



**PRESS RELEASE**

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## European Anti-trafficking Day

### The EU must step up efforts to eliminate sex trafficking

*“Trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation remains the most dominant form of trafficking in Europe today, and the EU must step up efforts to target traffickers, pimps, and the sex industry that makes its profits from the sexual exploitation of women and girls”,* stated Myria Vassiliadou, European Women’s Lobby (EWL) Secretary General, on the eve of the European Anti-trafficking Day.

In order to highlight the issues at stake, and also to give visibility to initiatives undertaken by both NGOs and government agencies to counteract trafficking in women and girls, the European Women’s Lobby organised a seminar in the European Parliament at the occasion of the European Anti-trafficking Day (18 October), with the participation of Members of the European Parliament from all political groups. Drawing upon the expertise of its member organisations working in the field, the EWL has taken a lead in implementing innovative actions, bridging between policy and practice in this field for the last ten years, and it is now time to hold EU policy-makers accountable and ask them to show what is actually being done to stop trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation.

*“We are in particular looking forward to European countries taking increased action to curb the demand for women in the sex industry by targeting buyers of sexual services. If there was no demand, there would be no business for pimps, and no need for a supply chain providing women from different parts of Europe and the world to be sold as commodities. No demand, no supply, no trafficking!”*, underlined Iluta Lace, EWL Vice President.

EU policies as well as national approaches against trafficking need to be more focused on the needs, human rights and protection of the women and girls that are being trafficked – and less focused on immigration related responses. Restrictive immigration policies, stricter border controls, and biometric ID systems will not make people less vulnerable to trafficking. On the contrary. It is time that the EU and the Member States make a shift in focus towards an approach where all actions are first and foremost measured against the impact on the victims.

Support and assistance to women that have been trafficked for sexual exploitation is the focus of a current EWL coordinated project in the Nordic–Baltic region, where a Nordic Baltic Network has been set up, bringing together NGOs and government agencies working together to assist women victims of trafficking and to prevent trafficking. *“This is a unique experience, where a multi country partnership between NGOs and government bodies has been put in place, acting as a kind of regional referral mechanism, in order to strengthen victim support and assistance in the Nordic Baltic region. Other regions in Europe could take similar initiatives, and learn from this model”*, said Malin Björk, Director of the Nordic Baltic project.

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The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisations of women's associations in the EU, representing over 2000 member organisations in 28 European States. The EWL aims at promoting women's rights and equality between women and men in the EU. EWL is committed to work for the protection and promotion of women's rights, and to work against violence against women in all its forms, including trafficking and prostitution.

In 2005, the Nordic-Baltic Taskforce against trafficking appointed the European Women's Lobby regional co-ordinator of a 3-year pilot project, which aims to be a starting point for long-term change in the region, developing victim-centred and durable models for support and reintegration of women victims of trafficking (VOTs) for sexual exploitation in and between the Nordic and Baltic countries. The Project aims to create a regional programme for the assistance to and protection of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation; to act as a starting point for long-term change in the region when it comes to victim support and durable solutions regarding victim assistance; and to strengthen the gender equality perspective in anti-trafficking policies and practise.

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