Combating organized crime: trafficking in women, further actions following the COM(1996) 0567

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PURPOSE : to further actions in the fight against trafficking in women. CONTENT : Since the Commission's first Communication at the end of 1996 on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, public concern about this matter and, in the same period, international co-operation have risen conseiderably. In particular, the European institutions (Council, Parliament and Commission) as well as European NGOs have actively contributed, to the increase in the general awareness of this unacceptable violation of women's human rights. A number of initiatives have been taken either at European level or in association with partners in third countries and with specialised organisations. Despite this unprecedented mobilisation, there is ample evidence that large numbers of women continue to be trafficked into EU Member States and into other development countries. They are often forced into prostitution, frequently in conditions akin to slavery. The main flow is coming from/or through the candidate countries. The trafficking is often carried out by professional criminal organisations. New networks are created constantly, and their methods become increasingly ruthless. This is a worrying trend for the European Union. Projects in this field, as well as multidisciplinary exchanges of information by experts and research work have, over the last two years, led to a better understanding of this type of organised criminal activity and have enabled certain shortcomings in our efforts to be identified. The objectives of this new Communication are: - to assure that the questionof trafficking in women for sexual exploitation remains high on the political agenda of the EU and that the Member States are encouraged to fully implement their legal obligations; - to reinforce international and European co-operation including both governments and NGOs in countries of origin, transit and desstination; - to strengthen a multi-disciplinary approach focusing on both prevention, research, law enforcement and an effective sentencing of traffickers, as well as on support to victims; - to address a clear message to the candidate countries, in the context of the accession process, of the necessity to take the national measures and to cooperate with the EU already now on this issue. Furthermore, this communication responds to requests made by the European Parliament to report back, before the end of 1998, on the progress made in relation to the first communication of 1996 (Wadington Report of 27/11/1997). It seeks therefore: - to indicate the present state of play in the fight against trafficking in women and to identify gaps; - to recommend a number of new targeted initiatives as well as the deepening of certain existing actions to the various parties.