



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



STOP RAPE NOW
UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN UKRAINE: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR INVESTIGATORS

Guidelines *Методичні рекомендації*

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FOREWORD

These Guidelines 'Trafficking in Human Beings in Ukraine: Practical Tools for Investigators' were prepared with the aim of strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat trafficking in human beings in the context of contemporary challenges – primarily the full-scale war, which has caused profound socio-economic and security crises.

Trafficking in human beings remains one of the most serious human rights violations, which is rapidly transforming: new forms of exploitation are emerging, the influence of digital technologies is growing, the vulnerability of the population is increasing and victims' access to justice is becoming more difficult. That is why it is important that professionals involved in detecting, documenting, investigating and preventing crimes related to trafficking in human beings are equipped with modern approaches, relevant knowledge and practical tools.

This publication is designed for investigators, operational staff, prosecutors and other professionals involved in combating trafficking in human beings. The guidelines summarise modern methods and approaches to investigating such crimes, take into account the specifics of working in a state of martial law and present tools for effective interagency cooperation and communication with victims.

Particular attention is paid to the analysis of new forms of exploitation, in particular online recruitment, labour exploitation under the guise of volunteering, the use of cryptocurrencies and digital blackmail. Considerable attention is paid to the ethical and legal aspects of working with vulnerable populations, methods of preventing secondary traumatisation and victimisation, as well as algorithms for documenting, collecting digital evidence and ensuring safety at the scene.

The guidelines are based on international standards, Ukrainian national legislation and best practices developed by both law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations. Their content is aimed at enhancing the level of professional training of specialists, strengthening response mechanisms and promoting the effective protection of the rights of victims.

We hope that the publication will become a reliable practical tool for readers in their daily work and will contribute to the promotion of justice, human rights and security in Ukraine.

SECTION 1

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN INVESTIGATING CRIMES RELATED TO TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The full-scale war in Ukraine has significantly transformed not only socio-economic processes, but also the crime environment, in particular the dynamics, nature and mechanisms of trafficking in human beings. Criminal activity, which was previously limited mainly to cross-border exploitation, has taken on new dimensions, forms and characteristics. Hostilities have caused mass displacement of the population, destruction of infrastructure and weakening of the institutional capacity of public authorities, which has significantly complicated the detection, documentation and investigation of crimes related to trafficking in human beings. In these conditions, the vulnerability of potential victims has increased, and the risk of people being exploited under the guise of volunteering, employment, assistance or evacuation has grown. New digital forms of recruitment and control – through social media, messengers and remote communication platforms, as well as the use of cryptocurrencies in the financial support of criminal schemes – have now taken on particular significance. There are a number of challenges, including limited access to victims in combat zones, public distrust of state institutions, low public awareness of the signs of exploitation and the rights of victims and the loss or inaccessibility of body of evidence. These and other factors necessitate a review of traditional approaches to investigation and the development of new algorithms of action in emergency situations. This section systematises current threats and trends in trafficking in human beings in wartime, as well as outlines the circumstances that complicate effective responses to such crimes. Particular attention is paid to identifying modern forms of exploitation, analysing risk factors that increase the vulnerability of the population and identifying barriers to justice.

Section points

- 1.1. Transformation of crime in wartime*
- 1.2. New forms of exploitation*
- 1.3. Vulnerability factors of victims of trafficking in human beings*
- 1.4. Obstacles to identifying victims of trafficking in human beings*
- 1.5. Complications in accessing justice*

1.1. Transformation of crime in wartime

The full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine unleashed by the Russian Federation has caused profound social, economic and security changes that have significantly affected the crime situation in the country. Violations of territorial integrity, mass population displacement, destruction of infrastructure, growing social tensions and a shortage of resources in the law

enforcement system have become factors in the intensification of various forms of criminal behaviour, including transnational, organised and latent crime. Particularly alarming is the growth of threats related to trafficking in human beings, which is taking on new dimensions, forms and methods in the context of war.

The following trends can be observed in the sphere of trafficking in human beings during the war:

1. Increase in the level of latent crime:

– hostilities in a significant part of Ukraine's territory complicate, and in some cases completely prevent, the implementation of operational and search measures and covert investigative (search) activities aimed at properly documenting cases of trafficking in human beings;

– in conditions of loss of control over territories, displacement of a significant number of people and the absence of properly functioning law enforcement agencies, the number of unregistered or uninvestigated criminal offences related to trafficking in human beings is increasing;

– public mistrust, fear of revenge, repression or re-victimisation hinder the disclosure of cases of trafficking in human beings.

2. Increased vulnerability of certain populations:

– there has been an increase in the number of people who have lost their social protection: internally displaced persons (hereinafter referred to as IDPs), refugees, unaccompanied children, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly;

– internally displaced persons, refugees, unaccompanied children, women, persons with disabilities and elderly persons are more likely than others to find themselves in situations of forced labour, sexual exploitation, begging, labour slavery and smuggling;

– loss of documents, income, housing, social environment and psychological maladjustment make these categories of persons particularly vulnerable to recruiters in the field of trafficking in human beings.

3. Digitalisation of criminal activity and changing tools of exploitation:

– sharp increase in cybercrime, including online recruitment of victims of trafficking in human beings through social media, messengers, fake employment and volunteer websites;

– use of the darknet and encrypted communication channels to organise trafficking in human beings, transfer funds and exchange personal data;

– disguising criminal activity as humanitarian, charitable, medical or relocation assistance.

4. Changes in the geography and structures of criminal groups:

– the spread of trafficking in human beings in border regions, in areas where state oversight is weak or non-existent;

– the growing role of organised criminal groups with transnational links that use military aggression and actions to strengthen their positions;

– active use of ‘legal cover’ – employment agencies, logistics companies, evacuation services through which victims of trafficking are recruited and transported.

5. Exhaustion of the law enforcement system:

– partial withdrawal of operational and investigative officers from the National Police of Ukraine to perform territorial defence tasks, leading to a shortage of personnel;

– overloading of National Police of Ukraine units with cases, especially in regions with a large influx of internally displaced persons, refugees and humanitarian operations;

– decreasing intensity and effectiveness of preventive, search, information and analytical work, as well as interagency cooperation.

During the war, **trafficking in human beings**, as a particularly dangerous social phenomenon, **has undergone** a significant **transformation**, going beyond the traditional understanding of cross-border exploitation. Currently, there has been an increase in the number of cases related to new, hybrid forms of this crime:

– *internal trafficking in human beings* – exploitation of Ukrainian citizens within the country, namely in regions that are not under direct threat of hostilities. There is a growing risk of internally displaced persons (especially women and children) being drawn into labour or sexual exploitation under the guise of employment, housing or humanitarian aid;

– *exploitation under the guise of ‘assistance’* – abuse of the trust of people in crisis situations by volunteers, humanitarian workers or persons imitating such activities for the purpose of exploitation. This includes involuntary involvement in labour or sexual services in exchange for food, transport, documents, shelter, etc.;

– *involving individuals in armed conflict*, either through direct coercion (in particular, in cases of involving children in the activities of armed groups or auxiliary structures) or through deception, psychological pressure, manipulation of feelings of guilt or patriotic motives, etc.;

– *exploitation in the field of reproductive services* – coercion into surrogacy, manipulation of pregnant women in the course of evacuation and trafficking in newborn children. These phenomena are particularly relevant in the context of reduced state oversight, chaotic migration, lack of proper birth registration and insufficient protection of women’s rights;

– *use for the purpose of organ removal* – coercion to donate organs under threat of violence, deception or as a source of additional income; transplant tourism using victims from vulnerable countries;

– *involving children in criminal activities* – the involvement of children in criminal schemes, including for the purpose of theft, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, begging (sometimes causing injury), etc.;

– *trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage* – the sale of women or

girls for marriage, often through international intermediary structures.

In the context of the growing scale and complexity of trafficking in human beings, accompanied by high latency, transnationality and the involvement of organised criminal groups, it is extremely important for the law enforcement system to respond promptly to new challenges. The need to strengthen institutional capacity, intergovernmental coordination and the implementation of specialised countermeasures is of strategic importance. The National Police of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the NPU) plays a special role here, which, despite the significant burden in the field of national security, continues to actively identify, investigate and prevent crimes related to trafficking in human beings, in particular by expanding international cooperation and creating specialised units. In April 2023, the Migration Police Department (hereinafter referred to as the MIPOL) established a special unit for transnational investigations and international cooperation, including on trafficking in human beings. The NPU and MIPOL actively cooperate with foreign colleagues, in particular from Norway, Lithuania and Türkiye, with the aim of exchanging information to conduct investigations. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the MIPOL and the NPU investigated cases of trafficking in human beings among the civilian population, while the Security Service of Ukraine investigated war crimes, including those related to trafficking in human beings. The authorities actively cooperated with foreign governments in numerous international investigations, including with the Czech Republic and Germany, organisation of joint action days with Europol, specifically targeting cybercrime, as well as sending requests for extradition from Georgia and Poland, and the provision of relevant legal assistance. The joint action days were arranged for the purpose of combating cybercrime, recruiting and identifying victims of trafficking in human beings from Ukraine and the People's Republic of China (PRC), including among refugees in European countries. In September 2023, Ukraine and Poland signed a new agreement on the exchange of information between authorities, including on cases of trafficking in human beings.

Analysis of the outlined trends is key to a deep understanding of new risks, modified forms of exploitation and transformed behavioural patterns of both criminals and potential victims of trafficking in human beings in wartime. Identifying and understanding changes enables not only to update methods of operational and search activities and procedural investigations, but also to timely adapt preventive, analytical and interagency approaches to countering this phenomenon. The focus should be on: new recruitment vectors (in particular through digital channels), high-risk social groups (internally displaced persons, children, persons with disabilities and women in crisis situations), as well as the specific conditions for exercising control over victims in conditions of general instability, population displacement and disruption of institutional order.

Conclusions

1. *War as a catalyst for the transformation of crime.* Full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation has led to a profound transformation of the crime situation in Ukraine. The violation of state oversight, destabilisation of social order and forced displacement of population have led to a rapid increase in the risks of both external and internal exploitation.

2. *Hybridisation of forms of trafficking in human beings.* In the current conditions, there is a growing prevalence of atypical, hybrid forms of exploitation masquerading as humanitarian or volunteer activities. Digital tools (social media, messengers and darknet) have become a key tool for recruiting, controlling and financing criminal activities.

3. *Increased social vulnerability.* The war has significantly increased the vulnerability of certain categories of the population, namely internally displaced persons, women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Their limited access to resources, legal protection and social support creates a favourable environment for criminals.

4. *Limited institutional response.* The deployment of police personnel to defence tasks, caseload overload and resource shortages have negative effects on the ability of law enforcement agencies to effectively detect, investigate and prevent trafficking in human beings.

5. *International nature of the threat.* Trafficking in human beings in wartime is increasingly transnational in nature, requiring enhanced inter-state coordination, in particular to identify victims, dismantle criminal networks and properly document international crimes.

1.2. New forms of exploitation

Trafficking in human beings is a multifaceted and transformative social phenomenon that changes under the influence of global and national challenges. In the current context, especially amid full-scale war, criminal practices are actively adapting to new realities.

According to the Law of Ukraine 'On Counteracting Human Trafficking', trafficking in human beings covers the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person for the purpose of exploitation, accompanied by the use of deception, coercion, threats, violence or the exploitation of a person's vulnerable situation. Such actions are recognised as criminal offences in the Criminal Code of Ukraine. In wartime, such actions take on new forms, often disguised as legal or socially acceptable mechanisms.

The current dynamics of digital technology development, global economic instability and the military conflict in Ukraine create conditions for the emergence of new forms of exploitation that often remain outside the traditional mechanisms for combating trafficking in human beings. Criminals are increasingly using digital tools, cryptocurrency transactions and seemingly

legal labour schemes to recruit, control and exploit victims.

1. Digital sexual exploitation and online pornography:

The Internet has become a key tool for recruitment, control and exploitation, especially in the area of sexual violence. Common manifestations of this form of trafficking in human beings include:

- forced online streaming involving victims (including children) on adult platforms, with subsequent sale of the content;
- production of intimate digital content on platforms such as OnlyFans, Telegram channels, etc. in situations where individuals are unaware of the legal consequences or are acting under pressure;
- sextortion (sexual blackmail): obtaining intimate materials through deception, followed by demands for new photos/videos or money;
- exploitation of minors via gaming platforms, social media and streaming services, by way of deception, psychological pressure or financial incentives.

Digital sexual exploitation and online pornography is a transnational, anonymous form of crime that often leaves no physical traces, leaving the victims 'relatively' free.

2. Labour exploitation under the guise of 'volunteering' or 'employment'

A new trend in trafficking in human beings is disguised exploitation in wartime, which often looks like official or semi-legal employment. The main manifestations are:

- physical labour without proper pay, contract or living conditions – common in logistics, construction, agriculture and other spheres;
- exploitation under the guise of volunteering – involvement for 'humanitarian work' without pay or with illegal conditions of detention;
- forced labour in the private sector (care, domestic service) – especially for women in a dependent position;
- involvement in labour in temporarily occupied territories, often under threat of violence or repression.

