

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES - EMPLOYABILITY

NEW LIVES FOR OLD

Life can often seem pointless when your pimp isolates you from the rest of society and exploits, abuses or even beats you, on a regular basis. In Greece, a very active and experienced EQUAL Development Partnership is working hard to combat human trafficking and the worst effects of the suffering it causes by bringing hope and new life chances to its victims.



Trafficking in human beings is a multifaceted phenomenon that is currently acquiring global dimensions. It has been identified as a contemporary form of slavery and it is certainly a severe violation of human rights. Unfortunately, the vast financial profits show that human trafficking is one of the most lucrative forms of organised crime. As the number of individuals and countries affected is growing, new trafficking routes are opening up, and the tentacles of organised crime are spreading, to the extent that trafficking in human beings is now being recognised as an issue of global concern. Human trafficking constitutes a major problem in the regions of eastern and south-eastern Europe. Greece, mainly due to its geographical position, is regarded as a destination and, to a lesser extent, as a transit country for persons who are being trafficked mainly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. Despite the many efforts that have been made by state agencies, as well as by international and non-governmental organisations, trafficking in human beings, in particular trafficking in young women for sexual exploitation, remains an acute social problem in Greece.

The [ASPIDDA Development Partnership](#) (DP) that is based in Alimos, just outside the centre of Athens, is combating discrimination suffered by victims of trafficking, protecting and claiming the fundamental rights of these victims and creating realistic conditions for their social and vocational integration. Its activities mirror the Council's Recommendations on the implementation of Member States' employment policies.^[1]

"Most victims are lured to Greece with false promises of good jobs and high income and they are driven by the dream of a better life. Unemployment, poverty, disruption of traditional, legal or social structures and the breakdown of the rule of law in many countries, give opportunities to traffickers to develop and expand their activities and, of course, their profits," says Daniel Esdras, Chair of ASPIDDA and also Chief of the Greek Mission of the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) and "they treat victims as products that can be easily transported, bought and sold." However, IOM has come together with a range of private and public agencies to protect and support victims of trafficking and to promote their integration.

OFFERING COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

Within the DP, activities are combined to create comprehensive support for victims of trafficking and to ensure that they can be smoothly and safely integrated into society and the labour market, in a way that respects and protects their fundamental human rights and the personal dignity of each individual victim. Structures in different areas of the country have been organised to operate as shelters for trafficking victims and provide services such as:



Advertising the multi-lingual guide

- Short-term accommodation;
- Medical and Health Care;
- Psychological and Social Support;
- Legal Counselling and Support;
- Information and Guidance;
- Empowerment and Vocational Training;
- Meditation with Employers in order to promote and support labour integration.

Apart from the support structures, one of the main guidance and support tools is a Multi-Lingual Guide addressed directly to the victims of trafficking. This Guide provides information about their rights, the existing measures and policies in Greece for their protection and support together with the contact details of organisations and agencies that provide services for victims of trafficking. The Guide has been produced in Greek and languages spoken by most victims namely, English, French, Albanian, Russian and Romanian. It is addressed mainly to women victims of trafficking and it is written in very plain language, so that the basic rights of a trafficking victim in Greece are both understandable and clear to the reader. The guide is also a useful tool for professionals who are active in offering services to victims.

Being able to contacting victims of trafficking is always a problem because they are kept hidden and out of sight of the general public. Sometimes they are found during police raids, sometimes they escape and flee to their country's embassy or sometime they are discovered by the project's street workers or even by taxi drivers. According to Greek anti-trafficking legislation, once rescued, victims have to be officially identified by the public prosecutor in order to have access to those measures of protection and assistance provided by the Greek State and also NGOs and IOM. Potential victims of trafficking are provided with a one month reflection period that can be extended to two months in case of victims under 18 years of age, to decide whether they wish to cooperate with the Authorities in the prosecution of their traffickers. During this period, they enjoy all rights that are available to victims who have already been identified, except for residence and work permits.

When victims are identified, they are entitled to seek employment and the DP has had considerable success in finding jobs and also accommodation for these ex-victims. The following anonymous, but real, life story is just one illustration of the way in which trafficking operates and also the solutions provided by the DP.

