



Labour exploitation in Sweden

A report by Räddningsmissionen, 2023

Räddningsmissionen

Räddningsmissionen [tr. *The Rescue Mission*] is a non-profit organisation that engage in social work based on Christian values. Our dream is to live in a city where no one is left behind or excluded. We offer both immediate and long-term solutions to create change for the people we meet and to combat deprivation. The vulnerability is constantly shape shifting and that makes us as an organisation in an constant change to keep up. But something we will always stand by is that every human deserves a dignified life.

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ISBN 978-91-988782-0-2

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Table of Content

Summary	4
Foreword	5
1. Background and Purpose.....	7
2. Work-related crime	8
2.1 Legal and illegal exploitation	9
2.2 Human Trafficking	9
2.3 Temporary employment, commonly referred to as gig labor	10
2.4 Exploitation	11
3. The Swedish model	12
3.1 Rights at the labor market	13
3.2 Legal avenues for compensation	13
4. Social Security Systems in Sweden	14
4.1 Healthcare	14
4.2 Health Insurance	15
4.3 Emergency assistance from Social Services	15
5. The Exploited Individuals	16
5.1 Foreign labor in Sweden	16
5.2 EU Citizens	17
5.3 Third-country nationals	17
5.4 Ukrainians in the EU	18
5.5 Swedish citizens	18
6. Types of Exploitation	19
6.1 Residence as a method of leverage and compensation	19
6.2 Labor Exploitation in the EU and Baltic Countries	19
6.3 Examples of models of fraud at the Swedish labor market	20
6.4 Fraud with posting certificates	21
7. Case Descriptions	22
8. Neighboring Countries' Situation	25
8.1 Finland	25
8.2 Norway	27
8.3 Denmark	28
9. Government effort to combat exploitation in Sweden	30
9.1 Social Services	30
9.2 National Support Program, NSP	31
9.3 Regional coordinators	31
10. The Role of Trade Unions	32
10.1 LO – The Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Underground Economy	32
10.2 Byggnads	33
10.3 Trade Union Center for Undocumented Workers	34
10.4 Solidariska byggare	34
11. The Non-Profit Sector	35
11.1 The Civil Society Against Human Trafficking Platform.....	36
11.2 Frälsningsarmén - Safe Havens	36
11.3 Stadsmissionen – Crossroads	36
11.4 Räddningsmissionen	37
12. Conclusions and Proposals	38
13. Methodology	42
Appendix	43
References	45

Summary

Labour exploitation has previously been regarded as a marginal phenomenon in Sweden, but in recent years, the extensive nature of the problem and the inadequacy of efforts have become evident. Sweden has reacted more slowly than neighboring countries and taken less vigorous actions. In this report, we examine labour exploitation and labour crime in Sweden. We adopt a comprehensive perspective but focus particularly on the individual's ability to assert their rights, something that is currently nearly impossible for non-union members. We also observe a clear lack of a victim-centered approach in the government's guidelines and in the proposals under consideration. Based on this, we put forward several proposals for measures to combat labour crime and, especially, measures that can empower the individual who is subjected to exploitation.

Foreword

Räddningsmissionen regularly encounters individuals who are subjected to various forms of labour exploitation or who are at risk of being exploited on the labour market. Our outlook, shared by governmental and non-profit actors, is that this is a significant and growing problem that has received insufficient attention in Sweden.

Human trafficking and labour exploitation cause immense human suffering and significant socio-economic losses. Criminal activities associated with the labour market and exploitation, such as undeclared work and low wages, exist in almost every industry involving manual labor. Industry organisations and trade unions agree that the situation is serious, distorts competition, exposes workers to significant risks, and subjects are excluded from society.

Individuals taken advantage of in exploitative jobs often find themselves in precarious situations outside the regular social safety nets. Moreover, exploitative work keeps people in poverty and marginalisation. For some, the situation has persisted for so long that they not only feel excluded from the society the country they work in but have also lost connections to their home country.

During the winter of 2023, the Delegation against Labour Market Crime presented an interim report (SOU 2023:8) attempting to assess the extent of Work-related crime in Sweden. The report reveals that the scope of the issue is widespread, difficult to measure, and the number of unreported cases is significant. The Delegation also compares Sweden's efforts against work-related crime with those of other Nordic countries, and the results are not favorable for Sweden. Sweden started working on these issues relatively late and has also generally taken less vigorous measures.

The government presents its strategy against work-related crime in the National Strategy against Work-related Crime from 2022 (Nationell strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet)^[1]. It includes a range of measures focusing on inter-agency collaboration, information campaigns, review of confidentiality provisions, and expanded sanctions. Some elements of the strategy involve ongoing work, such as the coordinated efforts between the Tax Authority, the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Border Police, and the Enforcement Authority to combat work-related crime and exploitation. However, these measures have also been criticized by the National Audit Office, particularly for the lack of a victim-centered approach. The strategy document acknowledges the need to facilitate convictions for exploitation on the labour market but does not propose any specific measures to address one of the fundamental issues: how exploited workers can assert their rights.

[1. Regeringskansliet, A2022/00996, Nationell strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet \(2022\)](#)

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has concluded that Sweden's efforts against exploitation have fallen short. GRETA, the body of the Council of Europe responsible for ensuring countries' compliance with the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, provides recommendations to help countries fulfill their obligations in combating human trafficking. GRETA urges the Swedish authorities to enhance the effectiveness of the Equality Agency, which has been coordinating measures against human trafficking since 2018, by addressing all forms of human trafficking and providing comprehensive support to victims. Moreover, the Police, labor inspectors, and other relevant actors should proactively intensify their efforts to identify potential victims without requiring active cooperation in investigations. The report highlights the concerning lack of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions in human trafficking cases, particularly regarding labor exploitation and child trafficking. GRETA emphasizes the need for Sweden to take decisive measures to ensure thorough investigations and successful prosecutions for all forms of human trafficking offenses.

1. Background and Purpose

The origination of this report started with a concluded pilot project within Räddningsmissionen funded by the European Social Fund (ESF+) to investigate exploitation and labor exploitation in Sweden and around the area of the Baltic Sea. The report is also based on experiences from an ongoing project, “Together Against Exploitation”, funded by the Västra Götaland Region (VGR) in west of Sweden as part of their work on social sustainability. The purpose of the report is to describe the ongoing work against exploitation in Sweden, to propose support measures for those affected and by doing so, prevent exploitation in the region. The report is based on interviews with victims of exploitation on the labor market and reports from authorities and non-governmental organisations, which are specified in Appendix 1 and 2, as well as in the references.

The report is intended as an overview and does not provide a comprehensive picture of such a large and complex area as labor exploitation in Sweden. The aim is to provide an accurate picture exploitation on the labor market in Sweden, based on the current legislations, the efforts being made, and the exploitation that occurs. Special focus is based on the narratives of individuals who have been subjected to exploitation on the labour market. We aim to examine their actual possibilities to take action and to identify potential improvements to enhance those possibilities.

2. Work-related crime

Work-related crime (arbetslivskriminalitet) is a relatively new concept used to describe criminal activities within the workplace. The Swedish Delegation Against Work-related Crime (Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitet) proposed a definition on June 16th, stating:

“... sophisticated practices that are in violation of provisions in statutes or agreements, and that relate to the working environment^[2].” [Our translation]

In the comments accompanying the definition, they write that:

“Work-related crime is characterised by the fact that the operator often violates multiple regulations. The criminal practices at the workplace can be complex and consist of multiple violations, often occurring over an extended period. It is not uncommon for the operator to employ workers who do not have the right to work in Sweden and exploit the vulnerable position of employees^[3].” [Our translation]

“The most severe cases of work-related crime involve criminal activities such as certain forms of human trafficking, exploitation of individuals, occupational safety violations, certain forms of benefit fraud and tax fraud, certain violations of the Aliens Act (2005:716), and certain forms of economic crime. Additionally, violations of other laws, regulations, and official provisions can also constitute work-related crime, as can breaches of contracts.” [Our translation]

There are several reasons for the increase in work-related crime in Sweden. Three common explanations are Sweden’s accession to the EU, the system for labor immigration, and extensive privatisations since the 1990s. The free movement of goods, services, capital, and workers within the EU’s internal market has contributed to economic growth in Sweden but has also challenged parts of the Swedish model of the labor market; in short, trade unions and employer organisations, are responsible for wage formation in Sweden, rather than government and laws (see chapter “The Swedish model”). Disparities in working conditions and living conditions within the EU have led workers from poorer areas to seek employment in Sweden and sometimes be exploited by deceitful actors. Laws and regulations affecting the Swedish labor market have also been influenced by the EU membership. For example, our procurement rules are based on EU directives and are interpreted by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which is responsible for ensuring that the law is followed in the interpretation

2. Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitet (2022) Arbetslivskriminalitet. En definition, en inledande bedömning av omfattningen, lärdomar från Norge. SOU 2022:36

3. Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitet (2022), SOU 2022:36

and application of the Union's treaties. According to Swedish interpretation, procurement processes must be conducted without examination of companies regarding, for example, requirements for binding employment contracts. This has made it easier for deceitful and criminal actors to operate in the Swedish labour market^[4].

The Swedish Work Environment Authority identifies several high-risk industries for work-related crime, namely the construction -, restaurant -, transportation -, cleaning, car wash -, personal care industry, healthcare and social services, agriculture and forestry, and waste management. Every individual interviewed for this report are or have been employed within these industries^[5].

2.1 Legal and illegal exploitation

The collective view of the authorities is that the risk of exploitation or abuse of workers constitutes one of the most serious risks associated with work-related crime^[6]. Some instances of exploitation are of such a grave nature that they verge on human trafficking, yet the largest group of individuals is subjected to exploitation in occupations that are legally permissible, posing difficulties to prove the exploitation as a crime. Exploitation may manifest, for example, in such low wages that despite full-time work, employees remain in poverty, which is not inherently criminal in Sweden, as the Swedish model relies on collective agreements rather than laws to govern, among other things, wages.

