

Preventing Human Trafficking

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, convening in Helsinki, Finland, on 13-15 October 2010

Whereas:

- Human trafficking is a form of slavery that still persists in our society, 200 years after slavery was officially abolished;
- According to the United Nations, human trafficking moves every year between 5 and 7 billion US dollars and about 4 million people (many of them children and women) who find themselves taken from one country to another (although these figures cannot be considered accurate as there are no precise data for trafficked women and children).

Noting that:

- Action against trafficking in human beings was adopted by the Council of Europe in the Convention of 16 May 2005. The aim of the Convention was to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, and ensure protection of victims. The Convention entered into force on 1 February 2008. However, so far only 27 states have ratified it and 16 others have signed the Convention out of a total of 47 member states of the Council of Europe. The Directorate of Communication of the Council of Europe has spearheaded a campaign to raise awareness of trafficking across its 47 member states.
- The Council of Europe Convention defines trafficking in human beings as:
 - o “The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation: Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.”
 - o A victim is defined as any person who is subject to trafficking by any of the means specified in the Convention. The consent of a victim to the exploitation is irrelevant where any of the means set forth by the definition (coercion, fraud, deception) have been used.

Considering that:

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- Human trafficking occurs in the country of origin, but then moves to other countries with more resources and, therefore, with more economic potential. Trafficking crosses frontiers and therefore needs cooperation, which organised transnational crime usually has no problem in finding;
- The Schengen agreement has created an area within which people are able to move between countries in a de facto free and unrestricted manner;
- Freedom of movement is one of the cornerstones of the European Union;
- Promotion of minority rights, facilitation of trade and economic development are essential tasks of the European Union;
- Human trafficking is a transnational problem that concerns all EU member states;
- Despite the efforts made by the EU and the UN to prevent human trafficking and to help the victims, human trafficking remains a problem.

Believing that:

- The challenges posed by the Schengen area when it comes to tackling human trafficking and the desire to improve the situation for victims of human trafficking makes a common EU strategy, guided by liberal values, crucial;
- The fact that member states' approaches to combating human trafficking vary widely makes it essential to exchange best practices, underlining the importance of a true European approach.

Calls on:

- European states to sign the Council of Europe Convention;
- The European states, local and regional governments and NGOs to implement the EU framework decision adopted by the Council and to create a common strategy with clearly defined roles and tasks for EU institutions and national authorities to adopt comprehensive laws against human trafficking: prevent trafficking, protect the human rights of victims of trafficking and prosecute the traffickers;
- The EU to take an even more active role in preventing human trafficking in origin countries, and to pay more attention to the reasons behind human trafficking, such as poverty, youth unemployment and risk awareness;
- Calls for the strengthening of the collaboration between the police and border police from other states, and for the establishment of a

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common European database containing information about missing persons and suspected victims of trafficking in cooperation with Europol, Eurojust and Interpol;

- EU member states to create national, politically independent rapporteurs on issues pertaining to human trafficking, to facilitate the exchange of best practices between countries;

The ALDE Group to continue to take a lead and to ensure that the issue of trafficking is put at the top of the agenda of the European institutions.

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