



COATNET statement for the European Anti-Trafficking Day

The fight against human trafficking is a priority for many Caritas organisations in Europe and around the World. Many participate in the ecumenical network COATNET, which brings together faith-based organisations (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox) under the Caritas Internationalis umbrella. Affiliates share a commitment to working together internationally, regionally and nationally in combating human trafficking and in assisting trafficked people.

Improving mechanisms against trafficking in human beings must go along with better protection of trafficked persons. Respect for human rights is of primary importance while assisting trafficked persons. Trafficked persons have the right to appropriate solutions, security, social and legal assistance and data protection.

In spite of existing international instruments in many countries, effective protection of victims of trafficking does not take place.

COATNET affiliates reiterate that:

When identified, trafficked persons should be issued with a voluntary temporary residence permit. This should be renewable and include the option to be converted into a long-term permit. It should be issued independently of the willingness of the person to cooperate with the authorities in investigations and prosecution. A trafficked person may have experienced physical or mental trauma. With such a residence permit, they can begin to reconstruct their lives and build a relationship of trust with the authorities. This may result in some degree of cooperation.

Return of trafficked persons to their countries of origin and their reintegration should be voluntary and carefully prepared.

COATNET affiliates urge the Belgian EU Presidency to put emphasis on effective protection of victims and their recovery, including creating opportunities for potential victims to earn a living and not be exposed to vulnerable situations.

In the 'European Year Against Poverty', COATNET affiliates underline the connections between poverty and trafficking. The links should influence anti-poverty policies.