



• ireti •

empowering women

toolkit
for social workers
on approaches
and methodologies
to contrast human trafficking



INTRODUCTION

IRETI “Empowering Women and Strengthening Socioeconomic Integration” is an **Erasmus +** funded project that was launched in November 2017. The **partner organizations are BB&R (Spain), Ubele (UK), and AUR (Romania), coordinated by HRYO (Italy).**

The project seeks to highlight and bring together the best practices of working with human trafficking for the common purpose of combating exploitation of women, and to allow victims from human trafficking to have an access to basic services through an **online platform.**

As part of the project, we have also developed a **Booklet of good practices** and the present **Toolkit on approaches and methodologies for social workers’ daily activities,** in order to gain knowledge from the work and the local realities in London, Bucharest, Salamanca and Palermo.

Since the **Toolkit** was not meant to be an extensive research on the topic, but rather a user-friendly tool, it was designed to allow an **easy reading, and possibly inspire social workers in their daily work, promoting a victim-centered approach where their wishes, safety and well-being are considered the priority.** Thus, besides the desk research conducted by the project staff, the content of the Toolkit was greatly enriched by the contributions of the social workers and survivors attending the IRETI international training in Salamanca on September 2019. A group of 26 frontline workers, in fact, had the chance to exchange successful approaches and challenges in their daily work with victims, potential victims and survivors of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

We have identified **four phases in the work with victims of human trafficking,** that is:

1. First contact
2. Establishment of a trusted relationship
3. Awareness raising and formal complaint
4. Empowerment, freedom and own life control.

Per each phase we present some tips and constraints related to four domains, which are **communication** (verbal/nonverbal), **setting** (safe environment), **connection to other services** (e.g. NHS, police, other), and **education, vocational training and activities proposed to the women**. As some suggestions are relevant in more than one phase, they are presented in multiple sections.

Lastly, considered that the aspect of communication emerged as the most sensitive and crucial one, thanks to the collaboration across project partners and with social workers and survivors, we have decided to include in the Toolkit a **Decalogue of good practices for communicators on the topic of victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation**.

10 POINTS FOR A POLITE COMMUNICATION

A decalogue of good practices for communicators on the topic “victims of trafficking and coercive prostitution”.

Besides the considerations expressed in the previous sections in relation to the communication with victims, potential victims and survivors, the linguistic and communicative register around the topic is very diverse and controversial.

Acknowledged that it is essential to **always use words which are appropriate to the context** (institutional, youth work, students, other migrants etc.), in this last section we present some reflections based on a desk research and the feedback received throughout the project by social workers and survivors.

1. Use words such as “sex worker”, “woman practicing prostitution”, “woman in situation of prostitution” or “women in situations of trafficking” or “woman in situation of sexual exploitation”. **Do not use the word “prostitute”** since it reduces the person to one activity in her live that has a negative cultural connotations.
2. Distinguish between **“consensual prostitution”** and **“forced sex work”**. Show forced sex work as a human right violation against freedom, equality, integrity and dignity of the person and as a way of violence against women.
3. Do not refer to the **country of origin** of the woman if not strictly necessary. It should only be mentioned in case it has informative value.

4. **Johns and Clients.** Some people call patrons of sex workers johns, while others call them clients. The term john is a historical term that holds meaning for sex workers, “it’s a nameless, generic and dehumanizing word used to refer to a homogenous group of men and does not represent the individuality and diversity of the clients”. Using the term “clients” is more respectful and accurate and it reinforces the labour dimension of sex work. (source: www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/StellaInfoSheetLanguageMatters.pdf)
5. The terms **“forced prostitution”** or **“enforced prostitution”** appear in international and humanitarian conventions such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court but have been insufficiently understood and inconsistently applied. “Forced prostitution” refers to conditions of control over a person who is coerced by another to engage in sexual activity.
6. **Avoid stereotyping and stigmatizing the prostituted women**, avoid including images of high heels or streetlamps.
7. Employ specialized sources, **giving voice and authority to women** who exercise prostitution. Make their experiences and opinions visible (always with their consent) and give special visibility to the stories of women victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Use information from specialized sources (information and opinions of experts and entities in the field).

8. Request **permission** to the women before spreading their identities or images. Images are part of identity right and personal data protection laws, regardless of whether they exercise prostitution voluntarily or forcedly.
9. Be careful not to use **images** of operatives or police raids where women can be identified, to avoid their criminalization.
10. **Avoid the term “baby prostitute”** when talking about underage girls (sometimes even children) who are sexually exploited. The term recalls the dimension of job rather than the one of exploitation.



•ireti•

empowering women

