
Ukraine: Council of Europe warns against risks of human trafficking for those fleeing war. Recommendations to States

The suspected cases of human trafficking and presumed victims among those who flee the Ukrainian war have alerted the Council of Europe's anti-trafficking body, GRETA, which has published a new guidance note to governments today in order to "provide immediate assistance to people fleeing Ukraine and detect potential victims and traffickers" "quickly and without the need for structural reforms". According to Helga Gayer, President of GRETA, the recommendations set out in this Note "should be disseminated broadly in order to reach all frontline actors, be it government representatives, NGOs or volunteers working with refugees". The first need is to ensure the adequate registration of all people, including those who lack papers, so that they can continue their journeys to transit and destination countries. Secondly, there is a need to increase "the presence of specially trained law enforcement officials at border crossing points, train and bus stations", including women officials. There is also a need to establish official and safe travel routes, free-of-charge public transportation or state-funded transportation set up by trusted organisation. Assistance and protection must also be provided by trusted people through a registration and vetting system.

It is also crucial to disseminate "clear information about the risks of being trafficked", and to reinforce 24/7 helplines. And the monitoring of labour inspectors in sectors at high risk of labour exploitation should also be intensified. Even more attention and monitoring are needed when it comes to unaccompanied minors or those travelling without their families. GRETA recalls that the "risks of trafficking in human beings are not limited to the war in Ukraine", and that this guidance note "should be applied in the context of any armed conflict and concern all people in need of international protection, regardless of their nationality".

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