

Implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims

2020/2029(INI) - 10/02/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 571 votes to 61, with 59 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

Members stressed the need to establish a coordinated, harmonised and coherent framework at EU level, based on more efficient assessment and follow-up mechanisms, which guarantees that prevention of trafficking in human beings is strengthened, together with support and assistance to victims and their protection, and aims at the complete elimination of trafficking.

Regretting the lack of comparable and detailed data on the scale of trafficking across the EU, Parliament called on Member States to increase their efforts and funding for research, analysis and data collection on all forms of trafficking in human beings.

Use of social media and digital technologies

Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to analyse the use of digital technologies, social media and the internet as the main tools used to recruit victims of trafficking. It asked them to:

- empower law enforcement authorities and civil society organisations in the fight against trafficking in human beings,
- adopt rules on civil liability for technology companies hosting material related to the exploitation of human beings,
- improve the legislative instruments used in legal proceedings and in the prosecution of traffickers,
- promote the exchange of information and cooperation between competent authorities, internet service providers and social media companies,
- promote public information campaigns across the EU on trafficking in human beings.

Victim identification, protection, assistance and support

The early identification of victims remains one of the main challenges for implementation, and one of the most crucial for enabling victims to exercise their rights.

Parliament recommended improving prevention measures and early identification of victims as well as simplified and unconditional access to assistance and protection while strengthening a horizontal and child-friendly gender perspective in all forms of trafficking. It also called on Member States to address in particular the needs of LGBTI persons, given their high vulnerability to trafficking in human beings.

Trafficking in human beings as a gender-related crime and the fight against trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation

The resolution stressed that 92% of victims of trafficking are women and girls, and that more than 70% of the perpetrators of this crime are men.

Parliament called on Member States to adopt specific measures to combat gender-based violence, violence against women and minors, social acceptance of violence and the culture of impunity, and to combat structural gender inequalities and gender stereotypes as root causes of trafficking.

Member States and the Commission were invited to (i) prioritise the prevention of the crime of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, including through information, awareness raising and education campaigns, (ii) focus on emerging patterns of trafficking for sexual exploitation, such as the increase in the exploitation of children and women, including through child grooming and sextortion.

Trafficking in human beings in the context of asylum and migration

Asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, including unaccompanied and separated minors, are vulnerable to trafficking. Women and children often find themselves sexually abused on their migration route in exchange for protection measures and basic sustenance.

Highlighting the very low number of victims of trafficking in human beings registered in international protection procedures, Parliament called on Member States to strengthen the provision of information to arriving individuals on their rights and the procedures applicable under EU legislation, including on the possibilities for obtaining support through lawyers and cultural mediators working to prevent human trafficking and exploitation.

Child trafficking

Children account for almost a quarter of all victims in the EU. Parliament called on Member States to ensure strict child protection measures, protection before and during criminal proceedings, access to unconditional assistance, compensation, non-punishment, assistance and support for family members of a child victim and prevention. It stressed the importance of establishing child-friendly justice and specialised services.

Other forms of exploitation

In response to the increase in trafficking for labour exploitation, Members called on Member States' national labour inspectorates to take action to identify and stop such practices. They also called for a focus on new forms of human trafficking involving activities in the area of forced begging, forced criminalities, the selling of babies, organ removal, illegal adoption, financial exploitation through fraud and trafficking in human beings through surrogacy.

Recommendations

Parliament invited the Commission to:

- revise, following a comprehensive impact assessment, the Directive on combating trafficking in human beings in order to improve measures to prevent, combat and prosecute all forms of trafficking, in particular for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which is the main reason for trafficking in human beings;
- publish without delay a specific and dedicated EU strategy for the eradication of trafficking in human beings in order to eliminate trafficking in human beings in the EU as a matter of priority, by means of a comprehensive, gender- and child-specific and victim-centred legal and policy framework;
- analyse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on potential victims of trafficking in human beings.

