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Combating trafficking in human beings: involving new experts essential

Christian anti-trafficking network extends scope of cooperation

Established and emerging stakeholders in the fight against trafficking in human beings have met for an international workshop in Prague/Czech Republic, 25-28 June, in order to identify possible areas of future cooperation. Invited by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), the workshop "New Partnerships against Trafficking" brought together participants from established anti-trafficking organisations and organisations, which are able to add important expertise to the struggle against all forms of trafficking, but so far have only marginally been involved in such activities. The Catholic Caritas of the Prague Archdiocese hosted the event as part of the project "Christian Action and Networking against Trafficking in Women" (CAT).

During the three-day workshop, participants discussed how new challenges in the fight against trafficking in human beings made it necessary to involve new partners with additional expertise. The question of the protection of undocumented migrant workers emerged as one of the new most pressing challenge for addressing all forms of trafficking, new slavery and forced labour in particular. Participants learnt from the International Labour Organisation about its efforts to combat forced labour outcomes of trafficking. The Platform of International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) contributed practical ideas on how to protect undocumented migrant workers. A presentation of a study on forced labour in the Czech Republic, undertaken by the Czech La Strada organisation, underlined the difficulties of combating trafficking for forced labour with working methods used for combating trafficking for sexual exploitation. Participants, therefore, underlined the need to strengthen labour inspections in order to combat forced labour along with the potential for involving additional actors, such as migrants' rights organisations, community groups, trade unions and employers.

Broad space was devoted to identifying how the judiciary could be involved in combating changing forms of trafficking. Experiences from most European countries with applying recent legislation against trafficking for forced labour indicated that there is still great uncertainty about how to use such recent legislation. Contributions from experts from Germany and Belgium underlined how regular contact of specialised NGOs with prosecutors and other representatives of the judiciary could strengthen knowledge and specific competence of the judiciary in addressing trafficking in all its forms. Particular attention was devoted to the question of how the rights of trafficked persons could be strengthened by the judiciary, for example by awarding compensation to trafficked persons.

Representatives from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation informed how their organisation was active in supporting and enabling states across Europe with the development of such new forms of cross-sectoral cooperation.

"While specialisation and professionalisation of governmental actors, NGOs and churches against trafficking for sexual exploitation over the last years was a necessary priority, we understand that it is in now time to again broaden the cooperation networks in order to fight all forms of trafficking." explained Torsten Moritz, coordinator of the CAT project. "The work of international organisations and NGOs supporting undocumented migrants will be effectively enhanced with actors from the judiciary contributing essential knowledge and important new working methods" he added.

For further information, please contact CCME, T +32 2 234 6 808



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