

Exploitation of North Korean workers in Gdansk shipyards: Poland reacts to HRWF statement at the OSCE conference in Warsaw

[See video of statement here \(start 31:00\)](#)

[Full text of statement](#)

HRWF (29.09.16) – On 22 September, the director of HRWF raised the issue of the exploitation of North Korean workers in Gdansk shipyards at the OSCE/ ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw (See video and full text on the OSCE website above) and initiated a friendly dialogue with the OSCE delegation of Poland about this problem. On 28 September, HRWF was informed by the delegation of Poland about the state of play regarding the situation of private companies hiring North Korean workers, who get working visas from the Polish authorities for this purpose. Here is the message that they sent to HRWF:

“The Republic of Poland, just as any other country of the European Union does not have any bilateral agreement with the DPRK regarding the exchange of workers. The Polish government does not take an active part in the process of hiring said workers nor does it promote such practices. The existing cooperation is based on private companies' independent agreements.

According to our estimations there are not more than 550 North Korean workers in Poland. Under the existing laws, all visa applications continue to be reviewed on a case by case basis. We would like to stress that in 2016 Poland has not issued any work visas for DPRK's nationals. In 2015 we issued only 129 such visas.

We wish to stress that government institutions, such as the National Labour Inspectorate and the Border Guard oversee their employment conditions and ensure the Polish laws are respected in their workplace. To that end, these institutions regularly inspect the companies where the DPRK nationals are employed.”

***Human Rights Without Frontiers* urges the Polish authorities to stop delivering work visas to North Korean workers as long as the ILO labour standards cannot be fully respected.**