



“Towards Strengthening the External Dimension and the Partnership in Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in the Post-EU Lisbon Treaty Era”

Conference organized by CEIPA and hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
23 June 2010, 14:00 – 16:45

Premise:

This Roundtable was conveyed in order to exchange views on recent policies and practices linked to the EU external dimension of the organized crime in particular the Trafficking in Human Beings. The event was organized by the Centre for European and International Policy Action (CEIPA) and hosted by the BE Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CEIPA has supported the EU Swedish Presidency of 2009 which has resulted in the adoption of the EU Action Oriented Paper on strengthening the EU external dimension on action against trafficking in human beings: Towards Global EU Action against THB. The next CEIPA round table meeting will take place in September 2010; the dates and programme will be communicated in due course.

Participants:

Event organizer: Centre for European and International Policy Action (CEIPA)

Event host: Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Event chair: Peter von Bethlenfalvy, CEIPA

Michael CARLIN	European Commission
Sanja CELEBIC	IOM Brussels
Michele CONINSX	Vice-President, Eurojust
Sophie COULOMBEAU	Commission, DG JLS
Maria DEL RIO	Spanish Network against Trafficking in Human Beings
Corinne DETTMEIJER- VERMEULEN	Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings
Gilles DU BOIS d'AISCHE	Belgian Defense
Frank FELIX	Director, Department for Asylum, Migration and Anti Trafficking, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Claudia GUALTIERI	LIBE Secretariat, European Parliament
Steve HARVEY	EUROPOL
Sophie JEKELER	Samilia Foundation
Carolina LASÉN DIAZ	Secretariat of the COE Convention against THB
Jean-Francois MINET	Belgian Ministry of Justice
David REISENZEIN	FRONTEX
Viviane SCHOLLIERS	Ministry of employment and equality, Politics and Migration
Henrik SJÖLINDER	MOJ, Sweden
Patsy SORENSEN	Payoke

Milvia SOUMBOUNOU	British Council
Delia STĂNESCU	Home Affairs Counsellor, Romanian Representation to the EU
Antonia SZILARD	European Parliament, University of Pécs, Hungary
Nazgül TAJIBAEVA	University of Bielefeld, Germany
Jerôme TOUSSAINT	Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Barbara VANGIERDEGOM	Belgian Ministry of Justice
Viktória VÉGH	Ministry of Interior, Hungary
Peter VON BETHLENFALVY	Executive Director CEIPA
Jelena VON HELLDORFF	IFIAS
Robert ZELDENRUST	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands

Opening remarks were given by Frank Felix of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Felix underlined the importance of continued efforts to strengthen cooperation and partnership between all sectors involved in action against THB, and the need to take a multidisciplinary approach to these topics. This includes not only Member States and their respective departments and ministries, but NGOs and other international organizations.

The Director of Payoke, Patsy Sörensen, underlined that it is becoming increasingly difficult support people on the field. One must use the EU Lisbon Treaty's emphasis on human rights as it pertains to victim assistance. In the post-Lisbon era, there is also a need to mobilize the European Parliament and use their new forms of power. The EU must be a leader in the field against THB and an example for other countries/regions to emulate, such as seen in the current project underway in Syria. There is a need for new programs for victims to better prepare them to fight back against their traffickers and also become stronger witnesses.

The Dutch National Rapporteur on THB, Corrine Dettmeijer-Vermeulem, noted the variance in roles and responsibilities of national rapporteurs versus the EU Anti Trafficking Coordinator (ATC). The Coordinator plays an important role in ensuring trust and a sustainable relationships between the various actors and fields involved. Current focus is on targeting judiciary all across Europe, yet it is also important to develop relations and strengthen cooperation with countries of origin that have a high number of victims.

Henrik Sjölander of the Ministry of Justice in Sweden echoed comments about the EU's role as a global actor. In Sweden, the fight against THB is being extended into other ministries, including the ministry of Foreign Affairs. The knowledge currently exists to establish a human rights standard and benchmark at the EU level.

Michael Carlin of the European Commission introduced the new position of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ATC) that had been published recently but remains vacant. This institution is meant to coordinate the services' (EU Agencies, EC DGs, anti trafficking national coordinators etc.) efforts in the fight against THB. Claudia Gualtieri of the LIBE Secretariat responded that the APO Secretariat will seek a legal basis for this position to be integrated into the new EU Directive on THB in order to ensure the position's sustainability. The EP LIBE committee supports the idea of an ATC as well as the new THB directive.

Viktória Végh of the Ministry of Interior, Hungary, noted that Hungary is increasingly becoming a country of origin for victims of trafficking and highlighted her country's efforts to combat THB. The Hungarian Presidency will see the implementation of the EU Action Oriented Paper (AOP) in 2011, a mapping exercise to clearly identify forms and routes of trafficking while

putting emphasis on better understanding THB for construction and forced criminal activities. Antonia Szilard of the European Parliament later added to these comments in describing a recent conference in Hungary on migrant health and trafficking and describing efforts to improve coordination between law enforcement officials and health care workers.