Regardless of whether the exploitation itself can be proven to be illegal, it is often linked to unsafe and hazardous work, rule violations, tax evasion, and other criminal activities. Substandard conditions and labor exploitation occur to the greatest extent in labor-intensive industries with manual work^[7].

2.2 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a serious crime and has strict criteria for it to be classified as such. Threats, coercion, and forced exploitation, along with an intention to exploit, are some of the fundamental criteria for something to be considered human trafficking. Human trafficking can also occur within begging or criminal activities such as theft and drug trafficking.

Sweden is primarily a destination-country where people are brought to be exploited. Within Europe, sexual exploitation is the most common form of human trafficking, followed by exploitation on the labour market. Sexual exploitation is often associated with prostitution; however, it can also involve forced marriages.

4. [Magro, L. \(2022\). Arbetslivskriminalitet: Kampen för ordning och reda. ISBN 978-91-566-3553-3](#)

5. [Arbetsmiljöverket – Osund konkurrens \(retrived 2023\)](#)

6. Departementsserien 2021:1 Myndigheter i samverkan mot arbetslivskriminalitet (2021), s. 22

7. [Riksrevisionen, Statens insatser mot exploatering av arbetskraft- regelverk, kontroller samt information och stöd till de drabbade, Granskningsrapport/Riksrevisionen, \(Riksrevisionen 2020:27\) s. 9](#)

Human trafficking may involve individuals being exploited through forced labor with low or no wages and under poor working conditions. This is something that is common, for example, in restaurants, car washes, nail salons, the construction industry, and agriculture.

Forced labor is a form of work in which a person is compelled to perform labor against their will, either through threats or other means. This practice has been prohibited since the 1930s under international conventions such as ILO Convention 29 and the European Convention, as well as EU directives. This definition of forced labor encompasses all types of work or services imposed on a person without their voluntary consent^{[8][9]}.

2.3 Temporary employment, commonly referred to as gig labour

Temporary jobs without employment contracts but with legal compensation exist in various industries, including the green sector, taxi services, advertisement distribution, and food delivery, often known as the gig economy. The gig economy is characterised by work ordered through a mobile application, where workers are rated. Typically, it also requires workers to have access to their own tools or vehicles necessary to perform the work. The work occurs within a three-party relationship between the customer, the worker, and the company, where the company facilitates the connection and takes a portion of the worker's earnings. In Sweden, certain industries have been exempted from employer responsibilities due to considering the work as extra income or a side hustle. Companies in the gig economy describe the work as a matter solely between the customer and the worker - the company merely acts as a platform for mediation and, therefore, does not need to employ those who work or take other responsibilities for them. Some gig companies have, under pressure, established employment agreements with collective bargaining agreements, but these agreements often apply to only a few of the company's gig workers.

In recent years, the trend has moved towards a growing group of workers whose primary income comes from various forms of gig work and who are partially or entirely outside of social safety nets and insurances because they lack contracts and fixed wages. The target groups described in this report often have had jobs that can be characterised as gig labor. Some industries are entirely dominated by groups with weak positions at the Swedish labor market, such as EU citizens, third-country nationals, or individuals in an asylum process. This applies, for example, to advertisement distribution, where many workers rely on it as their main source of income and often work long hours every day of the week to make a livable wage^[10].

The uncertainty for workers diminishes if they possess sought-after skills, and alternative forms of employment work better for individuals with greater social capital.

8. [Plattformen Civila Sverige mot människohandel - Vad är människohandel?](#)

9. [Jämställdhetsmyndigheten \(JÄMY\) - Prostitution and trafficking in human beings](#)

10. Gigwatch (2021), Apparna och Arbetet

On the other hand, individuals with low qualifications are at risk of struggling to support themselves and being exploited due to a greater power imbalance^[11].

2.4 Exploitation

People are forced to work against their will or under different levels of pressure. The most severe form of this is forced labour, which is criminalised as a form of human trafficking. This legal provision applies to situations where a person has no other viable alternatives.

Since 2018, the criminal offense of human exploitation has also been included in Swedish legislation. The legislator's intention was, like, our neighboring countries, to create opportunities to prosecute exploitation that falls short of the high criteria for human trafficking but is more serious than low wages. In the preparatory works of the law, the phrase "obvious unreasonable" conditions can be found. Human exploitation applies to individuals who, from a legal perspective, are considered to have other options but still engage in exploitative work instead of a worse alternative.



To be convicted of human exploitation, the act must be sufficiently serious and carried out through "improper means" such as unlawful coercion, deception, or taking advantage of someone's vulnerable position, helplessness, or difficult situation. The purpose is to protect individuals who are already vulnerable, and it is not required that the victim lacked an acceptable alternative, as is the case with human trafficking.

The law against human exploitation has not been successful in Sweden, and currently, there are only a few convictions with relatively low penalties. One case has been tried by the Supreme Court, which chose to convict after the appellate court had acquitted. The punishment was conditional. The law has apparently not had the intended deterrent effect. However, in Norway and Finland, there are several convictions related to exploitation and labor-related crime.

¹¹. Spreitzer, Gretchen M.; Cameron, Lindsey; Garrett, Lyndon (2017-03-21). "Alternative Work Arrangements: Two Images of the New World of Work"

3. The Swedish model

There is no exact definition of the Swedish model, but the term is commonly used. Its main features are a high degree of organisation among both employees and employers, as well as a high coverage of collective agreements, making sure that the majority of work performed in Sweden falls under their provision. Additionally, emphasis is often placed on the extensive right to strike and the absence of a statutory minimum wage^[12].

Along with Denmark, Finland, Austria, and Italy, Sweden is one of the EU countries that lack a statutory minimum wage. However, in Finland, there are regulations that align industry wages more closely with collective agreements (see the section on Finland). Nonetheless, Sweden is one of the high-wage countries in the EU, with an average wage of 15.05 euros per hour (Statistics Sweden 2022, all occupations). For comparison, the statutory minimum wage in Latvia is 3.63 euros per hour as of January 2023. And although wage differentials have increased in Sweden in recent years compared to other OECD countries, they are still relatively low. Collective agreements are often cited as a contributing factor, but for them to continue to contribute to small wage differentials, it is necessary to uphold the wage levels specified in these agreements. The lack of union representation among certain groups and the absence of minimum wages also allows employers to set very low wages without violating laws, except in extreme cases. For individuals working under the conditions described in this report, the Swedish model with collective agreements has generally not resulted in fair wages or working conditions.

If collective agreements are not followed and do not regulate work and employment conditions, it means that the Swedish model does not provide the protection it is expected to, which raises the question of other possible solutions such as declaring collective agreements universally applicable and introducing a statutory minimum wage^[13]. For the Swedish model of labor regulation to remain a guiding principle, it is important to examine whether measures are needed to ensure compliance with collective agreements and who is covered by them. This should be a priority issue during the 2020s for those who cherish the Swedish model.

12. Sjödin, E. (2019) Arbetsmarknadens skuggsida – rättsföljder vid för låga löner, Juridikum 2019-20 NR 3

13. OECD stat

3.1 Rights at the labour market

By having a taxed income from wages, preferably according to a collective agreement, and being a member of a trade union, workers in Sweden enjoy relatively strong protection. On the other hand, those who do not have a collective agreement have an unusually weak safety net.

The most common reasons why workers seek assistance from third parties include unpaid wages, lack of work, homelessness resulting from lack of work, injuries, and illnesses. They typically reach out to trade unions, authorities, or civil society organisations involved in social work for support or help.

Major Swedish trade unions impose a waiting period, meaning that membership must have been held for a certain period of time for the union to become involved in a case. Additionally, it is difficult for individuals without a legitimate employment contract to seek membership. Those who work in the informal economy also often hesitate to contact a union, which is sometimes perceived as an authority, to avoid putting their employment at risk.

Engaging a trade union in a dispute still provides the greatest opportunity for employees to obtain justice. It also increases the chances of claiming wages through the state's wage guarantee system, which can be provided to employees when a company goes bankrupt.

The law against human exploitation does not offer a realistic avenue for the exploited individuals, partly due to the low number of successful prosecutions and partly because a conviction does not necessarily result in financial compensation.

3.2 Legal avenues for compensation

Sweden lacks legislatively mandated minimum wage, and to pursue unpaid wages or unpaid income tax from an employer, an employee generally needs to initiate a civil lawsuit against the employer.

In certain cases, the lawsuit can be brought directly to the Labor Court, which is a specialized court tasked with resolving labor disputes. An employment dispute involves a disagreement over a collective agreement or any other dispute concerning the relationship between an employer and an employee. In such cases, the court acts as the first and final instance.

If it is not possible to file a claim with the Labor Court, it can be initiated at a district court. However, this is often impractical for an ordinary exploited worker. Civil lawsuits entail fixed costs and ongoing expenses for legal representation. The losing party is required to pay both their own and the opposing party's legal costs. The outcome of civil lawsuits often results in a settlement, which means that the employee does not receive the full amount that the employer withheld.

4. Social security system in Sweden

The Swedish social security systems apply to all Swedish citizens and typically to those who work and pay taxes in Sweden. EU rules on free movement state that all EU citizens can freely move, work, and study in any member state if they have the means to not burden the social security system of the other country. Access to social security systems is regulated through work and the individual's legal status. Those who work illegally or are posted (see chapter "posted") typically have no access to social safety nets.

4.1 Healthcare

In Sweden, everyone, regardless of citizenship and legal status, is entitled to receive urgent medical care that cannot be postponed. The scope of care included in this concept is determined by the healthcare system. Obtaining emergency care is usually not a problem, and the responsibility for the cost of healthcare is assessed as follows:

"Patients insured in an EU/EEA country, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom are entitled to necessary care in Sweden for the same fee as Swedish citizens, as long as they have a European Health Insurance Card, present identification documents proving residency in another Nordic country, present a certificate of entitlement to healthcare benefits in Sweden for individuals residing in another EU/EEA country, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom, present a certificate of studies in another EU/EEA country, Switzerland, or the United Kingdom, or present a certificate of residency in Sweden according to Regulation 883/2004. Patients who do not meet any of these conditions generally have to cover their own healthcare costs^[14]."