These schemes are based on abusing the trust of victims, their legal ignorance and exploiting crisis situations related to the loss of documents and limited access to legal assistance.

3. Financing exploitation through cryptocurrencies:

Cryptocurrencies are increasingly being used as a tool to finance illegal activities, including for:

- payment for exploitative 'services', including pornography, 'ordering' victims or transporting them across borders;
- remunerating recruiters and scheme coordinators;
- concealing traces of financial transactions, making them difficult to detect during pre-trial investigations.

The anonymity and irreversibility of cryptocurrency transactions give criminals a sense of impunity and make it impossible to quickly track the

movement of funds.

Typical situations that may indicate trafficking in human beings:

1. *Employment with an unknown location of stay.* A woman contacts a 'recruiter' via a Telegram channel who promises 'volunteer work with good pay and good living conditions' abroad. Upon arrival, her documents are taken away, she is forced to work without days off or pay and her movement is restricted.

2. *Suspicious activity in a shelter or accommodation centre for internally displaced persons.* A middle-aged man posing as a 'volunteer' offers girls evacuation to another region of Ukraine or abroad to European Union countries. Those who agree disappear. Shelter staff do not officially record these movements.

3. *Labour exploitation under the guise of humanitarian aid.* A displaced person agrees to work at the warehouse of a 'volunteer headquarters', where they are promised payment and food. Instead, they are forced to work 14 hours a day without registration, wages or living conditions.

4. *Involvement of minors in sexual online content.* A child left unattended after evacuation meets a 'project moderator' through social media and agrees to be filmed 'as a model'. It later turns out that the content is being sold on paid platforms.

5. *Forced begging.* A woman with a child from the occupied territory is placed in a 'charity shelter'. She is forced to stand on the street with her child and raise money for 'medical treatment', while the money is taken by the 'curator'.

6. *Illegal work through 'charity workers'.* A group of young people with IDP status agree to 'work in construction' for an unregistered person. The workers live in a basement without heating, health care and proper nutrition, and are threatened with deportation for 'illegal residence'.

Conclusions

1. *The emergence of new forms of trafficking in human beings during wartime.* In the context of full-scale war, traditional models of trafficking in human beings are becoming more complex, in particular through digitalisation, pseudo-legal employment channels and the use of financial innovations. Exploitation has become latent, masquerading as legitimate activity.

2. *The dominance of the digital environment in criminal activity.* The Internet, social media, streaming platforms, messengers and the darknet have become tools not only for recruitment but also for direct exploitation (online pornography, sextortion and sexualised violence against children).

3. *Abuse of humanitarian channels.* Criminals actively use the image of a 'volunteer' or 'humanitarian worker' to recruit victims, particularly among internally displaced persons, women and children. Often, such schemes are not officially recorded, making it impossible to identify the victims later.

4. *Labour exploitation under the guise of employment or assistance.* The lack of clear legal mechanisms to control the activities of volunteer or informal labour initiatives leads to the systematic exploitation of displaced persons.

5. *Financial shadowing of trafficking in human beings.* Cryptocurrencies have become one of the main means of financing criminal activities, paying for 'services', remunerating recruiters and legalising income. The anonymity of such transactions seriously complicates investigative actions.

1.3. Vulnerability factors of victims of trafficking in human beings

The full-scale war in Ukraine has caused a deep socio-economic crisis, mass migration, destruction of infrastructure and weakening of institutional oversight. In such conditions, the number of people who found themselves in a vulnerable situation and, accordingly, became easy targets for traffickers has increased significantly. Criminals quickly adapt their schemes to the situation, exploiting humanitarian instability, digital tools and people's lack of basic knowledge about self-protection mechanisms.

1. *Forced displacement: the multidimensional vulnerability of internally displaced persons:*

Internally displaced persons are one of the most vulnerable populations at risk of being trafficked. This is due to a combination of the following factors:

- loss of housing, work, social ties and support systems;
- difficulties in adapting to a new environment, insufficient understanding of legal rights and procedures;
- financial instability, forcing them to accept risky job offers;
- limited access to social services, free legal aid and registration of residence.

Situations where women with children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, teenagers and young people are affected are particularly dangerous. Cases of forced evacuation of children from residential facilities, as well as their removal from temporarily occupied territories to the Russian Federation, which may be accompanied by their further exploitation, also pose a significant threat.

2. *Loss of documents: a tool of controlled dependence:*

As a result of the war, many people have lost documents that prove their identity or confirm their legal status. This factor significantly increases the risk of exploitation:

- it makes legal employment impossible both in Ukraine and abroad;
- blocks access to state and humanitarian support programmes, medical and educational services;
- increases a person's dependence on 'intermediaries' or 'charity

workers' who may involve them in labour or sexual exploitation;

- makes it easier for criminals to use psychological or physical pressure, in particular by withholding documents as a form of control.

Traffickers often use lost or forged documents as a means of keeping victims under control, depriving them of their freedom of movement or the opportunity to seek help.

3. Digital recruitment through social media and online platforms:

Modern trafficking schemes are increasingly being implemented through digital channels. Social media, messengers and online services have become key tools for:

- spreading fake job advertisements ('lucrative job offer', 'volunteer mission', 'childcare' and 'modelling contracts');
- targeting individuals who publicly report financial difficulties, job or housing searches;
- creating fake accounts (with fictitious biographies of charity workers, military personnel, volunteers or businesspeople);
- establishing trusting relationships through dating platforms, gaming environments or Telegram channels;
- using manipulation, blackmail and psychological pressure – especially in cases of sextortion.

Most victims do not identify themselves as exploited or do not realise that they have become part of a criminal scheme. Young people with insufficient digital hygiene are particularly vulnerable.

Conclusions

1. Internally displaced persons are one of the most vulnerable populations, thus often falling victim to exploitation due to loss of housing, job, documents and limited access to social services.

2. The lack of personal documents creates conditions for dependence on third parties or illegal 'intermediaries,' which significantly increases the risks of labour and sexual exploitation.

3. Digital platforms are actively used to recruit victims, in particular through fake job offers, pseudo-charity, deceptive personal contacts and online blackmail.

4. Most new forms of exploitation occur within legalised or semi-public spaces, which complicates the identification of victims and requires updating response methods.

1.4. Obstacles to identifying victims of trafficking in human beings

A significant number of victims of trafficking in human beings remain outside the attention of public authorities and specialised institutions in wartime. This significantly complicates identification, provision of assistance, prosecution of perpetrators and prevention of re-exploitation. The problem is

multi-layered and requires a comprehensive approach.

1. Difficulty in identifying victims of trafficking in human beings

Most victims do not identify themselves as victims or deliberately avoid seeking help. The main factors are:

- fear of reprisals from exploiters (blackmail, threats or physical violence);
- victims' lack of legal awareness that they have been the subject of a crime, or uncertainty about their right to protection;
- psychological and emotional trauma that blocks initiative, apathy, disorientation and maladjustment, post-traumatic stress disorder;
- economic or domestic dependence on criminals (housing, work, food, health care or debt);
- fear of stigmatisation in cases of sexual exploitation, begging or involvement in illegal activities;
- emotional attachment to criminals, who often use romantic or friendly masks.

2. Distrust of law enforcement agencies and official structures

The lack of trust is largely due to:

- negative experiences of interaction with the authorities (refusal to accept reports, disrespectful attitude or formalism);
- fear of secondary victimisation – through repeated interrogations, mediation of cases, condemnation by society or immediate circle;
- belief in the impunity of criminals, especially in cases of international or online exploitation;
- lack of knowledge of procedures, excessive bureaucracy and legal barriers;
- language difficulties for foreigners, stateless persons or those who have returned from abroad;
- lack of transparency and visibility of state assistance, which makes victims more trusting of community or volunteer initiatives.

As a result, most victims of trafficking in human beings do not go to the police or other state structures, but prefer informal sources of assistance (volunteers, acquaintances and charity workers) or remain isolated.

Conclusions

1. The social vulnerability of a significant part of the population caused by armed conflict, internal displacement, loss of documents and housing creates a favourable environment for criminal trafficking schemes.

2. The absence or difficulty of restoring personal documents increases the dependence of vulnerable individuals on third parties, creating conditions for manipulation, forced labour, sexual services or other forms of exploitation.

3. Digital recruitment is becoming widespread: social media, messengers and online platforms are becoming the main channels of influence, in

particular through the use of fake job offers, blackmail, romantic scenarios or gaming/volunteering initiatives.

4. *Insufficient digital literacy among citizens*, especially among young people, IDPs and people in crisis situations, increases the likelihood of becoming a victim of fraudulent or exploitative schemes.

5. *Modern forms of trafficking in human beings are disguised as legal or socially acceptable initiatives*, which complicates the process of identifying victims and requires a rethinking of already existing approaches to prevention, identification and response.

1.5. Complications in accessing justice

The martial law and armed aggression against Ukraine have significantly affected all aspects of law enforcement, greatly complicating access to justice and the effective collection of evidence in cases related to trafficking in human beings.

1. Limited access to justice

Damage to the infrastructure of courts and law enforcement agencies, especially in de-occupied and frontline territories, makes it impossible for citizens to timely appeal to the courts or submit applications to pre-trial investigation bodies.

The displacement or instability of the judiciary due to the evacuation or transfer of judges from dangerous regions leads to long delays and a backlog of unresolved cases.

Logistical and security problems limit the physical presence of victims, witnesses, lawyers or human rights defenders in court proceedings, particularly in areas of active hostilities.

Digital inequality – limited or no access to the Internet makes it difficult to submit electronic applications, statements and participate in remote court hearings.

Distrust of public authorities, exacerbated by information attacks and psychological pressure from the aggressor, discourages citizens from seeking protection and assistance.

2. Complications of the evidence-collecting process

Limited or impossible operational access to the scene due to mining, destruction, occupation or ongoing hostilities.

Loss, destruction or lack of documentary evidence (contracts, receipts) that could prove exploitation.

Problems identifying victims, especially displaced persons or those without documents.

Refusal of victims to testify due to fear, psychological trauma, dependence on exploiters, as well as the threat of re-victimisation and re-traumatisation.

Difficulties in involving witnesses who are in occupied territories or

abroad, requiring international legal assistance, the process of which is significantly complicated during martial law.

The danger of conducting investigative actions in combat zones or frontline territories makes a full investigation impossible.

Conclusions

1. *Martial law has significantly worsened citizens' access to justice*, especially for victims of trafficking in human beings, which in turn leads to impunity for criminals and further spread of exploitation.

2. *The destruction and displacement of justice institutions* leads to a backlog of unresolved cases and a decline in public confidence in the justice system.

3. *The absence or loss of evidence* complicate the proper investigation of crimes, reduce the chances of restoring justice and ensuring that the guilty are punished.

4. *Psychological and security barriers* hinder the cooperation of victims and witnesses with law enforcement agencies, which requires the introduction of additional support mechanisms.

5. *Insufficient development of digital infrastructure* and limited access to the Internet complicate the use of modern technologies to ensure the continuity of the judicial process.

SECTION 2

ALGORITHMS FOR INVESTIGATORS IN DETECTING AND INVESTIGATING CRIMES RELATED TO TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Investigating crimes related to trafficking in human beings is one of the most difficult spheres of law enforcement, requiring a police officer to have a high level of professional training, clear algorithms for action and a humane approach to victims. These issues become particularly relevant in wartime, when the risks of exploitation increase and access to evidence and witnesses is significantly complicated. Law enforcement officers have to operate in conditions of legal uncertainty, information asymmetry, psychological trauma of victims of trafficking in human beings and the growth of the digital component of criminal activity. Below is the systematisation of modern algorithms for investigators at all key stages of detecting and investigating trafficking in human beings – from the initial assessment of a crime report to interaction with other entities and documentation of materials. Particular attention is paid to working with digital evidence, using open sources of information, applying cognitive interviewing to collect sensitive testimony.

Section points

- 2.1. Initial assessment of crime reports*
- 2.2. Initial stage of pre-trial investigation*
- 2.3. Identifying digital evidence*
- 2.4. Using open-source intelligence in investigating crimes*
- 2.5. Cognitive interview with a victim*
- 2.6. Checklists for scene actions*

2.1. Initial assessment of crime reports

According to Article 214(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the CPCU), the basis for initiating criminal proceedings is a statement or report of a criminal offence, as well as the independent discovery of relevant information by an investigator, inquiry officer or prosecutor from any source that may indicate the commission of such an offence. In this regard, authorised persons are required to immediately, but no later than 24 hours after receiving such information, enter the relevant information into the Unified Register of Pre-trial Investigations (hereinafter referred to as the URPI) and initiate an investigation.

Information on the detection of signs of trafficking in human beings can be obtained:

- from operational sources;
- during inspections of companies that provide intermediary services for

the employment of Ukrainian citizens;

- during inspections of dating agencies;
- from the Juvenile Police of Ukraine;
- from the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and the Security Service of Ukraine;
- from the State Migration Service of Ukraine;
- from the State Labour Service of Ukraine;
- from the Ukrainian Interpol Bureau and law enforcement agencies of other states;
- from the Department of Social Protection of the Population;
- from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine;
- from the media;
- from non-governmental and international organisations;
- materials of the operational unit on the conduct of an operational and search case against persons who are suspected of participating in the preparation of a criminal offence¹.

