

## **Working group 2**

The Working Group opened with presentations of Marco Bufo (Associazione On the Road, “Osservatorio Tratta), Irena Konečná (La Strada, Czech Republic) and Blanka Hancilova (Apreco Group) reflecting their experience with research on trafficking in human beings. Afterwards, it has discussed the following issues:

### *Lack of a clear definition of trafficking in human beings*

The lack of a clear definition of trafficking in human beings and its constituent aspects (such as for example ‘exploitation’) is one of the fundamental problems in addressing trafficking in human beings. A narrow understanding of trafficking in human beings means that victims of trafficking are not identified and referred to services they are entitled. Implementation of victims of trafficking rights is dependant on how trafficking is defined. There are parallels to this discussion in the discussions about refugees. The lack of a definition is one of the key factors that prevent the development of reliable and comparable quantitative data on trafficking in human beings. Unfortunately, unresolved issues with definition of trafficking in human beings run deep and the various discourses that inform the definition testify that we are possibly not nearing to any workable compromise.

### *De-contextualization of trafficking in human beings*

According to some participants, trafficking in human beings has been de-contextualized and it is (wrongly) being addressed as if it were an issue disconnected from labour, migration and other areas. While quantitative data on trafficking in human beings are of importance, research on trafficking in human beings should also look into the micro-data (such as for example personal narratives of trafficked persons), because these can reveal important information about various aspects of trafficking in human beings and their interconnectedness.

### *Independence, quality and policy relevance of research on trafficking in human beings*

Some representatives of civil society and researchers have asked how can independence of research on trafficking in human beings be ensured or strengthened. It was discussed that it is very difficult to voice criticism of trafficking in human beings policies implemented by the governments, when the governments are often funding some of the civil society activities or research. It was stressed that independence of research is of key importance and that one of the strategies to guarantee it is to conduct research initiatives in a multi-agency settings. The civil society and research actors should advocate with funding agencies so that these would better guarantee space for independent research and those within structures that call for research should advocate for independent research and evaluation within their own structures.

There is a need for both academic research and policy oriented research. Academic research is usually more independent, critiquing and ‘problematizing’ various aspects of anti-trafficking policies and bringing into discussions new issues. Policy or action oriented research has the advantage that it can be directly used in policy making, and it could be especially relevant for National Rapporteurs inasmuch if could bring evidence about impact of certain policies and advocate for changes. Most important however may be bridging the gap between academic and policy research so that both communities can profit from each other’s expertise.