The individuals interviewed for this report have received urgent medical care, which means "care that cannot be postponed," but in some cases, they have become personally liable for payment. Within the EU, member states determine their own healthcare policies, including the design and accessibility of healthcare. Most EU member states offer free emergency healthcare according to EU common

[14. 1177.se, Healthcare in Sweden if you come from another country](#)

guidelines^[15]. Several of those interviewed state that private health insurance is needed to access qualified healthcare in their home country and to obtain the European Health Insurance Card, which provides access to the full healthcare systems of other EU countries without additional costs for the individual.

Economic vulnerability is the common factor behind most cases of exploitation, and those working illegally generally do not have private health insurance. Even in cases where the employer falsely claimed that insurance was paid and included in the employment, those who have been injured have had to pay for healthcare themselves.

4.2 Health Insurance

By working in Sweden, the employee becomes part of the health insurance system and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) from the first day, provided that they have the right to reside here. An individual can ensure this by submitting a certificate to Försäkringskassan along with their contract, identification documents, and details of their accommodation. Many people miss this step, and the information is not readily accessible. Even smaller employers may overlook this, and deceptive employers who pay under-the-table wages typically do not register their employees.

All insurances in Sweden, including private ones, link sickness benefits and accident compensation to a proven and taxed income. The level of sickness benefits is determined by the future loss of income based on the current income. This means that individuals injured in undeclared work also do not receive compensation from the opposing party's insurance company in case of illness or accident. Internationally, Sweden has low compensation levels for pain and suffering.

4.3 Emergency Assistance from Social Services

According to Swedish social services legislation and the concept of residence, municipalities, through social services, have the ultimate responsibility for everyone residing in the municipality. An individual who is unable to provide for their own subsistence can seek emergency assistance from social services. Everyone has the right to apply and receive a written decision. Emergency assistance should be assessed on an individual basis and may include temporary financial assistance for accommodation and food, as well as assistance with recovery. In cases where the person is too ill or injured to take care of themselves, social services can assist with homeward travel and handover to the appropriate authorities in their home country.

15. *In accordance with Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union shall complement and support national health policies, promote cooperation between Member States, and coordinate their programs, fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the design of their health policies, as well as the organization, management, and provision of health care. [REGULATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL Regulation \(EU\) 2021/522 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 March 2021 establishing a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health \('EU4Health Programme'\) for the period 2021-2027, and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 282/2014 \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#)*

5. The Exploited Individuals

Those who are exploited in labour-related crime form a heterogeneous group in terms of legal status, age, nationality, and gender. What they all have in common is economic vulnerability and a lack of other realistic alternatives. This section describes how different groups' citizenship and legal status affect their ability to assert their rights. Foreign labor is primarily affected by unfair wages, excessively long working hours, poor living conditions, and hazardous work environments. Exploitation can begin with unethical means, such as deceiving workers into moving to Sweden with promises of residency permits and good job opportunities^[16].

5.1 Foreign Labour in Sweden

Official labor market statistics include employed individuals registered as residents in Sweden. It is unknown how many foreign workers are working in Sweden without being registered here. According to assessments by labour inspectors and representatives of labour unions, the number is estimated to be 100,000 people or more. However, the figure is uncertain and difficult to confirm with official statistics. The interim report of the Delegation Against Labor-related Crime's (Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitet) interim report (SOU 2023:8)^[17] estimates that 244,659 individuals are at risk of exploitation, however, EU citizens are not included in this calculation.

Foreign workers in Sweden who are not included in official employment statistics can according to the national institute of economic research be divided into three categories; posted workers, who are foreign workers employed by foreign companies temporarily operating in Sweden foreign labor working for Swedish employers and includes foreign citizens listed on Swedish employers' payrolls but not registered as residents and lacking a Swedish personal identification number and, unregistered workers who are not registered with employers or authorities. Employment statistics are available for posted workers and foreign labor listed on the Swedish employment payrolls even though they are lacking Swedish personal numbers nor are registered residents, however, obtaining information about unregistered workers with authorities or employees has proven more challenging.

Construction workers from Latin America, Ukraine, and other European countries outside the EU, report that the selling of work permits is arranged by construction

¹⁶. [Lägesrapport myndighetsgemensamma arbetet 2021](#)

¹⁷. [SOU 2023:8, Arbetslivskriminalitet – arbetet i Sverige, en bedömning av omfattningen, lärdomar från Danmark och Finland](#)

companies, often as part of the company's model. The employer's control of work permits makes workers dependent on the employer. Workers choose to stay in the workplace despite poor conditions out of fear of losing their work permits and sometimes due to fear of violence and punishment from the employer. Third-country nationals in such dependent positions are exploited and silenced due to their insecure legal status.

5.2 EU Citizens

The mobility of EU citizens is one of the fundamental freedoms within the EU, including the freedom to travel, reside, and work in all EU member states. The four freedoms, including the free movement of capital, were intended to contribute to increased welfare in Europe by eliminating various national barriers. The Services Directive from 2006 aimed to create a common market for services, allowing for national regulations^[18]. However, certain national exceptions regarding the free movement of goods and services remain, mainly based on health and environmental exceptions.

The free movement of persons primarily enables the opportunity for workers to travel and work in another EU member state. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no barriers to this, and according to the European Commission, between 12 and 13 million EU citizens lived in a member state other than their home country in 2019. Most of them were working or were family members of someone working. This group accounted for approximately 4.2 percent of the EU's working-age population^[19].

The Commission estimated that around 3 million individuals were posted or stationed, meaning they worked for their employer in a country other than their country of residence. Additionally, about 1.5 million people commuted across borders daily. The countries with the highest proportion of EU/EEA citizens and Swiss citizens relative to the population were Iceland, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, followed by Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Sweden has experienced a relatively low influx of EU citizens who settle or come to Sweden to work. Due to the absence of registers, such as border crossings, and because neither employers nor individual EU citizens have an obligation to register in Sweden, there is a lack of reliable statistics. Furthermore, there is a large number of unreported cases, especially among those who work unregistered.

5.3 Third-country nationals

A third-country national is a person who is not a citizen of any of the member states of the European Union and thus lacks Union citizenship. Individuals from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland are not considered third-country nationals regarding the free movement of persons within the EU.

¹⁸. Fördraget om Europeiska unionens funktionssätt, artikel 45

¹⁹. European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Fries-Tersch, E. Jones, M. Siöland, Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility 2020, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

Generally, third-country nationals lack the rights that Union citizens have within the EU, such as the right to freely move and reside within the Union to work, establish businesses, or study on the same terms as the citizens of the member state. Third-country nationals who have residence and work permits, either permanent or temporary, in an EU country can exercise these rights in other EU countries, albeit, with certain limitations. For instance, family members do not have the right to join based on a family member's rights. Individuals with this legal status are covered by public health insurance systems (Försäkringskassan) if they work in Sweden. However, it appears that there is no clear practice for this, and the extent to which they actually have access to social security systems seems to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Several of the individuals serving as informants in this report are third-country nationals with permanent residence rights and work permits in another EU country.

5.4 Ukrainians in the EU

The war in Ukraine is the single most significant factor that has affected the Baltic Sea region in 2022, with Poland being particularly impacted through a large influx of refugees.

Men who have moved or migrated to Sweden from Ukraine often work in the construction industry, where temporarily relaxed employment regulations have made it attractive to recruit people from Ukraine. Women from Ukraine who have moved to Sweden due to the war often face difficulties at the labor market. Despite sometimes having high education and experience, it is challenging for them to find employment, primarily due to language barriers. Many of them are single parents, which makes it difficult for them to work full-time or take on demanding jobs. Additionally, trauma from the war can make it challenging for them to cope with the pressures of a workplace.

5.5 Swedish citizens

Even Swedish citizens working abroad can be at risk of undeclared and untaxed work. Swedes are generally covered by both the Swedish and European health insurance through their citizenship. However, compensation for sickness or injury will be withheld if a person has not received any taxed income for an extended period.

Swedes also fall victim to exploitation in Sweden in the form of undeclared wages and unreasonable conditions for the same reasons as workers from other countries, such as poor economy, lack of housing, and limited alternatives^[20].

20. [Erik bor i chefens skjul – så försvann hemlösa ur statistiken, Hem och hyra, Josephine Freje 23 augusti 2021](#)

6. Types of Exploitation

According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, every worker has the right to working conditions that are healthy, safe, and dignified. In recent years, attention has been drawn to cases where workers have been subjected to extremely poor conditions in Sweden. These conditions may involve low or unpaid wages, excessively long working hours, hazardous work environments, or substandard living conditions. The term “workforce exploitation” is often used to describe such situations.

6.1 Residence as a method of leverage and compensation

Housing is sometimes considered part of the compensation, and the risk of homelessness can be used as a form of pressure^[21]. Companies that exploit workers and recruit from other countries often arrange accommodation, frequently under deplorable conditions, and at a high “fee” deducted directly from wages. This leads to increased control over the exploited workers, who receive lower wages and face an additional threat to their situation. If they were to complain or initiate a conflict with the employer, they risk not only losing their wages but also their housing.

6.2 Labor Exploitation in the EU and Baltic Countries

A 2018 EU report^[22] highlights a pattern where workers from refugee centers are employed informally as seasonal workers or interns in agriculture, construction, retail, the care sector, and other service sectors. The report describes how vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups, who have limited choices or resources to protect their social rights, are exploited, forcing them to work without proper registration. Other reports have also identified au pair work as a risk area for exploitation. Foreign workers who continue working illegally due to expired work permits are easily exploited. Refugees recruited directly from refugee accommodations often lack understanding of the Swedish system or their rights, making them vulnerable to exploitation. They may

21. Erik bor i chefens skjul – så försvann hemlösa ur statistiken, Hem och hyra, Josephine Freje 23 augusti 2021

22. Mineva, D., & Stefanov, R. (2018). Evasion of Taxes and Social Security Contributions. Vitosha Research EOOD (Center for the Study of Democracy Group, Bulgaria). September 2018.

also accept poor employment conditions to meet the requirements for residency permits. Seasonal work is another problem, often involving temporary employment in companies that do not contribute to social security. Similar issues arise in the service sector at summer and winter resorts.

