

Social aspects of human trafficking

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1. Relevance and compatibility between Denmark and Greece – as far as Denmark's 'Stop Trafficking Camp – Boosting the Social Dimension' initiative is concerned

At first sight, Denmark's 'Stop Trafficking Camp – Boosting the Social Dimension' initiative may appear as distant to Greece. Yet, a careful study reveals that distance appears by overemphasizing the various details of everyday practice and routine rather than the overall plans of confronting trafficking.

Comparatively speaking, there exists a strong compatibility on the level of the political and legal structures that exist in order to address trafficking. Of course, there are important differences which, however, tend to emerge on the level of political and legal culture, in other words, the ways that politics and law are practiced.

Another point of strong compatibility between Denmark and Greece on the issue of (effectively and efficiently – as defined in 'social' rather than 'legal' terms) confronting trafficking has to do with social welfare and social justice. Both countries emphasize these central issues of state policy and political dialogue – the two state structures and civil societies are familiarized with social welfare and social justice, so they are expected to respond 'instinctively' in similar manners in several social issues, including trafficking. On the other hand, the two EU countries tend to deviate from each other on cultural issues on gender (including prostitution) and conceptions of sin and crime, sin/crime and punishment.

(The interesting and challenging difficulties of taking this initial compatibility of Denmark and Greece on the levels of EU values and structures and turning it into a process of compatibilization in everyday practices are dealt with in the following paragraphs.)

2. Similarities and differences between Denmark's initiative and relevant practices in Greece

Greece has already a formidable programme (and mechanism) of addressing the problem of trafficking, from the penal attack to trafficking networks to the support of the victims plans. Most of Denmark's anticipations and practices are in one way or another present in Greece's relevant program. On the other hand, there are some particular 'details' of crucial importance that are missing. For example, in Greece it is presupposed that, in order to enjoy the benefits of support, victims of trafficking are willing to cooperate with authorities and agree to participate in a return program. Another example is the absence of remuneration. Both absences are indicative of broader differences of orientation between Denmark's and Greece's formulations of the problem and, thus, its solution. Most details are similar but are organized in different ways.

In fact, there appear two major differences between Denmark and Greece in the orientation to confront trafficking. These are two different emphases of considerable importance that give to the parts different meanings and suggest different ways of application.

The first difference has to do with the fact that Denmark's 2007 initiative (which differs from Denmark's previous initiative as well, although it constitutes a continuous improvement) is a social not a legal initiative; it constitutes a 'social approach' to human trafficking. This orientation was repetitively proposed in Greece as well but the proposal was not considered. Greece is operating within the framework of the EU 'Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings' of December 2005. This framework focuses mainly on the legal aspects of human trafficking, attributing secondary significance to social causes and social problems arising from human trafficking.

The second difference is that Denmark's initiative is holistic. It refers to 'holistic social measures for supporting, stabilising and repatriating victims and – most importantly – an alternative to come home'. Greece's program for dealing with trafficking, on the other side, appears (both in principle but in practice as well) as an assemblage of different parts coming from different (mostly state but civil society as well) actors reflecting power differences rather than their relevance to confronting trafficking (see Gr Lazos' Report). Up to this moment, these different parts appear not to have been examined as to their compatibility in contributing to a concrete general plan in which the means are to serve well-defined goals.

As a whole, Greece's way of confronting trafficking appears to refer to a national-modernity mechanism attempting to deal with a transnational-postmodern challenge.

Looking at Denmark's initiative, and given the broad compatibility between the two, Greece has the necessary facilities and personnel (in terms of experience and motivation) to adopt the most qualitative aspects of it. In fact, Greece has much to gain in the confrontation of trafficking by adopting these aspects of Denmark's initiative. (By adoption, having in mind a demanding creative process of confronting detail by detail rather than a fast, indifferent and passive mimicking.) It is these two differences appearing in the previous paragraphs – the social and the holistic – that appear to give a qualitative boost to the efforts and assist in efficiency and effectiveness, and enable the trespassing of stagnation and fatigue – that can and must be introduced in Greece's trafficking confrontation. The fact that both of them were already thought and proposed by experts and others in Greece reveals that a process of adopting them is not to emerge out of nowhere in modern Greece.

3. On the issue of capacity to transfer Denmark's initiative to Greece

Denmark's new anti-trafficking initiative is adoptable by Greece. If the efforts are to be succeed, serious and systematic work is needed. Yet, some differences of situation, structure and motive that need to be taken into consideration are noted in this section.

First, trafficking in Greece assumed an overall harshness definitely more intensive than in Denmark due to the different geopolitical position and the different (low and slow reaction) by state and civil society.

Second, trafficking is organized by different kinds of networks and (not to be underestimated) refers to, in certain respects, different kinds of women and children (in many respects, with different social and personal characteristics).

Third, the numbers of trafficked women and children are much higher than in Denmark – trafficking was more extensive than in Denmark – and their quality of life as victims of trafficking in Greece reveals broad differences. Some of them are living considerably better than the average Greek prostitute (for a certain period of time) whereas some others considerably worse.

Fourth, the public is tired of the issue of trafficking. This has to do with the ineffectiveness or short time of anti-trafficking campaigns as well as the growing sexism and racism. Also, it has to be mentioned that the clientele of trafficked women is somewhere between 1 in 5 and 1 in 6 of the male population living in Greece (Greeks and immigrants) – this is a strong number that sometimes election-oriented politicians are careful not to alienate.

