

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons – 30th July 2021

“Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad.”¹

Human trafficking consists of the exploitation of persons in the production of goods or the provision of services (including working in conditions that infringe labour standards, prostitution and other sex-related services); slavery or practices similar to slavery; servitude; activities associated with begging; or other activities, including the removal of any organ of the body.²

In 2018, about 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected and reported by 148 countries. Moreover, while 50% of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 38% were exploited for forced labour. To this end, on 18th December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly *proclaimed The World Day against Trafficking in Persons*, in its resolution A/RES/68/192 to raise awareness on the situation of victims of human trafficking.³

This year’s theme ‘*Victims’ Voices Lead the Way*’ puts victims of human trafficking at the centre of the campaign and will focus on the importance of listening to survivors of human trafficking, in view that many victims have experienced misunderstanding in their attempts to get help.⁴

The European Union also faces this reality with trafficking for sexual exploitation being the most reported form of human trafficking. It is a form of gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women and girls who make up around 95% of registered victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the EU.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-human-trafficking-day>

² [Trafficking in Human Beings \(gov.mt\)](#)

³ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-human-trafficking-day>

⁴ Ibid

In this context, ‘*Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA*’ provides binding legislation to prevent trafficking, to prosecute criminals effectively and to better protect the victims, in line with the highest European standards.⁵

Moreover, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2018 published a report entitled ‘*Gender-specific measures in anti-trafficking actions*’ that provides guidance to Member States on how to fully integrate gender-specific measures in their efforts to address trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. The proposed indicators also aim to support Member States in monitoring their efforts from a gender perspective, in their policies, and in victims’ identification, assistance, and access to justice.⁶

In this regard, the Maltese Government adopted the fifth ‘*National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking 2020-2023*’⁷ that builds on the work undertaken in the context of previous Action Plans. Moreover, in 2020, the Police launched 16 human trafficking probes, the highest number in years. Eight (8) involved sex trafficking and another eight entailed labour trafficking.⁸

The actions envisaged in the current action plan aim to address the major aspects of the fight against human trafficking with specific attention to awareness and prevention. Such actions include training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for officials working with migrants and asylum seekers, strengthening public awareness by national screening of video on human trafficking, awareness session on domestic servitude and labour exploitation mainly for persons working in care services. Outreach sessions in schools will also be

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-eu-legislation-criminal-law/directive-201136eu_en

⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-specific-measures-anti-trafficking-actions-report>

⁷ [Trafficking in Human Beings \(gov.mt\)](https://www.gov.mt/Trafficking-in-Human-Beings)

⁸ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-failing-minimum-standards-for-the-elimination-of-trafficking-us.884287>

organised for boys and girls between 13-15 years old to raise awareness on the dangers of online child abuse, including sexting, grooming and child pornography, amongst others.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) works to safeguard equality in the areas covered by its remit by investigating complaints, raising awareness and disseminating information on rights and responsibilities through training and information campaigns; networking with different stakeholders; carrying out research; and proposing and giving feedback to policies.

In 2019, the NCPE welcomed most measures in the proposed *'Reform on Human Trafficking and Prostitution'*. In particular, it commended efforts to combat human trafficking through prevention, awareness-raising and the strengthening of laws and protection mechanisms. The NCPE also welcomed plans to decriminalise prostitutes and enhance support for persons to exit prostitution. In addition to the measures outlined in the consultation document, the NCPE proposed a legal framework that penalises sex-buyers, underlining that a defining feature of prostitution is power and control of men over women, which reflects and reinforces a patriarchal society.⁹

According to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, over the past year, *"the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many global inequalities"*, leaving millions of people at greater risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, and other crimes.¹⁰

On this *World Day against Trafficking in Persons*, let us step up our efforts to give victims the support and justice they deserve by raising more awareness on this serious crime, promoting cooperation between countries, and ensuring that criminal traffickers are brought to justice.

⁹[https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our Publications and Resources/Annual Reports/NCPE Annual Report 2019.pdf](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/NCPE_Annual_Report_2019.pdf)

¹⁰<https://www.unodc.org/endht/en/statements.html>



National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2295 7850 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page.

26th July 2021