The setups of undeclared work observed in this report within agriculture, domestic services, construction, retail, transportation, hotel and restaurant industry, childcare, and the care sector are not new but persist, and require attention from relevant authorities. It should be emphasized that workers in these sectors are particularly vulnerable due to generally low wages, low activity in unions, diminishing state protection, and a high majority of the labor are migrants, which, in turn, reduces opportunities for economic and social integration.



6.3 Examples of models of fraud at the Swedish labor market

In most welfare states, the employer is responsible for paying insurance contributions and should therefore immediately register a new employee, share necessary information, and pay overdue fees. Especially in countries with high social security costs, employers tend to avoid paying social security contributions by concealing their employer status. There are various methods used to conceal the true employer, including registering independent or fake micro-businesses, using letterbox companies, staffing agencies disguised as job placement agencies, or a chain of subcontractors who hire and rehire workers on a short-term basis and engage in tactical bankruptcies. Other setups involve gig platforms, digital tools, websites, and electronic money transfers.

The shared characteristic of these various methods, in terms of evading taxes, fees,

and fair wages, is that they encompass purposeful and premeditated criminal actions with the objective of boosting employer profits. Regardless of the setup, the exploited workers find themselves in a more vulnerable situation, and society's control over agreed-upon rules and laws diminishes. The reduced control often leads to a poorer working environment, and as observed in Norway, there are often links to other types of criminality.

6.4 Fraud with posting certificates

Posting is a term that originates from the so-called Posting of Workers Directive from 1996, which was introduced to prevent unfair competition within the EU. The directive regulates situations where a foreign employer sends an employee to another country to temporarily work there (posting). Regarding holidays, working hours, and minimum wages, the laws of the receiving country always apply according to the directive. However, the laws and regulations of the sending country apply to wages, insurances, social contributions, and employment directives. Even foreign companies based outside the EU can apply to post workers in Sweden^[23].

During the posting, permission is granted by the sending country: the A1 document verifies that the worker's social contributions and wages are being paid. The documents are legally binding for all other member states as long as they have not been withdrawn or invalidated by the member state where they were issued. In practice, if the institution that issued the A1 certificate is unwilling to withdraw it, the member state to which the workers are posted cannot prosecute even blatant irregularities. As a result, it is difficult for authorities to question the validity of A1 certificates, and such efforts require greater cooperation between countries than currently exists. Additionally, authorities usually cannot verify whether the declared employment matches the actual work schedule of posted workers in the receiving member state^{[24][25]}. There is plenty of evidence of forged A1 certificates being presented during on-site inspections.

One problem for people exploited under posting is that they are left without legal recourse if violations of the directive are discovered in the event of an accident or illness. Insurance is not paid in the home country, and they are also not covered by the Swedish social insurance system despite working in Sweden. Even if a case goes to court, there is no guarantee that payment for healthcare and sick leave will be included. Disputes also take time to resolve, leaving the victim without protection in the meantime. Posted workers also do not have a given position in Swedish trade unions and are not covered by collective agreements.

[23. Arbetsmiljöverket \(Retrieved 2023\), Posting](#)

[24. Byggvärlden, Systematiskt fusk enligt Byggnads uppföljande granskning \(25 januari 2022\)](#)

[25. Byggmärknadskommissionen, Byggmärknadskommissionens slutrapport 2022](#)

7. Case Descriptions

From September to November 2022, we conducted interviews with citizens from Baltic countries regarding their situation in Sweden as part of this report. The case descriptions below are summaries of those interviews. All names provided are pseudonyms, and the situations are described in a manner that prevents identification of individuals.

Lech, 47 years old, Poland, carpenter, self-employed

Lech has been working as a craftsman in Sweden for nearly 30 years. He started as an employee of a Polish staffing agency and then held various positions in Swedish companies before finally starting his own business. He has experience working in the informal, formal, and gray sectors and mentions that the most challenging aspect has been learning Swedish regulations and navigating bureaucracy related to coordination numbers and registration. He specifically mentions difficulties with banks and bank accounts, even when he had a contract as an employee. Lech's perception is that it is easier to work in the informal sector or have one's own business than to follow the rules as a regular worker. Lech now resides in Poland but has assignments equivalent to full-time work in Sweden. He has social and health insurance through his own company in Poland, a legal form similar to simplified joint-stock companies in Sweden. All work is invoiced through his own company. He is satisfied with his situation but believes that construction site inspections should be stricter, and authorities should provide more comprehensive and easily accessible information in multiple languages. It is easier for him now as he knows Swedish and can seek assistance from Swedes he knows if any issues arise.

Jonas, 27 years old, Estonia, construction worker, on sick leave

Jonas came to Sweden through a private Estonian employment agency that also operated as a staffing company. The staffing company provided a workforce to a company that had both Estonian and Swedish divisions. The Estonian company acted as a subcontractor to a larger Swedish corporation specializing in villa construction and also independently contracted for renovation and remodeling projects. The company that employed Jonas operated in compliance with the Posting of Workers Directive, claiming to pay social contributions and provide insurance according to Estonian regulations. The promised salary was slightly higher than that of an Estonian construction worker but below the level of a Swedish collective agreement.

After a few months in Sweden, Jonas experienced a severe workplace accident that required immediate interventions and an extended hospital stay. Several highly specialized surgeries followed the initial emergency measures. The accident resulted in permanent reduced mobility for Jonas, and he will no longer be able to work in the

craft industry in the future. When Jonas contacted the company, they denied any responsibility and claimed that the employment had concluded. Furthermore, it was discovered that the company had not paid the promised insurance premiums or social contributions. Despite this, the Estonian government covers the costs of the Swedish healthcare interventions, but Jonas is unsure if he will be held liable for reimbursement. During his hospital stay, Jonas reached out to a trade union affiliated with the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO). The union stated they couldn't take any action as he wasn't a member but suggested him to contact "Solidariska Byggare", an organization that represents builders from all countries, regardless of residency status. This organization is a member of the Stockholm Local Federation (LS) of the Syndicalist and Anarcho-Syndicalist Confederation (SAC). Solidariska Byggare attempted to pursue the case against both the Estonian company and the Swedish main contractor. The investigation into the workplace accident was closed, and the police did not further investigate the matter.

Jonas expressed his preference to stay in Sweden, hoping to receive more qualified medical care and rehabilitation than what uninsured individuals receive in Estonia. He is currently living with Swedish friends as a lodger and has no income. Jonas is unaware of any organization that could support him.

Sworak, 58 years old, Poland, craftsman, on sick leave

Sworak has been in contact with Rådningssmissionen since 2020 when he reached out to the organization for advice and support. Since winter 2021, Sworak has been suffering from a severe medical condition and has been living in an unsustainable situation. The illness has caused significant mobility impairment, overall somatic deterioration, and susceptibility to infections. The condition is feared to be permanent, resulting in a permanent reduction in work capacity.

For many years, Sworak has worked in Sweden and claims to have weak ties to Poland. He also does not have any family. Initially, Sworak worked under legal employment contracts, but after falling ill, he increasingly ended up in illegal, contractless employment. After his latest hospital stay, Sworak worked in exchange for food and accommodation, living with his employer in an unheated garden shed without running water and electricity.

According to lawyers familiar with the case, Sworak can be considered a permanent resident and is entitled to compensation from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency due to his work in Sweden. Sworak's case could be pursued as a civil case against the companies that employed him and as an administrative matter to clarify his legal status. However, there is a lack of resources to pursue the case further. Trade unions are not interested in taking on the case due to its complexity and the fact that the employment law issues date back several years with unclear employment conditions. The case is not considered criminal by the police either.

Billy, 52 years old, Lithuania/Moldova, cleaner

Billy is what is known as a third-country national. He originally comes from Moldova and has permanent residency in Lithuania. He came to Sweden about three years ago in search of work and has been working in the gig economy as a flyer distributor and food delivery driver. Over the past year, Billy has been working as a cleaner with a legal contract that, on paper, covers 75% of the work with a wage significantly below the prevailing collective agreement for the cleaning industry. In practice, Billy works 10-12

hours a day, 6 days a week, without overtime pay or vacation. Billy is dependent on his work, and his civil/legal status is more uncertain than that of an EU citizen. He speaks good English and lives as a lodger in a sublet apartment. His goal is to stay in Sweden, and he prefers not to have a conflict with his employer that could jeopardize his job and, consequently, his permanent residency in Sweden. The long working days make it difficult for Billy to search for other jobs and learn Swedish.

Maya, 26 years old, Poland, cleaner

Maya came to Sweden with her ex-boyfriend four years ago. Her boyfriend had a job, and they lived off his income for several years. Maya has studied and worked part-time in the restaurant industry. For the past couple of years, she has been living alone and supporting herself as a cleaner. Over the past year, she has worked on a contract that she believed was legal. The working hours have varied, and the workplaces have been both offices and private residences. Her salary is below the collective agreement wage. When Maya asked her employer for more working hours, she requested a new contract and her pay slips. The employer then informed her that there was no more work and subsequently stopped answering her calls. When Maya checked the company with the tax authorities, it turned out that they hadn't paid taxes for any employees. Maya is currently seeking legal assistance to try to recover the unpaid taxes owed to her by the company. She speaks good Swedish but still finds it difficult to understand all the regulations that apply to her as an EU citizen. Due to her lack of legal income, stable housing, and therefore residence rights, she cannot continue her studies as a healthcare assistant that she has started. Maya is hesitant to report the company to the police and, moreover, believes that it would not improve her situation. Her primary goal is to find a new legal job.