Europol (represented by Steve Harvey) described its work against organized criminal groups that facilitate THB. There needs to be increased focus on what is happening internally within the EU and not only on external threats, and more education is needed on what THB is and how to identify victims. For example, there is an increase in unaccompanied minors being trafficked but labelled as illegal migrants instead of victims of THB. The victim is also often the best source of evidence but is also the most fragile, which makes investigations difficult. Schengen has played a role in decreasing opportunities for trafficker identification. Rather than further legislating THB, there is a need to formulate a more horizontal strategy to combating THB.

FRONTEX (represented by David Reizenzein) echoed this with a call for consolidation of current knowledge on THB, and pointed out that there are still diverging definitions amongst border guards on what THB is. The role of the EU Coordinator could be beneficial – it is necessary to have one person dealing with all of the actors involved and their products. There needs to be further discussion as to what powers and staff the EU Coordinator will have.

Michele Coninx of Eurojust echoed Europol's concerns about trafficking in minors, noting that victims of trafficking often become future traffickers. Ms. Coninx provided a report on internal security agencies and discussed the link between internal security strategies and political priorities. Eurojust is building a database with all sources on judgments and convictions relevant to THB. In future, the EU Agencies would increasingly coordinate their priorities and work plans to contribute to consolidated actions in the field. For example, Eurojust has structured its work according to the Europol priority areas to ensure proper follow-up.

Peter von Bethlenfalvy of CEIPA underlined the importance of coordination and coherence of action by the newly created standing committee on security (COSI), based on the provisions of the Treaty, involving a number of EU agencies such as FRA, EUROPOL, EUROJUST, CEPOL, FRONTEX; and perhaps in the future also FRA, the newly created EU Agency for Equal Opportunities and the EU IT agencies in the making. It is unclear at this stage whether the COSI mechanism overlooks the work of the EU agencies and streamlines the EU priorities within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty and Stockholm Programme, or if there are merely contributions to better coordination, reporting and operative action.

Carolina Lasén Diaz of the Council of Europe discussed the CoE's connections with European countries outside of the EU area and its role in promoting international cooperation. Ten countries are currently undergoing evaluation procedures. The CoE's convention on Human Rights mentions the EU and it is possible for the EU to ratify.

Jelena von Helldorff of IFIAS discussed the external aspect and "Project Europe 2030," a reference document for future challenges in the EU. There is need of a new European Security model, which would foster a culture of coordination, in particular between judicial cooperation, law enforcement, border control and health in the EU and formulate an EU wide

approach and improve funding. The European External Action Service (EEAS) could act as a relay between the Council and Commission.

Sanja Celebic of the IOM in Brussels gave an update on the project in Syria. It is a slow process to have government protocols implemented properly and it will take more than one project to build an adequate victim assistance protocol. Nonetheless, this is an example of a success story between the EU and a third country.

Sophie Jekeler of the Samilia Foundation discussed the awareness campaign about THB for the World Cup in South Africa. There is a specific chapter within the organization on trafficking and action against traffickers.

Delia Stănescu, Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU, described the Romanian situation as similar to Hungary as a country of origin for victims of THB. A new agency has formed against trafficking in Romania.

Ambassador Robert Zeldenrust of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands, described the influence through development initiatives in third countries and projects against THB. Embassy and consular staff need more awareness on THB issues, especially in regards to visa issuance. Embassies need to support NGOs who take care of people in detention centers. Foreign Affairs can play a role in combating THB, but there is a need for clarity in defining what this role is.

Frank Felix of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium, added that the role of Foreign Affairs (and the EEAS) has not been fully played out and they desire a bigger role. The EU has a global reputation as a leader in human rights, and “naming and shaming” those who violate human rights not an appropriate response, especially in countries with weak levels of democracy. There is a need to improve sharing of information with the public.

Mr. Felix also provided the summary of proceedings, describing the role of the victim as the central focal point and the need for a balanced approach to victims as both primary witnesses but also vulnerable people. The issue of human rights is a recurring theme, and there is need to ensure EU human rights standards exist and are in agreement amongst all parties involved. Post-Lisbon, there is a need to use new institutions and the increasing role of EU Parliament. While the role of the EU AT Coordinator has been agreed upon, there is still need for further definition and discussion. There are enough laws, organizations, and structures in place to combat THB – the problem is with implementation and evaluation. There is also a need to consolidate all of the information that already exists pertaining to best practises and the evolving nature of the issues.

Peter von Bethlenfalvy thanked all participants, especially the panelists, for their interventions, and Director Frank Felix of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for support and hosting this meeting.