

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- (1) UNDERLINES that the ageing of the population concerns all current Member States and acceding countries and that it is useful to promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensure adequate and sustainable pension provision in the future; it is also essential to develop policy responses to encourage present and future generations to remain active as they grow older.
- (2) CONFIRMS that the setting up of adequate, sustainable and modern pension systems falls within the competence of national policies, but that this process can be supported by strengthened cooperation at European Union level based on the open method of coordination.
- (3) REITERATES the particular importance of the objective of extending working life, in line with the Barcelona target, both as a contribution to the sustainability and adequacy of pension systems and as an integral aspect of the goal of increasing overall and specific employment rates in line with the Lisbon and Stockholm targets.
- (4) UNDERLINES the importance for the Council (EPSCO) of taking a more active role in promoting coordination between employment and social policies, as part of the overall effort to achieve adequacy, financial sustainability and modernisation of pensions systems.
- (5) UNDERLINES that the Social Protection Committee, where appropriate in cooperation with the Employment Committee and the Economic Policy Committee, should provide substantial support to the Council (EPSCO), in particular by carrying out specific studies focusing on common challenges for pension systems.
- (6) WELCOMES the Commission's undertaking, in view of the 2004 Spring European Council and, if appropriate, the Tripartite Social Summit, to present a report on progress towards the Barcelona objective of raising the effective average age at which people stop working.
- (7) UNDERLINES how essential it is to coordinate social protection, economic and employment policies and to continue, in the framework of the reform process, to focus a high level of attention on ensuring adequacy, alongside the financial sustainability and modernisation of systems.
- (8) RECOGNISES the need also to modernise occupational pension schemes and notes that the Social Partners have been invited, on the basis of the Commission's consultation document under Article 138 of the Treaty on the portability of occupational pensions, to consider an approach to reducing obstacles to mobility.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 20 October 2003

on initiatives to combat trafficking in human beings, in particular women

(2003/C 260/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

RECALLING

- that according to Article 5(3) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union trafficking in human beings is prohibited,
- the Hague Ministerial Declaration of 26 April 1997 on European Guidelines for effective measures to prevent and Combat Trafficking in Women for the purpose of sexual exploitation,
- that the Tampere European Council in October 1999 called for action against human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children,
- Council of Europe Recommendation 11 (2000) on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation and Recommendation 1545 (2002) concerning campaigns against trafficking in women,
- the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, especially Article 6, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Articles 34 and 35,
- in particular that the Palermo Protocol (2002) to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, develops a comprehensive approach specifically addressing trafficking in human beings and covers criminalisation, protection and assistance to victims as well as prevention of this phenomenon,
- the conclusions of the Syracuse Conference of December 2002 aiming to raise awareness of the issue of trafficking, particularly with regard to women, and of the need to widen and intensify activities in the Member States,
- that in this context, the Council (JHA) meeting with the candidate countries on 28 September 2001 agreed on 12 measures to combat trafficking, among them active operational cooperation, organisation of information campaigns and providing assistance to victims,

- the Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA of 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings,
- that the Brussels Declaration of September 2002 aims at further developing European and international cooperation, concrete measures, standards, best practices and mechanisms to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and that the Council Conclusions of 8 May 2003 agree to examine appropriate proposals made to implement specific items contained in the Declaration,
- that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in 2002, issued Recommended Guidelines and Principles on Human Rights and Human Trafficking stressing that the human rights of trafficked persons should be at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking and to protect, assist and provide redress to victims, where appropriate,
- that action within the European Union is being developed taking a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach towards preventing and combating these phenomena,
- that in terms of financial support, Community programmes are an important tool with a view to strengthening policies, practices and cooperation in the EU and between EU Member States and candidate countries in the fight against human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children,
- in particular that the Structural Funds (ESF and ERDF) can financially support actions to provide assistance to victims, as well as undertaking prevention and facilitating the social and economic integration of victims of human trafficking.

RECOGNISING THAT:

- the aforementioned UN instruments form a basis for enhanced global cooperation which is also reflected in developments regarding the European Union's relations with countries outside the Union,
- trafficking in human beings as defined by European Union law is not only a crime aiming at the sexual or labour exploitation of persons, in particular at the sexual exploitation and domestic slavery of women and children, but also shows disregard for the human rights of the victims,
- a variety of measures are required to tackle this present form of human slavery and programmes are also required for the purposes of the prevention of trafficking, the rehabilitation and the social integration of victims, alongside efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators and put a stop to further victimisation,
- eradication of the root causes of trafficking including, but not limited to, gender inequalities as well as unemployment, poverty and all forms of exploitation, should be at the forefront of long-term efforts to fight trafficking in women.

CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO:

- ratify and fully implement all international conventions and instruments against trafficking in human beings, in particular the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime,
- take into account the Hague Declaration of 26 April 1997, which invites Member States to provide or explore the possibilities for the appointment of National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in women,
- continue their full commitment to pursuing at national, European and international level their activities against trafficking in human beings, in particular women, wherever possible in cooperation with, and where appropriate by providing support to NGOs,
- underline their commitment in respect of concrete measures, such as campaigns, aimed at increasing awareness and to intensify cross-border and international cooperation in the fields of prevention, victim protection and assistance, with a view to achieving tangible results in the fight against trafficking in human beings, especially women, building on good practices and networks at the appropriate levels,
- support and protect victims in accordance with national law in order to make it possible for them to return safely to their countries of origin or to receive adequate protection in their host countries, in the context of measures supported through the Structural Funds and Community Programmes.

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- use the financial resources of the Community Initiative EQUAL to promote, in accordance with national law, the social and vocational integration of its beneficiaries,
- promote measures to set up a monitoring system on trafficking in human beings in order to provide updated data through the continuous and regular collection of information from the competent National Authorities such as National Bureaux and National Rapporteurs,
- ensure that all actions and initiatives to prevent the trafficking of human beings, especially women and children, and to protect the victims, have a gender sensitive perspective, that they are consistent with internationally recognised principles of non-discrimination and that they take into account the respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the victims in accordance with Community and national law.