Alexandrs, 33 years old, Latvia, electrician

Alexandrs came to Sweden after responding to a job advertisement for a position as an electrician, for which he had basic qualifications. He had a poor financial situation, debts, and was in desperate need of an income. The job offered over the phone was better paid than the available jobs in his home country. Upon arrival in Sweden, it turned out that the job, which was supposed to be in Stockholm, had been relocated to another city Borås located on the other side of Sweden. Alexandrs was driven to Borås after contacting the employing company over the phone. In Borås, Alexandrs is accommodated in a construction shack along with other workers from various parts of Europe. The person organizing the work keeps Alexandrs' ID card under the pretext that it is required by Swedish bureaucracy for registration purposes. For a couple of weeks, Alexandrs works on tasks completely different from what was promised; it involves industrial packaging and LEGO manufacturing. When the first paycheck is due, it is significantly lower and paid in cash, with deductions made for accommodation and transportation expenses.

Alexandrs leaves the accommodation and the job and heads to Gothenburg, where he receives assistance with shelter and filing a police report. The police in Gothenburg classify the case as a possible fraud and transfer it to the police in Borås, promising to follow up within a month if the workload permits. Alexandrs chooses to return home, as he sees no point in pursuing an uncertain report while lacking income.

8. Neighboring Countries' Situation

Our neighboring countries, namely Finland, Norway, and Denmark, have made significant strides in their efforts to combat labor exploitation. This progress has been recognized and commended in the interim report by the Delegation against Labor Exploitation, which has a favorable opinion of the stricter measures adopted by these neighboring nations^[26].

Below, we provide a brief overview of the measures our neighboring countries have taken against labor exploitation. The sections on Finland and Norway heavily rely on the Building Market Commission's report, "Neighboring Countries' Efforts against Labor Exploitation in the Construction and Civil Engineering Sector" from 2021, which is the most comprehensive account of how two of our closest neighbors have worked against the exploitation of foreign labor^[27].

8.1 Finland

Finland has a labor market structure that closely resembles Sweden's, with three major central organizations and trade unions, as well as employer organizations divided by ownership form. The Finnish government plays a much more active role than the Swedish government during collective bargaining negotiations. The state not only participates as an employer for public employees but is also seen as an actor guaranteeing stability in the labor market. Therefore, income policy agreements often encompass comprehensive agreements on wages, economic policy, and tax matters in collective bargaining negotiations. The parties involved in these agreements are the central labor market organizations, other interest organizations, and in most cases, the state and the Bank of Finland. Income policy agreements serve as frameworks and guidelines for collective agreements reached at lower levels.

In Finland as well, irregularities within the construction industry have raised concerns. These irregularities are linked to foreign labor and foreign companies, but as in Sweden and other countries, they are often facilitated through various collaborations with domestic actors. Due to fast ferries between Tallinn and Helsinki, there is daily commuting between the two capital areas, and approximately 50,000 Estonian citizens reside in Finland. Despite Estonia's positive economic development since its independence 30 years ago, wage levels in Estonia remain significantly lower than in

26. Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitet (2022), SOU 2022:36

27. Jeppson, H. (2021). [Grannländers arbete mot arbetslivskriminalitet inom bygg-och anläggningssektorn. En underlagsrapport till Bygghandelskommissionen. Oktober 2021.](#)

Finland. Estonian workers were welcomed in Finland even before the EU enlargement in 2004, and today there are many Estonian citizens and Russian citizens with permanent residency in Estonia who work in Finland.

8.1.1 Usury

According to Finnish law, the exploitation and mistreatment of workers can be classified as usury-like discrimination in the workplace. This classification is intended to apply to cases where employees are exploited in a manner that violates binding collective agreements, with low wages and long working hours, but does not meet the criteria for human trafficking. When a labor inspector detects discrimination, the employer may receive a request to rectify the situation. If the employer fails to comply with the request, the inspector transfers the case to the Occupational Safety and Health Authority for a decision. The authority can issue a binding decision for the employer and may also file a police report for violation of the provision on usury-like discrimination. A guilty verdict requires that the employee's financial distress or otherwise vulnerable situation, dependency, naivety, recklessness, or ignorance have been exploited. Between 2010 and 2018, the Finnish police registered 321 reports of usury-like discrimination, according to Statistics Finland, and the reports often originated from the inspections conducted by the Occupational Safety and Health Authority. In only 35 cases did it result in a guilty verdict. If the court determines that a too-low wage meets the requirements for discrimination in the workplace, the sentence is almost invariably a few hundred euros in fines.

8.1.2 Income Register

The Income Register is an important tool for combating the shadow economy, unreasonably low wages, and regulatory violations in Finland. Since 2019, all paid salaries, fringe benefits, fees, work-related compensations, and other income must be reported to the Income Register. From 2020, information about paid pensions and social benefits is also included. It is no longer possible to separately report income information to different authorities; instead, the same information is reported simultaneously to all authorities, making it difficult for the data provider to edit the information for different authorities. One difference from the Swedish system of monthly employer declarations is that the reports to the Income Register are linked to each payment. The Income Register is to be reported in real-time.

8.1.3 Personal Identification Number

A person who is a citizen of another country and comes to Finland to work must apply for a personal identification number. When an employee receives a personal identification number, they also receive a tax number. A foreign citizen can apply for a Finnish personal identification number by personally visiting the magistrate or the Tax Administration at their place of residence in Finland. The personal identification number is a prerequisite for applying for a tax number, which enables the receipt of a legal salary into a bank account.

8.1.4 Principal Contractor Liability Act

The Principal Contractor Liability Act in Finland differs from the Swedish law on contractor liability for wage claims. The purpose of the Finnish law on the liability of the principal contractor is to promote equal competition among businesses and ensure compliance with employment conditions at the labor market. The law applies to all industries where subcontractors or hired labor are used. The legislation is based on the principle that principal contractors are obliged to ensure that contractual parties fulfill their statutory obligations by requesting the various documents mentioned in the law before entering into an agreement.

8.1.5 Public Procurement

The National Strategy for Public Procurement 2020 in Finland is a strategy determined by the Finnish government. It includes methods for how procuring authorities can avoid promoting the shadow economy. Combating the shadow economy in the construction industry is to be achieved through the exchange of best practices and pilot projects. The Public Procurement Advisory Unit will document and disseminate these methods. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment also coordinates pilot experiments conducted at construction sites. According to Finnish procurement law, a bidder can be excluded from a procurement procedure due to previous neglect of societal obligations, such as tax evasion or failure to pay social security contributions.

Norway deliberately seeks to primarily utilize labor from the common EU/EEA labor market. Over 80 percent of those who come to work in Norway are citizens of a European country. Even though Norway is not a member of the EU, it is covered by the same rules on free movement of persons and services as EU member states through the EEA agreement. This means, for example, that Norway has the same obligations to implement the directive on posted workers as Sweden.

The proportion of workers from other countries in Norway has increased since the EU enlargement in 2004. Between 2008 and 2017, the share of foreign labor in Norway increased from 10 percent to 16 percent. The increase was particularly noticeable in the construction industry, and by 2018, there were more than 30,000 foreign construction workers registered for work in Norway, most of them from Poland, Lithuania, and Romania.

8.2 Norway

In Norway, as in Sweden, there is an extensive political consensus and agreement among labor market parties that labor-related crime is a significant and serious problem^[28]. According to Norwegian experts, there is a link between labor market crime and the exploitation of foreign labor, often referred to as “social dumping.” To combat labor-related crime and gather knowledge, special “labor crime centers” (A-krimssenter)

[28. Jeppson, H. \(2021\). Grannländers arbete mot arbetslivskriminalitet inom bygg-och anläggningssektorn. En underlagsrapport till Bygghandelskommissionen. Oktober 2021.](#)

have been established in Norway, which are intergovernmental collaborations between the Tax Administration, the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Work Environment Authority, and the Police. Work is underway in Sweden to establish similar centers.

8.2.1 Threat Actors

Norway, the term “hotaktører” is used to denote an individual, a group of individuals, or an organisation that has a known intention and capability to take over, alter, or destroy values. The concept of “centrala hotaktörer” refers to actors with the greatest potential to harm society. When examining 102 threat actors identified by the A-krimcenter, 80 were characterised as threat actors, while the remaining 22 were considered potential threat actors. Seventy-two percent had previous criminal convictions. It was also noted that 22 percent of the threat actors had been convicted of violent crimes and that there were connections to four criminal networks involved in extensive violence.

8.2.2 Wage Theft

In 2022, Norway introduced a new law to combat “lønnstyveri” or wage theft. Prior to this, employees in Norway, much like in Sweden, could demand their wages in court if they had not received the promised payment. However, this entailed the same problems of having to bear their own legal costs, getting involved in a lengthy process with an uncertain outcome, and risking having to pay the entire trial cost in case of loss. With the new law, it is now also illegal for employers to deceive an employee regarding their wages, which represents a significant tightening of regulations. As of the writing of this report, the law has not yet been tested in court, but there are hopes in Norway that it will deter deceitful employers. A similar law has also been adopted by a few states in Australia.

8.2.3 The Oslo Model

The Oslo Model is an attempt by the Oslo municipality to use its role as a public procurer to, as the city puts it, “promote a serious working life” with decent working conditions and fair competition among responsible suppliers who take social responsibility seriously. The model includes more extensive requirements on suppliers in public procurement than what is required by the Public Procurement Act. The model is further described in the report “Grannländers arbete mot arbetslivskriminalitet inom bygg-och anläggningssektorn” by the Construction Market Commission (Bygghandelskommissionen).

