

5th meeting of the EU Civil Society Platform on Trafficking in Human Beings
21-22 May 2015, Brussels

STATEMENT

Who is benefitting from the crime of trafficking? Stop Hypocrisy. Time to act now!

[Brussels, 21 May 2015] As the 5th meeting of the EU Civil Society Platform on Trafficking in Human Beings is about to start, our organisations call on the EU member states and the European Commission to take concrete steps towards the elimination of trafficking in human beings.

While we welcome the work of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator to put the issue on the European agenda, **we see no concrete progress towards the elimination of the pervasive phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and no real determination, from the EU and its member states, to move towards change.**

Among the different forms of trafficking, trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most prominent form, exploiting 80% of the victims.¹ According to UNODC², there would be around 140 000 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation only in Europe, and a turn-over of 70 000 victims every two years. The European Commission estimates that there are several hundred thousand persons victims of trafficking every year in the EU, mainly women and children trafficked for prostitution.³ However, European data tell us that only 10 998 victims were registered in the 28 EU Member States in 2012, and that only 1 054 convictions for trafficking in human beings (all forms) were reported by Member States the same year⁴. **How can such data discrepancy be explained?**

Our organisations, working to achieve equality between women and men and end violence against women, reaffirm that the EU and its member states will keep on failing to end trafficking for sexual exploitation if they don't put an end to the impunity of pimps and prohibit the purchase of sex.

End the impunity of pimps and traffickers.

In an intervention in the European Parliament (EP) in January 2014, Europol explained that trafficking in human beings, and especially in women and girls, has increased in the countries where prostitution markets have been legalised.⁵ A 2013 study of 150 countries, conducted by economists from the UK and Germany, shows that “the scale effect of legalised prostitution leads to an expansion of the prostitution market, increasing human trafficking.”⁶

There is a clear link between prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Such link was already highlighted in the UN 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, which affirms that “Prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person”, and to which the European Commission has reiterated its commitment.⁷ In several answers to written questions of MEPs, the European Commission recognises the links between prostitution, organised crime and trafficking in human beings.⁸

It is time for the EU and its member states to act against the impunity of pimps and traffickers, in a harmonised way. The EU cannot support a system based on the impunity of those benefitting from a crime. Pimping and procuring need to be criminalised in all EU member states, with no exception.

End demand for prostitution and sex trafficking.

Trafficking and prostitution are benefit-driven activities. According to UNODC, the European market of sexual exploitation amounts to US\$3 billion per year.⁹ Like for any other business, the demand is at the core of the system: it perpetuates it and makes it lucrative. If there were no men to buy sex, there would be no prostitution and therefore no trafficking for sexual exploitation; pimps and traffickers would turn to a more profitable industry.

As long as sex buyers are not criminalised for their responsibility in fostering prostitution and sex trafficking, the EU and its member states won't have the tools to end trafficking. Under Article 18(1) of the EU Directive on human trafficking, Member States are obligated "to take appropriate measures to discourage and reduce the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings." Addressing the demand is not a random provision of the EU Directive: it is a key legislative tool to disrupt a system which exploits the most vulnerable ones in Europe, starting with women and children.

Challenging the demand for prostitution is also a priority for the EU according to its core value of equality between women and men, enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The EP resolution on "Prostitution, sexual exploitation and its impact on gender equality", adopted in February 2014 and supported by a large cross-party majority, acknowledges that "prostitution is a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, which it aggravates further" and therefore considers that "one way of combating the trafficking of women and under-age females for sexual exploitation and improving gender equality is the model implemented in Sweden, Iceland and Norway (the so-called Nordic model), and currently under consideration in several European countries, where the purchase of sexual services constitutes the criminal act, not the services of the prostituted persons."¹⁰

There is increasing evidence that the so-called 'Nordic model', through the criminalisation of the purchase of sex, contributes to deterring trafficking and organised crime. Evaluations in Sweden and Norway have demonstrated that tackling the demand for prostitution is the most strategic and efficient way to reduce sex trafficking, but also to change mentalities and reduce violence against women.

What are we waiting for? While more data and reports are being elaborated, hundreds of thousands of women and children are being exploited and abused in the system of prostitution, fueled by trafficking.

We call on the European Commission and the EU member states to take immediate action to end the chain of sex trafficking, by criminalising the demand for prostitution and supporting persons in prostitution through decriminalisation, exit programmes and social services.

"They say that slavery has disappeared from European civilisation. This is incorrect. It still exists, but now it weighs only on women, and it is called prostitution."

Victor Hugo, 1862

Our organisations are part of and support the [Brussels' Call 'Together for a Europe free from prostitution'](#) and develop campaigns to raise awareness on the reality of prostitution and sex trafficking and to contribute to social change towards abolitionist policies on prostitution in order to realise women's and girls' human rights.

Signatories:

European Women's Lobby

CAP International

European Network of Migrant Women

Coalition against Trafficking in Women

Equality Now

Aretusa

Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique, Belgium

Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad, Belgium

Le Monde selon les Femmes, Belgium

Centre for Women War Victims- ROSA, Croatia

PETRA Network for Prevention and Elimination of Trafficking in Women, Croatia

Women's Network of Croatia

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), Cyprus

8. marts-initiativet (March 8 Initiative), Denmark

Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations NYTKIS, Finland

La Ligue du Droit International des Femmes, France

Fondation Scelles, France

L'Amicale du Nid, France

Mouvement du Nid, France

Solwodi, Germany

Maisha African Women, Germany

Hungarian Women's Lobby (Magyar Női Érdekérvényesítő Szövetség), Hungary

Immigrant Council of Ireland

Doras Luimní, Ireland

Ruhama, Ireland

IROKO, Italy

MARTA Resource Centre for Women, Latvia

Klaipeda Social and Psychological Services center, Lithuania

Caritas Lithuania

Fier, The Netherlands

Polish Women's Lobby, Poland

Médicos del Mundo Spain

Comisión para la Investigación de Malos Tratos a Mujeres, Spain

Swedish Women's Lobby, Sweden

Unizon, Sweden

RealStars, Sweden

Eaves, UK

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/citizens-corner/trafficking-explained_en

² http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/TIP_Europe_EN_LORES.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/citizens-corner/trafficking-explained_en

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat_report_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_-_2015_edition.pdf

⁵ <http://greenmediabox.eu/archive/2014/01/29/human-trafficking-in-the-eu/> at 1h02

⁶ http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/45198/1/Neumayer_Legalized_Prostitution_Increase_2012.pdf

⁷ 22/07/2013, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2013-006332&language=EN>

⁸ 15/10/2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2014-006360&language=EN>

⁹ http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/TIP_Europe_EN_LORES.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2014-0162>