

## **Human Trafficking: Myth or Reality?**

Support reflection

### **1. Traffickers are often seen by victims as allies for their migratory project, and not as criminals.**

Reality

The victim may see the trafficker as someone who enhances a future goal whose consequence leads the victim to understand his reasons. On the other hand, the victim can see these conditions of exploitation as the only alternative and therefore accepts the prospect of the exploiting person without questioning. Note that the victims are suspicious of the systems of laws and rights because they consider that those do not apply to themselves, accepting that the prospects of the person who exploits are those of those who want to help.

### **2. Are there any victims of Human Trafficking in Portugal?**

Reality

Between 2008 and 2018, 1,948 signs were registered, of which 693 were confirmed as victims of human trafficking and 379 were flagged by “NGO/Other entities” (there are cases still under investigation) Source: MAI/OTSH (date of last data update: July 2019) Portugal is simultaneously a country of origin, transit and destination of Human Trafficking. This phenomenon brings with it a set of problematic causes and consequences: organized crime, sexual and labor exploitation (among other forms), asymmetries between the most developed and the most deprived countries, gender and human rights issues, lack of family and community support.

### **3. Can a Portuguese person be a victim of Human Trafficking in Portugal?**

Reality

Between 2008 and 2018, 173 Portuguese victims of this crime were confirmed. Source: MAI/OTSH. Date of the last data update: July 2019

A victim of human trafficking is not always an immigrant, but a person in a situation of exploitation. According to international, European definitions and Portuguese legislation, the crime of Human Trafficking happens when a person is offered, delivered, recruited, enticed, accepted, transported, accommodated through violence, kidnapping, serious threat, fraudulent deception or maneuver, abuse of authority, exploitation of mental disability or special vulnerability; with the aim of: exploitation, namely sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, begging, slavery, organ harvesting, exploitation of other criminal activities. For there to be a crime of Human Trafficking, it is not necessary to cross an international border, just transportation within the same country. Article 160 of the Penal Code.

### **4. Traffickers can work through employment and tourism agencies, promising work abroad and the necessary documentation for the trip.**

## Reality

The crime of Human Trafficking has a good organization, which in most cases means that they are set in a network and in services available on the market, freely accessible, such as employment and tourism agencies, without any suspicions.

### **5. In the case of Human Trafficking, victims cannot leave the exploitation space.**

#### Myth

Victims are often able to leave the physical space of exploitation, however they may be subjected to threats and physical and/or psychological coercion that does not allow them to flee/ask for help. Often, victims don't see themselves as such.

### **6. All foreign people who are victims of trafficking are undocumented.**

#### Myth

Not all victims of trafficking are undocumented, however they may be subject to exploitation and control methods that may vary over time. Among them, the following stand out:

- document retention. Victims may be deprived of their documents and money on the pretext that they are kept safely or are needed to obtain visas, thereby controlling their freedom;
- resorting to violence and restricting movements. Various methods are used to control victims, including their incarceration and the administration of drugs;
- resorting to threats made to the victims themselves, as well as to their families. Sometimes traffickers threaten, for example, to tell the victims' families and/or the community they come from that they have agreed to participate in degrading work practices, or threaten to tell the authorities that they have no documents.

### **7. The victims of Human Trafficking are necessarily people in a situation of poverty.**

#### Myth

It is not possible to describe the typical victim of Human Trafficking. Victims can be children or adults, men or women, illiterate or literate people, physically fit people or people with disabilities. Victims may come from different locations/countries and from different ethnic groups. There is no specific type of exploitation for each gender, and anyone can be the target of any type of exploitation. Most of the victims are, however, people who had hopes, either to get a better life or to earn money for their families, hopes that have been defrauded. ”

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### **8. Recruitment always involve physical strength or abduction.**

#### Myth

The recruitment or recruitment of people who will become victims of trafficking can vary, and depends a lot on the age or sex of the victim as well as on the type of exploitation to be carried out. In this way it is possible that recruitment is done through false job advertisements, promises of a loving relationship, promise of study or training opportunities, promise of support or facilitation of immigration to another country or the abduction of the victim. What is at the basis of the promises made is deceit, that is, a future condition is promised that will never come to fruition, in order to attract the person and, subsequently, subject him to a situation of exploitation.