

# European Union Policies on Human Trafficking - Abstract

*Jessica Klein*  
*Undergraduate Student*  
*Vanderbilt University*

*Julie Wolin*  
*Undergraduate Student*  
*University of Colorado Boulder*

**Background:** What started as a plan, the Europe Plan, to prevent the human destruction and utter devastation that the world witnessed in World War II has been modified and shaped into the world's foremost example of unmatched international cooperativity, the European Union (EU). Recently in European history, the EU has moved to confront the issue of human trafficking. Member States of the EU reported 15,846 victims of human trafficking solely between 2013 and 2014. Of these documented cases, the vast majority, seventy-six percent, were female. Out of those 15,856 trafficked individuals, sixty-seven percent were sexually exploited, twenty-one percent were forced into other types of labor, and an additional twelve percent were trafficked for other reasons including non-consensual organ harvesting. Through policy, the EU is working to prevent the trafficking of human beings, provide adequate care to its victims, and prosecute the individuals and organizations responsible for such heinous crimes; however, more can - and should - be done.

**Methods:** The information presented in this paper was drawn from extensive literary reviews of existing, published works. Specifically, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and state websites provide the majority of the key data and perspectives.

**Results:** The European Union has taken several measures to combat trafficking and any form of human slavery since its inception in the 1950s. Organizations and conventions such as the International Labor Organization, the Council of Europe, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights as a part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, and the European Union all have policies and conventions that are aimed at stopping and preventing the trafficking of human beings. Most importantly, the EU Trafficking Directive of 2011 has set forth clear definitions of 'forced criminality' and human trafficking for all member states. In a case study of Spain, it was found that the country has taken impressive strides in creating policies to combat human trafficking by creating new networks between the police, the lawmakers, and the social service providers. Overall, the steps that have been taken by the EU and individual states have shown significant growth in terms of taking the steps necessary to eliminate human trafficking.

**Conclusion:** Regarding human trafficking within the Member States of the European Union, there is still room for improvement, as the EU can and should pass legislation mandating that its Member States take responsibility for initiatives to stop trafficking and uphold justice and security within Europe's borders. Another initiative that the EU should prioritize is educating the public on the seriousness and of human trafficking as well as its persistence in today's modern world. A more informed population will lead to better international and domestic prevention methods. Hopefully, someday in the near future, trafficking and its associated atrocities will be erased from the world, for good.

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