Fifth, the anti-trafficking forces in the state mechanism and civil society currently exhibit strong traits of fatigue, expressed in inactivity, routine, problem hiding and indifference.

Sixth, and most interesting (even if it is not yet felt by the anti-trafficking forces in the state and civil society), the trafficking networks reveal signs of modernization (avoiding challenges to public opinion) and the trafficked women pass to a 'second generation', revealing new cultural patterns, habits and orientation (much nearer to ideal type of trafficked woman assumed in the Danish initiative).

4. Key issues and basic questions

In this section some particular issues of high importance which are found in Denmark's initiative, are noted (as they are of interest in case that the plan is to be adopted to boost the anti-trafficking efforts in Greece). Sometimes, it is crucial details such as these that are of importance in deciding the success of an effort.

In the Report and the Discussion Paper is noted that in Denmark's previous anti-trafficking plan cooperation between the police, social and health sectors as well as between local and international NGOs was considered essential. Moreover, it is noted that cross-sector collaboration among government agencies, the police and the social organizations, among others, was good. In Greece, the anti-trafficking model that was applied was overbureaucratic, perhaps chokingly bureaucratic, pressing towards avoidance of responsibility and initiative. Apart from the fact that too many state partners engaged in dealing with trafficking, each one of them had many areas of responsibility (see report by Gr. Lazos). As a consequence, trafficking – and trafficked women do not constitute a social body or political pressure group in themselves – was reduced to a second priority issue. Phenomena of low efficiency, low effectiveness, low morale and indifference (and, perhaps, corruption) emerged. So, it would be interesting to know more about the structure of the old and the new Danish plan, the ways that various mechanisms cooperate, to be informed in some detail in the ways that responsibility was and is divided.

A second topic that draws the interest on Denmark's initiative from the point of view of Greece is the two centres that were established: the knowledge and coordination Centre for Human Trafficking (VKM) and, especially, the National Anti-trafficking Centre. As is noted, 'social services

offered to victims need to be improved and better coordinated. For this reason, the national Anti-trafficking Centre has been established. The Centre is a knowledge and coordination centre whose tasks are to coordinate all initiatives, including coordinating outreach work among foreign prostitutes and trafficked women and develop methods to streamline efforts on an ongoing basis. Once every year the centre will report on the status for implementing the action plan, including key figures concerning the development in numbers, country of origin, citizenship etc.'

These two centres are indeed highly promising in overcoming the problems of bureaucratization and indifference in the forces that are confronting trafficking in modern Greece. In fact, the creation of such a centre as the National Centre was repeatedly proposed by experts in modern Greece receiving a no-response response (see report by Gr. Lazos).

5. Particular issues of particular importance

Having in mind the possibility of adopting Denmark's 2007 anti-trafficking initiative in Greece, there are certain issues that appear to be of major interest in solving particular but important problems and broadening the ways of looking at trafficking as a social problem.

First, it would be interesting to be informed about the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency on the basis of which the anti-trafficking activities of the state sectors and NGOs are evaluated. These criteria, although they are not sufficient in themselves boosting anti-trafficking activities, constitute an absolutely necessary component in this direction. It would be interesting to know more about the developed methodology through which authorities in Denmark enable national and local stakeholders to assess, monitor and evaluate existing activities. A supplementary question is to know the methods through which the ways the most experienced and most highly motivated to fight trafficking are selected and given responsibility.

A second interesting point has to do with outreach work – the ways though which it is acceptably and effectively-efficiently practiced. The National Referral Mechanism is an interesting mechanism which can support the trafficked person to avoid harsh treatment (including indifference and contempt) by the authorities. It constitutes one meeting point of the state organizations that engage in anti-trafficking with the interested NGOs – and, in fact, one of the issues that may lead to a re-energization of the NGO anti-trafficking movement in Greece.

A third interesting point – a point of high interest in Greece due to the condition that women from abroad suffer in prostitution (even those out of trafficking networks' control) – has to do with the informed and open-minded way of looking at trafficking by acknowledging that a part of it constitutes a moment of prostitution. In this way, first, part of the difficulty in contacting trafficked women is alleviated and, second, the problems that not trafficked women from abroad face in prostitution are confronted.

This third point is even more interesting by the fact that it opens officially a channel of coordination with Danish prostitutes as well. It would be very interesting to be informed in more detail about the Competence Centre Prostitution organized by the Danish government and its four objectives (offering support to prostitutes to come out of the vicious circle, reducing the traumas of prostitution, preventing prostitution among young people at risk, increasing the knowledge of the relevant expert groups about the problem area).

A fourth point of interest refers to two particular strategies: The 'One approach – one million options' strategy (through which 'each victim should be offered an action plan that maps out individual needs and launches relief measures and development initiatives for the individual' and the 'Specialised Unit on Counselling'.

A fifth point that appears interesting is to know more about the issue of risk assessment, a rather ambitious idea of dealing with the problems of particular individuals at particular moments. Which particular measures provide the Danish plan in order to avoid routine and devaluation of this promising strategy?

Finally, which are the estimated costs (in money, resources, personnel) of putting the 'Stop Trafficking Camp – Boosting the Social Dimension' into action?

As noted at the beginning, Denmark's initiative is adoptable in Greece. It bears the capacity of giving a decisive boost in the confrontation of trafficking in early 21st century Greece – along the lines that European Union decision are oriented.