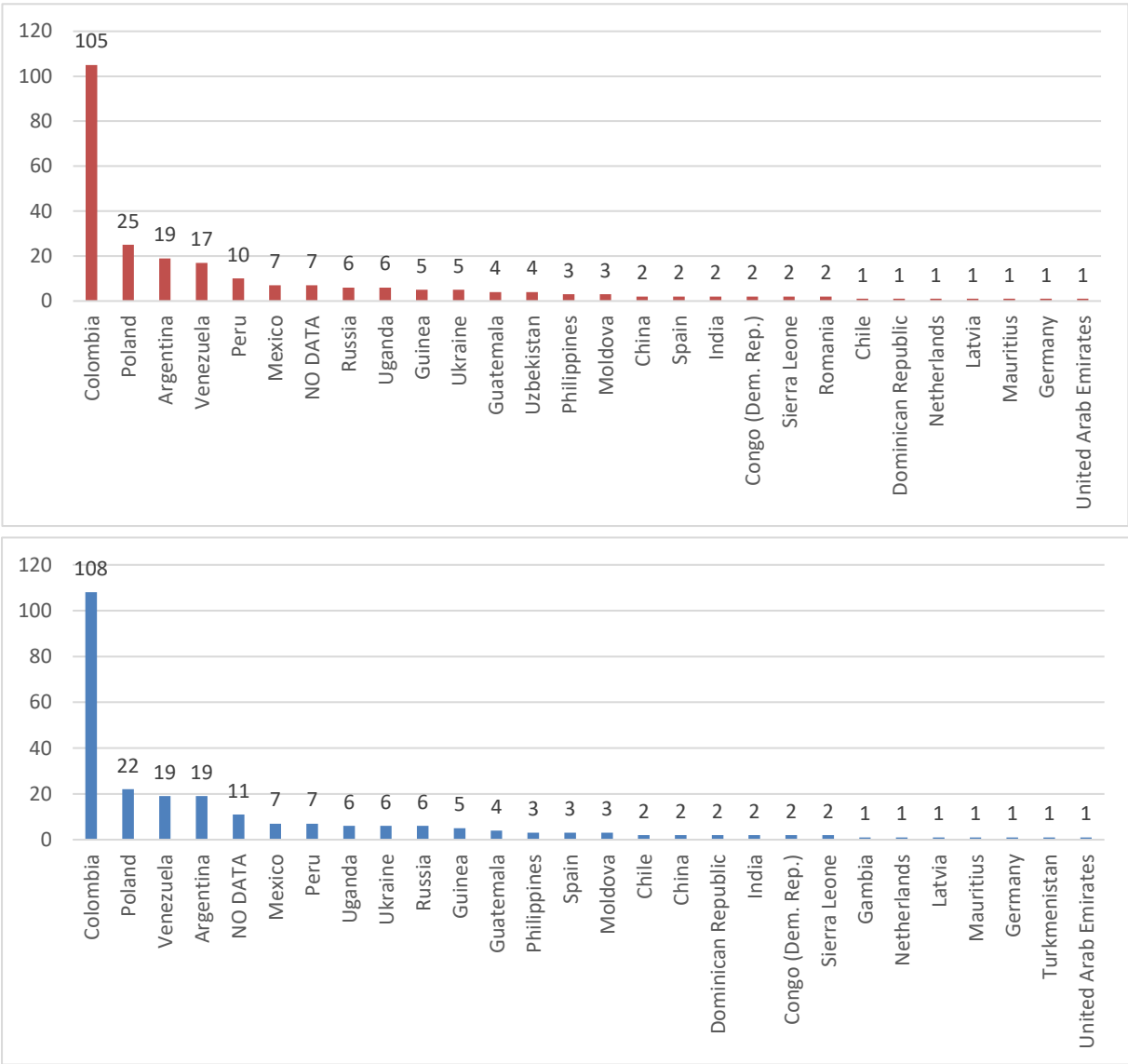
Assistance provided by KCIK

In 2024, 244 people benefited from the assistance of the KCIK, 12 from social services and one from the support programme. Victims were able to obtain assistance from several institutions.

The main task of the KCIK is to help people find safe shelter and provide humanitarian aid (such as clothing or food). In 2024, 164 people benefited from this form of assistance. In addition, the NCIK most often provides assistance to beneficiaries in the scope of legal consultations (175) and translation services (120). It is not uncommon that victims also need transport (107) and psychological support (89).

Assistance in legalising residence often involves receiving a certificate on being an alleged victim of human trafficking (72%), a small part of KCIK beneficiaries benefits from international protection (7%), few also opt for reflection time (certificate - Article 170). For 3%, other unidentified types of assistance in legalising the residence also occurred.

