

An EPSCO initiative on the social aspects of trafficking in human beings - reflections from Denmark

In December 2005 the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted an *Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings*.

It is stated in the Action Plan that it should aim at strengthening the commitment of the EU and the Member States to prevent and fight trafficking in human beings, committed for the purpose of all forms of exploitation and to the protection, support and rehabilitation of its victims. It should be based on the recognition that in order to address effectively human trafficking an integrated approach is needed, having as its basis the respect of human rights and taking into account its global nature. This approach calls for a coordinated policy response notably in the area of freedom, security and justice, external relations, development co-operation, social affairs and employment, gender equality and non-discrimination.

In the Plan, there are references pointing to social exclusion, sexual exploitation, gender inequalities, children at risk and other issues which are within the remits of the EPSCO – Council.

Denmark finds that, fundamentally, trafficking in human beings is a problem that not only stems from the social situation in the country of origin, but also gives rise to social imbalances in the country to which a person has been trafficked. For the victims who end up in a foreign country, who are being abused and who do not know their rights, trafficking is a social disaster.

Human trafficking is a European problem that needs European solutions. Each member state deals with the consequences in their own territory, but with a cross-border problem like this, it is absolutely essential that member states communicate, coordinate and engage in mutual learning.

We all have a responsibility - be it the countries of origin or the receiving countries - to combat these intolerable actions against persons, who are often very vulnerable from a social point of view, especially young women and children. Therefore there is a need for more pro-active, integrated and cross-sectoral efforts in order to prevent and combat the social causes of trafficking.

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In order to ensure a thorough debate also in the social field Denmark finds it of utmost importance that the EPSCO- council as soon as possible and in tandem with the initiatives from the JHA-council - initiates a thorough discussion of the social aspects of human trafficking which i.a. should lead to operative Council – conclusions in the social policy field regarding:

- Efficient ways of mutual learning through existing frameworks i.e. the National Inclusion Plans and the OMC for social protection.
- Development of common statistics and indicators in an area of which we know too little.
- Development of projects between member states regarding prevention and awareness raising.
- Information campaigns on a European level, targeted at the victims of human trafficking.