



FRA Media Release  
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## **EU must do more to fight child trafficking EU Fundamental Rights Agency presents report on child trafficking in the EU**

**The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) releases today a new report on ‘*The role of the European Union in the fight against child trafficking*’. Many children fall victim to trafficking every year. There are extremely low numbers of convictions in child trafficking cases. Overall, the report finds that the EU must do more to address the issue. The FRA calls for better legislation to combat child trafficking.**

**The protection and care for victims, in particular, must be improved.**

Every year a significant number of children fall victim to trafficking for sexual exploitation and other purposes. Child trafficking is an EU-wide problem, although there is insufficient data in this area to assess its true extent.

FRA Director Morten Kjaerum: “Human trafficking is part of the modern slave trade. Every year, a significant number of children in the EU fall victim to trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, adoption and organ extraction. These are alarming signals. We must make every possible effort to protect and support these children”.

### **Children disappearing from shelters, destinations unknown**

According to official figures, the disappearance of children from shelters in the EU Member States is widespread, with their destinations largely unknown. It is well known, that the children most likely fall into the hands of traffickers. However, this problem remains widely ignored, due to a severe lack of monitoring by Member State authorities.

Specialised shelters for victims of child trafficking are not provided in most Member States. Children are sent to shelters for adult victims of trafficking, specialised shelters for unaccompanied minors or other facilities for vulnerable children. The FRA report proposes minimum standards for shelters, and policies to prevent disappearances of children.

Morten Kjaerum: “Children are less likely to disappear from shelters if they can build a relationship of trust with the authorities. This includes giving children a long term perspective for education and the possibility to stay in the country”.

## **Identification of victims vital for prosecutions**

Often the victims of child trafficking are not correctly identified as victims however, the identification of victims is crucial to prosecuting traffickers.

Available figures indicate that there are very few convictions of traffickers in child trafficking cases. Convictions were recorded in only 4 Member States in the period 2000-2007.

The FRA report identifies good practices regarding the identification of victims in Finland and in the Czech Republic. These good practices should form a basis for the elaboration and implementation of EU-wide minimum standards. Morten Kjaerum: "Without improvements in the identification of victims and the conviction of perpetrators, laws designed to prevent child trafficking and protect victims will continue to exist only on paper".

## **Minimum standards required to increase protection of victims**

"Although trafficked children are clearly victims, they are often treated as criminals. It is unacceptable that children who are victims of trafficking are criminalised and even detained", Morten Kjaerum added.

In some Member States, victims of child trafficking face detention for border offences and other illegal acts such as prostitution. EU legislation should therefore ensure minimum standards for a policy of non-punishment of victims of child trafficking. This would also help increase their trust in state bodies, whilst no longer leaving victims dependent on their traffickers.

"The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights welcomes the EU Commission's proposal from spring 2009 to fight human trafficking. I strongly urge the Council to adopt this proposal, which would represent an important step in the protection and care of victims of trafficking in the EU. Additional steps will be needed to guarantee the protection of children, as they are particularly vulnerable and therefore deserve special attention and increased protection".

**The FRA report is available from: <http://fra.europa.eu>**

**For further questions please contact Mrs. Heller**

**E-mail: [media@fra.europa.eu](mailto:media@fra.europa.eu)**

**Tel.: +43 158 030 642**

Notes to editors:

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights was established in March 2007 in Vienna, Austria. The Agency has three key functions: to collect information and data on fundamental rights; provide advice to the EU and its Member States; and promote dialogue with civil society in order to raise public awareness of fundamental rights.

See <http://fra.europa.eu>

The European Commission adopted on 25 March 2009 a proposal to fight trafficking in human beings. This text approximates national legislations and penalties, makes sure that offenders are brought to justice even if they commit crimes abroad. Victims will receive accommodation and medical care and if necessary police protection so that they recover from their plight and are not afraid to testify against their perpetrators. They will be protected from further traumatising during criminal proceedings, deriving for example from probing questions about the experience related to their forced sexual exploitation. Victims will receive free legal aid throughout the proceedings including for the purpose of claiming financial compensation. The proposal encourages sanctions against clients of people forced to offer sexual services and against employers exploiting trafficked people. The proposal also establishes independent bodies to monitor implementation of these actions.

See IP/09/472 on <http://europa.eu/rapid/>