

**Reports: 9th EU Anti-Trafficking Day Conference, 20 October, 2015
and
EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Persons, 21 October , 2015**



High Level Conference Marking the 9thEU Anti-Trafficking day, 18 October

Organised by the European Commission in collaboration with the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of European Union, the conference took place in Brussels on the 20th of October, 2015. The Mary Ward Loreto Foundation was invited to attend as an active participant of the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings (THB).

The theme, “Time for concrete actions: Implementing the Legal and Policy Framework on Trafficking in Human beings” and aim of the conference was to develop a policy for the implementation of the EU legal framework and policies addressing trafficking in Human Beings. The Conference marks the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, instituted on 18th of October, 2007 with a view to highlighting the EU common commitment to eradicating trafficking in human persons.

Two important components of the Conference were:

- **Introductory Remarks by the Chair, Opening statements and Keynote Address**
- **High level panel, Interactive discussion**

Introductory Remarks by the Chair, Opening statements and Keynote Address

Ms. Myria Vassilidou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission, introduced¹ the meeting and welcomed the 200+ participants, the representatives of the EU Parliament, the EU Commissioners, Ministers, Europol, Eurojust and Civil Society. She explained that the main priorities common to the European Union and the European Commission are: “Following the money and reducing demand for trafficking in Human Beings in all forms of exploitation”.

These important issues will be the subject of the two interactive discussions of the honourable panellists listed in the Appendix. After the introduction Ms. Vassilidou concluded by saying that: “States are strong, and they can protect and defend themselves, but individuals, especially those exploited, are not as strong and it is our duty to protect them.”

Mr. Felix Braz², Luxemburg's Minister of Justice and Dimitris Avramopoulos³, EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, followed these remarks, highlighting the success and progress of the EU member states against trafficking in persons. He [which 'he' is being referred to here as 2 people are named] commented on the fact that many states are raising concerns regarding the full implementation of the legal framework and policies of individual governments. This was one way of achieving the eradication of this terrible and unacceptable phenomenon in our society.

What is needed now is action and implementation.

¹<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I110681> (Introductory speech by Myria Vassilidou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission).

²<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I110682> (Felix Braz, Minister of Justice of Luxembourg)

³<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I110683> (Dimitris Avramopoulos, EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship)

In her keynote address, Professor Sylvia Walby⁴, (Distinguished professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, University of Lancaster), spoke specifically about the importance of prevention and implementation of the Legal and Policy framework.

Professor Walby identified prevention as a key word in all the Anti-trafficking documents and is at the core of the Directive 2011/36/EU⁵: "Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims," is more clearly highlighted in the 1st and 18th articles of the Directive. She noted that prevention is also at the core of the 'EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016.' Professor Walby⁴ considered the work of prevention as extremely compliant with the services offered to the victims. This focus leads to the empowerment of the victims or the potential victims, and empowers them to have the courage to give testimony against this crime. –"Their statements and their standing up in the Court can help the prosecutors to succeed in convicting the traffickers. If the victims are so important for the prosecution process, then they are also part of the prevention strategy. We know a lot about trafficking because the victims have spoken out. We need to improve our services so they are able to speak in front of policy makers and in public, on the subject of awareness-raising. They have been supported through the services. The provisions of services for the victims are not an end but rather part of a process towards the rebuilding of our social institutions. Increasing the quality of our services and widening them is part of prevention." Also the prosecution has a role in prevention by reducing impunity.

She explained that we cannot consider the trafficker as a single person who exploits the victim but we have to think more broadly and to consider the traffickers as all those who benefit from it (article 3 of the EU Directive).

Professor Walby continued her speech by speaking about 'demand,' as Art 18.1⁶ of the Directive confirms the commitment of the Member states to reducing demand by way of a preventative

action. We learned to broaden our understanding of the concept of demand to encompass not only the final consumers but all the people, institutions and networks that benefit from human exploitation. So the market is not just between individual buyers and sellers, but it is between institutions, individuals and organizations that make this market as a complex amalgam of individuals and institutions.

⁴<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I110684> (Professor Sylvia Walby, Distinguished professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, University of Lancaster)

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036>

⁶ Article 18.1 of the Convention: “Member States shall take appropriate measures, such as education and training, to discourage and reduce the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings”.

Professor Walby concluded by exploring the EU Specificity and US as follows:

EU Specificity:

- Innovative decriminalisation of selling of sex by individuals (almost universal, just a few exceptions).
- Innovative criminalisation of the purchase of sex by individuals (some Member States like Sweden)
- Innovative partial de-criminalisation of profit-taking from selling sex (some Member States like the Netherlands and Germany)

US Specificity:

- Not decriminalising the selling of sex
- Not decriminalising the purchase of sex
- Not decriminalising profit taking.

And she added in conclusion that we shouldn't make a generalisation of the phenomenon, because it is not understood globally in the same way.

High level panel, Interactive discussion

Luigi Soreca, Director, Directorate for Security, DG Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission and **Myria Vassilidou**, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission facilitated two interactive discussions;

The first, facilitated by Mr. Soreca, was entitled: “Following the money and the perpetrators of trafficking in human beings.”

