Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, and protecting victims

2010/0065(COD) - 19/05/2016 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2016) as required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

The report examines trends in trafficking in human beings, the results of specific anti-trafficking actions, and statistics provided by the Member States. Furthermore, the report examines action taken by the Commission and any other relevant stakeholders under the EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016.

The report is based on information from three main sources:

- information gathered by the **National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms ('NREMs')** and submitted to the EU's Anti-Trafficking Coordinator by Member States;
- contributions submitted by **civil society organisations** participating in the EU Civil Society Platform against trafficking in human beings and the EU Civil Society e-Platform; and
- information from the relevant EU agencies, international and regional organisations.

Main trends: the trends in the statistical data for the **period 2013-2014** provided by Member States for this report are consistent with the trends in the previous period (2010-2012). However, given the complexity of the phenomenon, there are solid grounds to expect that the actual numbers of victims of trafficking in the EU are indeed **substantially higher**.

- In total there were **15 846 'registered victims'** (both identified and presumed) of trafficking in the EU.
- Trafficking for the purpose of **sexual exploitation** is still the most widespread form (67 % of registered victims), followed by **labour exploitation** (21 % of registered victims).
- The **other forms of exploitation** described by Member States (12% of victims) include trafficking for the purpose of forced begging, criminal activity, forced marriage, sham marriage, or organ removal, trafficking of infants and young children for adoption, trafficking of pregnant women to sell their new-born babies, trafficking for the production of cannabis and trafficking for drug smuggling or the selling of drugs.
- Over three quarters of the registered victims were **women** (76 %). At least 15 % of the registered victims were **children.**
- 65% of registered victims were EU citizens. The top five EU countries of citizenship for registered victims in 2013-2014 were Romania, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Poland.
- The top five **non-EU countries** of citizenship were Nigeria, China, Albania, Vietnam and Morocco.

- There is strong evidence that criminal networks involved in trafficking in human beings have exploited **the migration crisis** to target the most vulnerable, in particular women and children.

- In total, **4 079 prosecutions** and **3 129 convictions** for trafficking in human beings were reported in the EU.

Results of action and main challenges: most Member States have **highlighted the difficulty of measuring the results and impact** of anti-trafficking actions. However, only a few have developed relevant indicators, or have evaluated their national strategies and action plans.

To ensure effective, forward-thinking policies and actions, the Commission considers that **systematic evaluations of Member States' strategies and action plans** and the measuring of the results and impact of the action taken are very important. The main priorities are:

- **increasing the number of investigations and prosecutions** since the level of prosecutions and convictions remains worryingly low;

- providing **unconditional access to assistance**, support and protection to victims;

- **preventing trafficking** to the greatest extent possible by using all available instruments at EU and international level;

- finding solutions for the **limited resources** available for anti-trafficking measures, victim assistance and prevention measures at national level.

Main conclusions: the contributions to the report from Member States and other stakeholders make it possible to highlight a number of key challenges that the EU and its Member States need to address as a priority, by devoting appropriate efforts and resources:

- address and prioritise tackling all forms of exploitation;

- increase the number and effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions;

- work on improving data collection in the field of trafficking in human beings;

- focus on the early identification of all victims including by putting in place the right mechanisms to do so;

- ensure all victims are offered protection and assistance;

- take gender-specific measures and adopt a child-centred approach in all actions;

- focus on the most vulnerable victims including at-risk children;

- provide adequate support to child victims;

- prevent trafficking in human beings by addressing the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation; systematically evaluate national strategies and action plans;

- allocate adequate resources to address trafficking in human beings; and cooperate meaningfully with civil society.

The report also stresses the importance of:

- encouraging governments and independent bodies to routinely participate in the EU Network of National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms (‘NREMs’);

- the ratification of all relevant international and regional instruments by Member States to promote effectiveness and consistency in joint efforts and strengthen international cooperation;

- the correct and full implementation of the EU Directive, to ensure the prevention of the crime, the prosecution of the perpetrators and most importantly, the protection of victims.

By the end of 2016, the Commission will publish the two further reports required under Article 23 of the anti-trafficking Directive, on compliance and criminalisation, together with a post-2016 Strategy on trafficking in human beings.