In view of the general digitisation of society, information on signs of trafficking in human beings can also be obtained from online sources.

In accordance with Article 214(4) of the CPCU, an official authorised to receive and register statements and reports of criminal offences (investigator, prosecutor or other authorised official) shall receive and register such a statement or report. Refusal to accept and register a statement or report of a criminal offence is not permitted.

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of 'registration of statements (reports) of crimes' and 'registration of crimes' (which is actually the entry of information into the URPI). Thus, the initial verification of information is an important stage in the work of an authorised official, in particular an investigator. The purpose of such verification is to establish the accuracy of the facts, the signs of a crime and the grounds for entering information into the URPI.

At the same time, it is important to remember the provisions of Article 214(3) of the CPCU, which states that conducting a pre-trial investigation before entering such information into the URPI or without such entry is not permitted and entails liability under the law. As an exception, in urgent cases, the scene may be inspected before the information is entered into the URPI (the information shall be entered immediately after the inspection is completed or a certificate or expert opinion is received).

Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the current CPCU, the pre-trial investigation body shall respond promptly to any appeal or report containing information about a possible criminal offence, in particular

¹ I. Vyshnevskya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. P. 128.

trafficking in human beings. At the same time, registration in the URPI and the start of a pre-trial investigation shall be preceded by a quick assessment of the situation – that is, activities aimed at verifying the information received that indicates the commission of a criminal offence – trafficking in human beings.

Thus, after receiving information about the fact of trafficking in human beings (or independently discovering such a fact), the authorised official shall:

- 1) register citizens' statements or reports;
- 2) conduct a preliminary check and analysis of the information received (verification and assessment of the credibility, completeness, source of origin of the information, etc.) and take measures to clarify the circumstances of the criminal offence;
- 3) make a decision on:
 - entering information into the URPI and initiating a pre-trial investigation – if there are signs of a crime;
 - refusal to initiate criminal proceedings – in the absence of elements of a crime.

Conclusions

1. *The initial assessment of a report of a crime* containing signs of trafficking in human beings *is a key stage* that determines the further effectiveness of the pre-trial investigation. It requires authorised persons to respond quickly, properly classify the information received and strictly comply with the requirements of criminal procedural law.

2. *Regulatory and legal framework*, in particular Article 214 of the CPCU, *establishes the obligation to immediately register statements and reports* of crimes and enter the relevant information into the URPI if there are signs of a criminal offence. Refusal to accept or register such statements is unacceptable.

3. In the context of investigating trafficking in human beings, *the multi-channel nature of information sources* – from operational and search data, materials from other state and international structures to open online resources – is of particular importance. Since these sources may have varying degrees of reliability, the preliminary verification stage is critical, as it minimises the risk of premature or unfounded investigations.

4. *The presence of even partial signs of trafficking in human beings in a report obliges* the investigator or prosecutor not only to assess the risks, but also to ensure the immediate recording of the information received and to implement measures to protect possible victims. Proper initial verification serves not only a procedural but also a preventive function, allowing for the rapid identification of real threats to human life, health or freedom.

2.2. Initial stage of pre-trial investigation

After the information is entered into the URPI, a pre-trial investigation begins. Investigators of crimes related to trafficking in human beings are conditionally divided into two groups at the initial stage of investigation:

Situation 1. A pre-trial investigation is initiated after an investigator, prosecutor (operational unit) directly discovers circumstances indicating the commission of a criminal offence under Article 149 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (CCU), namely:

1.1. Signs of an offence are established as a result of the detention of a person during or after the commission of criminal acts of trafficking in human beings, for example, in the following circumstances:

- a controlled purchase and sale of a person, where the buyers were either operational staff or citizens who voluntarily agreed to assist law enforcement agencies (the victim may be aware of the facts and nature of the measures being taken);

- detention of a suspect by officers of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (hereinafter – SBGSU) while crossing the border independently;

- detention as a result of controlled recruitment and (or) movement of victims across the state border of Ukraine (for example, detention at the border, during placement or boarding onto transport). In this case, the pre-trial investigation begins after the submission of a report by an employee of the operational unit or notification of SBGSU officials. The grounds are the factual data contained in the protocols of operational and search measures (hereinafter referred to as OSM) and annexes thereto or other materials of operational search activities (hereinafter referred to as OSA) (e.g. explanations), in the documents requested and seized in accordance with the circumstances of the detention of suspects².

Main tasks:

- documenting the fact of the detention of the suspect and recording their testimony; searching for, identifying and seizing physical evidence of the commission of a criminal offence;

- identifying and seizing funds obtained as a result of a criminal offence, establishing all the circumstances and accomplices of the criminal offence, as well as witnesses;

- taking measures to secure a civil claim and confiscate property.

In order to accomplish the tasks set, the following procedural actions should be taken:

- 1) organising and conducting a controlled purchase and sale of a person, where the buyers were either operational staff or citizens who voluntarily

² Methods of Investigating Trafficking in Human Beings: a Scheme Album / O. V. Zakharova, O. I. Herasymiv, O. M. Dufeniuk, A. I. Kuntii, S. I. Marko, Y. V. Priakhin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2019. Pp. 29-31.

agreed to assist law enforcement agencies (the victim may be aware of the facts and nature of the measures being taken);

- 2) detention and personal search of an individual;
- 3) inspecting the scene;
- 4) interrogating the suspect;
- 5) conducting searches at the suspect's place of work (residence or other places);
- 6) checking the suspect against criminal records;
- 7) interrogation of witnesses and victims;
- 8) presenting the suspect for identification;
- 9) obtaining permission and conducting temporary access to items and documents (printouts of conversations from mobile operators);
- 10) conducting simultaneous interrogations³.

1.2. Signs of trafficking in human beings were established during the investigation of other crimes, for example, during the investigation of crimes under Articles 146, 150, 150¹, 169, 172, 175, 271, 303 and 304 of the CCU.

Main tasks:

- identifying the victim and ensuring their safety;
- establishing the circumstances and possible witnesses of the criminal offence, the identity of the offender and their role;
- identifying and preserving documents and other physical evidence;
- establishing the consequences of the offence;
- ensuring compensation for the damage caused and possible confiscation of property.

The tasks set are solved by taking a number of procedural actions:

- 1) interrogation of victims and witnesses;
- 2) appointment of forensic examinations (forensic medical, forensic psychiatric, etc.);
- 3) temporary access to items and documents that testify to the circumstances of the criminal offence;
- 4) detention and interrogation of suspects;
- 5) search of the place of work (residence) of detained persons in order to find traces of a criminal offence;
- 6) checking the suspect against criminal records;
- 7) retrieving information from transport telecommunications networks;
- 8) interrogation of the suspect.

Situation 2. A pre-trial investigation was initiated in connection with statements made by victims, their legal representatives or other citizens (relatives):

³ Methods of Investigating Trafficking in Human Beings: a Scheme Album / O. V. Zakharova, O. I. Herasymiv, O. M. Dufeniuk, A. I. Kuntii, S. I. Marko, Y. V. Priakhin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2019. Pp. 29-31.

2.1. Law enforcement agencies were appealed a long time after the exploitation, when the victim was able to free themselves independently or with the help of others (without involving the police).

Main tasks:

- recording all information provided by the victim or their relatives;
- recording traces and consequences of the criminal offence for the victim;

- identifying all participants in the criminal offence and detaining them;
- collecting evidence confirming the fact of trafficking in human beings.

The tasks set are solved by taking the following procedural actions:

- 1) interrogation of victims and witnesses;
- 2) sending a request to verify information about the victim's crossing of the state border of Ukraine;
- 3) conducting a physical examination followed by the appointment of forensic examinations (forensic medical, forensic psychiatric, etc.);
- 4) temporary access to items and documents that testify to the circumstances of the criminal offence;
- 5) detention and interrogation of suspects;
- 5) search of the place of work (residence) of detained persons in order to find traces of a criminal offence;
- 7) checking the suspect against criminal records;
- 8) retrieving information from transport telecommunications networks;
- 9) presenting the suspect to the victim for identification⁴.

2.2. Reports to law enforcement agencies by relatives (or citizens) about the disappearance of a person in circumstances indicating trafficking in human beings, or reports by citizens about suspicious facts that may indicate human trafficking

Main tasks:

- establishing the whereabouts of the victim;
- taking measures to rescue them and ensure their safety;
- establishing the identity of the perpetrator;
- collecting evidence confirming the fact of the criminal offence.

The tasks set are solved by taking the following procedural actions:

- 1) interviewing witnesses (parents, relatives or acquaintances of the victim);
- 2) sending a request to verify information about the victim's crossing of the state border of Ukraine;
- 3) if the seller is identified, detaining and interrogating them;
- 4) searching the place of residence (work or other place) of the suspect;

⁴ Methods of Investigating Trafficking in Human Beings: Scheme Album / O. V. Zakharova, O. I. Herasymiv, O. M. Dufeniuk, A. I. Kuntii, S. I. Marko, Y. V. Priakhin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2019. Pp. 32-33

- 5) checking the suspect against criminal records;
- 6) retrieving information from transport telecommunications networks;
- 7) filing a motion for international legal assistance in criminal proceedings (if the country where the victim is likely to be present at that time has been identified)⁵.

Conclusions

1. *The initial stage of pre-trial investigation* in human trafficking cases determines the effectiveness of further investigative actions and the chances of bringing the perpetrators to justice. A distinctive feature of this stage is the need to respond quickly to the information received, correctly assess the investigative situation and promptly implement measures aimed at collecting and recording evidence, as well as ensuring victim's rights.

2. *Determination of the investigative situation*: detection of a crime by law enforcement officers in the course of operational activities; receipt of statements from victims or reports from citizens; detection of signs of trafficking in human beings during the investigation of other criminal offences. Each situation requires a different algorithm of action.

3. *Goals of the initial stage*: recording initial information, interviewing victims and witnesses, detaining suspects, seizing physical evidence, ensuring the safety of the victim and preventing their re-victimisation.

4. *Procedural actions*. The effectiveness of the investigation largely depends on the timely and proper interrogations, searches, inspections of the scene, temporary access to items and documents, the appointment of expert examinations and the collection of information from telecommunications networks.

5. *Interagency cooperation*. It is extremely important to involve other state structures (SBGSU, Ministry of Internal Affairs, social protection authorities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Interpol) and international legal mechanisms to search for victims, record evidence abroad and detain suspects who may have left Ukraine.

6. *Ensuring the rights of victims*. A key component of the investigation is respect for human rights, ensuring protection, psychological support and preventing secondary traumatisation of victims of trafficking in human beings.

7. *The initial stage of the pre-trial investigation requires the investigator* to be professionally flexible, to strictly comply with the requirements of the CPCU and to have a deep understanding of the specifics of the crime of trafficking in human beings. A comprehensive approach to recording the circumstances of the offence, competent planning of investigative actions and interaction with other entities are the key to an effective investigation and

⁵ Methods of Investigating Trafficking in Human Beings: a Scheme Album / O. V. Zakharova, O. I. Herasymiv, O. M. Dufeniuk, A. I. Kuntii, S. I. Marko, Y. V. Priakhin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2019. Pp. 33–34.

the subsequent prosecution of those responsible.

2.3. Identifying digital evidence

Given that modern digital technologies, in particular the Internet, are currently being used as a tool for expanding criminal activities in the field of trafficking in human beings, below are typical digital traces as objects of forensic investigation that may contain information about the criminal offence.

2.3.1. Typical traces of the use of tools in computer technology

Hardware: personal computers, laptops and netbooks, tablets, mobile phones, smartphones, SMART TVs, photo and video recording systems, all-in-one computers, routers, etc.

Software:

- recruitment of potential victims (specially created websites, computer social media and notice boards);

- communication (e-mail, chats, instant messengers, IP telephony and other multimedia means of communication, ensuring anonymity (proxy servers (HTTP, SOCKS, CGI), Darknet (Tor, 2IP), secure transmission of information on the network (encryption tools);

- control and exploitation (online porn studios, network storage (clouds, peer-to-peer, FTP and video hosting), websites providing sexual services, organ sales, etc.);

- obtaining funds from the exploitation of victims (e-money, platforms that can be used for legalisation, etc.)⁶.

2.3.2. Typical traces in mobile computer devices with telephone functions (phone and address books, diaries with lists of meetings and tasks, messaging services (SMS, MMS, e-mail), voice recorders, cameras and video cameras, multimedia players, etc.).

Phone functions that need to be examined:

- phone and address books;

- notes with lists of meetings and tasks;

- notebook;

- event reminders;

- short text messages in electronic communications networks (SMS – Short Message Service);

- short multimedia messages containing full-colour images, photos, melodies and video clips;

- text and multimedia messages from various apps (Viber, WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.).

