

Human Trafficking; Fighting modern-day Slavery

Trafficking is an ultimate de-humanizing act that reduces people to goods. It distorts relations and severely hurts people to re-establish new healthy relationships. Christian NGO's have been leading the fight against this modern-day slavery and for the ECPM this is an issue that has to be high on the agenda of the EU.

Approximately 20.9 million people are in forced labour worldwide. Although it is difficult to establish an exact figure, conservative estimates suggest 44 per cent of these people have been trafficked¹. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common worldwide - 58 per cent of all identified victims are victim of sexual exploitation and forced into prostitution.

Cooperation at EU an international level

Since human trafficking is a cross-border crime, combating it requires international cooperation. ECPM draws the attention of the EP to the positive results achieved by joined non-legislative efforts such as close cooperation with professionals and the civil society organisations active in the field and partnership-building with the private sector which should continue to be strengthened. A business coalition involving companies wishing to keep their supply chains free of goods made by victims of human trafficking is to be welcomed and encouraged through incentive policies at EU level (e.g. reduced taxes). The EU Member States must continue sharing best practices as well as working and establishing stronger cooperation with all the stakeholders in order to better identify, protect and assist victims, including in the legislative process, from being subjected to violence and exploitation.

Prevent and reduce the demand

The best solution, proven to effectively address² and have positive effects on reducing the demand for sexual services, is to encourage at EU level that member states will criminalise the purchase of sex in all circumstances as well as third party sellers (consisting of pimps and traffickers) and decriminalise those personally selling sex, such as the Nordic Model³.

Give special attention to children

The EU is under an obligation to make a commitment to do everything in its power to stop child trafficking and to ensure children receive protection and justice.

This commitment must start with eradicating internet child pornography as well as fixing flaws in the children welfare system. We urge the EU to build a technology task force and put in place technology innovation to fight child sexual exploitation. Data systems that track and find missing children, who should be regarded as victims and not runaways, must also be improved at EU level. ECPM is also calling on the member states to introduce a system which would provide every child victim a child trafficking guardian to support them and speak up for their best interests. A guardian who offers

¹ International Labour Organisation Global Estimate of Forced Labour 2012

² Seo-Young Cho, *Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?*, German Institute for Economic Research-DIW Berlin, Germany, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

³ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/european-parliament-vote-nordic-model-prostitution-that-fines-clients-1433466#.Uujpg3B1E7Q.facebook>

security and stability to a child is invaluable in aiding his/her recovery and preventing the child from returning to his trafficker.

Policies to counter cybercrime connected to trafficking

Most young people who are exploited sexually in return for payment came into contact with the purchaser via the Internet⁴. It is difficult for the sex services provided online to fall under the definition of sex trafficking because it is hard to prove the three main elements: “force, fraud or, coercion.” Therefore, measures at EU level to adjust the human trafficking legislation to online sex services, as well as programs to raise awareness and prevent people from being offered online jobs in prostitution must be adopted.

Protect, support and assist the victims

The EU common policy must adopt a victim-focus approach by ensuring services are available to help them get out of the sex industry. Therefore, EU common guidelines to better identify victims of trafficking must be developed. Further, Member States should provide proper designation to ensure victims receive the care and the help they need, and link up the national referral mechanisms and the relevant authorities: the police, migration services, border guard services, judges, social fraud investigators and also experts on financial investigations.

For the purpose of better protecting young persons against sexual abuse member states can be encouraged to ensure that persons up to the age of 21 have special status where a trafficking offense has been committed and stand under special protection. The EU can facilitate a process in which families are given assistance to reunite with those European citizens who are victims of human trafficking in another EU Member State. A victim-centred approach also couples assistance in starting their new life either in the country they were trafficked or their home country (see Italy’s model). So they are guaranteed a residence permit and receive education and training to help them start a new career. This is really what every European Union country should be striving for.

⁴ Swedish Government report, pg 35, <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/14/92/31/96b1e019.pdf>