8.3 Denmark

“Social dumping” is a term used to describe the situation where foreign companies are located in Denmark but do not comply with Danish laws and regulations, or when foreign workers work in Denmark without the mandatory legal documents or under illegal conditions. There is no study on the extent of this problem according to the interim report of the Delegation against Labor-Related Crime. Denmark has experienced strikes by posted construction workers, many of whom were from Poland. The main demand was that posted workers’ wages should be aligned with the

Danish collective agreements. Denmark introduced the offense of “exploitation of labor” last year. This offense has similarities to the Swedish provisions on human trafficking and exploitation. For criminal liability, it is required that an action has been taken with the purpose of exploiting a person in “work under obviously unreasonable conditions,” and the Danish proposition states that it is generally sufficient for the exploited person to receive less than 50 percent of the industry’s minimum wage for such conditions to be considered present. Denmark has similar interagency cooperation as Sweden but, in some cases, goes further, especially in the two measures described below; fund for posted workers and registry for companies with posted workers.

8.3.1 Fund for Posted Workers

The Labor Market Fund for Posted Workers is an independent and self-owned fund administered by the Labor Market Supplementary Pension, a pension provider in Denmark. The fund aims to ensure that posted workers receive correct wages in situations where the employer does not pay the agreed-upon wage despite pressure from the employee or a labor organisation. The fund is financed together by Danish employers and foreign service providers who post workers to Denmark. A prerequisite for a payout is that the wage claim has been established through a court judgment or settlement in the Labor Court or through arbitration. The fund is combined with a type of blacklisting where companies that have triggered a payout from the fund in the past 36 months are listed on a website.

8.3.2 Registry for Companies with Posted Workers

Since May 1, 2008, Denmark has maintained a register of foreign service providers (RUT) with the aim of providing an overview of companies posting workers in the country and ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety and tax legislation, as well as promoting the interests of the labor market. Notification to the RUT must be made before work commences, and even foreign self-employed individuals without employees must register with RUT if they provide services in high-risk industries, including the construction industry. The notification includes information such as the business name, address, and contact details, the identity of the posted workers, the duration of the posting, and the location where the work will be performed. The Danish Working Environment Authority (Arbejdstilsynet) is responsible for overseeing the notification process, and violations of the notification requirement can be reported to the police and the Danish Tax Agency (Skattestyrelsen). Automatic information on Danish occupational health and safety regulations is provided when making a notification in the construction industry.

9. Government efforts to combat exploitation in Sweden

In addition to the Act on Human Trafficking, which was enacted by the Swedish Parliament in 2018, the government has taken several measures to counteract labor-related crime and prevent companies that deliberately engage in fraud from gaining competitive advantages. Authorities have been tasked with collaborating to combat labor-related crime, and an entrepreneur's liability has been introduced in the construction industry to counter unhealthy competition. This effort is summarised in the National Strategy against Labor-Related Crime^[29].

The government has assigned the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Economic Crime Authority, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the Swedish Migration Agency, the Police Authority, the Swedish Tax Agency, and the Prosecution Authority with an enhanced mandate to collaborate in combating labor-related crime. The mandate also includes establishing regional centers against labor market crime by the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Police Authority, and the Swedish Tax Agency, with other collaborating authorities gradually joining, but no later than the end of 2023. These efforts aim to create collective efforts against labor market crime and improve regional cooperation among the various authorities.

The government has also commissioned interagency cooperation to counter organised crime and money laundering.

9.1 Social Services

Through the Residence Directive, social services are responsible for addressing acute emergencies for all individuals residing in a municipality. In cases involving human trafficking, social services collaborate with regional coordinators and the police to provide secure accommodations and support for sustenance. However, when it comes to exploitation, where the legal aspects are often less distinctive, social services do not have equally pronounced directives.

Since August 2022, social workers have the option to apply directly to the Swedish Migration Agency for a one-month reflection period with temporary residence permits

29. [Regeringskansliet, A2022/00996, Nationell strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet \(2022\)](#)

when there is suspicion of exploitation, without the need to initiate a preliminary investigation^[30]. However, all municipalities have not established procedures for such applications at the time of writing this report.

9.2 National Support Program, NPS

The National Support Program (NSP) is a support program that provides assistance to individuals who have been subjected to human trafficking and exploitation. The program is operated by the platform Civil Society Sweden against Human Trafficking and is currently funded by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. NSP aims to provide customised support and improve the situation of those affected. The support NSP provides complements the support measures offered under the Manual on Suspected Cases of Human Trafficking (MMM) and the Return Program.

9.3 Regional coordinators

Throughout the country, there are specialized regional coordinators who can provide practical consultation and guidance on matters related to human trafficking. They are employed within the social services and are part of the national coordination against prostitution and human trafficking. The regional coordinators serve as support for the national mandate of the Equality Agency regarding prostitution and human trafficking for all purposes. The responsibilities of a regional coordinator include providing methodological support to authorities, conducting training initiatives, participating in collaborative efforts against exploitation and human trafficking, offering supportive interventions to victims based on local conditions, serving as a contact person for the Return Program for Human Trafficking Prostitution, and engaging in outreach work. The regional coordinators are part of the National Method Support for Human Trafficking and regional task forces coordinated by the County Administrative Boards^[31].



30. Sveriges Rikes Lag (2022:1015).

31. [Jämställdhetsmyndigheten \(JÄMY\), Regionskoordinatorer-In English](#)

10. The Role of Trade Unions

Membership in a trade union is not a given for individuals who work in the shadow economy and lack knowledge about the Swedish labor market. The stance of trade unions towards those who work in the shadow economy varies, and tackling criminal exploitation poses a challenge for the Swedish labor movement.

Approximately 60 percent of all workers in LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation) occupations are members of a trade union, and the Swedish trade union movement is considered strong in terms of membership rates, although the percentage of organised workers has declined over the past 20 years. The Swedish model is based on broad agreements between employer organisations and trade unions in collective bargaining agreements, which has been regarded as providing such robust protection that minimum wages and other politically determined labor market laws are not needed. Negotiations and conflicts directly between employers and employees are less common in Sweden compared to other EU countries, which is believed to be attributed to the Swedish model^[32].

10.1 LO – The Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Underground Economy

The individuals interviewed in this report primarily work in occupations represented by construction unions as well as transport, hotel, and restaurant unions. In the LO report “Workplace Crime: The Fight for Order and Control” (Arbetslivskriminalitet: Kampen för ordning och reda)^[33], the authors state that industries where work-related crime is prevalent often exhibit risk factors such as low trade union membership rates, high time pressures, high staff intensity, self-employment, and poor working conditions. The more skewed the power distribution is between employees and employers, the greater the risk of exploitation. The report suggests that it is no coincidence that many of the most vulnerable industries employ a significant number of foreign workers, young people, and individuals with temporary or seasonal employment. When workers struggle to establish themselves in the labor market or assert their rights, the risk of exploitation increases.

32. Erik Sjödin (2019) Arbetsmarknadens skuggsida – rättsföljder vid för låga löner, Juridikum 2019-20 NR 3

33. Magro, L. (2022). Arbetslivskriminalitet: Kampen för ordning och reda. ISBN 978-91-566-3553-3

The report identifies several factors that have contributed to the current situation and proposes, as the National Audit Office does, enhanced and deepened collaboration among various authorities working on the issue. The report emphasizes the importance of ensuring that exploiting workers is not profitable, which should be achieved by convicting more deceitful employers.

The report also argues that the current system of labor migration is flawed and puts workers at a clear disadvantage. The rules for labor migration should instead be tightened to support employees, including reintroducing labor market testing and granting work permits only for full-time jobs. Furthermore, the report suggests that public procurement also contributes to unhealthy competition, as the lowest price often determines the outcome, resulting in cost savings at the expense of good working conditions and occupational health. Therefore, new guidelines are proposed to limit the involvement of too many subcontractors in procurement processes, and the introduction of a blacklist for unscrupulous employers. However, the report does not address the protection and support for victims of crime, those who are exploited. Nor does the report advocate for using trade union actions or to include exploited workers who are not involved in any trade union in their trade union activities.

10.2 The Builders Trade Union

At the Builders Trade Union (Byggnads) congress in 2022^[34], it was acknowledged that the construction industry faces significant issues of foreign construction workers being exploited through lower wages and employment conditions. Region Gävle-Dala presented a motion requesting the union to explore the possibility of hiring a number of individuals proficient in multiple languages to recruit foreign construction workers. The proposal suggests that the project should run for four years, and Byggnads should investigate the feasibility of financing this initiative. Despite being rejected by the executive board, the motion was supported by delegates^[35].

In the vision-document “Together Building the Future - Vision 2030”^[36] formulated after the Byggnads congress in 2022, there is a commitment to include more foreign workers in the union. The ambition is expressed to conduct an inventory and develop strategies to ensure that foreign labor on Swedish construction sites operates under collective agreements. Byggnads will focus on establishing and maintaining collective agreements with employers who employ foreign labor. A designated person at the central level and a network of regionally responsible individuals will work towards this objective. Workers should feel welcome and identify with Byggnads representatives, who should have experience in the field and be able to communicate in multiple languages. The aim is to make foreign workers feel secure in becoming members of Byggnads and confident in contacting the union during conflicts.

[34. Byggnads, Motioner och utlåtanden \(2022\)](#)

[35. Byggnadsarbetaren, Satsning på att värva utländsk arbetskraft \(2022\)](#)

[36. Byggnads, Kongressprotokoll \(2022\), Byggnads 2030](#)

10.3 The Trade Union Center for Undocumented

The Trade Union Center for the Undocumented (FCFP)^[37] is an association dedicated to trade union activities, established by LO (Swedish Trade Union Confederation) and TCO (Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees), along with several sector-specific trade union organisations. Its purpose is to assist and support undocumented workers in the Swedish labor market.

FCFP estimates that there are between 30,000 and 50,000 undocumented workers in Sweden alone, and they are in an extremely vulnerable position. It is not uncommon for undocumented workers to receive salaries far below the collective agreement rates, or sometimes not receive any payment at all. Despite limited resources, FCFP has been able to pursue cases on behalf of workers who would otherwise not have access to trade union representation and legal assistance through voluntary efforts.