Social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) should be

⁶ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. P. 139-140.

investigated for information about where the suspect studied, where they live, what city they are from, where they work, date of birth, as well as information about places and events they have visited with a clear location, examine photos, user's 'friends', family, marital status and since when and user's posts;

- sports apps such as Runtastic, Nike + Running and others (date, time, user location displayed on OSM satellite maps);

- message log, where system messages that the user may have missed are stored;

- voice recorder, where recordings are stored;

- apps with a conversation recording function;

- photo gallery (depending on the phone's features, you can get information on each photo, like the exact location, date and time of the photo), where photos taken by the user or sent to the user are stored, as well as screenshots, animations and video recordings. You can also view hidden and recently deleted photo collections;

- calendar, where reminders about events and meetings are stored;

- e-mail – contains digital messages of any content (text documents, audio and video files, archives and programmes);

- browsers (history of visited websites and saved tabs, etc.);

- a mobile taxi service app, where you can get information about past trips, namely the exact location with the specific address of the app user's pick-up and drop-off points and the driver's details, as well as information about planned future trips;

- a mobile app for rail and air services, where you can get information about both the history of previous trips and current trips of both the app user and other persons for which tickets have been issued, particularly information about the date of travel, place of departure and arrival, train or flight number, seat in the carriage or aircraft and personal data of ticket holders;

- *#06# – using this combination, you can find out the IMEI (smartphone identification number)⁷.

Conclusions

1. *Digital traces are key evidence* in human trafficking cases, as most stages of this crime: recruitment, communication, control, displacement, exploitation and profit-making, leave a digital trace that can be recorded and analysed.

2. *Computer equipment, mobile devices and online services* are the main sources of information that can confirm involvement in a crime or reflect the circumstances of trafficking in human beings. These include smartphones, laptops, social media, messengers, payment platforms and online booking

⁷ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. P. 140–142.

and transport services.

3. *Smartphones contain the largest amount of potentially important digital evidence*, such as contacts, messages, e-mails, photo and video files, geolocation data, movement history, notes and access to social media accounts.

4. *Particular attention should be paid to anonymous digital channels*, encryption, the use of TOR networks, proxy servers and cryptocurrency transactions, which can be used by criminals to conceal their activities.

5. *Professional and timely identification and seizure of digital evidence* requires close cooperation with cybersecurity experts and the use of specialised software.

6. *Digital traces shall be recorded and analysed under the CPCU* in order to ensure the admissibility of such evidence in court proceedings and to avoid its distortion or loss.

2.4. Using open-source intelligence (OSINT) in investigating trafficking in human beings

The main areas of influence of the online space on human trafficking include:

– *recruitment through social media*. Human traffickers actively recruit potential victims through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc., using fake accounts that offer a wide range of opportunities. Young people and individuals seeking employment or means of financial improvement are particularly vulnerable;

– *forum and messenger platforms*. Criminals use closed forums, chats and messengers such as Telegram, WhatsApp, Viber, Signal, etc. to organise and operate criminal groups, where coordination between members of the criminal group takes place, as well as active correspondence regarding various forms of trafficking in human beings;

– *online exploitation*. Potential victims are often forced to create pornographic material or participate in webcam businesses that operate on closed online networks.

– *the Dark Web*, which is part of the World Wide Web, can only be accessed using specific software, authorisation or a specially configured browser. In the so-called dark web, criminals can remain anonymous, which makes human trafficking even more dangerous and difficult to track⁸.

Given the above aspects, increasing attention is being paid to the introduction of modern investigation methods. One such innovative approach is the use of open source information (OSINT). To ensure the effective and lawful application of this method, the Berkeley Protocol was developed, which

⁸ I. Vyshnevskya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. Pp. 142–143.

has become significant in international law enforcement and investigative practice.

The Berkeley Protocol is the first set of global guidelines on the use of publicly available digital data as evidence in international investigations of human rights violations. The document contains standards for finding, collecting, storing, verifying and analysing content from social media and other open sources, such as:

- photographs, videos and other publications;
- content created by users on social media, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and others;
- satellite image data⁹.

The Berkeley Protocol cycle for open source investigations:

- 1) *online queries* – information retrieval process;
- 2) *preliminary assessment* – determining the need to collect digital information;
- 3) *information collection* – obtaining digital materials from the Internet;
- 4) *preservation* – activities aimed at ensuring the storage and recoverability of the collected information;
- 5) *verification* – assessing the reliability of content and sources of information;
- 6) *investigative analysis* – the process of interpreting data, conclusions and identifying gaps for further investigation;
- 7) *new online query*, etc.¹⁰

There are two types *of online queries*:

- a) search, i.e., finding information and sources using standard search techniques;
- b) monitoring, i.e., identifying new information via systematic and regular review of a set of permanent sources. Investigators shall maintain working lists of websites and profiles to be monitored, which shall include justification for the reasons for monitoring, the person responsible for the process and monitoring intervals. The working list of hashtags and keywords being monitored should be updated on a regular basis.

Preliminary assessment. Before collecting information (content) on the Internet, a preliminary assessment of the materials identified should be conducted in order to avoid excessive data collection. At the same time, it is necessary to adhere to the principles of minimisation and focus of the investigation, as well as to guarantee the inviolability of the right to privacy

⁹ Berkeley Protocol for Investigations Using Open Digital Data. Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association. JURFEM.ua. News of 14 March 2022. URL: <https://salo.li/0586643> (accessed on: 15 July 2025).

¹⁰ Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source / New York and Geneva, 2022. P. 56. URL: <https://salo.li/9158436> (accessed on: 15 July 2025).

when collecting information.

Information can be collected via screenshots, conversion to PDF, file downloads or other forms of recording. Methods for collecting digital content may vary depending on whether it has potential evidentiary value in court proceedings or will only be used as internal working material. In the first case, online data shall be collected in the format it was stored at the time of collection or in a state as close to the original as possible. Any changes, transformations or conversions caused by the collection process shall be documented.

The minimum standard for providing evidence in a case is:

- 1) a uniform resource locator (URL) – an address used to identify and locate a resource on the Internet;
- 2) Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) source code – a text document consisting of elements describing the structure and content of a web page;
- 3) a complete screenshot with the date and time indicated.

Preservation of information. In order for digital material to be accessible and usable, it should be preserved in both the short and long term. In other words, the main purpose of digital preservation is to maintain its accessibility in such a way as to ensure the suitability, authenticity and potential use of such material, in particular in court proceedings. To analyse a digital document, copies shall be created and stored separately so that investigators can work with the copy rather than the original. This minimises the handling of the original and reduces the risk of alteration and damage. IT experts recommend having at least three copies of the data, stored on at least two different types of storage media¹¹.

Verification of information. Verification, i.e., establishing the accuracy and authenticity of information collected online by analysing and comparing it with other information from both open and closed sources. The assessment of materials shall include verification of their content based on any objectively verified information. It is essential to use geolocation data (determining the location of an object or the location from which the recording was made, etc.) and chronolocation data (comparing the dates and times of events)¹².

Investigative analysis is the practice of reviewing and interpreting the information that has been collected to formulate conclusions for further decision-making and the development of working hypotheses. Investigators shall adhere to strict standards to ensure the impartiality, relevance and accuracy of the data and conclusions contained in analytical materials, and take measures to protect confidentiality and other aspects of human rights,

¹¹ Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source / New York and Geneva, 2022. Pp. 60–62. URL: <https://salo.li/9158436>

¹² Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source / New York and Geneva, 2022. Pp. 63–66. URL: <https://salo.li/9158436>

especially when working with personal information.

The most common types of analysis are:

- comparative analysis of images/videos – the process of comparing the features of objects, persons and/or locations with other unknown and/or known objects that have been recorded by different cameras from different angles, in view of image quality, lighting, etc.;

- spatial analysis involves studying various objects and landscape data and verifying them against maps or other geographic systems;

- social media analysis – mapping and recording relationships between people, groups, organisations, URLs, etc.;

- incident mapping – an analytical method used to establish temporal and geographical links between different incidents and events. It may also include mapping (profiling) other events related to the crime, such as statements by the alleged offender specifying the place and time;

- mapping the structure of criminal offences: type of offence, behaviour of the offender or victim, etc.¹³

Tools for collecting and analysing information from open sources that can be used by investigators:

Maltego is a tool designed to analyse data and visualise connections between different objects, such as websites, domain names, e-mail addresses, IP addresses, social media profiles and other digital identifiers. With Maltego, you can quickly transform disparate information collected from open sources into visual graphs and diagrams that reveal hidden patterns, chains of related resources, points of intersection between different elements.

BigDataPeople 2 is a tool for solving OSINT tasks based on big data, which comprehensively analyses the public information space and digital traces using the latest advances in generative artificial intelligence (proposed by Artelligence, a Ukrainian IT company which develops unique AI technologies and is involved in OSINT projects). The product analyses data from social media, messengers, marketplaces and other open sources based on search queries and the use of machine learning algorithms helps structure and unify it.

IntelligenceX is a search and analytical tool focused on working with open data (OSINT) and closed sources of information, such as the darknet, public and private databases, forums, social media, etc. Its main purpose is to provide access to historical and current data for investigations related to cybercrime, fraud, security breaches, as well as to ensure transparency and protection¹⁴.

¹³ Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations A Practical Guide on the Effective Use of Digital Open Source / New York and Geneva, 2022. Pp. 66–67. URL: <https://salo.li/9158436>

¹⁴ Analytical Report on Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Ukraine. K. A. Borozdina, V. O. Bulavin, H. H. Zhukovska, O. V. Rykun, K. B. Levchenko. Kyiv. Private Entrepreneur A.T. Moroz, 2025.

Conclusions

1. *The use of open-source intelligence (OSINT)* in human trafficking investigations opens up new opportunities for identifying, documenting and analysing digital traces of criminal activity. In a situation where a significant part of the recruitment, coordination and exploitation of victims takes place online, investigative actions shall adapt to the digital environment and be based on the latest technological tools.

2. *The Berkeley Protocol is an international benchmark* for the lawful and effective use of open sources in criminal proceedings. It establishes the stages of OSINT investigation – from information collection to verification and preservation, which contributes to the formation of a body of evidence admissible in court. The standards for verification, documentation and preservation of digital materials, which allow the authenticity of information to be preserved, are of particular importance.

3. *The use of specialised OSINT analytics tools* (Maltego, BigDataPeople 2, IntelligenceX, etc.) allows not only to identify the online activities of criminals, but also to map criminal connections, track exploitation routes and construct a comprehensive forensic picture.

2.5. Cognitive interview with a victim

A cognitive interview is a psychologically validated questioning technique designed to maximise the recall of events from the memory of a witness or victim without suggestion or additional trauma. It is particularly effective in situations where testimony is crucial and the events were stressful or traumatic.

Stages of a cognitive interview:

- *initial identification:* analysing circumstances that may indicate signs of trafficking in human beings (lack of documents, control over the person, fear, dependence, confusion and signs of exploitation);

- *establishing contact:* ensure safe conditions, introducing oneself, explaining the purpose of the conversation, assuring confidentiality and taking into account the gender/age of the interpreter.

- *explaining the format of the interview/questioning:* explain that any information is important, even if it seems insignificant at first glance. Ask to express their thoughts aloud.

- *main part:* structured conversation using cognitive interviewing (examples of questions are given below).

- *conclusion:* assure support, give the opportunity to contact again and provide contact details of support services.

- *assessment of information:* establishing the circumstances of the

criminal offence under Article 149 of the CCU, qualifying characteristics, preparing procedural documents.

For a successful interrogation of the victim, the following rules should be followed:

- it is desirable that the interrogation of a female or minor victim be conducted by a female investigator (a male victim should be interrogated by a male investigator);

- adhere to the principle of 'do no harm';

- conduct the pre-trial investigation by the same investigator – this will help establish mutual trust with the victims;

- carefully plan and prepare a list of questions to be asked during the interrogation;

- analyse all factors that may have an individual or general impact on victims: racial, religious, social, cultural, gender and ethnic differences;

- establish an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust between the investigator and the person being questioned. The victim should understand that the investigation (search) is being conducted by a professional who is well-informed about human trafficking proceedings;

- show respect for the victim, accompanied by sympathy, but not pity.

- use optimal approaches to minimise distress;

- provide the victim with comprehensive information about their rights and the course of criminal proceedings. Particular attention should be paid to the timely filing of a civil claim¹⁵.

Typical list of questions for interviewing victims of trafficking

Questions concerning the recruitment stage of the victim:

1. Was the first contact between the victim and the traffickers voluntary? If so, who initiated this contact?

2. If the contact was not voluntary, was the victim coerced, threatened, subjected to violence or blackmailed?

3. Where and when did the first contact take place?

4. What was the method of contact – was it an advertisement, personal contact directly with the trafficker, contact with a third party or through digital technology?

5. What means of communication were used?

6. Did the victim know what they would be participating in?

7. Did the victim have any idea that the intended purpose was to provide sexual services or other forms of exploitation; was criminal activity, adoption, labour exploitation, use in armed conflicts, organ/tissue removal or donation mentioned at any stage of the recruitment process?

8. If the purpose of the recruitment was to provide sexual services, what

¹⁵ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. Pp. 162–163.

form was discussed: on the street, in a brothel, on call or online?

9. Was the victim misled about the real purpose of 'employment'? If so, what exactly was promised to the person: legal work (e.g. office work) or was work related to the sex industry, such as stripping or working as a waiter/waitress in a strip bar, immediately agreed upon?

10. Was the person told that after leaving Ukraine, they would be met and accommodated by other people?

11. How was the financial side of the matter organised? Did the victim pay money in advance or was there an agreement to pay on credit?

