

More women trafficked to Nordic countries for labor, marriage: police



- By Lisa Anderson, [Reuters](#)
- Mar. 10, 2015, 7:20 AM

UNITED NATIONS (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - A growing number of women are being trafficked to Nordic and Baltic countries for forced labor, identity theft and "marriages of convenience" to foreign men, experts said at the opening of a United Nations session focusing on women.

The International Labour Organization estimates that women represent 55 percent of all forced labor and 98 percent of those trafficked for sexual exploitation.

In Norway, a wealthy nation of 5 million, there is an "ominous trend" of young foreign women lured to work as nannies, and then trapped in abusive employment, said Peggy Hessen Folsvik, first secretary of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions.

"What used to be a cultural exchange increasingly has become a method by which Norwegians get cheap domestic help," Folsvik said at a panel on human trafficking on Monday during the first day of the two-week-long U.N. 59th Commission on the Status of Women.

Often overworked, underpaid, deprived of their passports and otherwise abused, these young women are basically trafficked into forced labor. Getting the perpetrators convicted, however, has proved difficult, she said.

Trafficking victims in fishing, agriculture and construction often are men, while trafficked women are turning up as workers in grocery stores and hospitals, Folsvik said.

The victim could be the "smiling person" who cleans your house, serves your coffee and checks you out at the grocery, she said. "In practice, they are invisible."

In Denmark, the latest trend is traffickers using victims' identities to commit fraud and other crimes, said Hanne Bergstrom, an inspector with the Danish National Police.

Denmark, like other Nordic and Baltic countries, has also seen a growth in forced labor, particularly in "social dumping", a term that refers to the trafficking of unemployed migrant workers vulnerable to abuse, Bergstrom said.

Police also are seeing a growth in women trafficked for "marriages of convenience", said Anne Siri Lorvik, assistant chief of police in Norway's National Criminal Investigative Service.

In these cases, women - primarily from EU countries - are lured into marriages in order to confer residency or other legal status on their spouses. Since this often happens initially with the women's consent, cases are difficult to prosecute, Lorvik said.

Nordic and Baltic law enforcement authorities must cooperate regionally, sharing expertise and contacts to fight trafficking, the panel said.

This kind of cooperation has resulted in Iceland's first convictions in a human trafficking case in 2010, said Berglind Eyjolfsson, detective inspector of Reykjavik Metropolitan Police and chair of the Nordic Baltic Network of Policewomen.

(Reporting by Lisa Anderson, editing by Alisa Tang)

Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-more-women-trafficked-to-nordic-countries-for-labor-marriage-police-2015-3#ixzz3WOHIWGKx>