

Human Rights Department: Anti-Trafficking Programme

Side Event at Migration and Integration Seminar

12th May 2005 – 1.15-2.45pm

‘Exploitation in Western Europe: Trafficking or fanning the flames?’

Panellists:

1. PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – Europe – Mr Serge Du Croq – The organisation has recently conducted research on the exploitation of irregular status migrants in Western Europe in different sectors.
2. European Civic Forum (NGO) – Network of ‘sans papiers’ in Europe – Ms Sissel Brodal – The organisation has recently conducted research on the exploitation of migrants in the agricultural sector in Western Europe.
3. FIZ – Consultative centre for trafficked and migrant women in Switzerland – Ms Doro Winkler.

Introduction

Material hardship and perceived opportunities for work abroad are cited as the most common factors driving the migration plans of many victims of trafficking in the OSCE region. An increasing demand for informalised and unprotected forms of work, linked to new global economic transformations, is seen to be contributing to increasing irregular movement which brings in its wake many victims of trafficking. Current research estimates that irregular immigrants account for one third to one half of new entrants to developed countries.

Many irregular migrants find employment but some observers posit that migrants in Europe resemble a slave labour force, existing on the margins and fenced in by society. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is already well documented in the OSCE region. New research indicates that forced labour exploitation also exists in a number of sectors in Europe including agriculture and food processing, small manufacturing, domestic/care work and hotels and restaurants,. The factors contributing to such exploitation and the manner of its organisation are now demanding attention. The labelling of those affected as alternately trafficked victims or illegal migrants has consequences both for those involved in the exploitation and the State.

This side event will bring together a number of practitioners that will explore the factors contributing to and the different manifestations of exploitation in Western Europe. It will provide an overview of the risks taken, particularly by migrant women, in seeking irregular forms of work in Western Europe and discuss ways in which current approaches to trafficking can be strengthened to provide protection from human rights violations.