12. If a debt scheme was used, how much time was the person given to repay the debt?

13. Did the victim pay for a passport, visa or transport costs, or did they agree to repay the money spent on this later?

14. Did the victim visit any government agencies or foreign missions to obtain documents? If so, can they name or describe the officials who dealt with them; did any of these officials from state institutions or foreign missions know about the intended trafficking?

15. How were the funds paid, directly to the traffickers in the destination country or via bank transfer to the country of origin/third country?

16. Were there any discussions about paying additional money for services in the destination country, such as renting a room in a brothel, accommodation or advertising costs?

17. Do human traffickers know the home address or any other information about the victim's family and relatives; did they claim to know this information before the trafficking?

18. Was any information provided about the length of time the victim would be away and the route they would take?

19. Were the victim's family and friends aware of these events?

20. Did the victim's family or another person who had control over the person receive money or other valuables for the victim?

21. Was the victim subjected to sexual, physical or psychological violence, or were they illegally held in isolation prior to being transported?

22. Were there any witnesses to any of the above events? If so, please provide all details.

23. What was the age of the victim at the time, were they under 18 years of age? If so, did any of the traffickers know about it?

24. Did the victim meet other victims of trafficking in human beings at any stage of the recruitment process; do they know their names and contact details; can they describe them or do they know their ages?

25. Does the victim have information about any other traffickers? If so, how many were there, was he/she aware of their roles in the trafficking

process, can he/she provide verbal descriptions of recruiters¹⁶?

Questions concerning the victim's work (labour exploitation)

1. What type of work did the victim perform (working hours; breaks; days off; amount of pay)?

2. Were any records provided regarding pay, deductions, changes in salary or amounts? If so, for what exactly?

3. What were the victim's working conditions (workplace organisation) and where exactly did they work? Did they have to travel to get to work?

4. How often and who supervised the work? How did the supervisor treat the workers?

5. Were workers forced to work against their will?

6. What were the roles and responsibilities of the supervisors and employers?

7. How many people worked with them?

Questions regarding other working conditions of the victim:

1. How many hours a day did they have to work?

2. Sleeping conditions (where they slept): on beds or on the floor, daily routine, were they allowed to sleep longer than usual, what would happen if the victim slept longer than usual or during the working day?

3. Were there any instances when the victim told their 'owner' that they did not want to work, and what was the response of the employers?

4. Did the victim pay for accommodation?

5. How many meals did the person have a day, at what time, were they allowed to eat at any time chosen by the victim, did they have to pay for food, could they buy it from someone other than the employer, did they charge money for it, did they deduct it from their pay?

6. Did they have to ask permission to eat? If so, who did they have to ask, what happened when someone ate without permission, did they have to hide their food, did anyone give them food secretly?

7. Did anyone ever get sick, were sick people allowed to stop working, who did they have to ask about this, was anyone forced to work when they were sick, did the victim see a doctor, who took them to a doctor, how soon after the victim asked for medical assistance was it provided, and what was the name and location of the doctor¹⁷?

Questions regarding forcing the victim to work:

1. Were any threats made against the victim in the event that they left their work? If so, then how, did anyone help the employer intimidate them,

¹⁶ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. Pp. 168–169.

¹⁷ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. P. 170.

were they threatened with being reported to the police and immigration authorities if they disobeyed or tried to leave?

2. Was there a minimum amount that the victim had to earn per 'working day' (e.g. during online fraud or the provision of online sex services)? If so, what was the punishment for 'earning' less than that amount?

3. Were there any fences or walls around the premises where the victim was held, were the locks on any doors changed, were the doors locked from the inside or outside, did the victim have a key, who had the key, were the doors kept open or closed, who locked the victim in?

4. Was there any explanation for the physical barriers, did the victim ever think about trying to leave, did they ever ask for permission to stop working, and if so, whom did they ask?

5. Were there any threats to the victim's family? If so, who made the threats and what exactly was said?

6. Was anyone responsible for supervising the workers to ensure their detention, and if so, who? Were these people armed, did they use violence in the facility where the victim was held, did they use physical violence against anyone, did they threaten anyone for refusing to perform a particular task?

7. Were there any known cases of the murder of workers by 'owners', or were there any instructions on what to say to the police if the victim was detained, etc.?

Questions aimed at establishing the details of any form of violence characteristic of these criminal offences (physical and psychological)

1. When did the acts of violence occur and how many times (specific dates, if possible; mention of important events to approximate the time if specific dates cannot be established)?

2. Where did it happen (full description of the premises; layout of the room, bed, sofa, etc.; furniture, etc.)?

3. What was the specific nature of the act of violence and a full description of the injuries caused, were contraceptives used?

4. What was said to the person during the act of violence or when threatened with violence, who said it, were weapons (which ones) or other objects that could be used to inflict blows used?

5. Under what circumstances did the act of violence take place: was it done purely for sexual gratification, or was it sexual or physical violence or to intimidate, coerce or teach a lesson; was it punishment because the person did not comply with the criminals' demands or tried to escape?

6. Did the victim show their refusal or disagreement through gestures or words? If so, how exactly did this happen? Was the attacker injured during the act of violence? If so, describe these injuries.

7. What was the person's physical condition after the act of violence: concussion, external or internal bleeding, nausea, etc.?

8. Did the victim tell anyone else about what happened to them? If so, a detailed description of that person and their response is required.

9. Did the person seek medical assistance for these injuries and was such assistance provided? If so, detailed information about the doctor, hospital, clinic, as well as whether any records were made, etc. should be obtained.

10. What was the person's mental state, were they afraid during and after the act of violence?

11. What was said to the victim or what happened afterwards? Were they threatened with further violence? If so, under what circumstances? Did the perpetrator express regret about this?

12. Detailed description of the attacker; any distinctive physical characteristics: tattoos, pierced ears, scars or marks, distinctive voice, speech or accent, smell or perfume, condition of teeth and nails, etc.

13. In cases involving organ/tissue removal or donation, all medical details related to the location where the organs were removed; which organs were removed, the location and description of the medical equipment and personnel involved, any related financial transactions, who was paid, details related to the recipients, etc.

14. Were there any witnesses to any of these events? If so, please provide all details¹⁸.

Interrogation of minors in criminal proceedings concerning trafficking in human beings

In national legislation, the interrogation of minors is regulated by Article 3(1)(12),(13) of the CPCU; Articles 223–227 of the CPCU and Article 38 of the CPCU. As a general rule, interrogations of minors are conducted by investigators and inquiry officers duly authorised to investigate relevant criminal offences under Article 216 of the CPCU. In accordance with Article 484(2) of the CPCU, if criminal proceedings are conducted against a minor, or if they are conducted against several persons, at least one of whom is a minor, it shall be conducted by an investigator or inquiry officer specially authorised by the head of the pre-trial investigation body to conduct pre-trial investigations involving minors. At the same time, the possession of relevant psychological or pedagogical education by an investigator and inquiry officer is not a mandatory criterion for their assignment to juvenile cases.

On 7 February 2023, joint Order No. 493/5/67/ 32 was signed by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the Prosecutor General's Office 'On the introduction and implementation of a pilot project on the involvement of psychologists in criminal proceedings involving minors through regional/interregional free legal aid centres'.

¹⁸ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. Pp. 163–172.

According to this order, in Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Chernihiv oblasts and Kyiv, the Coordination Centre will introduce a Register of Psychologists, and investigators, inquiry officers, prosecutors, investigating judges and courts will be able to involve psychologists through the regional centre on the basis of a relevant request. Moreover, within the framework of the pilot project, it is standard practice of ensuring that a child psychologist works with the minor on their psychological state, resulting in written recommendations provided on the possibility of conducting investigative (procedural) actions with them, as well as conducting procedural actions with the participation of minors (witnesses or victims) without undue delay after the events that became the subject of the proceedings, but with due regard to the psychological state of the minor and the psychologist's recommendations on the possibility of conducting procedural actions with them¹⁹.

Children shall be questioned in legal proceedings in accordance with international standards that protect children's rights, in particular their best interests and psychological and emotional safety.

Professionals to interview (question) child victims shall be familiar with the RAPID psychological first aid methodology. The RAPID-PFA model (RAPPORT – ASSESSMENT – PRIORITISATION – INTERVENTION – DISPOSITION) was developed at Johns Hopkins University. The name of the model contains the first letters of the measures taken during the psychological first aid.

- R (rapport) – establishing contact, rapport, using reflective listening. In child interviews, the child may not always be able to talk about the event, so games, fairy tales, songs, lullabies, building blocks, cards, chess, colouring books, etc. are used;

- A (assessment) – assessment. At this stage, after communicating with the affected child, it is necessary to conclude on the level of severity of their stress;

- P is interrelated with A. At this stage, it is necessary to understand who should be helped first.

- I (intervention), i.e., during the interview, the child's acute stress level should be stabilised and reduced;

- D (disposition) – disposition, support. This involves observing the child who has just been interviewed. How are they feeling? Will they be able to function properly again? If not, what further assistance is needed²⁰.

¹⁹ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. Pp. 174–175.

²⁰ I. Vyshnevskaya, O. Zakharova, O. Marin, O. Savaida, R. Shekhavtsov *Combating Human Trafficking in Times of War in Ukraine: Methodological Recommendations* / edited by O. Marin. Lviv: Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, 2024. P. 176.

Investigators or juvenile police officers shall use the **'Green Room' method when interviewing (questioning/surveying) a child, taking into account their age and psychological characteristics**. The purpose of the 'Green Room' method is to obtain reliable testimony from the child during the interrogation/interview while minimising and preventing further trauma to their psyche. The 'formula for effective interaction with a child' has the following components: 'safe place', 'safe adult' and 'child in safety'.

A **'safe place'** is a place that:

- is predictable for the child (the child has received complete information about where they will be, what will happen to them, what rights they have, how long the interrogation/interview will take, who will be present during the interrogation/interview and what role the persons present will play); the child also realises what will happen to them after the interrogation/interview (it is important to provide the child with complete information about the entire interrogation process in order to give them a sense that they can control what will happen to them during the interrogation/interview; a sense of control over one's own life minimises stress, enhances a sense of security and activates the part of the child's brain responsible for recalling events that have taken place);

- prevents violence against the child (no shouting, threats, coercion or manipulation);

- is safe for the child's physical condition (not cold, not hot, comfortable lighting, friendly atmosphere, few strangers, objects, etc. in the room);

- is as well-prepared as possible for interaction with the child (age-appropriate furniture, pencils, paper, toys, etc.).

A **'safe adult'** is an adult who:

- knows and takes into account the age and individual characteristics of the child and their psychological state during the interrogation/interview;

- interacts with the child 'at eye level', including physically, by maintaining eye contact rather than communicating while looking down at the child from above;

- is able to recognise the child's needs and is able to satisfy them at a basic level during the interrogation/interview;

- ensures the protection of the child's rights and interests;

- is friendly towards the child and shows empathy.

'Child in safety' means that the child:

- feels protected and is physically calm;

- maintains control over the situation (understands where they are, what will happen, who they can turn to for help and ask for a break (to go to the toilet or drink water));

- can manage their emotions and safely recount events that happened to them earlier;

- has an attentive and caring adult nearby (legal representative,

psychologist, child services representative or lawyer);

- is safe from objective and subjective threats.

The interrogation/interview of a child by a juvenile police officer or investigator should be conducted in accordance with specific phases (stages), where each performs a certain function. The following **phases (stages) of interrogation/interview are proposed**:

- *preliminary* – planning the date of the interrogation, taking into account the individual characteristics of the child and the specific situation;

- *introductory* – getting to know the child (establishing contact), explaining the purpose of the meeting and the roles of the persons conducting the interrogation/interview and those present during the interrogation/interview;

- *free narration phase* – provides the necessary vector for the questions that will be asked during the next phase of detailed interview. At this stage, the child should talk about the course of events freely and at their own pace. It is important to initiate free narration with a question that will encourage the child to talk;

- *detailed interview phase* – supplementing and organising the events described by the child during the free narration phase in order to clarify the circumstances of the case. It is desirable that the psychologist play an active role in this phase, asking the child about what interests the juvenile police officer or investigator the most;

- *final phase* – after the interrogation/interview, it is recommended to ask the child how they feel, whether they have any concerns or requests. At the end, talk to the child about neutral, emotionally unburdensome topics to reduce their level of tension. The final phase is important for protecting the child's mental health²¹.

Conclusions

1. *Investigating crimes related to trafficking in human beings requires clearly structured algorithms covering all stages, from initial verification of information to referral of the victim to the support system.*

2. *The effectiveness of an investigator's initial response depends largely on their ability to quickly assess the situation, identify signs of a crime and promptly organise cooperation with other entities.*

3. *Digital traces (traffic, correspondence, money transfers and digital photos/videos) are a key source of evidence in modern forms of trafficking in human beings, particularly in the online environment, which necessitates special skills in collecting, preserving and documenting such evidence.*

4. *The use of modern open-source intelligence (OSINT) tools, in*

²¹ Guidelines on Organising Work with Children Using the 'Green Room' Method for Investigators and Juvenile Police Officers. Kyiv. 2021. Pp. 19–31. URL: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19rmVAFm6oFEGK3_DgDibxNlxaieFsuxD/view?pli=1

particular the Berkeley Protocol, enhances the analytical capabilities of investigators and facilitates the establishment of digital exploitation routes.

