

Beat: Politics

More than twenty million people are estimated to be victims of human trafficking

MEPs debate

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USPA NEWS - More than twenty million women, children and men are estimated to be victims of human trafficking worldwide. The Parliament's human rights subcommittee holds a hearing on Thursday 16 April to discuss what the EU can do to tackle the issue when dealing with other countries.

During the hearing MEPs are expected to identify and assess the different categories of human trafficking, those who profit from it and what the EU could do about it. The debate will serve as a basis for an upcoming report by the human rights subcommittee on the issue. Committee chair Elena Valenciano, a Spanish member of the S&D group, said: "The EP has a key role in monitoring EU activities abroad and ensuring that the respect for human rights is an intrinsic part of all our policies. We must continue to work on translating our commitments, good intentions and expectations on human rights into real and concrete measures."

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, half of all trafficking victims are adult women and nearly a third children. Most of the victims are subjected to sexual exploitation but other forms of exploitation, such as forced labour, are increasing. "The trafficking in human beings is the slavery of our time," said Valenciano. "A terrible scourge that according to the International Labour Organization affects more than 20 million people worldwide and that preys especially on girls and women turned into merchandise for sexual exploitation. It is not only a serious and massive violation of human rights but an inexhaustible source of financial resources that nurtures networks of organised crime."

She added that greater coordination at all levels was needed and that the EU should show leadership on the issue. The directive on trafficking of human beings was adopted on 21 March 2011. It focusses on prevention, the protection of victims and the prosecution of criminals. Adopted in 2012, the EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings adopted in 2012 identifies a series of priorities and concrete measures to prevent human trafficking; assist the victims and increase prosecution of the traffickers. Human trafficking is also addressed by several external relations instruments, such as the annual progress reports on countries vying to join the EU as well as by talks with countries outside the EU.

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