Figure 14 and 15. Country of recruitment and residence upon recruitment

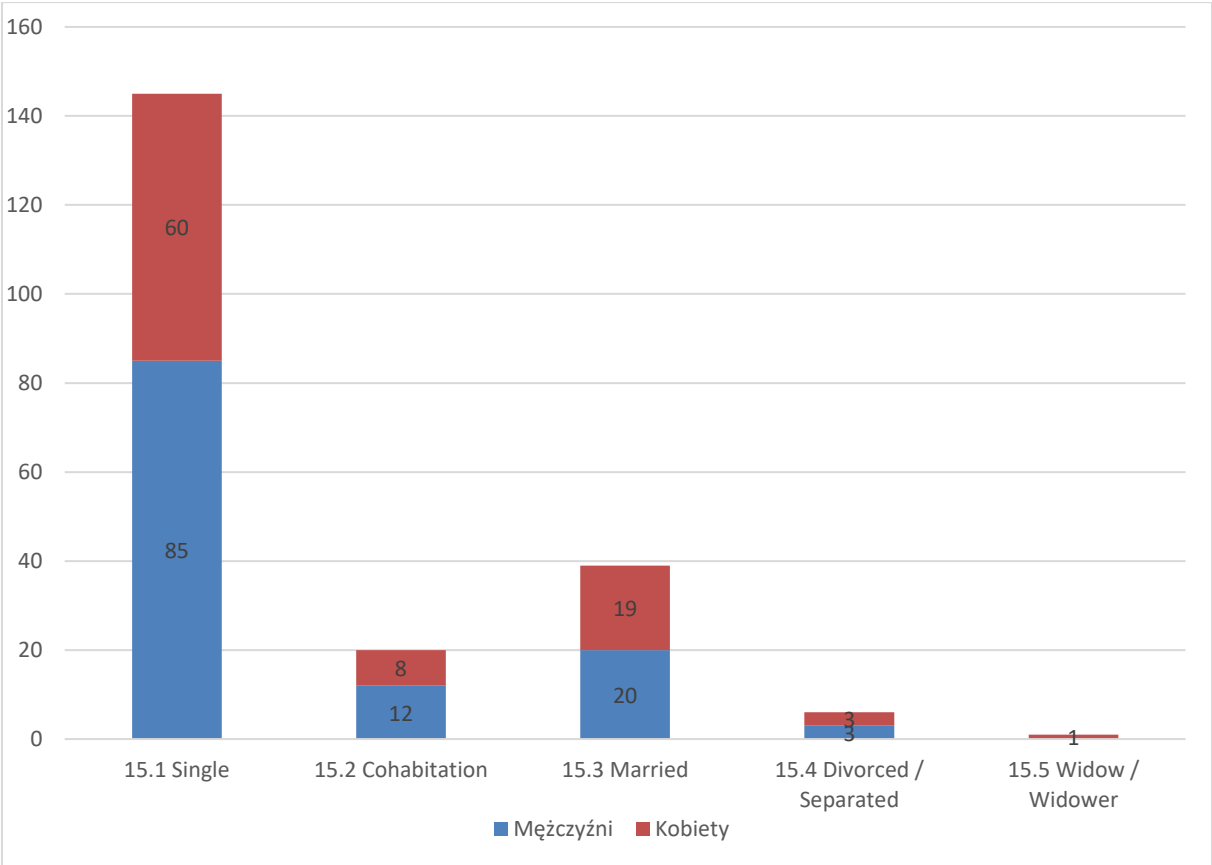


The vast majority of beneficiaries (44.5%) worked professionally at the time of recruitment, seeking to earn money outside their own country was driven by a desire to improve even more their financial

situation. 22.3% were unemployed at the time of recruitment. 19% of people did not provide information on this issue, 12.6% indicated another occupation, while 1.2% had unpaid work.

KCIK beneficiaries do not always want to disclose their level of education. The majority of persons who chose to do so have a secondary education and come from the Latin American region (85), while the remaining (21) include citizens of Ukraine (6), Poland (3), the Philippines (2), Guinea (2), Uganda (2), Russia (1), Moldova (1), Sierra Leone (1), Kenya (1), Nigeria (1) and Congo (1).