In this session, the panellists gave their opinions on how the traffickers can be reached by following the money. They also highlighted the fact that targeting the trafficker's money and wealth meant a strike where it most hurts the traffickers.

The second interactive discussion, facilitated by Ms. Vassilidou, was entitled: “Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings and reducing the demand for all forms of exploitation.”

During this session the panellists expressed the need for cooperation within all the institutions and Member States to fully implement the EU Legal Framework and the Policy.

During this meeting three studies⁷ were introduced which were published by the European Commission, as deliverables of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings, 2012-2016.

⁷http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/publications/study-case-law-trafficking-purpose-labour-exploitation_en
<https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/node/4921>



The EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings

This event was organized on the 21st of October, 2015, comprising three parallel workshops. The NGO representatives were divided into three groups to discuss a special topic, after which they presented and shared their thoughts on the issue to the collective audience.

Workshop 1. Children as high risk group of trafficking.

The members of this group focused mainly on unaccompanied children as well as on the child refugee crisis. The group shared their concerns for the fake ‘adoption’ of children and for children involved in forced labour and domestic servitude. Another concern highlighted by this group was the recruitment of children in armed conflicts and child trafficking for exploitation in forced criminal activities.

Workshop 2. Emerging Concerns.

The second group focused on the current Syrian refugee crisis, which is leading to an increased risk of people being exploited and trafficked. They recommended a greater awareness about this issue and called on more people to become involved in preventing exploitation at a national level, when the refugees are being assisted in transitory or residential camps.

Also another emerging concern raised by this group was the sham of forced marriages which leads to different forms of exploitation, especially in domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.

Workshop 3. Prevention of trafficking in Human Beings.

The third group focused on demand, reduction and prevention initiatives. The MWL Youth Manager was a member of this group and made a presentation at the group session.

They [who?] The group commenced by reflecting upon Article 18.4⁸ of the EU Directive: “Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.” This article criminalises the use of services by each citizen who knows that the person who offers the services is a victim of trafficking. In this context “following the buyers” was thought as a prevention initiative which would lead to identifying the victims. While the conviction of buyers can reduce demand, it is very difficult to prove that the buyer is aware that he/she is purchasing services from a victim of trafficking. It was felt that the key to success is to work locally in order to change the mentality of our governments and our judiciary and then start lobbying at a European level.

Another suggested action regarding prevention was to ensure that there is a legal requirement for businesses to state publicly their policy against Trafficking in Human Beings and show that their supply chain is free from exploitation.

At the end of the group session, it was decided to discuss the topics relating to each form of exploitation and to identify concrete ideas to be implemented to prevent trafficking. The group was subdivided into smaller groups who will continue to work on it by means of the e-Platform.

Outcomes of the Event

It was both a good opportunity and experience to attend these very important meetings. It has been a meaningful exchange on best practices. It was so positive to participate and contribute to meetings where the highest institutions of the EU commit to eradicating trafficking in human beings.

Ten contacts were established and more than thirty MWL leaflets were distributed in the Market Place.

“⁸In order to make the preventing and combating of trafficking in human beings more effective by discouraging demand, Member States shall consider taking measures to establish as a criminal offence the use of services which are the objects of exploitation as referred to in Article 2, with the knowledge that the person is a victim of an offence referred to in Article 2”
-Article 18.4 of “Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims” Directive 2011/36/EU.

INDICES

Panellists of 1st interactive discussion:

- Michèle Coninx, President of Eurojust
- Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the European People's Party, Co-Chair of the Intergroup on Children's Rights of the European Parliament
- Nicola Caputo, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- Sandor Gaastra, Director General, Police of the Ministry of Security and Justice, the Netherlands 2
- Mariya Gabriel, Member of the European Parliament, Vice Chair of the Group of the European People's Party
- Teresa Jiménez Becerril Barrio, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the European People's Party
- Enrique López Villanueva, Intelligence Analyst, Organised Crime and Intelligence Centre, Spain, Member of the EU NREM Network
- Michael Rauschenbach, Head of Business Area Serious Organised Crime, Europol

Panellists of 2nd interactive discussion:

- Catherine Bearder, Member of the European Parliament, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
- Sylvie Bianchi, European Project Specialist, Foundation SAMILIA, Belgium
- Malin Björk, Member of the European Parliament, Vice Chair of the Confederal Group of the United Left - Nordic Green Left
- Sandra Claassen, Director, FairWork, the Netherlands
- Martin French, Driver of the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) on Trafficking in Human Beings, Senior Manager at National Crime Agency (NCA), UK
- Anna Hedh, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- Mary Honeyball, Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- Kostadinka Kuneva, Member of the European Parliament, Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
- Elisabeth Moiron-Braud, Secretary-General of the Inter-departmental Unit for Protecting Women against Violence and for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Women's rights, Member of the EU NREM Network
- Andrew Wallis, CEO, Unseen, UK

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