

18 October 2016 - European day against trafficking in human beings

This day must be a day when we step up our efforts to combat the most dominant form of trafficking, namely trafficking in women, girls and boys for sexual exploitation. In order to do this effectively, we need to go beyond words and address the root causes that fuel trafficking for sexual exploitation, i.e. the demand for paid sex and the growing prostitution markets in Europe.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is a fast-growing, criminal enterprise in the world, with women and girls making up 98 percent of its victims. Although international law and the laws of 134 countries criminalise sex trafficking, it is still legally and socially acceptable to treat women and girls as merchandise.

Millions of women and girls are bought and sold every year in the commercial sex trade, i.e. prostitution, which is often the end destination of sex trafficking. Without the sex trade, there would be no industry to traffic women and girls into, so efforts to address sex trafficking must also address prostitution.

We need to adopt and implement laws that address both those who profit from this crime – sex traffickers, brothel owners, sex tour operators and pimps – and also those who fuel the demand: the buyers. Holding buyers of commercial sex accountable reduces sex trafficking.

In combatting trafficking human beings and organised crime, the so-called Nordic model has proven to be the most effective tool. In this model, it is the purchase of sexual services that constitutes the criminal and penalised act, not the services of the prostituted persons. So far, this model has been implemented in Sweden, Iceland, Norway and France.

What are we waiting for? While more data and reports are produced, hundreds of thousands of women and children are being exploited and abused in the prostitution market, which is fuelled by trafficking.

On the European Day Against Trafficking in Human Beings, on the 18th of October, we call on the EU member states, the Council and the European Commission to take concrete steps towards the elimination of trafficking in human beings. We advocate for the Nordic Model, a legal framework that:

- Decriminalises and de-penalises people in prostitution, including victims of trafficking, and provides them with support services – including leaving prostitution if they wish to do so.
- Criminalises those who exploit people for profit, including sex buyers, traffickers, pimps and brothel owners.

STATEMENT BY MEP'S ON THE EU Anti-Trafficking Day

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