



Soroptimists Stand Up for Women on EU Anti-Trafficking Day

Trafficking in human beings is a grave human rights violation. It is prohibited by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and defined by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as a particularly serious form of organised crime. It is an example of modern slavery which destroys families and lives. Victims, usually women, are transported and coerced into exploitative conditions such as sexual exploitation, forced labour, begging, criminal activities, and even the removal of organs.

From 2010 to 2012, European Union Member States reported a total number of 30,146 registered, identified and presumed victims. Out of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, 95% were female.¹

Victims and their families suffer major physical and psychological consequences. Sustained abuse – including sexual abuse –, living in constant fear, poor living and working conditions severely impacts victims' health. Trafficked women often suffer from extreme emotional stress, shame, grief, anxiety, and post-traumatic disorder, which can lead them to drugs, alcohol and even death.

EU Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October is an occasion to reinvigorate Europe-wide commitment for eradicating trafficking in human beings. It is a time for policymakers and the public to reflect upon the response to THB in Europe. For example, national governments need to improve the identification of victims and the assistance that is provided. Failure to ensure better investigation and prosecution of human trafficking crimes is still a real problem that engenders a feeling of impunity for human trafficking offenders. In the context of the refugee crisis, unaccompanied children are especially vulnerable targets and should be provided with special care and attention.

In the light of these many challenges, SIE President Renata Trottmann Probst, whose Biennium theme is "We Stand Up for Women," is putting a particular emphasis on the need to address this very serious human rights violation which is not always visible, but is happening right in front of our eyes.

Raising awareness of and helping to prevent human trafficking has been part of Soroptimist International of Europe's work for many years. For one, the Union of Norway's project "Valgt det..." ("Chose it") staged a play on human trafficking to inform, engage and create debate on human trafficking, in particular among young people. According to the Union, "Storytelling theatre gives the victims of trafficking a face, tells their horrifying stories, mixes them with hard facts and makes a heart-breaking performance about real humans with their hopes and dreams." Many individual clubs within the Union of Norway are still putting on the plays so that high-school students can become aware of this complex and devastating issue that affects people just like them.

Soroptimists will continue to tackle THB through their Union and Club projects far and wide until all women, children and men are free from this modern slavery.

Click here to learn more about [Trafficking in Human beings](#)

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat_report_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_-_2015_edition.pdf