



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator
for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**

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Dear Excellencies,

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I would like to thank Deputy Minister of Interior, Ms. **Ptáčková Melicharová** for the invitation to join the Czech EU Presidency and the European Commission in our common efforts to address human trafficking, in particular to share with you my priorities, concerns, and lessons learned on the establishment and implementation of the national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism in the OSCE region. Let me start by saying that I concur with the EU Presidencies and the European Union **on the need to develop common EU standards on the collection and analysis of data on trafficking, as well as, the establishment of National Rapporteurs or an equivalent mechanism** as a vital instrument to enable an effective EU response. As such, to mark the 2008 EU Anti-Trafficking Day, I presented on behalf of the members of the Alliance Expert Coordination Team a statement which provides a number of recommendations to be considered by governments when envisioning the establishment or strengthening of this mechanism at national level.

Dear colleagues, it is hard to admit that 12 years have passed since the Hague Declaration, and despite a great deal of effort, the vast majority of countries around the world still have an incomplete picture of trafficking in human beings (THB). This situation has a profound impact at national level by undermining the effectiveness of measures and the investment of funds and human resources

made to tackle this problem. It's clear that **we lack an overall image of the scope of this issue, the trends, and even an accurate assessment of the results of our actions!** As policymakers and practitioners we need empirical evidence so we can understand the problem, identify how far we are from the turning point, and respond adequately. Furthermore, **especially in times of crisis**, I believe that policymaking based on evidence can also increase public confidence in the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of efforts undertaken by all stakeholders.

Dear colleagues, I am aware of the fact that practitioners and policymakers face complex challenges when seeking to assess the impact of anti-trafficking policy and programmes, as well as the need to exchange meaningful information that can lead to concrete results. Numerous international instruments stress the importance of data, information and accurate analysis to a country's ability to effectively combat THB. As such, I agree that the National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms can assist the States to take ownership in producing, analysing, utilizing and reporting on quantitative and qualitative data needed to improve their anti-trafficking efforts. At the same time, let me also stress that even the best data cannot alone solve the problem. We need concerted effort regarding **implementation, and a strong political commitment and engagement at the highest level.**

Based on the responses to our 2007 questionnaire sent by governments in the OSCE region, out of 44 respondents, 26 indicated that they had a National Rapporteur or equivalent mechanism in place. Now, I would like to take a moment to share with you three elements which we learned from our on-going work looking at the experiences of a number of OSCE States with this mechanism:

1. **Models** of the national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism differ in terms of placement of this function within the national anti-trafficking structure. On the **mandate**, good practice shows that States should provide this function with the legal authority to gather data and report on all forms of trafficking. This means sufficient authority to request and access data from all necessary sources at the national and local level. Independency to conduct the work with intellectual and political support from the government, access to all information needed, and transparency of reporting, including public debates, **are intrinsic features of this national mechanism which should not be compromised if States want to achieve tangible results.**

2. In relation to the **Added Value** at national level one can say that:

- a. This instrument is able to provide better statistical knowledge and understanding of THB on the basis of concrete evidence;
- b. it can contribute to raise public and policymakers' awareness of the issue;
- c. it plays an important part in adapting priorities and assisting in the decision-making process on resources and actions to be taken;
- d. its results have been used to reform government policy and practice, including practices addressing all forms of trafficking; and
- e. this function can also contribute as a national focal point to gather and disseminate information on THB, including assisting in drafting responses to questionnaires in co-operation with other services.

3. On the **reports** produced by National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms, one can say that they should include evaluations of anti-trafficking work and should be used to revise, adapt and target initiatives contained in national policies on a regular basis. In addition, research must always be an integral part of the work of this mechanism, including gathering and the analysis of

information on important trends. It is vital that this mechanism consults with stakeholders at large, including civil society and experts. As a result, national reports should not simply catalogue activities, but should be able to articulate shortfalls and gaps in order to target areas in which efforts can be improved by stakeholders.

There is no single blueprint to implementing an effective national monitoring and reporting mechanism, since governments should be the ones deciding which type of instrument is most appropriate and effective within their own institutional, legal and financial constraints. Therefore, the importance of fulfilling the functions of a national rapporteur or an equivalent mechanism is not about structure, it is about – **reporting, reviewing, and measuring progress made at national level based on assessment and evaluation, as well as making recommendations in order to address the knowledge gap.** Overall, the lack of appropriate mechanisms in any one State weakens the concerted efforts of co-operation in the EU, which then contributes to an overall imperfect regional response with internal and external effects. **To this end, there is no effective co-operation at strategic and operational level without some degree of collaboration, and this should be a strong reasoning why we need an EU-wide network of exchange of information composed of national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms that can contribute towards better knowledge and understanding of this issue, based on concrete and comparable information. In general, the recommendations made for the creation of such national mechanisms aimed at:**

- (1) identification of the scale of the problem;
- (2) encouraging the exchange of information among counterparts at international level;
- (3) calling upon the mechanism to draw up annual reports for government discussion at national level with a view to developing appropriate policies; and
- (4) encouraging research in order to better understand and address this phenomenon.

Therefore, if we have these recommendations implemented at national level we do not need an additional structure, such as an EU Observatory on THB or an EU Rapporteur. We need a facilitator to bring together those responsible for the national structures, so as to discuss issues of common interest aimed at identifying specific strategies, programmatic priorities and activities, as well as policy development needs.

Consultation with the majority of stakeholders points in favour of the creation of an EU Network that can provide the Community and its Member States with an opportunity to exchange experiences on the basis of reliable information from a multi-disciplinary standpoint, since National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms are bodies which possess, as part of their competencies, a comprehensive overview of the situation at national level.

Imagine what it would be like ... to have an opportunity to discuss as a group among peers and to be able to identify concrete areas of work, including - for instance - joint EU initiatives, and to provide input to areas of priority outside home affairs, such as external relations, gender equality, development aid, etc.!

Permit me to emphasize that I fully agree with the recommendation made by the Austrian EU Presidency in 2006 that we need to appoint an **EU Co-ordinator who will act as a focal point on EU anti-trafficking policy. In the spirit of this recommendation, I envisage an EU Co-ordinator who works in collaboration with Member States** in order to facilitate regional co-operation.

In conclusion, as politicians and policymakers, our actions bear tremendous power - along with consequences, which in most cases are paid by those most vulnerable in our society. It's time for us to strengthen our ability to solve problems by designing and implementing policies that can adequately address

this heinous crime. As such, I feel that the momentum is now here!

Sometimes what we lack are not the financial resources. Rather, what is missing is the national sense of urgency that pulls us towards concerted action for the benefit of all.

Thank you ...