

Ahern announces Anti Trafficking Measure

The Minister for Justice and Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D, today announced that Ireland has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, following the deposit of Ireland's instruments of ratification with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Speaking in Brussels at an EU council meeting today, Minister Ahern said:
"Ratification of this Convention is a key element in fulfilling this Government's commitment to tackling trafficking in people – one of the most horrendous crimes worldwide. Effectively, we are dealing with a modern form of slavery, a gross violation of human rights and an extremely profitable business for organised crime. This Convention is designed to provide a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of trafficking victims and witnesses and the effective investigation of those suspected of trafficking offences.

Our ratification of this Convention sends a signal to the international community that we are willing and able partners in the international efforts to protect victims, prosecute the offenders and prevent this crime."

This Convention recognises trafficking in human beings as a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and integrity of human beings. It seeks to protect and promote victims' human rights in the fight against trafficking and places a special focus on the protection of trafficking victims. It applies to all victims of trafficking - men, women and children. The Convention applies to all forms of exploitation - sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, removal of organs and all forms of trafficking - both national and international. It will enter into force as regards Ireland on 1 November 2010.

Copies of the Convention and its explanatory report can be obtained on the Council of Europe website www.coe.int/trafficking.

15 July 2010

Note for Editors

The Government of Ireland signed the Convention on 13 April 2007.

A National Action Plan, which sets out the legislative and administrative structures to give effect to the Convention, was published on 10 June 2009.

Some of the key arrangements which have been put in place to date include:

- Enactment of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 which became operational on 7 June 2008. This gives effect to the criminal law/law enforcement elements of the Convention.
- Administrative arrangements which provide a period of recovery and reflection of 60 days for potential or suspected victims and periods of temporary residency where the suspected victim is assisting with an investigation or prosecution. Pending the enactment of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill these administrative arrangements in relation to recovery and reflection periods and temporary residence, broadly reflecting the provisions in the Bill, were introduced on 7 June 2008.
- Dedicated units to combat human trafficking established in the Department of Justice and Law Reform and in the Garda Síochána.
- An Interdepartmental High Level Group to recommend the most appropriate

and effective responses to trafficking in human beings to the Minister for Justice and Law Reform.

- Engagement with NGOs and representatives of the High Level Group through roundtable discussions held every 4 months approximately. 5 interdisciplinary Working Groups have been established to progress matters in relation to Child Trafficking, Development of a National Referral Mechanism, Awareness Raising and Training, Sexual Exploitation issues and Labour Exploitation issues and, in turn, report to the High Level Group.
- Suspected adult victims are provided with accommodation and all necessary medical and material assistance by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) in conjunction with the HSE, prior to identification as a suspected victim and during 60 day recovery and reflection period, following referral by the GNIB.
- HSE provide a care plan for potential and suspected victims of human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.
- Provision of legal aid and legal advice to potential and suspected victims of trafficking in both civil and criminal cases by the Legal Aid Board.
- The HSE make all necessary provisions regarding any unaccompanied child who is suspected of being or who is identified as a victim of trafficking. This involves initial counselling/debriefing, multidisciplinary assessment of need and a care plan overseen by a HSE person.
- An ongoing awareness raising campaign directed at the public and law enforcement agencies initially launched in October, 2008.
- Training courses entitled 'Tackling Trafficking in Human Beings: Prevention, Protection and Prosecution' delivered to members of the Garda Síochána and a probationer Garda training module on human trafficking.
- Awareness raising training for relevant Government officials e.g. HSE, PSA, INIS, ORAC, Crime Victims helpline, DETE, NERA, probation service staff, Social welfare inspectors and staff of youth detention schools.
- Development, design and delivery of a 'Train the Trainer' course for staff of Government and Public Sector organisations to enable training on human trafficking to be rolled out to all staff in these organisations.
- Data Strategy being developed further to help establish the nature and extent of trafficking in human beings in Ireland.