I was born in a small town in the Balkans and I am the oldest child in my family and I have 2 sisters and a brother who is just 8 months and I love them very much. My mother is very tired and she faces a chronic health problem while my father is an alcoholic and most of the time he is unemployed. The financial situation in our house was always miserable and my mother had to keep the household, to raise the children and work at the same time. As the oldest child I stopped going to school at the age of 15, and starting working to assist financially yet, the money I was earning was not enough to support my family.

At some point, a Greek friend of my family suggested that I should go and work in his country

because there - as he used to say - "I would earn lots of money". We trusted this man because we knew him more than ten years and he could have been my father or even my grandfather as he was 60 years old. My parents gave their written consent for me to travel to Greece, since I was still young to go by myself and this friend promised to pay for all my travelling expenses.

When I arrived in Greece there were two strange men waiting for me at the airport. They took me to an apartment where I was kept locked, I could not speak the language and they had taken away all the documents I had with me. They never mentioned to me that the job I would do was prostitution but it seemed strange to me that I was dressed with provocative clothes and they put me in make-up, since I was too young for all that. They then took me to a hotel and I was told to go up to a room and wait for "my employer."

I was scared! But finally I was very lucky. The man that came to the room as a client was an undercover policeman. He showed me his identity card immediately and he took me to the police station. From that point my story followed the legal procedure. I was identified as a trafficking victim and transferred to a shelter. There, I was provided with all the necessary support in order to get over the bad experience I had. With the help of the staff of the shelter, I was also able to find a proper job in Greece, since I was given a work permit

MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

Two major aims of the DP are not yet reflected in the action plans. These are tackling the gender pay gap and introducing a gender dimension into strategies for improved health and safety at work. Specific working groups have studied these two issues and have produced a survey on health and safety conditions and another on the wages paid to women and men in the 19 organisations. Both surveys reveal that legal obligations are generally being respected. There were only few cases of discrimination that related to levels of pay, but in-depth case studies indicated that there was a need to address the principle of equal pay for comparable work. There were more obvious concerns about health and safety issues. It appears that when women are worried about the security of their jobs, they may be prepared to accept working conditions that are harmful to their health. In one factory, the survey discovered pregnant women dealing with toxic agents and in another female workers were regularly lifting iron bars weighing over 30 kilos. Then, there was a problem with a ceramics company in which women were prohibited from working close to the ovens and this restriction blocked their access to better paid jobs. The problem could have been resolved if the employer had purchased new safety equipment but he felt he could not make the financial investment. However, there were encouraging responses from three enterprises, which were immediately prepared to redress the deficiencies highlighted by the survey. In addition, five companies with particularly problematical health and safety conditions agreed that the DP should carry out a second analysis in greater depth and, if necessary, negotiate appropriate improvements with the Work's Council.

IMPROVING THE CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

It is still too early to assess the full impact of the DP's activities but the process of change is well underway. Training materials and tools created by the project are enhancing the visibility of the equality action plans and stimulating other employers to follow suit. These organisations then have access to a CD-Rom that presents and explains the experience of the original 19 companies and agencies in tackling discrimination and improving the job situation and working conditions of all their employees. Thanks to the leading role played by the National Trade Union Federation within the project and the country at large, the agreements and action plans are setting new standards for collective bargaining.

THE ADDED-VALUE OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Agir para a Igualdade has transnational partners in [Austria](#), [Italy](#) and Hungary. The Italian DP is working on life-long-learning and the Hungarian project aims to increase the employability of the Roma community. Transnational exchange has generated a learning process that is helping all partners to take more account of the needs of ethnic minorities and to integrate a gender dimension into their activities. Building on the Portuguese experience, partners in "Igualdade.Sociale@it.hu.pt" are producing a guide to support enterprises in introducing equality plans covering both dimensions of gender and ethnicity.

Agir	para		a		Igualdade
Confederacio	Geral	dos	Trabalhadores		Portugueses
Alvaro					Cartas
Rua	Vitor		Cordon		n01-r/c
P-1200-482					Lisboa
Tel:	+351	21	325	53	31
Fax:	+351	21	325	53	17
E-mail:					cgtp@mai.telepac.pt
www.cgtp.pt					