



• 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**.

## CONCLUSIONS

Working with people is never easy, and working with people in a condition of vulnerability is even harder. With this Toolkit we hope to offer useful suggestions for the daily work with victims of human trafficking. Big differences are linked to the submission/not submission of a formal complaint and to the possibility or not to be hosted in a dedicated shelter providing a whole-round support by specialized staff.

In this conclusive section we want **to recall some main aspects, principles and recommendations** that emerged from an analysis of the suggestions and constraints in the work with victims of human trafficking:

- Within your organization and across other organizations and services, promote **greater knowledge** on how to recognize situations of vulnerability that could be linked to human trafficking.
- Pay great attention to the **intercultural communication** dimension. Be sure that the client is at ease with the cultural mediator and in the meeting setting. Do not assume that you have the same understanding of things.
- The **contacts with other services** represents a particularly challenging aspect for the vast majority of the social workers who have contributed to the development of the present Toolkit. Cultivate positive relations with the different actors and services, and if it is possible, offer them training opportunities to learn more about human trafficking. Share with them this toolkit!
- Propose thematic roundtables with the various stakeholders (police, NHS, street units) in order to **develop**

## and possibly implement operational guidelines for mutual support (MoU).

- Don't take any decision or action without the woman's consent and do not impose your preferences because "it's your job". Respect her decisions and be sure you don't involuntarily cause harm to the person when trying to help her.
- Unfortunately, often the **opportunities** offered to migrant women are very much limited (e.g. cleaning services, waitress, home assistance) without encouraging new solutions and entrepreneurial ideas. The **economic dimension** is likely to become a big constraint that can jeopardize the whole process, especially for the women who do not join a protection program providing shelter and services. **Be encouraging, optimistic and supportive**, but do not promise things that you cannot do/give.
- Lastly, always **promote a victim-centered approach where their wishes, safety and well-being are considered the priority.**



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