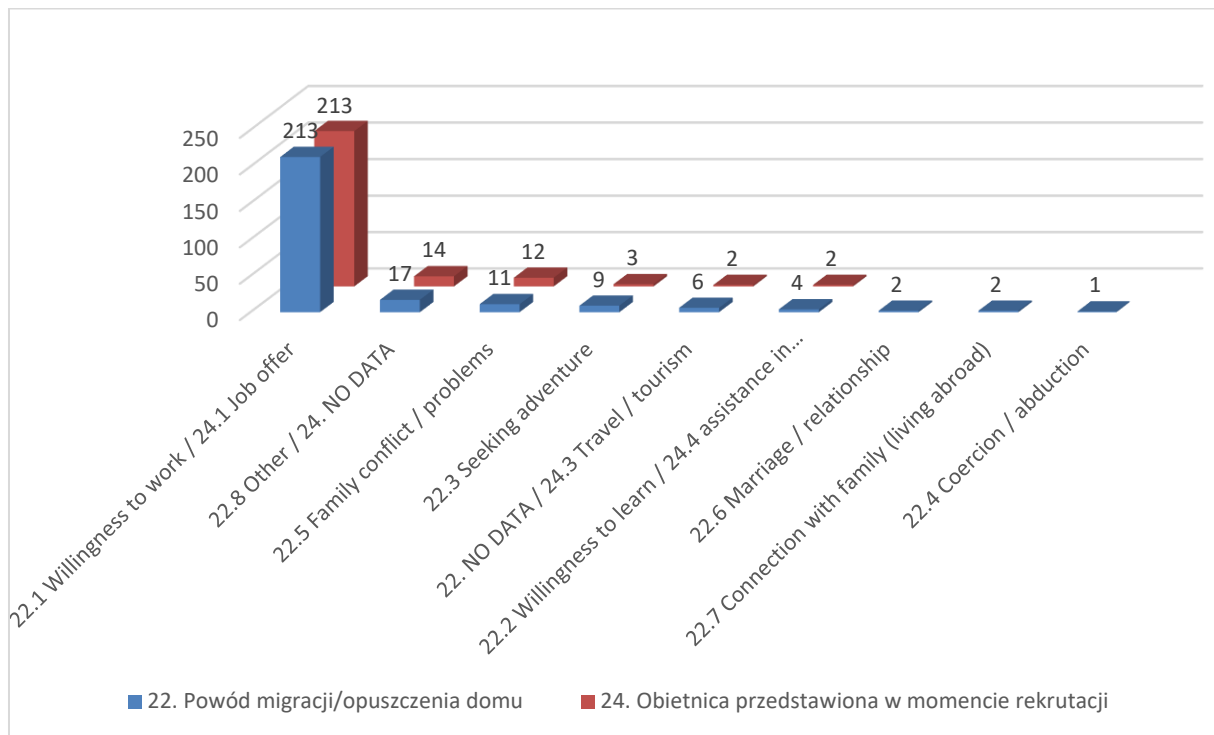
Figure 16. Marital status



The vast majority of beneficiaries declare that they were single at the time of exploitation. It is much less common for married couples (39), cohabiting couples (20), or divorced persons (6) or widows/widowers (1) to be taken advantage of.

The majority of victims declare having no children (103 people), only 14 declared having three or more children. On the other hand, 35 individuals admitted that they had one child and 26 admitted that they had two children. Only 8 persons were accompanied by children during their period of exploitation. The victims who took their children with them to work were mainly women who also worked professionally in their own countries. The majority are Colombian women identified as victims of human trafficking by law enforcement agencies.

Figure 17. Reason for migration



213 persons indicated that the reason for leaving home was their willingness to get a job.

The vast majority of people were recruited by recruitment agencies (102), through advertisement (95) and personal contact (92). They find job advertisements mainly on the Internet.

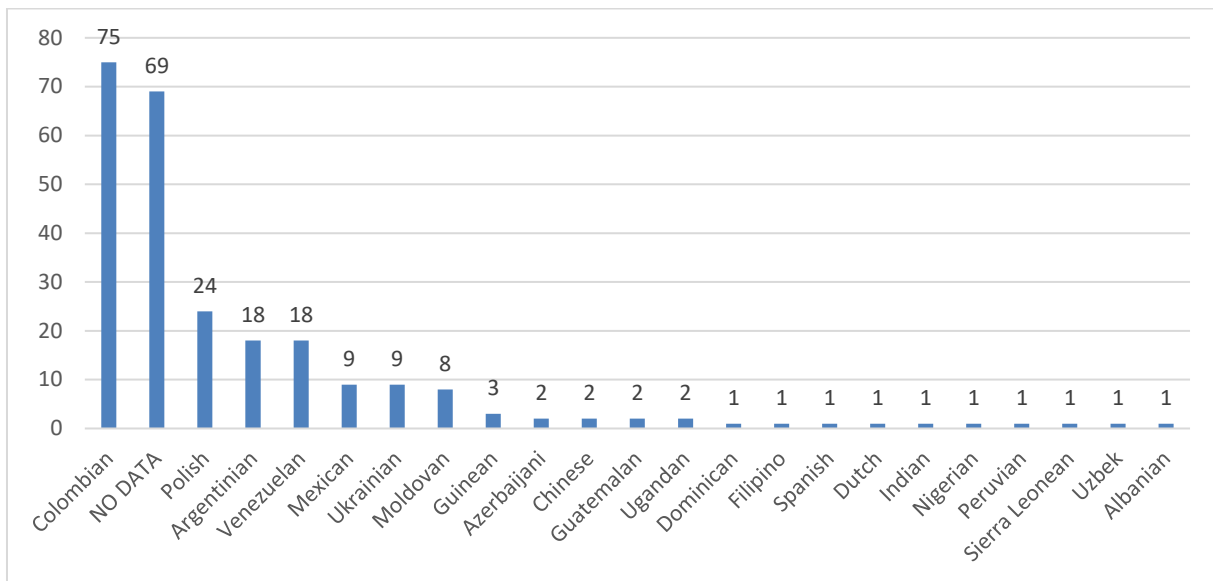
Two persons declared they were recruited by a tourist agency and another two by coercion/kidnapping. 32 persons declared other unidentifiable forms of recruitment, while 15 persons did not provide information on this subject.

For the vast majority of beneficiaries (193), Poland was the destination country at the time of recruitment. In 23 cases these were other European countries, in two cases - Latin American countries and in 1 case - an Asian country. 28 persons did not provide data on this subject.

In most cases, the country promised during recruitment is the country they later land in.

According to the data, victims most often do not know the recruiter and have had no previous contact with them (65.9%). In some cases, a friend or close friend acts as the recruiter (24.9%).

