



La Strada International - European NGO Platform against trafficking in Human Beings - welcomes the UN commitment for a strategic and coordinated global approach to address Trafficking in Human Beings and further global action. Especially as we are concerned about the remaining gaps in the implementation of anti-trafficking action in Europe and globally. We note that not all relevant international legal instruments are ratified by States or they are not adequately implemented. We see serious gaps in the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as the identification, protection and support to trafficked persons.

We also see still a predominant focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation and States should equally prioritize all forms of human trafficking by including specific policy measures for all different types of exploitation and its victims. Such policies must be based on a human rights approach – instead of a criminal justice approach. We see hardly any options for unconditional access to assistance which really infringes on trafficked persons' rights. Even when identified, trafficked persons are frequently detained, deported or are prosecuted for crimes which were committed as a direct consequence of their trafficking situation. Non-compliance with the non-punishment provision is therefore another severe gap noticed at European national level.

For effective prevention it is essential that root causes of human trafficking are effectively addressed, including the structural drivers of exploitation and abuse. While there is much ado about addressing demand, measures have so far mainly pointed at the sex industry and been focusing on criminalising the clients of sex workers, which has done nothing to address the real root causes of human trafficking.

Moreover migration policies focus mainly on promoting return instead of facilitating legal migration. There is an urgent need for attention and protection of all vulnerable workers in particular migrant workers and those in irregular work or situations, during COVID 19 it has become clear how much vital work is conducted by this group and how vulnerable they are for exploitation and abuse. Next to binding legislation on business and human rights, structural information provision; access to legal aid and services, safe reporting and complaint mechanisms for all workers is urgently needed, as well as effective access to compensation and remedies and awareness and outreach.

Identification of victims should not remain a sole responsibility of a single government agency but should be carried out by multidisciplinary teams including civil society organisations providing services to trafficked persons. In general the work of civil society should be much better respected by governments, as we note an alarming shrinking space in Europe and globally.

Lastly we see a lack of possibilities for victims to access temporary or long term residence and only few possibilities to obtain (permanent) residence on personal grounds or effective access to asylum procedures. Access to residence and long-term support is essential for trafficked persons' re/integration into society and to prevent re-trafficking.