5. *Cognitive interviewing as a method of questioning victims allows them to reconstruct true memories without re-traumatisation*, while ensuring the quality of the information obtained.

6. *Coordinated interaction between the investigator and operational units, the prosecutor and social services* is a prerequisite for effective investigation and protection victims' rights.

7. Investigating crimes of trafficking in human beings requires not only procedural literacy, but also *attentiveness to the traumatic experiences of victims*.

2.6. Checklists for scene actions

Recognising and responding to cases of trafficking in human beings directly at the scene requires clear, rapid and coordinated interaction. Law enforcement officers shall act in accordance with established algorithms, remaining attentive to the needs of victims while ensuring that the crime is properly documented. The use of checklists promotes consistency in actions, minimises the risk of missed steps and enhances the effectiveness of the investigation.

1. Actions at the scene:

- assess the situation for possible signs of trafficking in human beings (isolation, control of movement, fear, lack of documents, etc.);
- ensure personal safety, the safety of victims and witnesses present;
- conduct an initial interview with the person who may be a victim (without pressure, in accordance with ethical standards);
- check documents, establish identity;
- identify signs of vulnerability (age, gender, citizenship, disability and emotional state);
- offer temporary protection and escort to a safe place;
- notify the relevant social services, services for children's affairs and juvenile police;
- if necessary, call for medical assistance or an interpreter.

2. Preparation of materials:

- immediately enter the information into the URPI under Article 149 of the CCU;
- draw up a scene report inspection (photo and video recording, description of the situation);
- draw up reports on the interrogation of the victim, witnesses and potential suspects in the case;
- record and seize physical evidence (mobile devices, documents, notebooks and photos, etc.);
- draw up evidence seizure reports in accordance with procedural

requirements;

- obtain written consent to provide assistance and protection;
- send a request to the Ministry of Social Policy to establish the status of a trafficked person;
- ensure the collection of evidence indicating recruitment, displacement, exploitation or loss of control over a person.

3. Referral of the victim:

- notify the anti-trafficking coordinator in the region, relevant NGOs and the free legal aid centre;
- organise access to medical, psychological, social and legal support;
- facilitate placement in a crisis centre, shelter or temporary accommodation;
- provide an interpreter (if the victim does not speak the state language);
- initiate the appointment of a social worker or multidisciplinary team to provide support;
- conduct a risk assessment of re-victimisation, including the risks of retaliation by exploiters, threats to child victims, etc.

Useful resources:

The website of the National Social Service of Ukraine provides guidelines for victims of trafficking in human beings and for officials responsible for granting such status: <https://sal0.li/FFF52D8>

Confidential counselling Hotline numbers:

- 1547** – Government hotline for combating trafficking in human beings;
- 116 123** (mobile) or **0 800 500 335** – La Strada National Hotline;
- 527** (mobile) or **0 800 505 501** – Hotline for combating trafficking in human beings and supporting migrants.

Conclusions

1. Effective response to cases of trafficking in human beings directly at the scene is critical for identifying victims, ensuring their protection and timely collection of evidence.

2. *Coordinated interaction* between the police, social services, healthcare professionals and other entities *enables not only to detect crime, but also to provide comprehensive support to victims*: from first aid to long-term support during the rehabilitation process. It is also important to remember the importance of an ethical approach to victims, respect for human rights and the prevention of re-traumatisation.

3. *The introduction and use of checklists in everyday practice* is not only a tool for the effective work of investigative and operational teams, but also a guarantee of restoring justice and humane treatment of persons who have become victims.

SECTION 3

ETHICAL AND LEGAL BASIS FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN INVESTIGATORS AND VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Effective investigation of crimes related to trafficking in human beings is impossible without adherence to high ethical and legal standards of interaction, which are based on unconditional respect for human dignity, protection of the rights and legitimate interests of victims and targeted minimisation of the risk of re-traumatisation. In such cases, the investigator not only performs a procedural function but also acts as a social mediator between the individual and the state. It is through the behaviour of law enforcement officials that victims form their attitudes towards justice, legality and humanity. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable populations, namely children, women, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBT+ community and internally displaced persons. Such persons require a delicate, attentive and individual approach. Effective communication with them requires not only knowledge of legal instruments, but also developed skills of emotional intelligence, empathy, flexibility and unconditional adherence to the principles of non-discrimination. Interagency cooperation is an equally important factor in a successful investigation. Coordinated work between investigative units and social and medical services, guardianship authorities, free legal aid institutions, psychologists, representatives of local authorities and non-governmental organisations ensures not only the collection of the body of evidence, but also the provision of a full range of support to victims, namely medical, psychological, legal and social.

Section points

- 3.1. Basic ethical and legal principles of communication with victims in human trafficking cases*
- 3.2. Informed consent and confidentiality as the basis for protecting the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings*
- 3.3. Features of communication with vulnerable categories of victims*
- 3.4. Cooperation between investigators and organisations and institutions providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings*
- 3.5. Case studies of effective models for coordinating the actions of investigators, social services and non-governmental organisations*

3.1. Basic ethical and legal principles of communication with victims in human trafficking cases

Investigating crimes related to trafficking in human beings requires special training and understanding the specifics of working with victims. Most victims have traumatic experiences that affect their mental state, behaviour

and ability to give consistent testimony. When working with them, it is important to adhere to the principles of humanity, safety, individual approach and confidentiality in order to avoid re-traumatisation and maintain trust.

1. Respect for the views and dignity of the victim

The investigator should communicate without judgement and avoid questions that may blame the victim ('Why did you go there?'). The investigator should use neutral language without derogatory terms ('victim of exploitation' rather than 'prostitute' or 'illegal worker').

2. Safety first

The investigator should ensure physical and psychological safety: avoid contact between the victim and suspects and provide security during court hearings. Before starting the interview, the investigator should check that there is no threat to the victim's life or health (e.g. from a criminal group).

3. Confidentiality

Restrict access to personal data (encryption, separate files). Non-disclosure of information, control to ensure that data allowing the victim to be identified is not published.

4. Awareness

Providing clear information about rights, the investigation process and available assistance. The investigator should explain what will happen at each stage: from the interview to the court proceedings.

5. Voluntary participation

The victim has the right to refuse to answer questions or to stop the interview if they feel unwell or are experiencing severe stress.

6. Individual approach

Take into account the physical and emotional state of the victim, their cultural background and age (use appropriate terms and understandable words).

Cases of re-traumatisation of victims have become widespread, when during investigative actions, while recounting the events that occurred, they experience emotional trauma again. This can lead to certain negative consequences (exacerbation of PTSD, loss of trust in law enforcement, refusal to cooperate further, providing incomplete or contradictory testimony).

Among the ways to avoid re-traumatisation, the following should be highlighted:

- *minimising the number of interviews.* The essence of the principle lies in reducing the number of repeated interviews that force the victim to relive traumatic events. Each new interview may revive emotional pain and trigger feelings of shame or guilt;

- *using video recording of the first interrogation so as not to force the victim to repeat the story.* This principle enables to preserve the original testimony in an unchanged form, thereby helping to avoid the need for

repeated questioning of the victim. The video recording may be used in the investigative process and in court, protecting the victim from re-experiencing trauma and ensuring the evidential value of the testimony;

– *creating safe conditions*. Safety encompasses not only physical security but also psychological protection. The victim must clearly feel that they are not under threat. In practice, this means the absence of third parties, pressure or aggressive wording, as well as the creation of a supportive atmosphere that contributes to reducing stress levels and fostering openness in communication;

– *conducting interviews in specially equipped 'green rooms' or neutral rooms without police symbols*. Interviews should take place in specially equipped rooms with a comfortable interior and soft lighting, free from official symbols, uniforms or attributes. This helps avoid triggers that may remind the victim of danger or coercion and contributes to building an atmosphere of trust;

– *psychological support (from initial psychological assistance to subsequent engagement with a specialised professional)*. A psychologist provides professional support to the victim at all stages of interaction. This includes helping to prepare the person for the interview, monitoring their emotional state during questioning and providing post-traumatic support after the interaction has concluded. This significantly reduces the risk of destabilisation and re-traumatisation;

– *presence of a psychologist during the interview, who can help stabilise the victim's emotional state*. The psychologist may intervene if signs of panic, dissociation or emotional overload are observed, suggesting pauses or grounding techniques and helping to formulate responses without allowing the situation to become traumatic. This creates an additional level of protection for the victim;

– *humane communication*. This principle entails respectful and empathetic interaction. The practitioner should not demonstrate distrust, judgement or pressure. It is important to maintain a calm tone, use simple and clear language and allow the victim sufficient time to respond. Humane communication is key to building trust;

– *avoiding accusatory or overly detailed questions about intimate aspects of exploitation*. An accusatory tone ('Why didn't you...?') may provoke shame or guilt and act as an emotional trigger. Questions relating to intimate details should be asked only to the minimum extent necessary, delicately and with an explanation of why such information is important. This helps avoid feelings of humiliation and additional psychological distress;

– *using open-ended questions ('What do you remember about the incident?' instead of 'Why didn't you run away?')*. Open-ended questions allow the victim to recount events to the extent they feel ready to do so. They do not impose an interpretation and do not trigger a defensive

response;

– *pausing during communication, not rushing, taking into account the emotional state of the victim.* Interviews should not be rushed. If the victim becomes distressed, it is advisable to pause, offer water, allow them to change position or step outside briefly. Attentiveness to the person's condition reduces the risk of overload and helps maintain psychological stability.

It should be borne in mind that the effectiveness of interviewing a victim increases significantly when due consideration is given to such *stages* of the process as conducting the *interview* in accordance with a defined structure:

1. Preparation for the interview includes:

– identify the victim's needs (including whether the involvement of an interpreter or a psychologist is required, and whether support from a social worker is needed);

– make sure that the venue is safe and non-traumatic;

– collect preliminary information to avoid repetition of questions.

2. Interviewing:

The most appropriate method is the forensic interview. This method is also called a 'structured, trauma-sensitive interview'. It is based on the NICHD Protocol (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development), which has been adapted in many countries, and involves:

– rapport building – establishing contact, creating a safe atmosphere and explaining the role of the investigator and the interview process.

Examples of questions and phrases:

'How are you feeling now? Is there anything that could help you feel more comfortable?'

'Before we begin, would you like to ask me any questions?'

'Are you comfortable here? We can change the location or take a break at any time'

'I will briefly explain how our conversation will proceed. Is everything clear to you?'

'It is very important to me that you say only what you remember. If you do not remember something, that is completely normal. Is that okay with you?'

– free narrative – giving the victim the opportunity to recount the events at their own pace, without interruptions:

Examples of questions to initiate the narrative:

'Please tell me what you would like to share about this event'

'Please tell me everything you remember, in the sequence that feels most comfortable for you'

'What is the very first thing you remember?'

'Could you tell me in a bit more detail about what happened?'

'I am listening; you may speak at your own pace'

'If you need a pause, just let me know'

'Please continue when you are ready'

– focused questions – using open-ended and neutral questions to clarify details, without leading statements. These questions should be asked only after the victim has completed their full free narrative:

Examples of open-ended questions about facts:

'What else do you remember about this situation?'

'Could you please tell me more about that place/person/moment?'

'What happened next?'

'How did you realise that...?' (without suggesting the content)

'What did you see/hear/feel at that moment?'

Examples of neutral follow-up questions without pressure:

'What exactly did you mean when you said "there"?''

'Could you tell me, when referring to the person, who that was?'

'You said that you felt "uncomfortable". What exactly made the situation uncomfortable?'

Phrases that should be strictly avoided:

'Why didn't you run away?'

'Are you sure that this is how it happened?'

'You are not mistaken, are you?'

– closure and support – summarising, thanking the victim for their cooperation, explaining the next steps and 'closing' the conversation:

Summarising and supportive phrases:

'Thank you for sharing this information; I understand that this was not easy for you'

'Before we finish, is there anything you would like to add or clarify?'

'How are you feeling now? Do we need to take a pause?'

'I will now briefly summarise what I have understood. Please let me know whether this reflects what you wanted to convey'

'The next steps will be as follows (explain briefly and clearly). Is this clear to you?'

3. After the interview, it is necessary to:

– summarise the main points, thank them for their cooperation;

– explain the next steps in the investigation;

– refer the victim to support services (medical, psychological assistance and shelter).

When conducting the relevant procedure, it is essential to take into account the specific aspects of working with different groups of victims. For example, when communicating with children, age-appropriate language should be used, a teacher or psychologist should be involved and a legal representative should be present; when communicating with women, the risk of stigmatisation and shame and the possibility of choosing a female investigator should be taken into account; when communicating with persons

with disabilities, an accessible format of communication should be offered and physical comfort should be ensured; when communicating with LGBT+ representatives, increased confidentiality regarding gender identity/orientation should be ensured and discriminatory language should be avoided; communication with IDPs should take into account additional trauma related to war and displacement and the possibility of assisting in the restoration of documents.

