

Prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings — A European Union strategy since 1996

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Each year, at world level, hundreds of thousands of women and children are being moved across international borders by trafficking rings. The European Union has been actively engaged since 1996 in developing a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach towards the prevention of and fight against trafficking in human beings. Here are a few examples of the way this strategy has been implemented over the last four years, going backwards in time.

2002

- **Targeting the traffickers:** on 19 July, the Council of ministers adopted the European Commission's proposal for a Framework Decision to combat trafficking in human beings (common definition of trafficking for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation, which will be implemented in all 15 member states of the European Union as well as in the candidate countries; the penalty for trafficking in all member states must be not be less than eight years' imprisonment).
- **Protecting the victims:** the Commission has put forward on 11 February a legislative proposal for victims of trafficking to be allowed to stay for a limited period if they are prepared to co-operate in investigations and proceedings against their exploiters. The legislative proposal is currently under discussion in the Council.
- **Russian Federation:** a feasibility study on dealing with trafficking in the Russian Federation is under way. This project will be a joint EU/RUS/US project within the Transatlantic Agenda under which information campaigns already have been carried out (Poland in 1998, Ukraine in 1998, Hungary and Bulgaria in 1999-2000).
- **Eastern European countries:** the Commission has also started to develop actions against trafficking in East European countries, including Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

2001

- **Stop II programme launched:** the adoption of the STOP II programme on 28 June 2001 allows for continued support to projects on trafficking after the first five year STOP programme that financially supported 85 projects to combat and prevent trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children, including child pornography. On 5 November 2001, the STOP II Committee agreed on a set of 18 new projects, eight of which (with a total co-funding of around C 750 000) will focus on the victims. Currently, the process to adopt a set of projects for 2002 is under way.

- **Candidate countries involved:** EU ministers of justice and the interior together with their colleagues from the candidate countries on 28 September 2001 agreed 12 measures to combat trafficking, among them active operational co-operation, organisation of information campaigns and providing assistance to victims.
- **Prevention forum:** the Commission launched in May 2001 the European Forum on Prevention of Organised Crime. In this context, a specific workshop on prevention of trafficking in human beings has been set up.
- **Awareness raising campaigns:** the Commission implemented anti-trafficking activities, including an awareness raising campaign, in the Ukraine in co-operation with the International Organisation for Migration. Feasibility studies on the subject were also carried out in Belarus and Moldova.

2000

- **DAPHNE programme launched:** Following up from the DAPHNE initiative of 1997, the DAPHNE programme, launched in December 2000, has a wider scope than the STOP programme in that it covers the general issue of violence against women and children in which trafficking is included. Although the DAPHNE programme is open for public entities, it focuses on the important role of NGOs.
- **United Nations:** since December 2000, the UN Convention on transnational organized crime and its accompanying protocol on trafficking in persons, especially women and children have been signed by more than 100 parties. These include the European Commission and all member states of the European Union. It is expected that these instruments will be ratified and implemented shortly.

1999

- **Amsterdam Treaty:** Since May 1999, the European Union's actions to combat trafficking in human beings are explicitly mentioned under the Title VI in the Amsterdam Treaty. The articles of Title VI cover police and judicial co-operation.
- **Tampere European Council:** The conclusions from the European Council in Tampere, Finland, of October 1999 also give clear priority to the fight against trafficking in human beings.
- **Accession partnerships:** The problem of trafficking in women and children has retained the attention of the EU institutions in the framework of the pre-accession strategy and in particular of the PHARE programme. Fight against organised crime has been included among the priorities of the accession partnerships of 1999 and 2001 for several applicant countries.

1998

- **New target initiatives:** in a second Communication on further actions in the fight against trafficking in women in December 1998, the Commission assessed

progress made and recommended a number of new target initiatives as well as the deepening of certain existing actions.

1997

- **National legislation review:** In February 1997, the Council adopted a "joint action" calling on member states of the European Union to review their national criminal legislation as regards trafficking in human beings and judicial co-operation as well as to encourage protection of victims in judicial proceedings.
- **DAPHNE initiative launched:** the DAPHNE initiative to combat violence against children, young people and women was launched. A four-year DAPHNE programme followed the initiative in December 2000.

1996

- **A European strategy:** In a first Communication on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the European Commission developed a European strategy to prevent and fight against this phenomenon.
- **Europol involved:** the mandate for Europol was extended in order to enable the organisation to combat trafficking in human beings.
- **STOP programme launched:** in November 1996, the incentive and exchange programme STOP was launched to support actions by the persons responsible (public officials and NGOs) for the fight against and prevention of trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children.