

EU Strategy on human trafficking is a step forward, but fails to protect trafficked persons and their human rights in an integrated and holistic manner, says Caritas

Brussels, 21 June 2012 - While welcoming the release of the European Union's [Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016](#), Caritas Europa reminds the European Commission that this strategy needs more comprehensive approach to trafficking issues in order to follow the human rights-based approach. The strategy should fully address the issues of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation as well as of the social inclusion of trafficked people.

Human trafficking is a crime and needs measures coordinated among many partners. More than 20 Million people were estimated to be the victims of trafficking between 2002 and 2011 in the world. Of these, 5.5 Million were children.

“Combating trafficking in human beings is at the very heart of the mission of Caritas inspired by the Catholic Social Teaching and its principles of human dignity, fight against poverty and the promotion and defence of human rights,” says Jorge Nuño-Mayer, Secretary-General of Caritas Europa.

Therefore, Caritas Europa supports the EU's attempt to identify a number of priorities to combat the crime of human trafficking and the implementation of its Directive 2011/36/EU. In terms of prevention and prosecution, Caritas Europa welcomes the efforts of the Commission to reduce the demand, especially by monitoring whether Member States criminalise the use of services of victims of trafficking in human beings. Another step forward is the establishment of national multidisciplinary law-enforcement units on human trafficking and of joint police and judicial investigation teams in all cross-border trafficking cases. Caritas Europa particularly welcomes the EU Civil Society Platform on victim protection and assistance and development of the EU-wide system of data collection.

“Over-all, Caritas Europa welcomes this initiative of the European Commission. However, based on experience of Caritas organisations in the most parts of the world, we are preoccupied that a number of issues regarding prevention, protection and assistance of trafficking persons are missing in the strategy,” says Jorge Nuño-Mayer. Caritas Europa urges the European Commission to revise the following:

The strategy should explicitly mention the equal access to the human rights protection for victims of trafficking **regardless of their collaboration at legal proceedings**. The Commission must address various forms of **labour exploitation**, both in formal and informal sectors. This must include concrete actions on improvement of **identification of trafficked workers**, because there is a tendency to maintain a disproportionate focus on an individual's immigration status but not their exploitative situation. The strategy should address the issues of **social inclusion** and access to the labour market of victims of human trafficking, including creating vocational and employment opportunities.

The Commission should promote the availability of the protection and assistance in the **country of origin** if the trafficked person is repatriated.

The Strategy should include the issue of trafficked people who wish to apply for **asylum**. This will prevent victims of trafficking applying for asylum or for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, from being expelled or returned before having had an opportunity to apply for asylum, or before the assessment of the substance of their application.

Finally, as usual Caritas advocates for **more legal channels for migration**, as there are reasons to believe that restrictive immigration policies and the enforcement of EU border regimes play in the hands of traffickers.

Caritas remains committed to combat human trafficking at all times, all over the world.

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