Conclusions

1. *Communication* between investigators and victims of trafficking in human beings *shall be based on clear ethical and legal principles*, taking into account the deeply traumatic experiences of victims. Failure to adhere to these principles leads to re-traumatisation, loss of trust in the law enforcement system and reduced effectiveness of investigations.

2. The *key principles of interaction* are: respect for the dignity and autonomy of the individual, safety of the environment, confidentiality, awareness, voluntary participation and an individual approach, taking into account age, gender, psycho-emotional state, cultural and social context.

3. *Re-traumatisation can be minimised by* reducing the number of interviews; using video recording of the first interview; applying trauma-informed interviewing techniques; involving psychologists and social workers; creating a safe and neutral environment for communication.

4. *An effective method of working with victims of trafficking in human beings is considered to be a forensic (structured) interview* aimed at reducing psychological stress and building trust. Its use allows reliable information to be collected without violating the person's sense of psychological security.

5. *Working with vulnerable populations requires special training* for investigators and additional conditions: involving interpreters, teachers and legal representatives; adapting language; choosing a professional of the appropriate gender; ensuring physical accessibility and maintaining special confidentiality.

6. *The implementation of basic ethical and legal principles* in the pre-trial investigation process not only improves the quality of the body of evidence, but also gives victims a sense of security, restores their trust in the state and contributes to their social and psychological rehabilitation.

3.2. Informed consent and confidentiality as the basis for protecting the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings

The work of investigators with victims of trafficking in human beings requires not only professionalism in investigation, but also a deep understanding of the ethical and legal principles of interaction with victims. Some of the key principles of this interaction are *informed consent and confidentiality*. These principles not only guarantee respect for human rights, they also help build trust in the law enforcement system, create safe

conditions for communication and prevent re-traumatisation.

1. Importance of informed consent:

Informed consent is a person's voluntary, conscious agreement to undergo a specific investigative, medical or social procedure after receiving comprehensive information about its content, purpose, risks and consequences.

Informed consent is required:

- during the interrogation, interview or psychological examination of the victim;

- when conducting a medical examination or recording bodily injuries (photos, videos);

- for the transfer of personal data to social services, international or human rights organisations;

- for the involvement in assistance programmes – rehabilitation, legal, protective and others.

Forms of consent:

- written – is standard in criminal proceedings, especially for actions that may have legal consequences;

- verbal – can be recorded on video or in a protocol when circumstances do not allow for a signature to be obtained.

2. Stages of obtaining informed consent

2.1. Preparation:

- ensuring a safe, confidential and comfortable environment for interaction;

- involving an interpreter, social worker and, if necessary, a psychologist;

- preparing an adapted form of information in accordance with the age, level of education and emotional state of the victim.

2.2. Provision of information (explanation):

- clearly explain who is conducting the action, its purpose, essence, duration, what data will be collected, where and by whom it will be stored;

- it is important to avoid legal jargon and explain the content in an accessible form;

- it is necessary to explicitly emphasise the observance of confidentiality and the person's right to refuse to answer or to ask their own questions.

2.3. Voluntariness:

- participation in procedural or ancillary measures shall be voluntary (except for mandatory actions prescribed by law);

- it is prohibited to use psychological pressure, manipulation or hidden conditions ('no consent, no help').

2.4. Verification of understanding:

- the investigator must make sure that the victim truly understands what they are consenting to (through control questions);

– when working with children or persons with intellectual or communication difficulties, the participation of a psychologist or educator is mandatory.

2.5. Recording consent:

– written confirmation or video recording of verbal consent is a mandatory element of proper procedural action;

– in the event of further changes in circumstances, consent may be withdrawn or updated.

3. Ensuring confidentiality:

Confidentiality is one of the fundamental standards for protecting the rights of victims. Violating confidentiality can lead to social condemnation, risk to a person's life or health and refusal to cooperate with the investigation.

The main mechanisms for ensuring confidentiality are:

using coded designations in documents (e.g. 'Victim 1') and avoiding disclosure of names;

restricting access to case files to authorised persons only;

secure storage of personal data in registers (passwords, encryption and access restrictions);

mandatory verification of what information will be transferred to third parties (social services, the UN, etc.) only upon victim's written consent;

avoiding the publication in the media of any details that allow the identification of a person.

Conclusions

1. Informed consent and confidentiality are not formal requirements, but key tools for protecting the dignity, safety and autonomy of the victim.

2. Adherence to these principles: strengthens victims' trust in law enforcement agencies; contributes to the creation of a safe and non-discriminatory environment; reduces the risk of re-traumatisation and refusal to cooperate.

3. The process of obtaining informed consent shall be gradual and adapted to specific conditions, taking into account the age, psychological state and language characteristics of the victim.

4. Confidentiality shall be ensured at all stages – from questioning to data storage and transfer, using practical and technological mechanisms of information protection.

5. Violation of confidentiality or failure to ensure the voluntary participation of the victim not only significantly reduces the effectiveness of the investigation, but can also cause additional harm to the person who has been exploited. The implementation of informed consent and confidentiality into the daily practice of investigators is an important sign of ethical responsibility and professional maturity of the law enforcement system.

3.3. Features of communication with vulnerable categories of victims

Victims of trafficking in human beings do not constitute a homogeneous group – each person has unique experiences, levels of vulnerability and needs. Effective communication with them requires an individual, attentive and non-discriminatory approach, guided by the principles of human rights protection, safety, dignity and psychological well-being. Proper consideration of the age, gender, physical, emotional, cultural and social characteristics of the victim is a key factor influencing both the effectiveness of the investigation and the quality of the evidence collected, as well as the victim's willingness to cooperate with the investigation and testify in court.

Particular attention should be paid to members of so-called vulnerable populations who, for various reasons (social, physical, mental, political or others), are at increased risk of re-traumatisation, marginalisation or secondary violence. These include, inter alia, children, women, persons with disabilities, representatives of the LGBT+ community and internally displaced persons. When working with them, investigators shall not only adhere to professional standards, but also demonstrate respect, empathy, and a willingness to provide support at every stage of the process.

1. Children

Features of this category:

- age and psycho-emotional immaturity and limited understanding of events;
- high dependence on adults and susceptibility to be influenced by others;
- traumatic experiences cause fear, withdrawal and impaired trust in the victim.

Recommendations for investigators:

- interrogations are conducted exclusively in the presence of a psychologist, educator or legal representative;
- forensic interview techniques are used (gradual establishment of contact, adapted language and no pressure);
- creating a comfortable environment ('green rooms', neutral interior and minimisation of formalities);
- video recording the first interview to prevent repeated questioning;
- after interaction, referral of victims to care, psychological support and rehabilitation services.

2. Women

Features of this category:

- are more likely than others to be victims of sexual or labour exploitation;
- face double trauma – from the crime itself and from social condemnation;

- are at high risk of developing PTSD, feelings of guilt and isolation;

Recommendations for investigators:

- ensuring maximum confidentiality (limited presence and possibility to choose the investigator's gender);
- avoiding stigmatising or accusatory questions;
- involving a crisis psychologist or counsellor during the first contact;
- mandatory information about available support resources (shelter, legal and medical assistance, etc.);
- allowing time for decision-making without pressure or haste.

3. Persons with disabilities

Features of this category:

- physical (motor, sensory) or intellectual impairments;
- often dependent on outside assistance, which increases the risk of exploitation;
- may not understand legal procedures.

Recommendations for investigators:

- ensuring physical accessibility (premises, transport);
- engaging sign language interpreters, alternative communication specialists and adapting materials;
- simple and clear wording of questions and constant verification of understanding;
- cooperation with social institutions and healthcare facilities to accompany the person at all stages;
- preventing restrictions on rights due to disability;
- adherence to the principle of full participation.

4. Representatives of the LGBT+ community

Features of this category:

- high risk of double discrimination – both as victims and based on gender/sexual identity;
- often hide their identity for fear of condemnation or ridicule;
- often have negative experiences of interaction with state institutions.

Recommendations for investigators:

- complete non-discrimination and unconditional respect for self-determination;
- protecting privacy – especially regarding sexual orientation or gender identity;
- avoiding prejudiced or stigmatising statements or behaviour;
- recognising a person's right to a safe environment regardless of their identity.

5. Internally displaced persons

Features of this category:

- loss of housing, documents and social ties;
- experience of war, persecution and trauma of loss;

- increased risk of labour exploitation, especially in conditions of poverty or unemployment;

- emotional exhaustion, anxiety and depression.

Recommendations for investigators:

- assessing primary needs (availability of housing, documents and access to health care);

- involving humanitarian organisations (Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, UN, etc.);

- providing assistance in restoring documents, legal status and social protection;

- sensitive attitude to the context of resettlement (avoiding generalisations or stereotypes);

- referral to a psychologist or crisis counsellor if there are signs of deep trauma.

General principles of interaction with vulnerable populations

- individual approach;

- ensuring safety (physical, emotional and legal);

- cross-sectoral interaction (the investigator should coordinate work with social, medical, human rights and educational structures);

- transparent information and consent (the person should understand what is happening to them and control the process);

- preventing re-traumatisation through control of communication conditions, wording and emotional burden.

Conclusions

1. Effective *interaction* with victims of trafficking in human beings belonging to vulnerable populations is not only a professional challenge, but also an *ethical duty* of the investigator. The success of an investigation largely depends on the ability of law enforcement officers to take into account the individual characteristics of such persons, establish trusting contact with them and ensure a safe, dignified and supportive environment.

2. *Vulnerable categories of victims* (children, women, persons with disabilities, representatives of the LGBT+ community and internally displaced persons) *require a particularly sensitive, attentive and adapted approach*, which includes: understanding the context of life experiences, trauma and barriers to communication; adherence to the principles of non-discrimination, respect for identity and privacy; creation of conditions that prevent re-traumatisation (in particular through pressure, formal procedures and depersonalisation or social condemnation); actively involving multidisciplinary support: psychologists, social workers, interpreters, educators, healthcare and human rights professionals; transparent information and informed consent at every stage of interaction.

3. The *role of the state* in the perception of the victim is not limited to the criminal prosecution of the perpetrators – *it is also about the attitude*

towards the person themselves, their safety, dignity and recovery. Therefore, work with vulnerable populations should be based not only on knowledge of legal procedures, but also on empathy, respect, cultural sensitivity and professional ethics.

3.4. Cooperation between investigators and organisations and institutions providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings

The number of cases of trafficking in human beings is increasing steadily, which is due to its nature as a transnational organised criminal activity. This type of criminal activity is highly profitable for criminal groups and has a low detection and punishment rate. At the same time, trafficking in human beings causes profound physical, sexual and psychological harm to victims, which necessitates a comprehensive approach to combating this phenomenon.

Organisations that have accumulated experience in providing assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings have unique knowledge and practical support tools. Their involvement in strategic and operational cooperation with law enforcement agencies creates the preconditions for strengthening the effectiveness of combating this type of crime and improving mechanisms for protecting victims.

In a broad sense, cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings is a specific system of legal means and procedures consisting of the synthesis of concerted action of various entities involved in combating trafficking in human beings as separate organisational systems, aimed at achieving the common goal of minimising and localising all factors contributing to the commission of this category of crimes and the further development of this phenomenon. In a narrow sense, cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings is the activity of different anti-trafficking entities based on laws and by-laws, coordinated in terms of purpose, place and time, and involves the rational combination of the forces, means and methods available to these entities with the aim of detecting, preventing and stopping trafficking in human beings, as well as eliminating the causes and conditions that contribute to it. Usually, *cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings is multilateral*, which is due to the importance and complexity of the tasks faced by the competent authorities. In terms of time and duration of joint actions, cooperation can be divided into permanent, regular, periodic, one-off and temporary.

Within the activities of law enforcement agencies, cooperation with victims of trafficking in human beings and organisations that provide them with assistance is crucial for effectively combating this type of crime. *Such cooperation encompasses a number of important aspects:*

- ensuring initial contact and immediate safety of victims, which is

carried out by police officers at the time of detection of trafficking in human beings;

- facilitating the provision of temporary accommodation and comprehensive assistance to victims who may subsequently act as witnesses and cooperate with the investigation in criminal proceedings;

- gaining access to important confidential information about criminal networks, which usually remains inaccessible to law enforcement officers due to mistrust on the part of victims; in this regard, particular attention should be paid to the protection of personal data and non-disclosure of information that could threaten the safety of victims.

The work of victim support organisations is aimed at minimising the incidence of trafficking in human beings and protecting victims of this crime. Victim support organisations may receive information about trafficking in human beings from victims or their relatives or friends. Such information can be very useful to law enforcement agencies in locating and rescuing other victims, identifying and neutralising traffickers. Rescuing victims and identifying traffickers are two important components of a mandatory strategy to combat trafficking in human beings.

Cooperation between victim support organisations and law enforcement agencies can contribute to achieving this goal. A significant number of victims of trafficking who are under the supervision of victim support organisations are willing to pass on information about trafficking to law enforcement agencies. In some cases, where law enforcement agencies operate in a professional and safe manner, victims of trafficking may be able to provide such information directly to law enforcement agencies. In other cases, victims refuse to meet with law enforcement officers and request that organisation staff assist in conveying confidential information on their behalf. By sharing relevant information with law enforcement agencies, a victim support organisation can help the victim report available information that may help rescue other victims (potential victims) or contribute to the identification of traffickers and the application of sanctions against them.

