

News on the Council of Europe

1st February 2008: Entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against trafficking in Human Beings [CETS no. 197]

Trafficking in human beings constitutes a violation of human rights and is an offence to the dignity and the integrity of the human being. It treats human beings as a commodity to be bought and sold. The victims are put to forced labour, usually in the sex industry but also, for example, in the agricultural sector or in sweatshops, for a pittance or nothing at all.

Trafficking in human beings directly undermines the values on which the Council of Europe is based.

To fight this modern form of slavery, the Council of Europe adopted (2005) a comprehensive treaty (Council of Europe Convention on Action against trafficking in Human Beings) aimed at preventing trafficking, protecting the human rights of its victims and prosecuting the traffickers.

The Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings was launched in 2006 under the slogan Human being – not for sale. The Campaign aimed to raise awareness, to highlight the different measures, which can be taken to prevent this new form of slavery and to promote the widest possible signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

This Campaign ends on 1 February with the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against trafficking in Human Beings [CETS No. 197].

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197) was opened for signature in Warsaw on 16 May 2005 on the occasion of the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. On 24 October 2007, the Convention received its tenth ratification thereby triggering the process by which it enters into force on 1 February 2008 with regard to the first ten countries to ratify it: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. It enters into force with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Malta and Norway on 1 May 2008.

The Convention has also been signed, but not yet ratified by 23 other member states: Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Further ratifications are expected in the coming months.

Ten member states – Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey - have not yet signed it.

The Convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member’s states; non-members states and the European Community also have the possibility of becoming Party to the Convention.

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