

Promising practices in Europe in support of victims of human trafficking

Tanya Nirina Tierney, Moving Voices International

This One Pager analyses promising practices in Europe that contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention reiterates the Palermo Protocol's definition of **trafficking** and identifies four areas of intervention: **prevention**, **protection** of the victim's rights, **prosecution** of the trafficker, and **partnership** (4Ps).

These analyses follows the framework of the 4Ps in diverse country contexts. The criteria include: the human rights principles applied by the initiatives; their innovative traits; their impact; their sustainability; and whether they can be scaled up and/or replicated elsewhere.

Amsterdam, the Netherlands. **Protection—Housing for victims that do not wish to cooperate with authorities. Shelter is offered only to those victims with a temporary residence permit, which is granted conditionally on their cooperation.**

Many reasons may prevent a victim from cooperating with authorities; it could entail serious consequences for their safety and well-being (Brunovskis 2012). Protection is extended to trafficking victims that are not included in the national protection scheme; it must be provided to all trafficked persons without discrimination.

However, the national legal framework may present an operational challenge to the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Christian Aid and Resources Foundation (CARF), which could limit the initiative's reach.

Antwerp, Belgium. **Protection and prevention—Raising awareness and disseminating information on 'loverboys';¹ a specialised task force for their victims; and advocacy for a specialised reception centre.**

Recognising that human trafficking is a complex and nuanced phenomenon, this practice's comprehensive approach raises awareness, promotes advocacy and plans targeted services.

Challenges in scaling up involve financing these services: informing on new patterns of exploitation can be demanding, especially if highly dependent on state resources.

Belgium. **Protection, prosecution and partnership—An institutional partnership between government and accredited NGOs.²**

The creation of an institutionalised partnership between the government and NGOs strengthens the fight against human trafficking, leading to processes that are "swift and efficient [...] due to close collaboration, trust, exchange of information and open communication" (Pearson 2002, 93).

This is a positive step towards the comprehensive protection of victims. However, continuity requires constant funding. In addition, the partnership could confuse potential trafficking victims, leading them not to trust the NGO in a field that is highly dependent on trust.

Denmark. **Protection and prevention—A strong trust-based relationship with the Nigerian community in Copenhagen.³ The key to the work of the NGO (HopeNow) is the employment of a former victim of trafficking as a peer social worker to bridge the cultural gap between the workers and their target group.**

A trust-based relationship with the community results in broader outreach and employing an empowered former victim of trafficking could boost the initiative's impact. It can improve the quality of

interventions and reduce the social-cultural-human rights gap between society, the NGO and the target group. The referral of potential victims may come from within the community or from the victims themselves, resulting from the trust-based bond.

Germany. **Prevention and protection—A reintegration programme for trafficking victims based on cooperation between an NGO and countries of origin. Both returned victims and local organisations share responsibility for the programme's outcomes.**

This initiative involves empowering women who are required or willing to return to their countries of origin by providing them with alternative economic opportunities, such as training and resources to start a business. The innovative element is the effort to improve the reintegration journey by providing victims with economic alternatives in their countries of origin, reducing their risk of resorting to traffickers again to improve their socioeconomic situation.

Replicability depends on funding and the NGO's transnational network in the origin countries.

Italy. **Protection and prosecution—A dual track for trafficking victims to access a temporary residence permit: one requiring them to collaborate with the prosecution of the trafficker(s), and another allowing them to stay in Italian territory without any obligation of cooperation.**

This practice adopts a victims' rights-based approach, providing them with "autonomy and freedom by offering them the possibility to escape from a situation of abuse and coercion" (Palumbo 2015, 62). It acknowledges that irregular stay in the country could be a consequence of trafficking since victims are granted temporary residence regardless of their permit status. Replicability depends on the involvement of policymakers as it involves residency permits and relates to immigration law.

The analysis points to the prevalence of a protection model in Europe, especially within the European Union. Stronger initiatives include elements of prevention to address root causes, and, most importantly, persecution. They provide for a 'reflection period' for victims to recover and/or make an informed decision about cooperating with authorities. During this period, victims are provided with protection and social assistance as well as a temporary residence permit in some countries.

These initiatives help create a trust-based environment in which they can speak out against traffickers without fear or repercussions; an auspicious combination to better combat human trafficking while ensuring the protection of victims.

References:

- Brunovskis, A. 2012. *Balancing protection and prosecution in anti-trafficking policies: A comparative analysis of reflection periods and related temporary residence permits for victims of trafficking in the Nordic countries, Belgium and Italy*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Palumbo, L. 2015. "Protection of trafficked people in Italy: policies, limits and challenges". *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, Vol. 18 No. 1, 52-65.
- Pearson, E. 2002. *Human traffic, human rights: Redefining victim protection*. London: Anti-Slavery International.

Notes:

1. Human traffickers whose mode of operation involves trying to make young girls or boys fall in love with them.
2. Pag-Asa, Payoke and Sürya are formally recognised as an integral part of the process of identification and recognition of trafficking victims and proxies to claim rights on their behalf.
3. The most represented nationality of identified trafficking victims in Denmark.