

# Workers' Perspective On Severe Labour Exploitation



**Cornelia Riehle**

## News

In June 2019, FRA published its [fourth report on the topic of severe labour exploitation, focusing on the perspective of the workers](#). The report is based on interviews with 237 exploited workers. It outlines the following:

- Pathways into severe labour exploitation;
- Working and living conditions of employees;
- Employers' strategies to keep the workers working;
- The interviewees' perception of risk factors for severe labour exploitation;
- Employees' access to justice.

In its conclusions, the report recommends acting on recruitment, i.e., by setting minimum EU standards for employment and recruitment agencies and their subcontractors. Another suggestion is to enforce the legal framework for labour law, i.e., by reinforcing workplace inspections with the support of the planned European Labour Authority and by the adoption of the EU Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions. Another key issue is to inform workers of their rights and the existence of labour exploitation. Migrants should avoid irregular residence status, as it strengthens the employers' position of power.

In this context, the report asks EU Member States to increase legal avenues for migration and to create targeted labour migration programmes. The power of employers is also strengthened by policies that tie the residence permit to the existence of an employment contract. Residence permits and visas should give migrants the possibility to quickly switch employers. Residence status also permits many victims of labour exploitation to report to the police. Therefore, the report sees the need to shift the authorities' focus from immigration enforcement to the protection of workers and labour rights. Lastly, the report recommends taking measures to develop a culture of rights among relevant stakeholders in the labour market as well as among the general population.

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