

The most criminologically significant problem of globalization is the differentiation of incomes of the population. The market system does not imply a complete leveling of income, since this stratification is a driving force, an incentive to increase efficiency, however, to ensure social stability in society, the stratification of income must have boundaries of optimal values.

The experience of countries with developed market relations has demonstrated the usefulness and effectiveness of forming a mass layer of people interested in sustainable development, who ensure the satisfaction of their material and spiritual needs with their own labor. In conditions of economic crisis, income differentiation accelerates even more; globalization intensifies the process of income stratification and creates the basis for the growth of crime and the expansion of the scope of criminal economic relations. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a mechanism for implementing not only national, but also interstate policies to reduce the gap in income of the population and to form a stable middle class.

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### HUMAN TRAFFICKING AS A PRESSING GLOBAL ISSUE

Human trafficking remains a pressing global issue that continues to violate basic human rights and exploit vulnerable individuals. Recognizing the urgency of this problem, countries worldwide are enhancing their efforts to combat this crime. The

purpose of this paper is better understanding of the problem of human trafficking and how we can ensure a world where human rights are respected, and exploitation is eradicated.

The fight against human trafficking has gained significant momentum in recent years, with international institutions working in tandem to address this grave human rights violation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) plays a crucial role in monitoring the global situation and reporting progress. According to the UNODC's Global Report on Human Trafficking for 2022, there has been an encouraging 11% decrease in global human trafficking compared to 2019. This decline demonstrates the effectiveness of concerted efforts against this crime.

Human trafficking can mean sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced criminal activities, forced begging, slavery and removal of organs. Other forms include forced marriage and illegal adoption, as well as the transportation of babies for sale.

What about data, it is important to mention that 50% of trafficking victims were trafficked into sexual exploitation and 38% for forced labour; 67% of people trafficked for sexual exploitation are women; 67% of people investigated or arrested for trafficking in persons are men, and 33% women; 46% of trafficking victims are women, 34% are children, and 20% are men [1]. Human trafficking is a highly lucrative business with a lower risk of detection for perpetrators than many other forms of crime. Globally, traffickers make estimated profits of €29.4 billion in a single year.

There are six common myths about human trafficking: it doesn't happen in the EU; only women are trafficked; only adults are affected; it's all about prostitution; people trafficked within Europe only come from outside the EU; traffickers are all men.

Gangs, seemingly legitimate companies, recruitment agencies and even the victims' relatives engage in this crime. Trafficking in human beings is often hidden from view, and the distinction between it and other crimes, such as extortion, money laundering and drug trafficking can be blurred, meaning it is hard for investigators to pick up on it. As a result, a significant number of cases of human trafficking, often involving multiple forms of exploitation, remains unrecorded.

Victims are often fearful of reprisal or ashamed of their plight – because they were tricked into it or they find their situation humiliating – and, understandably, tend not to declare themselves to the authorities. It is estimated that there are five to ten times more victims within the EU than reported.

The internet, social media and digital platforms have given criminals additional advantages, including greater anonymity, a larger audience to be tricked and the possibility to control victims over a greater distance. Traffickers use digital technologies to recruit, exploit, and advertise for victims, to organise their transportation and accommodation and to hide criminal proceeds. For instance, photographs have been used to blackmail people via social media. Some criminals have gone as far as setting up false recruitment agencies online to lure people in. Traffickers also search the internet for requests for work made by jobseekers, which they exploit. Young people are, according to Europol, particularly vulnerable to online exploitation. They tend to have poor 'digital hygiene' and thus leaving much personal information on them available. With people spending more time online since the COVID-19 pandemic started, they have become easier to lure into trafficking, with lower risk to the criminals [2].

Combating human trafficking is one of the priorities of Belarus in the international arena. Belarus is a party to all major international agreements related to the topic of combating human trafficking: The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 15 November 2000; Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of 15 November 2000.

The Republic of Belarus actively cooperates with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on combating human trafficking, and coordinates the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, established in 2010 [3].

The most common form of human trafficking in Belarus is sexual exploitation. Of the 5,679 victims of human trafficking identified in 2002–2018, 5,041 people were subjected to sexual exploitation, 635 to labor exploitation, and 3 to organ removal. Of the total number of victims of human trafficking, 12.5% (710 people) were minors.

For the purpose of sexual exploitation, traffickers transport Belarusian women to the countries of the European Union, the Middle East and some regions of the Russian Federation. The main vector for the export of Belarusian citizens for the purpose of labor exploitation is Russia.

Human trafficking remains a grave violation of human rights that demands the attention and collective efforts of the international community. The global progress made in reducing this crime is encouraging, but there is still much work to be done. By investing in personnel training, strengthening international cooperation, and adopting comprehensive legislation, countries can continue to combat human trafficking effectively. It is only through these concerted efforts that we can ensure a world where human rights are respected, and exploitation is eradicated.

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