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Church-led delegation meets for exchange with Europol on combating trafficking in women

Visit of anti-trafficking network to The Hague underlines common concerns despite different roles

Representatives of European Churches and public authorities cooperating against trafficking in women met with representatives of the EU' police office Europol during a visit to The Hague 1st-4th April. The visit was occasion for an exchange on analytical knowledge, common concerns and activities against trafficking. The visit was part of the activities of the European network, "Christian Action and Networking against Trafficking" (CAT). The activities of the anti-trafficking network have a strong focus on enhancing the cooperation against trafficking between churches, NGOs and public institutions/law enforcement, both on national as on EU level.

The delegation of practitioners from Churches and police officials from seven European countries met with representatives of different departments of Europol' s serious crime unit in order to learn more about the analytical and operational approach taken by the European Union' s law enforcement organisation. The participants coming from Belgium, the Czech Republic Germany, Greece, Italy, Montenegro and Lithuania also learnt about the complex procedures through which Europol gathers knowledge on trafficking. Europol assists member states in the combat against trafficking through operational cooperation and gathering and analysing of information.

Representatives of Europol shared their insights into the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, in particular women and children, on a European scale. They also gave an update on the role of Europol in assisting law enforcement efforts in the different EU member states and beyond. Representatives of the Christian organisations and their public partners gave an overview on their knowledge and concrete activities against trafficking. Both sides expressed interested in an improved exchange of updated information on trends in trafficking and counter-strategies. The meetings also was the opportunity for a fruitful exchange on the interrelatedness of trafficking in human beings and irregular migration.

The delegation of the CAT network also used the opportunity to meet with some of the most important Dutch actors in the fight against trafficking, among them the National rapporteur against trafficking, the Dutch Protestant Churches and the Foundation of religious against trafficking in women.

Torsten Moritz, coordinator of the CAT project, commented: "This visit was very informative and important for us. We understood Europol' s great potential, but also current problems of analysing and combating trafficking. As we in our work have different approaches, we can all gain a lot from better exchange and cooperation against this crime and human rights violation. This visit broadened our horizons and marks a good start for further developing this important exchange."

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