

Press release – Human trafficking: stronger measures to protect women, children and migrants



In a report adopted with 571 votes in favour, 61 against and 59 abstentions, Parliament assesses the [2011 EU Anti-trafficking Directive](#) and calls for more robust measures against all forms of trafficking, focusing on protecting women, children and migrants. MEPs regret the absence of comparable and detailed data on the scale of trafficking across the EU, and demand that cooperation among member states to fight what are often transnational crimes be reinforced.

Focus on sexual exploitation and victims in precarious situations

Sexual exploitation remains the most prevalent and reported purpose for which people are trafficked in the EU, predominantly affecting women and girls, and perpetrated mostly by men. The report calls on the Commission to amend the Anti-Trafficking Directive to ensure that member states explicitly criminalise the “knowing use” of services provided by victims of trafficking.

Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, especially women and unaccompanied minors, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, MEPs warn. They highlight the very low number of registered victims in international protection procedures and call on the member states to ensure that anti-trafficking and

asylum procedures are interconnected. The special needs of victims such as LGBTI people, persons with disabilities and people from racialised groups including Roma are often overlooked, Parliament criticises.

Use of social media and digital technologies

The internet, social media and new technologies are used to attract and trap potential victims of trafficking, including children. MEPs therefore call on the Commission and member states to address the use of online technologies in both the proliferation and the prevention of trafficking.

In addition, Parliament:

- stresses that nearly a quarter of all victims are children, and calls on member states to develop specific measures to protect and assist them;
- notes that the exploitation of victims of trafficking might take several forms, such as labour exploitation, forced begging, forced and sham marriage, forced criminality, but also the selling of babies, organ removal or illegal adoption;
- warns that the situation of trafficked victims has worsened since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis and denounces the increase in online advertisements featuring victims of trafficking and the demand for child pornography.

Quotes

Co-rapporteur [Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D,ES) said “This crime has increased as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, and online tools are being used more and more to trap people. We call on the Commission to revise the anti-trafficking directive, so that all member states explicitly criminalise the use of services provided by victims of trafficking. We have to support and help victims, and guarantee the end of the culture of impunity surrounding this transnational crime.”

“Human trafficking violates life, physical and mental integrity, sexual freedom and human dignity. It dehumanises individuals and turns them into objects for sale. It predominantly targets women and girls for sexual exploitation, who are trafficked by men. The alarming increase in the trafficking of children affects undocumented migrants in particular. We call on the Commission to revise the anti-trafficking directive so that member states explicitly criminalise the use of services provided by trafficked victims”, said co-rapporteur [Maria Soraya Rodriguez Ramos](#) (Renew, ES).