Figure 18. Nationality of the recruiter



Recruiters are often Colombians (75) and Poles (24) and it happens that they work together. Foreign victims mainly arrive in Poland by air (209), private buses (72) or public transport (65). They often use several modes of transport.

Victims are most often controlled by dragging them into debt (127), direct threats (122) and all kinds of payment manipulation (93). They are often deprived of their documents (78) and their freedom of movement is limited (49). They also suffer physical violence (61), work in poor conditions (21), and receive no medical care (49). The legalisation of residency, or a lack thereof, is a frequent form of control over victims (15). Victims also receive indirect threats (21) and psychological violence is applied. Other forms of control include: bad treatment (20), coercion/kidnapping (15), failure to provide food (15), psychological violence (9), poor housing conditions (8), humiliation (8), non-payment of wages in full (6), racism (6), imposition of fines (3), violation of employee rights (3), blackmail, (3), substance abuse (1), financial penalties/no pay (1), rape (1), restriction of contact with the external world (1), other (1).

In 2024, the majority of beneficiaries assisted were identified in Poland and were foreigners. All KCIK beneficiaries identified abroad (United Kingdom [2], Germany [2], Sweden [1], Spain [1], France [1], Italy [1], Belgium [1]) except France (a citizen of Congo was identified in France) were Polish citizens.

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy

According to statistics available at the Department of Social Welfare (published in the ministerial report MRiPS-03), 88 families were covered by social assistance in 2024 due to the need to protect victims of trafficking in human beings.

Pursuant to Article 5a of the Act of 12 March 2004 on social welfare, support was provided to 44 foreign victims of human trafficking, including:

- 44 foreigners who received special purpose benefits in the form of cash,
- 1 foreigner who received assistance in kind (shelter, meal, necessary clothing).

At the Office for Foreigners, the staff initially identified five people as potential victims of human trafficking. Two of five foreigners have been confirmed as victims of human trafficking by the competent authorities.

4 Information and education activities implemented in 2024.

In 2024, the activities of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, other ministries, state institutions and non-governmental organisations focused on counteracting the growing threat of human trafficking, with special attention to forced labour among Latin American migrants. A number of coordinated initiatives targeting both high-risk groups and the general public have been implemented, using modern forms of communication and traditional educational methods.

4.1 Selected important projects

Information campaign of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration and the National Headquarters of the Border Guard on forced labour

The Ministry of the Interior and Administration, in cooperation with the National Headquarters of the Border Guard and the National Police Headquarters, has prepared a nationwide information campaign on forced labour. As part of the campaign, a comprehensive set of promotional and educational materials was developed and printed, including:

- 10,000 posters
- 17,000 educational cartoons for young people
- 500 posters with a space for contact details of local coordinators
- exhibition materials (40 roll-ups, a pop-up wall)

The materials were distributed to all Voivodeship police headquarters and Border Guard divisions as well as Voivodeship anti-human trafficking teams.

Campaign of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The IOM implemented an awareness campaign targeting Ukrainian refugees, which received more than 400,000 impressions on social media (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). The campaign was carried out in public transport means in selected locations and on PKP Intercity and POLREGIO routes. IOM experts also appeared in the “Onet Rano” programme, reaching out to the general public with information on the threats related to human trafficking.

ESCAPE TRUCK - mobile human trafficking laboratory

One of the most innovative projects was ESCAPE TRUCK, implemented by the Police and the Border Guard in cooperation with the Dutch Embassy, the University of Wrocław and the Dutch Police. The project used a specially adapted lorry, where an escape room was created to reflect the real conditions in which victims of human trafficking are kept.

Two editions of the project were carried out in 2024:

- First edition (17-29 May)
- Second edition (7-18 October)

The project involved a total of more than 3,500 participants, mainly young people aged over 16. The event was widely covered on the media, including TVP3 and local radio stations.

Mobile exhibition “The faces of human trafficking”

The exhibition by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration was presented in strategic locations across Poland:

- Airports (Lublin, Gdańsk)
- Universities (University of Łódź, University of Białystok, University of Zielona Góra)
- Railway stations (Main railway station in Gdańsk)
- Voivodeship offices and their branches
- Cultural centres and libraries

The exhibition reached thousands of recipients, presenting different forms of human trafficking in an accessible, visual way.

Preventive actions taken in the regions

Voivodeship Anti-Human Trafficking Teams regularly organised events addressed to the general public or to particular professional and social groups. Details of activities undertaken in regions can be found in the report on the implementation of the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking (NAP) in 2024 at:

<https://www.gov.pl/web/handel-ludzmi/krajowy-plan-dzialan-przeciwko-handlowi-ludzmi-na-lata-2022-2024>

5 Legal grounds

National law



Poland has developed a number of national law regulations related to countering human trafficking. The Polish legal grounds for combating human trafficking include:

The Criminal Code (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 17)

The concept of human trafficking has been captured as a three-element definition, which consists of: the manner of action of the perpetrators, the means and methods used by them and the purpose of exploitation of a person.