10.4 Solidariska byggare (Solidarity builders)

Solidariska Byggare describes itself on its website as part of the Stockholm Building Syndicate within the Swedish Workers' Central Organisation (SAC)-syndicalists^[38]. The trade union consists of workers from diverse backgrounds, with a significant number of affiliated EU citizens, labor immigrants from non-EU countries, and undocumented workers. The goal of the association is to create dignified conditions for all construction workers in Stockholm and they have handled labor-related issues even in cases where formal contracts are absent.

Solidariska Byggare provides interpretation assistance in several languages, including Russian and Spanish, and has many members who can assist with additional languages when needed. The trade union's efforts focus on regulating the relationship between employers and workers, leaving the question of citizenship and migrant status to the state. The majority of cases pursued by Solidariska Byggare involve unpaid wages, sudden terminations, workplace accidents, and travel reimbursements. They have successfully litigated and won dozens of cases, both through direct negotiations and court decisions.

The challenge for Solidariska Byggare lies in the fact that SAC is a relatively small organisation with limited resources, and its principles are based on member self-organisation without paid union representatives. This means that complex cases impose a significant burden, and they can only dedicate themselves to a limited number of cases.

[37. The trade union center for the undocumented \(FCFP\)](#)

[38. Solidariska Byggare](#)

11. The Non-Profit Sector

Non-profit organisations engaged in open social services often serve the most vulnerable individuals, those who have, in various ways, fallen outside the safety net of society. They reach out to individuals who are apprehensive about engaging with authorities for various reasons, such as concerns about residency permits or fears of having engaged in illegal activities through undeclared work. Others seek support due to homelessness and lack of funds for basic necessities.

Non-profit organisations also engage in advocacy work and conduct their own investigations. For instance, the report “Modern Slavery in Sweden”^[39] by The Salvation Army describes one of the largest cases of human exploitation in modern history, which occurred in August 2021. An employer brought around 50 individuals from Bulgaria to Sweden to exploit them in berry picking in Älvsbyn. A joint operation was initiated by the police and social services in northern Sweden, but only a small portion of the recruited individuals were identified by the authorities as victims of crime. The Salvation Army’s trafficking center, Safe Havens, and the law firm, Brottsbyrån, provided practical support and legal information to 35 of the approximately 50 Bulgarians when they became stranded in Stockholm awaiting repatriation.

The Salvation Army was called upon to provide social and legal support to the victims, together with social services and the regional coordinator. The affected individuals had the opportunity to consult with lawyers and Safe Havens, and it was revealed that 33 out of the 35 victims expressed a desire to file a police report.

In the Älvsbyn case, The Salvation Army identified several shortcomings in the Swedish government’s handling of the situation. There was inadequate knowledge and lack of preparation among the responsible authorities. The regional coordinator against human trafficking was not heeded, and support from the Equality Agency was not accessible. Furthermore, because the police and social services did not identify the individuals as potential victims of human trafficking in a timely manner, the exploited individuals did not gain access to the Swedish protection system as outlined in the Manual on Suspicion of Human Trafficking (MMM)^[40].

39. Frälsningsarmén. (2021). MODERNT SLAVERI I SVERIGE- med erfarenheter ur ett nordiskt perspektiv. En lägesrapport från Frälsningsarmén om arbetskraftsexploatering.

40. Jämställdhetsmyndigheten (JÄMY) (2022). Manual vid misstanke om människohandel

11.1 Swedish Platform Civil Society against Human Trafficking

The Platform against Human Trafficking is a non-partisan and non-religious non-profit organisation that operates based on human rights principles^[41]. The platform works to combat and prevent human trafficking and aims to ensure that individuals who have experienced human trafficking, trafficking-like exploitation, and prostitution have their human rights upheld.

The platform engages in individual and structural work with a focus on coordinating and to ensure that there is a good quality of interventions that lead to an improved and strengthened situation for the affected individuals and their families. The platform also works preventively with those at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking.

11.2 Frälsningsarmén - Safe Havens

Frälsningsarmén (The Salvation Army) currently carries out extensive work against human trafficking and exploitation through initiatives such as its Safe Havens Trafficking Center in Stockholm^[42]. Safe Havens provides protection and support, including legal advice, to victims of trafficking and exploitation. Through its international network within Frälsningsarmén, Safe Havens has a broad reach and can offer support in other countries as well. Their work involves providing qualified trauma-informed care and interventions for individuals who have experienced human trafficking or exploitation. While Safe Havens typically does not directly handle cases of labor exploitation, they can refer individuals to other actors and continue to provide support to help them move forward in other ways.

11.3 Stadsmissionen – Crossroads

Crossroads is an open initiative operated by the national NGO called Stadsmissionen (City Mission) throughout Sweden, including Stockholm Stadsmission, Skåne Stadsmission, and Linköping Stadsmission^[43]. Crossroads targets individuals living in social or economic vulnerability who are either EU citizens or non-EU citizens without a Swedish personal identification number, and who also do not have access to public legal aid or support from other actors. The staff at Crossroads speak multiple languages and, through Stadsmissionen, can offer qualified legal advice primarily related to residency permits. In matters concerning labor exploitation and if the participant is not a member of a trade union, Stockholm Stadsmission's Crossroads collaborates with the Trade Union Center for Undocumented Workers. Stockholm Stadsmission also has a dedicated knowledge team that focuses on human trafficking and exploitation, providing support to participants who have experienced, among other things, labor exploitation.

[41. Swedish Platform Civil Society against Human Trafficking](#)

[42. Safe Havens traffickingcenter](#)

[43. Crossroads - Malmö](#)

11.4 Räddningsmissionen

For many years, Räddningsmissionen has conducted fieldwork in Gothenburg and the Västra Götaland region, targeting EU citizens and individuals outside the Swedish safety nets. In Gothenburg, there is a shelter for the target group operated in collaboration with the City of Gothenburg, as well as a social center where the same group has access to laundry facilities, showers, breakfast, and the opportunity for qualified social support in various languages.

Räddningsmissionen conducts the project “Together Against Exploitation”, funded by the Västra Götaland region, within the field of labor exploitation^[44]. The aim is to engage in outreach work, develop methods for supporting individuals, establish networks between non-profit actors, and raise awareness in public discourse. In their operations, Räddningsmissionen encounters individuals who are exploited or at risk of exploitation in the labor market. They provide information on how the labor market functions and offer advice on actions that can be taken to strengthen one’s rights against deceitful employers.

Regarding exploitation at the workplace, Räddningsmissionen lacks the resources and legal expertise to pursue cases and represent clients in civil court proceedings.



44. Räddningsmissionen - Exploatering

12. Conclusions and proposals

12.1 Conclusions

The proposals for improving the fight against labor exploitation in Sweden primarily focus on increased control and enhanced possibilities for prosecuting those who exploit workers. These are important measures, but they cannot be expected to increase the willingness of exploited individuals to report or provide them with greater opportunities for financial compensation for the harm they have suffered. As it stands today, exploited laborers often risk losing their jobs, residency permits, and housing if they report an exploitative employer. If they are not affiliated with a trade union, they also have limited realistic options for seeking compensation for unpaid wages or other forms of exploitation.

In its report on Sweden's efforts against trafficking and exploitation, GRETA, the Council of Europe's anti-trafficking body, states:

“However, GRETA remains concerned by the low number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in THB cases, and in particular the near absence of convictions for THB for the purpose of labour exploitation and child trafficking. GRETA once again urges the Swedish authorities to take measures to ensure that THB offences are investigated and prosecuted effectively, leading to proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, ...”^[45]

This was written in 2018, but the conclusions are also shared by this report, based on our assessment 2022. Our conclusion is that the work done so far has not had a significant impact on either the number of convictions or the extent of labor exploitation in Sweden.

Furthermore, we note a lack of qualified support to provide redress for those who have been exploited at their work. There are several aid organisations whose primary focus is to support victims of prostitution and human trafficking, however, such interventions are not primarily sought after by victims of labor exploitation. What is demanded is more qualified legal support and assistance in legal proceedings, as well as financial support for subsistence during illness and legal processes, and for healthcare expenses.

Currently, there are no organisations that provide qualified legal and social support free of charge to individuals who have been subjected to labor exploitation if the situation is deemed a labor market conflict. With few but significant exceptions,

45. [GRETA's Report and Government's Comments, published 8 June 2018](#)

Swedish trade unions do not include workers without formal employment in their efforts.

This fact is indirectly confirmed in the government's response to GRETA, which was issued in July 2022, regarding how victims of labor exploitation can have their rights fulfilled and claim compensation for unpaid wages:

“The Swedish labour market model is based on the regulation of wages and various working and employment conditions in collective agreements between the social partners. The autonomy of the partners means that it is the responsibility of the trade unions and the employers to ensure compliance with the rules of collective agreements, including rules on wages. If a victim of THB is a member of a Swedish trade union, the trade union will normally assist with the legal proceeding. Victims of THB, who are not a member of a Swedish trade union can claim unpaid wages and take legal action at the competent court.

Victims of THB can bring civil claims for unpaid wages and social contributions based on employment law...”^[46]

In practice, the government acknowledges that victims of labor exploitation in Sweden do not receive legal support and have no actual possibilities of obtaining compensation or recovering unpaid wages if they are not members of a trade union. The response also fails to clarify that the crime of human exploitation, for which Sweden currently has only a few convictions, does not automatically provide economic redress for the victims.

We also note that while the Delegation against Workplace Crime expresses positively acknowledges several of the stronger measures taken by our neighboring countries. Sweden has limited itself to what we consider weaker measures, such as interagency cooperation, information dissemination, and slightly tougher penalties.

Some of the measures implemented by neighboring countries that we would like to highlight include the “Arbejdsmarkedets Fond for Udstationerede”^[47] in Denmark, which guarantees the correct wages for posted (trade union-affiliated) workers in Denmark by compensating workers who are not paid and is intended to be combined with a blacklist of companies that exploit labor. The Oslo model with its enhanced client responsibility, the introduction of the concept of “wage theft” in Norway, as well as the Finnish occupational health and safety inspectors’ authority to verify the payment of correct wages in addition to workplace conditions.

