

The fourth EU Anti-Trafficking Days: Paving the way towards an integrated and multidisciplinary approach

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On 18 and 19 October 2010, the Belgian Presidency of the European Union hosted the fourth anti-trafficking day on the topic “Towards an external multidisciplinary approach to prevention of trafficking in human beings, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims?”

Four Cs – *communication, cooperation, confidence*, and in a *comprehensive* manner – defined the approach to be taken in order to enhance a **multidisciplinary integrated approach** to combating trafficking in human beings (THB). Four Ps – *prevention, protection, prosecution* and *partnership* – defined the main principles on the basis of which actions, measures and best practices were discussed.

Partnership

Particular emphasis was laid on the principle of partnership, which is as a new addition to the initial three Ps and should be more strongly developed. In the global fight against trafficking, international partnerships between key stakeholders and coordination between national actors are equally important for the successful implementation of counter-trafficking actions. **Governments are urged to build partnerships** with all relevant stakeholders, including not only actors such as civil society and international organisations, but also with the private sector which can play a key role in promoting decent work. In the same line partnerships with trade unions can have a relevant impact on the monitoring of minimum wages, as well as in ensuring effective remedies and access to justice for victims of THB. A global code of conduct for the private sector, the exchange of best practices and companies’ involvement in the global social responsibility agenda – such as via signing the Athens Ethical Principles which stand for zero tolerance for any organisation benefiting from trafficking – mark the way forward.

Protection

In the area of protection, the EU Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) have been successful in dismantling transnational crime networks which traffic Roma Children throughout Europe. However, cooperation in the area of protection is still limited and needs to be promoted more strongly. It was highlighted that progress in victim protection across Europe heavily relies on a **uniform victim protection status** valid in all EU Member States (MS). Furthermore, protection should not be subject to the ability or willingness of the person concerned to cooperate with law enforcement. The current lack of uniformity between national legislations in terms of definitions of victim and trafficker and discrepancies in treatment of sexual and labour exploitation stand as an obstacle for both effective victim protection and the prosecution of traffickers.

Prevention

'You are not for sale' has become one of the key slogans in counter-trafficking prevention strategies. However, as best practices presented have proven, **awareness-raising and information campaigns** have now gone beyond traditional strategies and use means such as countering recruitment via the internet or, as in the Portuguese-speaking community, assessing the knowledge of the phenomenon in the population at large in order to improve the implementation of follow-up programmes. As they link countries of origin and destination, awareness-raising campaigns, can also act as instruments of external cooperation with third countries.

Prosecution

Profit is both the main driver for human trafficking and its Achilles' heel. **Financial investigations** which facilitate the tracing and freezing of assets have the potential to uncover the criminal structure of transnational criminal organisations. However, a major obstacle is that confiscation measures remain too complex and lengthy on EU level. Improvements can be achieved by enhancing and widening already existing structures such as the Asset Recovery Offices (ARO) which already exist in 20 MS. Further **challenges** in the field of prosecution which need to be addressed remain the corruption of border guards, official consent of family members to the border-crossing, in particular of child victims, and the lack of guaranteed protection for victims cooperating with law enforcement.

The need to **strengthen external cooperation** is also evident in the field of prosecution, where police and judicial cooperation have to be reinforced. Investigations could be made more effective through cooperation with EUROPOL, FRONTEX and EUROJUST. It was commonly agreed that trainings need to be provided not only for border police but also for law enforcement officers, labour inspectors, prosecutors and judges if standards of practice are to be harmonized. Also, the continuing institution of Immigration Liaison Officers (ILO) and their cooperation with European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) missions might become a best practice in the field of counter-trafficking.

The way forward

At the close of the conference, strategies for combating human trafficking had been further refined, the need for more and better data collection highlighted, further relevant stakeholders identified and challenges been made aware of such as the difficulties of prosecuting new forms of trafficking like forced begging. During the Trafficking days the launch of an EU website on THB was announced which can now be viewed under <http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/index.action>. The EU also demonstrated that the fight against trafficking will remain one of its priorities: a new EC Directive on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims is about to be adopted, and an Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Ms Myria Vassiliadou, was appointed in December 2010.

For more information, see the [background document](#) and the [synthesis of elements](#).