Pursuant to Article 115 §22 of the Criminal Code (hereinafter referred to as CC):

“Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, delivery, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a person using:

1. violence or an unlawful threat;
2. abduction;
3. deception;
4. misinformation or the exploitation of a mistake or the inability to properly comprehend the action taken;
5. abuse of a relationship of dependence, taking advantage of a critical position or a state of helplessness;
6. giving or accepting a material or personal benefit, or the promise thereof to or from a person having custody of, or supervision over, another person;

- for the purpose of exploitation of that person, even with his or her consent, particularly in prostitution, pornography, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, begging, slavery, or other forms of exploitation that are degrading to human dignity, or for the purpose of obtaining cells, tissues, or organs in violation of law.

If the perpetrator's behaviour involves a minor, it constitutes human trafficking, even if the methods or means listed in points 1 - 6 are not used."

On the other hand, the last paragraph of the cited legal regulation refers only to situations where the victim is a child. Accepting the need to provide special protection to minor victims, the legislator has limited the legal qualification of the perpetrator's act to the aim of his or her action only. Thus, in the case of minor victims, the second element of the definition (relating to the methods and means) does not have to be identified for an act to qualify as human trafficking.

In Poland, according to Article 189a of the Criminal Code:

§ 1 Whoever commits trafficking in human beings shall be punished with imprisonment from 3 to 20 years.

§ 2 Whoever makes preparations for the commission of the crime specified in § 1 shall be subject to the penalty of imprisonment for 3 months to 5 years.

Human trafficking is one of the crimes that do not occur on its own, but coexist with others, among others:

- against sexual freedom and morality;
- violation of bodily integrity, bodily harm;
- against the rights of persons engaged in gainful employment;
- participation in and leadership of an organised crime group;
- fraud;
- against freedom;
- against the reliability of documents;
- illegal border crossing;
- simple and violent theft.

[Act on Foreigners \(Journal of Laws 2024, item 769\)](#)

The legal act that ensures compliance with the law applicable to, among others, counteracting human trafficking is the Act on Foreigners of 12 December 2013.

The Act on Foreigners (hereinafter referred to as AOF) defines the rules on the entry, transit, and stay of foreigners in the territory of the Republic of Poland, as well as the departure of foreigners from that territory. The Act specifies the procedure to be followed and the authorities competent in these matters. It indicates, among others, that:

- a foreigner who is presumed to be a victim of human trafficking within the meaning of Article 115§22 of the CC shall be issued a certificate confirming the existence of such a presumption [Article 170 of the AOF];
- the stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland of a foreigner presumed to be a victim of human trafficking shall be considered legal for the period of validity of the certificate referred to in Article 170 of the AOC issued to that foreigner. The stay of a foreigner to whom the certificate has been issued shall cease to be considered legal as soon as the minister competent for the interior records information in the relevant register that the foreigner: actively, voluntarily, and on his or her own initiative, re-established contacts with persons suspected of committing the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC) or crossed or attempted to cross the national border in violation of the law;
- the certificate issued by the authority competent to prosecute the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC) shall be valid for a period of 3 months from the date of its issuance, and in the case of a minor foreigner - for a period of 4 months from the date of its issuance [Article 172 of the AOF];
- a temporary residence permit for a foreigner who is a victim of human trafficking shall be granted after all of the following conditions have been met: he or she resides in the territory of the Republic of Poland; he or she has cooperated with the authority competent to prosecute the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC) and in the case of a minor foreigner, he or she has been granted the status of a victim in a case concerning the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC); and he or she has severed contacts with persons suspected of committing the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC). [Article 176 of the AOF];
- the minimum validity period of a temporary residence permit shall be 6 months [Art. 177 of the AOF];
- a permanent residence permit shall be granted to a foreigner for an indefinite period of time in response to his or her application, if: he or she is a victim of human trafficking within the meaning of Article 115§22 of the CC and: he or she has resided in the territory of the Republic of Poland immediately before applying for the permanent residence permit for a period of no less than 1 year on the basis of a temporary residence permit for victims of human trafficking, has cooperated with law enforcement authorities in criminal proceedings in a case concerning the crime of human trafficking (Article 189a§1 of the CC) and has a well-founded fear of returning to his or her country of origin [Article 195(1)(5) of the AOF].

[Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners in the Territory of the Republic of Poland \(Journal of Laws 2024, item 854\)](#)

Article 68. 1. If an application for international protection concerns a person who may be vulnerable, in particular a person being:

6) a victim of human trafficking

- the Head of the Office shall assess whether that person is vulnerable in international protection or social assistance proceedings.

2. The applicant or the person on whose behalf the applicant is acting shall be considered to be vulnerable with regard to social assistance, where there may be a need to:

1) accommodate him or her at a centre that:

a) is adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities;

b) provides accommodation in single rooms;

c) is intended exclusively for women or women with children;

2) place them in a nursing and treatment facility, a nursing and care facility, or a hospice;

3) place them in foster care that corresponds to the psycho-physical situation of these persons;

4) adjust the diet according to their health status.

3. The Head of the Office, in order to assess whether the person referred to in section 1 is vulnerable, may order medical or psychological examinations, the cost of which shall be covered by the national budget from the part at the disposal of the minister competent for the interior, from the funds at the disposal of the Head of the Office.

4. If the Head of the Office does not order the medical or psychological examination referred to in section 3, he or she shall inform the person who may be vulnerable that he or she may, on his or her own initiative and at his or her own expense, undergo such an examination.