Another measure that we believe could assist exploited workers is the Finnish principle of considering collectively agreed wages as a minimum wage. However, this could potentially conflict with the Swedish model, which in turn could have other negative labor law consequences.

Finally, we reiterate that the current efforts against workplace crime and exploitation lack the victim perspective applied to, for example, victims of human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. Victims of workplace exploitation have very limited opportunities to seek justice if they are not affiliated with a trade union since they

46. <https://rm.coe.int/reply-from-sweden-to-the-questionnaire-for-the-evaluation-of-the-imple/1680a73d54>

47. [Lov om Arbejdsmarkedets Fond for Udstationerede \(LOV nr 613 af 08/06/2016\)](#)

would need to file a civil lawsuit against the employer. The incentives to report offenders are also inadequate, as few cases result in convictions, and even a conviction does not guarantee economic compensation for the victims.

12.2 Proposals

Based on the foundation laid in this report and the testimonies we have gathered from conducted interviews, we have a range of proposals for how the work against labor exploitation could become more robust and better encompass the exploited individuals. The proposals go beyond those outlined in the government's strategy for combating work-related crime^[48], and we see that they could improve the situation for criminally exploited labor, as well as for workers at risk of exploitation in Sweden.

12.2.1 Learn from neighboring countries

Expand the rights of Swedish employee representatives (skyddsombud) so that, similar to the Finnish model, they have the right to investigate the proper payment of wages. Introduce a fund for exploited labor combined with a blacklist of exploitative companies, as done in Denmark. This would allow exploited workers the opportunity for compensation, which would increase the incentive to report misconduct, while the blacklist would make it less advantageous to exploit labor.

12.2.2 Utilize purchasing power

Oslo municipality has decided to leverage its position as the country's second-largest procurer to combat workplace crime. The so-called Oslo Model includes requirements for all labor to be registered, workers to receive wages equivalent to collective agreement levels, and only to have more than one subcontractor in exceptional. If Swedish municipalities introduced similar regulations, it would protect workers from exploitation even within Sweden.

12.2.3 Make wage withholding a theft offense

One particular measure from neighboring countries that we wish to highlight is the Norwegian approach of introducing the concept of wage theft. Wage theft means that withholding wages is not only a breach of contract but also a crime subject to public prosecution. In Sweden, this would be a significant step towards addressing one of the largest problems for exploited workers not members of a union. Currently, to obtain their rights, they must sue the exploitative employer in civil court, which is often impractical and rarely results in more than a settlement, even in successful cases. If wage theft were a crime subject to public prosecution, enabling the exploited to recover unpaid wages, it would both provide increased incentive to report and greater opportunities for the vulnerable to obtain justice.

48. Regeringskansliet, A2022/00996, Nationell strategi mot arbetslivskriminalitet (2022)

12.2.4 Make the blue card mandatory

Currently everyone working in Sweden (excluding gig workers) should be insured, and it is the employer's responsibility to pay the social contributions that grant access to health insurance. However, it is a recurring problem for exploited workers to lack health insurance coverage in various ways and to varying degrees. If the EU's health insurance card, the blue card, became mandatory for posted workers, it would be a first step towards ensuring that all employees are covered by health insurance and that contributions are paid. Similarly, it should be possible to verify that all employees of Swedish companies in Sweden have also had their social contributions paid.

12.2.5 Incorporate the victim perspective

In the vast majority of efforts against work-related crime in Sweden, we observe the absence of the perspectives of those affected, which is also evident in the proposed solutions. Authorities must receive clear directives to regard individuals who may be victims or potential victims of human exploitation as crime victims and provide them with support, even if they do not self-identify as victims or participate in the investigation.

13. Methodology

The report is based on interviews with victims of exploitation, meetings with organisations in Sweden and other Baltic Sea states, as well as independent research and summaries of reports and inquiries. The work was conducted between April 2022 and April 2023, and the conclusions pertain to the information available during that period.

Through interviews and practical support provided to exploited workers, the project gained valuable insights into the perspectives and qualitative aspects of the situation in several cases. The project also engaged with various stakeholders in the Swedish labor market, including non-profit and private consultants, as well as aid organisations in the Baltic region and the Nordic countries. Trade unions have contributed their perspectives, and the project has participated in discussions with authorities involved in the collaboration against human trafficking and exploitation.

The project's objective has been to provide an accurate portrayal of the situation faced by exploited individuals and convey their actual opportunities for action in the present circumstances. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions and semi-structured follow-up inquiries, covering topics such as recruitment, healthcare, legal matters, and the situation in their home countries, among others.

The texts contain citations in the form of footnotes on the same page, referencing the primary source from which the information was obtained. The intention has been to present the source material in a clear and accessible manner, including links to websites or documents.

The project manager and author has been Daniel Åman, and Lars Lovén serves as the editor for the report.

Appendix

1. Campaigns

Several campaigns against human trafficking, prostitution, and work-related crime have been initiated and concluded, some are ongoing, and new ones are in the making. The information about these campaigns is derived from the respective organisations' own presentations. The footnotes contain direct links to these initiatives.

Before you go

Currently, the “Before you go”^[49] campaign is ongoing, in which the Swedish Equality Agency informs individuals about the risks of being subjected to labor exploitation in multiple languages.

Rights for All Seasons – Campaign on Seasonal Workers

The European Labour Authority (ELA) acknowledges that seasonal workers employed across borders have formal rights, but due to the temporary nature of their work, they are more vulnerable to insecure living and working conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the conditions for seasonal workers, exposing them to increased health risks.

To raise awareness among seasonal workers and employers who hire them about existing rights, obligations, and advisory services, the European Labour Authority (ELA), in collaboration with the European Commission, the EURES network, and the European Platform tackling undeclared work, has launched the “Rights for all Seasons” information campaign^[50].

European Platform tackling undeclared work

One of the tasks of the European Labour Authority (ELA) is to support member states in combating undeclared work. In 2021, the European Platform tackling undeclared work was established as a permanent working group within ELA.

At the EU level, undeclared work is defined as “all paid activities which are lawful as regards their nature but not declared to the authorities, taking into account differences

49. [Jämställdhetsmyndigheten \(JÄMY\), Before you Go](#)

50. [The European Labour Authority \(ELA\) \(2023\) ELA – Rights for all Seasons](#)

in the regulations of the member states”. The most common type is work performed within a formal business, partially or entirely undeclared. Partially undeclared work is sometimes referred to as “under-declared work”, “envelope wages”, or “cash-in-hand wages”.

Another type is undeclared “self-employment” or independent work, where self-employed individuals provide services either to a formal business or to other clients, such as households.

Undeclared work occurs in all economic sectors, both within countries and across borders. It is often found in sectors such as construction, renovation or repair, gardening, cleaning, childcare, or HORECA (Hotel/Restaurant/Catering - food and beverage services)^[51].

2. Other Organizations and Initiatives

Below are two organisations that do not fall into the categories mentioned above but are involved in addressing labor exploitation and combating workplace crime through lobbying, procurement concepts, and independent investigations. The information is sourced from the organisations’ own presentations. The footnotes contain links to the respective organisation.

Fair Building (Rättvist byggande)

Fair Building is a work model that was initiated by Stockholmshem in 2017 to combat crime and unhealthy competition at construction sites. The work model quickly gained popularity among construction companies and property owners, and in December 2021, the non-profit association Fair Building was established in collaboration with the industry association Byggherrarna. Fair Building encompasses requirements for procurement, control, and scrutiny of the entire subcontractor chain, unannounced workplace inspections with follow-up, and handling of deviations from contractual breaches and legal violations, as well as support through training and advocacy. The goal is to create fair and sustainable workplaces within the construction industry^[52].

Fair Play Construction (Fair Play Bygg)

Fair Play Construction is an organisation that aims to combat criminal activities within the construction industry. The organisation is driven by Byggnads Stockholm-Gotland and Stockholms Byggmästareförening. Fair Play Construction examines and evaluates the information submitted, supplements it when necessary, and compiles it to facilitate the authorities’ work against workplace crime. Their goal is to create sound and secure workplaces where companies can compete on equal terms. The organisation supports the authorities in their efforts against criminal actors and activities within the construction industry^[53].

[51. The European Labour Authority \(ELA\) \(2023\) European Platform tackling undeclared work](#)

[52. Rättvist Byggande](#)

[53. Fair Play Bygg](#)

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ORGANISATIONS:

Fair Play Bygg <https://fairplaybygg.se/>

Stockholms Stadsmission Mötesplatser – Stockholm (tidigare Crossroads) <https://www.stadsmissionen.se/motesplatser>

Crossroads – Malmö <https://www.skanestadsmission.se/verksamheter/crossroads-malmo/>

JÄMY <https://jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/>

Arbetsmiljöverket – arbetslivskriminalitet <https://www.av.se/arbetsmiljoarbete-och-inspektioner/arbetslivskriminalitet/stoppa-arbetslivskriminalitet/>

Räddningsmissionen – Exploatering <https://raddningsmissionen.se/exploatering>

Safe Havens traffickingcenter <https://www.fralsningsarmen.se/safe-havens/>

Rättvist Byggande <https://www.rattvistbyggande.se/>

Fackligt Center För Papperslösa <https://www.fcfp.se/>

Nationella Stödprogrammet (NSP) <https://manniskohandel.se/var-verksamhet/nationellt-stodprogram/>

Plattformen Civila Sverige mot Människohandel <https://manniskohandel.se/>

Solidariska Byggare <https://www.facebook.com/people/Solidariska-byggare-Stockholms-byggsyndikat-av-SAC/100076192153069/>

This report is written with the support of Västra
götalandsregionen and Europeiska socialfonden



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www.raddningsmissionen.se

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