

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002896/19  
to the Commission  
Maria Grapini (S&D)  
(22 September 2019)**

*Subject:* Human trafficking in the European Union

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most widespread form of THB in the EU (67%), its victims being mostly females from central and eastern European countries.

At the same time, a number of victims are men from EU countries, who are predominantly victims of labour exploitation, as well as members of vulnerable groups, forced into criminality or begging.

Trafficking in human beings, which is a serious crime and an infringement of human rights, is on the increase as a result of increased mobility and the large profits to be made.

Sexual exploitation is by far the principal aim of trafficking in women. Most trafficked women are forced to provide sexual services for payment, while many are also victims of domestic violence.

Traffickers recruit their victims in various ways, including coercion, force or deception, generally exploiting the precarious economic situation of women looking for a better life abroad.

The existence of cross-border networks engaged in trafficking from eastern to western countries, is amply demonstrated.

In view of this, what measures is the Commission planning to take to dismantle human trafficking networks, particularly those targeting women and children?

**Answer given by Mr Avramopoulos on behalf of the European Commission  
(29 November 2019)**

Of all victims registered for the period 2015-2016 in the EU, 68% were women and girls and 23% were children. Around half of the victims were EU citizens, many trafficked within their own countries. Women and girls are predominantly trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (95%), which remains the most reported form of trafficking (56%) <sup>(1)</sup>. Trafficking in human beings is driven by high profits and by the demand that fosters exploitation of victims. The EU has a solid legal and policy framework on trafficking in human beings <sup>(2)</sup>, with a human rights, victims centred, gender specific and child sensitive approach.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Second European Commission Progress report, COM(2018) 777 final: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_com-2018-777-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_com-2018-777-report_en.pdf) , and its accompanying Staff Working document, SWD(2018) 473 final: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_swd-2018-473-commission-staff-working-document\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_swd-2018-473-commission-staff-working-document_en.pdf)

<sup>(2)</sup> Directive 2011/36/EU, OJ L 101, 1 15.4.2011; 2017 Communication 'Reporting on the follow-up to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of trafficking in human beings and identifying further concrete actions' (COM(2017) 728 final); Commission website, [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/node/4598\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/node/4598_en)

Prevention remains the cornerstone of EU action <sup>(3)</sup>, including by countering the impunity of perpetrators involved in the crime, to disrupt the business model of traffickers, untangling the trafficking chain and turning trafficking into a 'high-risk, low-return' crime by 'following the money'. In line with the Anti-trafficking Directive <sup>(4)</sup> and the 2017 Communication <sup>(5)</sup>, the Commission encourages the Member States to step up investigations and prosecutions <sup>(6)</sup>, and to criminalise those knowingly using services exacted from victims of trafficking. Trafficking in human beings remains among the priority crime areas of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime 2018-2021 <sup>(7)</sup>.

The Commission is committed to ensure that funding matches policy priorities and objectives. In this context, consistently identified patterns, including with respect to women and girls who remain persistently the majority of the victims, disproportionately targeted for sexual exploitation, are taken into account.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Priority A, 'Disrupting the business model and untangling the trafficking chain' in 2017 Communication (COM(2017) 728 final)

<sup>(4)</sup> Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, OJ L 101, 1 15.4.2011

<sup>(5)</sup> 2017 Communication 'Reporting on the follow-up to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of trafficking in human beings and identifying further concrete actions' (COM(2017) 728 final)

<sup>(6)</sup> The 2017 Communication has particularly identified the intensification by Member States of proactive financial and intelligence-led investigations, prosecutions, joint investigations, asset recovery, freezing and confiscation of profits as a means to breaking the business model of traffickers. This includes cross-border cooperation with the support of EU agencies, such as Europol and Eurojust. Second European Commission Progress report, COM(2018) 777 final: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_com-2018-777-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_com-2018-777-report_en.pdf), and its accompanying Staff Working document, SWD(2018) 473 final: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_swd-2018-473-commission-staff-working-document\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_swd-2018-473-commission-staff-working-document_en.pdf)

<sup>(7)</sup> European Commission Users Report, COM(2016) 719 final [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report\\_on\\_impact\\_of\\_national\\_legislation\\_related\\_to\\_thb\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report_on_impact_of_national_legislation_related_to_thb_en.pdf)