5. A person who has not consented to the medical or psychological examinations referred to in section 3 shall be considered a person who is not vulnerable.

6. The Head of the Office shall make the assessment referred to in section 1 immediately after the submission of an application for international protection and at any time until the completion of the proceedings, in case new circumstances concerning the applicant or the person represented by the applicant are revealed.

Article 69. 1. In the case of a foreigner who is a vulnerable person, the activities in the proceedings concerning granting of international protection shall be performed:

1) in conditions that ensure the foreigner's freedom of expression, in a manner tailored to his or her psycho-physical condition;

2) within a timeframe appropriate to his or her mental and physical state, designated taking into account the dates for the foreigner's use of the health services;

3) at the foreigner's place of residence, where it is justified by his or her

health condition;

4) with the participation of a psychologist, a physician, or an interpreter, if necessary.

2. At the request of a foreigner who is a vulnerable person, in cases justified by his or her needs, the activities carried out in the proceedings concerning granting of international protection:

1) shall be performed by a person of the same sex;

2) shall be performed with the participation of a psychologist, a physician, or an interpreter of the sex indicated

by the foreigner.

Article 69a. When providing social assistance to a foreigner who is a vulnerable person, the accommodation and food needs of such a person shall be taken into account.

Article 69b. When providing social assistance to a minor, the need to safeguard his or her interests shall be considered, taking into account in particular:

3) the safety and security considerations, particularly where there is a risk that the minor is a victim of human trafficking.

[Act on Social Assistance \(Journal of Laws 2024, item 1283\)](#)

Another act of law that provides protection and includes the appropriate tools to meet the basic needs of Polish and foreign victims of human trafficking is the Act on Social Assistance of 12 March 2004 (hereinafter referred to as ASA).

The most important provisions of the Act that concern the issue of human trafficking provide that:

- foreigners residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland on the basis of the certificate referred to in Article 170 of the AOF or on the basis of the permit referred to in Article 176 of the AOF shall be entitled to benefits in the form of crisis intervention, shelter, a meal, the necessary clothing, and a purpose-specific benefit [Article 5a of the ASA];
- social assistance shall be provided to individuals and families because of the need to protect victims of human trafficking [Article 7(7a) of the ASA];
- the tasks of the Voivodeship governor include coordination, within the framework of the social welfare system, of the activities related to counteracting human trafficking and the support provided to victims of trafficking in human beings [Article 22 (15) of the Act on Social Assistance];

[Act on the Entry into, Residence in, and Exit from the Territory of the Republic of Poland of Citizens of Member States of the European Union and Members of Their Families \(Journal of Laws 2024, item 633\)](#)

In accordance with Article 41a(1) of the Act on the Entry into, Residence in, and Exit from the Territory of the Republic of Poland of Citizens of Member States of the European Union and Members of Their Families, an EU citizen or non-EU family member who is deemed to be a victim of human trafficking within the meaning of Article 115 § 22 of the Criminal Code shall be issued with a certificate confirming the presumption that the person is a victim of a human trafficking crime. The first certificate shall be

valid for a period of 3 months, and in the case of a minor EU citizen or a minor family member who is not an EU citizen, for a period of 4 months from the date of its issuance (Article 41b(2)), According to Article 41b(3) of the aforementioned Act, another certificate may be issued for a period of at least 6 months, but no longer than for a period of 3 years, if the following conditions are met for an EU citizen or a member of his or her family:

- 1) he or she is staying in the territory of the Republic of Poland;
- 2) he or she has undertaken cooperation with the authority competent to conduct proceedings in the case of the offence referred to in Article 189a§1 of the Criminal Code and, in the case of a minor foreigner, has been granted the status of a victim in proceedings in the case of the offence referred to in Article 189a§1 of the Criminal Code;
- 3) he or she has terminated any contacts with persons suspected of committing the offence referred to in Article 189a§1 of the Criminal Code.

These provisions are modelled on the relevant provisions of the Act on Foreigners, i.e. Articles 170-176.

[Act on Assistance for Citizens of Ukraine \(Journal of Laws 2024, item 167\)](#)

In 2022, the Act on Assistance for Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of that State was enacted, the aim of which is to create a specific regulation providing an ad hoc legal basis for the legal stay of citizens of Ukraine who, as a result of hostilities, were forced to leave their country of origin and entered, with the appropriate entry authorisation, the territory of the Republic of Poland. The citizens of Ukraine referred to in paragraph 1 of this Act are recognised as persons enjoying temporary protection in the Republic of Poland within the meaning of Article 106(1) of the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland.

The regulations on human trafficking contained in the aforementioned Act are of a preventive nature and have strengthened the penalties provided for in the Criminal Code for committing this crime.

To quote the aforementioned regulations:

- Article 72. Convicting a perpetrator who, during the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, committed an offence referred to in:
 - 4) Article 189a §1 of the Act of 6 June 1997 - Criminal Code - the court shall impose a sentence of deprivation of liberty for 10 to 15 years or a sentence of 25 years of imprisonment.