A *suggested algorithm for investigators* to follow when referring information about victims of trafficking in human beings may include a number of steps:

1. Victim identification:

- initial assessment of signs of trafficking in human beings;
- ensuring the immediate safety of the victim (isolation from exploiters, temporary shelter);
- recording basic information (without excessive details that could reveal the victim's identity without their consent).

2. Obtaining the victim's consent:

- explaining to the victim their rights and opportunities to receive assistance (psychological, medical and legal);

- written or verbal confirmation of consent to transfer information to the victim support organisation (in accordance with the Law of Ukraine 'On Protection of Personal Data');

- in the absence of consent – transfer only generalised information that does not allow the person to be identified but will help in organising support.

3. Initial notification of the organisation:

- notifying the organisation through an official communication channel (secure e-mail, Hotline or specialised register);

- transferring a minimum amount of data: gender, age (approximate), health status, presence of children and urgent needs (housing, medical treatment);

- in case of threat to life – immediate contact with the organisation's crisis team.

4. Coordination of further actions:

- coordinating actions between the law enforcement agency and the organisation (provision of shelter, health care and support in court proceedings);

- appointing a responsible person in both structures to support the case;

- regularly exchanging information within the limits necessary for the safety of the victim and effective investigation.

5. Ensuring confidentiality and security:

- using coded identifiers instead of full names when exchanging information;

- maintaining access to data only for a specific group of people;

- protection from re-victimisation (no dissemination of data in the media and avoidance of stigmatisation).

6. Documentation and reporting:

- keeping records of referrals (date, amount of information transferred and responsible persons);

- analysing the effectiveness of cooperation between law enforcement agencies and organisations for further improvement of the mechanism.

Conclusions

1. Effective counteraction to trafficking in human beings is impossible without coordinated, cross-sectoral cooperation between investigators and organisations providing assistance to victims. Such cooperation is critical both for investigating crimes and for ensuring the rights and safety of victims. Involving professional organisations enables to establish communication with victims, who often do not trust law enforcement agencies, thereby increasing the chances of obtaining reliable information about crimes.

2. A comprehensive approach to cooperation between investigators and support agencies ensures a rapid response, the provision of necessary assistance, minimisation of the risk of re-traumatisation and increases the motivation of victims to cooperate with law enforcement officers. Particularly

important aspects of such cooperation are: adherence to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, personal safety, clear documentation of actions and coordination at all stages of the case.

3. *Well-established cooperation* between investigators and organisations and specialised institutions not only strengthens the state's ability to effectively combat trafficking in human beings, but also guarantees respect for human rights, in particular those of the most vulnerable populations.

3.5. Case studies of effective models for coordinating the actions of investigators, social services and non-governmental organisations

Effective interagency cooperation is crucial to ensuring comprehensive protection for victims of trafficking in human beings, especially children and other vulnerable populations. Coordination between investigators, social services, psychologists, healthcare professionals and non-governmental organisations allows for a balance between criminal prosecution of perpetrators and a humane, safe approach to victims. Below are examples of models that have proven effective in Ukraine and other countries.

1. Mobile Brigades model (Ukraine)

Essence: mobile teams are composed of representatives of the police (juvenile prevention or investigators), a social worker and a psychologist. They go to the scene or to where the victim is at the same time.

Feature: rapid response enables them to immediately assess the danger, provide emergency psychological assistance, carry out the initial documentation of events and establish further support.

Result: the continuity of the 'identification – protection – support' process is ensured, which reduces the risk of losing the victim's trust and helps preserve the body of evidence.

2. Crisis Rooms model in police stations (Ukraine)

Essence: specialised rooms for working with children have been arranged in selected police stations, providing a safe and comfortable environment for communicating with victims.

Feature: interviews are conducted without the participation of uniformed personnel, in the presence of a psychologist or social worker. This minimises pressure on the child and reduces the risk of secondary traumatisation.

Result: the quality of the initial interview is improved and inter-agency communication between the police and social services is strengthened.

3. Integrated Single Window model (OSCE recommendations for Ukraine)

Essence: introduction of a protocol for automatic notification of all relevant services (social, medical, psychological and legal) after the first contact with the victim (e.g. through the police or a hotline).

Feature: standardised response algorithms, single database and time

frames for each service. The model requires digital coordination and an adequate level of information security.

Result: duplication of functions is eliminated, time losses are reduced and the actions of actors are directed along a single vector.

4. *Child Advocacy Center model (CAC) – (USA, Canada)*

Essence: a multidisciplinary team (investigator, psychologist and social worker) works within a single centre. The forensic interview is conducted by a trained psychologist, while the investigator observes the process via video link.

Feature: the child is assigned a 'support advocate' – a social services professional who accompanies them throughout the investigation and court proceedings. All actions are planned collectively with due regard to the interests of the child.

Result: the quality of the evidence collected is improved, the number of repeat interrogations is reduced and the child feels safe and supported.

5. *Barnahus model (Children's House) – (Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Eastern European countries, including Ukraine)*

Essence: all services – legal, medical, psychological and social assistance – are provided in a single physical space. The child is interviewed once in a specially equipped room with video recording, which is accepted by the court as evidence.

Feature: the child does not encounter justice in its formal form (courtrooms, police interrogations). A permanent coordinator works with the child, ensuring continuity of support.

Result: the risk of re-victimisation is reduced, the duration of the investigation is shortened and trust in the justice system increases.

These models demonstrate different approaches to providing comprehensive assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings. Regardless of the format, the key components of effective interaction remain:

- interagency coordination and standardisation of action algorithms;
- involving trained psychologists and social workers;
- creating a safe and non-violent environment for victims;
- long-term support for victims until they are fully reintegrated.

The successful implementation of such models in Ukrainian practice can significantly enhance the system's capacity to respond not only legally but also humanely, focusing on the rights and dignity of each victim.

Conclusions

1. Consideration of models of interagency cooperation demonstrates the importance of a systemic and comprehensive approach to working with victims of trafficking in human beings. The most *effective models are those that ensure:* early detection and immediate response, which reduces the risk of further harm to victims; integration of law enforcement agencies with social and medical services, which guarantees comprehensive support and

avoids duplication of functions; minimisation of secondary traumatisation, especially when working with children, through the creation of a safe environment, the use of specialised interview techniques and the involvement of professional psychologists; long-term support and reintegration, which provides not only legal protection but also emotional and social recovery; unification of procedures and standards of interaction, which increases the effectiveness of response, reduces delays and increases trust in the system.

2. The proposed cases prove that only a *multidisciplinary approach*, combining the efforts of investigators, social services, healthcare professionals, human rights defenders and non-governmental organisations, can fully ensure the rights, safety and dignity of victims. It is critically important for Ukraine not only to borrow international experience, but also to adapt it to the national context, taking into account the realities of the legal system, resources and institutional capacity.

AFTERWORD

Trafficking in human beings is one of the gravest crimes against the individual, grossly violating fundamental human rights and causing profound psychological, physical and social harm to the victims. In conditions of war, mass population displacement, loss of economic stability and destruction of the institutional environment, the risks of falling into situations of exploitation increase dramatically. Thus, this poses new challenges for law enforcement institutions, requiring immediate adaptation of approaches, updating of knowledge and constant interaction with other entities included in the system of combating trafficking in human beings.

This publication aims to provide professionals, primarily investigators, with practical tools for identifying, documenting and investigating crimes related to trafficking in human beings, as well as for communicating appropriately with victims. Particular attention is paid to ethical aspects and principles of human rights protection, which are critical for building trust and cooperation with people who have experienced trauma.

The recommendations are based on current international standards, Ukrainian national legislation, interagency action algorithms and the practical experience of investigators working with social services, non-governmental organisations, psychologists and other members of interdisciplinary teams. They contain both basic action guidelines and extended case studies demonstrating effective response models in specific situations.

We sincerely hope that this publication will be useful in the daily activities of law enforcement officers, will contribute to the development of a attentive, lawful and professional approach to working with victims of trafficking in human beings, as well as to improving the effectiveness of investigations and the protection of victims' rights.

We express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the creation of the Guidelines – professionals from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, international partners, human rights defenders, academics and civil society activists. Special thanks are extended to those who provided real-life examples, shared their experiences and pointed out to anti-trafficking gaps that require further study and attention.

We hope that our joint efforts, based on the principles of dignity, justice and solidarity, will become an important contribution to a reduction in the scale of the crime of human trafficking and, consequently, to a safe and humane society.

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ANNEXES

Crimes related to human trafficking²²

Article 142 of the CCU Illegal experimentation on a human being

Article 143 of the CCU Violation of procedures prescribed by law with regard to human organs or tissue

Article 146 of the CCU Illegal confinement or abduction of a person

Article 150 of the CCU Exploitation of children

Article 150-1 of the CCU Using a minor for begging

Article 151-2 of the CCU Forced marriage

Article 169 of the CCU Unlawful actions for the purpose of adoption

Article 300 of the CCU Importation, making or distribution of works that propagandise violence and cruelty, racial, national or religious intolerance and discrimination

Article 301 of the CCU Importation, making, sale or distribution of pornographic items

Article 302 of the CCU Creating or running brothels and trading in prostitution

²² Specifics of Classification and Investigation of Crimes Related to Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration / Compilers: T. I. Sozanskyi, I. B. Hazdaika-Vasylyshyn, O. V. Zakharova, E. M. Mruchkovska, R. M. Shehvtsov. Lviv, 2019. P. 67.

Article 303 of the Pimping or compelling to prostitution
CCU

Article 304 of the Engaging minors in criminal activity
CCU

Indirect signs of an “average” victim of trafficking²³

APPEARANCE:

- untidiness;
- bright make-up;
- tired appearance;
- inappropriate clothing (for the season or situation).

PHYSICAL CONDITION:

- signs of physical violence (bruises, burns or scars);
- injuries (permanent injuries);
- diseases of the reproductive system (including sexually transmitted infections);
- alcohol, drug or other addiction.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION:

- inability to control emotions;
- lack of self-confidence;
- animosity, hostility;
- aggression;
- fear;
- feeling of unmotivated anxiety;
- anger;
- feelings of helplessness;
- shock;
- confusion;
- memory lapses;
- pronounced feeling of guilt;
- depression;
- suicidal intentions.

BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS:

- crying;
- withdrawal;
- unwillingness to talk;
- avoiding eye contact;
- demonstrative behaviour;
- blaming others or oneself for what happened.

²³ Counteraction and Social Prevention of Human Trafficking in Ukraine: Textbook / Compilers R. M. Andrusyshyn, I. I. Sydoruk, Y. M. Kohut. Lviv: Rastr-7, 2023. Pp. 82-83.

The most common behavioural patterns of criminal recruitment ²⁴

'Pseudo-legal' vacancies: advertisements promising 'easy work abroad', often with no experience required but high pay. For example, 'assistant job in Europe' or 'modelling business without contracts'.

Emotional component: posts that use emotionally charged phrases to create a sense of a unique opportunity, such as 'only one chance to change your life'.

Requests for personal data: requests to provide copies of documents, full-length or intimate photos under the pretext of registration or 'pre-selection'.

Switching to private messages: invitations to switch to messengers such as Telegram or WhatsApp for 'additional information'.

Urgency requirements and pressure based on this: indications of a limited offer period, such as 'last places available' or 'register today only'.

Prepayment offers: demands to pay an 'insurance fee' or 'document costs', indicating fraudulent intentions.

²⁴ Analytical Report on Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Ukraine. K. A. Borozdina, V. O. Bulavin, H. H. Zhukovska, O. V. Rykun, K. B. Levchenko. Kyiv. Private Entrepreneur A.T. Moroz, 2025. P. 58.

How Not to Become a Victim of Crimes Related to Human Trafficking²⁵

In today's world, trafficking in human beings remains one of the most severe forms of human rights violations. Fleeing for their lives due to Russia's military aggression, millions of Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes, become internally displaced persons or move to other countries. The war has greatly increased vulnerability to falling into the trap of labour, sexual or other forms of exploitation, both in Ukraine and abroad. People looking for work abroad or facing challenging life circumstances are particularly vulnerable.

How to understand that you are in danger?

You receive job offers without a formal contract.

The employer avoids answering specific questions about working conditions.

Promises of high earnings without special skills or language knowledge.

A demand to surrender original documents.

Pressure or isolation from relatives and friends.

What can you do to protect yourself?

Always check information about the employer and intermediary.

Formalise documents officially.

Inform your relatives about your whereabouts and leave copies of documents.

Save the phone numbers of hotlines and Ukrainian consulates in the country of stay.

Where can you seek help?

National hotline for combating human trafficking and counselling migrants, tel. 527; 0 800 505 501.

State Migration Service of Ukraine dmsu.gov.ua.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine / Consular Office.

Remember: trafficking in human beings is a crime. No one has the right to use your labour, body or life for their own benefit.

Awareness, caution and responsible behaviour are your main protection.

²⁵ Website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. URL: <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/iak-ne-stati-zertvoiu-zlociniv-poviazanix-iz-torgivleiu-liudmi>