



## 5 organisations in Europe join forces to combat online trafficking of women

Athens, 11 December 2020 - A new project has been launched by NGOs [Progetto Tenda Torino](#), [DRC Greece](#), [LABC](#), [CWEP Poland](#) and [Nesta Italia](#) to combat online traps for women and girls.

Through the “Free 2 Link” project, the above organisations and public authorities will join forces to elaborate and disseminate knowledge to prevent e-trafficking, building together an awareness-raising online platform.

The use of internet and digital technologies has significantly increased in recent months marked by COVID-19, leading inter alia to a rise in online trafficking. At the same time, evidence from the field according to Progetto Tenda, leader of the anti-trafficking network Anello Forte, shows that early identification of victims is a challenging task.

While frontline service providers working with sex workers and victims of trafficking are key to identifying cases of trafficking, there are no effective mechanisms to help professionals understand online recruitment and exploitation patterns. The clear need to build capacity on early identification of victims, targeting frontline professionals, has also been identified by the European Commission.

Most of the victims are from Eastern and South Europe (34% from Romania and Albania), Africa (64% from Nigeria and Ivory Coast), and Asia (mainly China, 19%) [2]. Despite Italy and Greece being the main entry points for migration and refugee flows into Europe, only a few victims of trafficking are identified during the Reception and Identification process applied to refugees and migrants.

The five organisations will work closely to build updated and accessible knowledge on e-trafficking, directly intervene and prevent online violence against women. By creating an online platform, the organisations further aim to equip frontline staff and connect organisations working in asylum and integration programmes across Italy, Greece, and the European routes of women trafficking.

This will be followed by training opportunities for civil society professionals, governmental and law enforcement employees. There will also be activities to raise awareness and evaluate progress.

“The Global COVID19 pandemic has seen an increase in screen time these past months amplified and enabled online trafficking of women. We need to understand how much of a toll this has taken on women victims and strengthen professionals across Europe to stop online violence,” says Alba Cauchi, the DRC Country Director.

The project is funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) of the European Commission, and it will be completed in 2 years.

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Note to editors:

[1] <https://bit.ly/3gz7vL5>

[2] <https://bit.ly/37Og7tC>

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