[Legislative Changes concerning Human Trafficking](#)

[Implementation of Directive \(EU\) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#)

In June 2024, the European Union adopted a new directive amending Directive 2011/36/EU on the prevention of trafficking in human beings. The Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, has launched the work on the implementation of this directive into the Polish legal system. The transposition deadline shall expire on 15 July 2026.

The most important changes introduced by the new directive include:

- Expanding the definition of human trafficking to include new forms of exploitation such as forced marriage, illegal adoption and forced surrogacy.
- Introducing mandatory criminalisation of the conscious use of services provided by victims of human trafficking.
- Tightening of regulations concerning the dissemination of material presenting sexual exploitation, especially using ICT.
- Strengthening preventive measures, including the obligation to establish National Action Plans and mechanisms for early detection and identification of victims.
- Emphasis on the development of digital competence of law enforcement agencies with the purpose of combating human trafficking using technology.

[Work on the draft of national Act on counteracting and combating human trafficking](#)

In November 2024, a dedicated working group was set up as part of the Inter-Ministerial Team for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings to draft a comprehensive act of law regulating all aspects of preventing and counteracting trafficking in human beings and support for victims. The aim is to create a coherent and modern act of law, integrating the previously fragmented provisions and adapting them to the current international and EU standards, including the new directive. The group's work focuses on precise definitions, the support system for victims (with particular focus on minors), a potential support fund and mandatory training for professionals.

[Amendments to the Act on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions and the draft Act on the Labour Market and Employment Services](#)

In 2024, work continued on the amendments to curb unfair employment agency practices and protect workers, including migrants, from exploitation. The amendment to the Act on the Promotion of Employment (due to come into force at the beginning of 2025) limits the fees charged to employees delegated to work abroad. The pending draft Act on the Labour Market and Employment Services (referred to the first reading in the Sejm on 9 January 2025) provides, among others, for an increase in penalties for illegal fees and additional regulations to combat illegal employment of foreigners.

[The “Kamilek Act” \(amendment to the Family and Guardianship Code and other laws\)](#)

Although it is not directly the Act on human trafficking, its entry into force in 2024 (part of the provisions, from 15 February 2024, standards for the protection of minors, from 15 August 2024 with mandatory implementation by 15 February 2025) is significant for the protection of children from various forms of violence and exploitation, including human trafficking. The Act introduces, among others, standards for the protection of minors in institutions, mandatory verification of those working with children in the National Criminal Register, the Serious Case Review procedure and changes to the court hearing of children.

Changes in the visa regime

In 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took measures to tighten the visa regime. On 31 July 2024, the Minister of Foreign Affairs issued guidelines on the examination of visa applications. A draft act has also been prepared to amend certain acts of law in order to eliminate irregularities in the visa regime. A significant change was the introduction of the visa requirement for Colombian citizens travelling to Poland for work purposes as of 15 August 2024.

Internal procedures

In order to increase the effectiveness of the activities carried out by authorities dealing with the crime of human trafficking, baseline procedures have been developed such as:

- Algorithm of Conduct of Law Enforcement Officers in Case of Revealing a Crime of THB,
- Algorithm for Identifying and Dealing with a Minor Victim of Human Trafficking for the Police and Border Guard officers,
- The procedure for employees of the Office for Foreigners processing applications for international protection in case of preliminary identification of a foreigner as a victim of human trafficking,
- Guidelines for labour inspectors with an accompanying list of indicators for identifying potential victims of human trafficking for forced labour.



International law

Poland is one of the numerous countries that actively counteract human trafficking; moreover, it also provides assistance and support for people who have fallen victim to this practice. It is party to international law regulations, including:

[Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

[Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims](#)

[Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime](#)

[Council Directive 2004/81/EC of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities](#)

[Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly](#)

[Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly](#)

[United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others](#)

[International Labour Organization Convention no. 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour](#)

[International Labour Organization Convention no. 105 Concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour.](#)

6 Summary



2024 was an intensive period in the development of the anti-human trafficking system in Poland. Despite the stabilisation of the migration situation related to the conflict in Ukraine, Polish institutions had to face new challenges, primarily associated with a significant increase in the number of victims coming from Latin American countries. This change in the geography of the victims' origins has necessitated the adaptation of the existing support mechanisms and the intensification of international cooperation.

Key Lessons of 2024

- **Forced labour as the prevailing form of exploitation:** Poland continued to be primarily a destination country for victims of forced labour, with an increasing number of migrants from Latin America and Central Asia as victims of this practice.
- **Impact of the conflict in Ukraine:** The war in Ukraine continued to generate the risk of human trafficking among refugees, although certain changes in the dynamics and methods of recruitment can be noted.

- **The importance of new technologies:** Criminals have been increasingly using the internet, the social media and encrypted messaging to recruit, control and exploit victims, posing a significant challenge to law enforcement authorities.
- **Progress in legislation and coordination:** Key work has begun on the implementation of the new EU Directive and the preparation of a comprehensive Act on counteracting and combating human trafficking. The National Referral Mechanism was adopted to improve inter-institutional cooperation.
- **The need to strengthen preventive activities and victim support:** Despite numerous campaigns and training activities, there is a need for further public awareness raising and improvement of the support system for victims, including addressing systemic issues such as access to health insurance or adequate benefits.

Challenges for the Future

- **“Dark number” of criminal offences:** The actual scale of human trafficking remains difficult to estimate, which requires improved methods of identifying victims and encouraging them to report the crime.
- **Adaptation of perpetrators:** Criminals are rapidly adapting their methods of operation to changing conditions and new technologies, which requires law enforcement agencies to continuously develop their competence and tools.
- **Protection of particularly vulnerable groups:** Women, children, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities remain vulnerable groups and require dedicated protection measures.
- **Ensuring the long-term integration of victims:** Effective victim support is not only crisis intervention, but also the support in long-term social and professional reintegration.
- **Effectiveness of prosecution and administration of justice:** Despite the growth in the number of convictions in the EU, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and victims are compensated remains a challenge.

2024 has shown that Poland can effectively adapt its anti-human trafficking system to the changing challenges. The adoption of the National Referral Mechanism, the launch of the work on the dedicated law and the innovative approach to education provide solid foundations for further development.

At the same time, the increasing number of victims from remote geographic regions and the development of new technologies require determined action in the near future. Success in counteracting human trafficking will depend on the ability to implement new legislation quickly, ensure adequate resources as well as maintain a high level of inter-institutional and international cooperation.

Human trafficking remains one of the most serious violations of human rights in the contemporary world. Poland, as a country of origin, transit and destination, is particularly responsible for the development of effective mechanisms to counteract this practice. The actions taken in 2024 and those planned for subsequent years provide grounds for cautious optimism that the system will become increasingly effective in protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators.

This report does not describe all the actions taken by institutions to combat human trafficking, therefore we encourage to read the report on the implementation of the NAP 2022-2024, available at:

<https://www.gov.pl/web/handel-ludzmi/krajowy-plan-dzialan-przeciwko-handlowi-ludzmi-na-lata-2022-2024>

7 The ABC of Help

Contact details of institutions and non-governmental organisations that provide assistance to victims of human trafficking

Ministry of the Interior and Administration

National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking

As part of the public task entitled “Running the National Consulting and Intervention Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking” which aims to secure the needs of victims of human trafficking - Polish citizens, EU citizens, or foreigners, as well as persons at risk of becoming victims of this crime, a 24-hour helpline and preventive telephone counselling is provided.

Tel. +48 22 628 01 20

24/7 helpline

National Police Headquarters

Anti-Human Trafficking Department

Phone (22) 60-148-33 (office)

E-mail: handelludzmi@policja.gov.pl or call: **664 974 934**.

Police officers operate the hotline from 6 AM to 10 PM. During the night hours, reports on the crime and any information can be recorded on an answering machine and officers contact those interested in providing information.

In emergencies involving risks to life or health, the emergency numbers **112** or **997** should be called.

Polish Border Guard Headquarters

Section I of the Operational and Investigative Board

tel.: (22) 500-40-41 (office)

e-mail: zos.kg@strazgraniczna.pl

and a 24-hour hotline at the Polish Border Guard Headquarters: +48 800 422 322

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Poland

Poland has been a member of the IOM since 1992. The IOM’s National Office in Warsaw has been operating since 2002 and runs projects in the scope of promoting and supporting regulated migration

and integration of migrants, combating human trafficking, assistance in voluntary return and reintegration as well as information and training activities aimed at raising awareness of migration phenomena. IOM also provides direct support to persons with migration experience including those affected by the war in Ukraine.

Migrant Info Helpline: **22 490 20 44** - open Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM.

Foreigners interested in obtaining assistance with voluntary return are asked to call IOM staff at **666 34 34 66**,

or send an email message to: iomwarsawavr@iom.int

or use the online application avr.iom.pl

Non-governmental organisations

[La Strada - Foundation Against Human Trafficking and Slavery](#)

Helpline: **+48 22 628 99 99*** (assistance, advice)

- Monday through Thursday from 9 AM to 6 PM
- Fridays from 9 AM to 2 PM

*Wednesdays from 2 to 6 PM, the person on duty speaks Russian

Telephone number for Vietnamese-speaking clients: **+48 22 621 56 18**

Foundation office: **+48 22 622 19 85** (administrative and office phone number)

E-mail: strada@strada.org.pl

<https://www.strada.org.pl/>

[PoMOC Mary Immaculate Association for Women and Children](#)

Hotline: **511 801 161**

Information on possible assistance - pomoc@Po-MOC.pl

Association's Office: Phone: **+48 32 255 38 69**

E-mail: biuro@Po-MOC.pl

<https://www.po-moc.pl/pl>

Halina Nieć Center for Legal Aid

E-mail: biuro@pomocprawna.org, porady@pomocprawna.org

Empowering Children Foundation

E-mail: <https://fdds.pl/szukasz-pomocy/>

Phone: **116 111** Child and Youth Helpline (open 24/7)

Phone: **800 100 100** – Phone number for parents and teachers on child safety

Itaka Foundation - Centre for the Search for Missing People

Support line numbers

+48 22 654 70 70 - for calls from landline phones in Poland

+48 22 654 70 70 – for calls from abroad

+48 22 654 70 70 – for calls from cell phones

Caritas Polska

<https://caritas.pl/szukam-pomocy/>

Time of Freedom Foundation

E-mail: biuro@czaswolnosci.pl

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