

Transcript of Speech by Panelist Anna Zobnina, Strategy and Policy Coordinator, European Network of Migrant Women

Thank you very much, Youla. Thank you very much ODIHR and OSCE for organizing this event and inviting our network to present. I also similarly to the previous speakers want to emphasize how much we welcome the research done by UN WOMEN and ODIHR on the trafficking in the context of COVID. It was extremely important for us and, really, we are looking forward to the updated manual that will be out in September as I understand. I am not going to repeat all the numerous and very important issues that were highlighted with regards to trafficking in women, especially for sexual exploitation, in the context of COVID. I think the research is excellent and the previous speakers did it very well as well. I want to speak a little bit about some practical approaches and perhaps not solutions, because the problem is too huge, especially right now in the context of COVID. But some of the important things that we as a migrant women organization with members who are migrant women, mostly, migrant women service providers, a lot of whom are working directly with victims of trafficking and various other forms of violence... What we think should be *[should happen]* on the ground *[is]* to make the situation... to alleviate the suffering of the women who are victims of trafficking and perhaps to prevent it. So first of all I would like to say that if you are a service provider and you come across victims of trafficking who are migrant women in Europe most overwhelmingly, as Gregoire pointed out before, it is very important that an organization has a clear idea what is their main goal when it comes to violence against women or sexual exploitation. Is it to help the women in prostitution? Is it to help the women to get out of prostitution? Is it to prevent the women from getting into prostitution? Or the combination of the both. And these are important questions that need to be asked and they will determine the needs, but also the tools and methodologies of the service providers. Of course, the bigger question that also exists is more general: As an organization, do you see a world in which women and girls are not sexually exploited possible? Is this your vision of the world, where trafficking in women is not a social norm, where prostitution is not seen as a way out of poverty for the most poor women, for the migrant women? And on this will also depend your work with victims and the survivors. When it comes to female migrant victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking for its purposes, from our perspective, it is a form of violence against women. And this is also how it is viewed by our members as well. And this big umbrella of violence against women, where there are various, various forms, there are very concrete issues when it comes to sexual exploitation. So for example the intergenerational prostitution. Something that our members are dealing with, when there is a mother who is exploited in prostitution, she is a victim of trafficking, she gives birth, her children are growing in this system. We know that this is particularly an acute issue in countries like India, but it is also very prevalent in Europe. And here, what we need is comprehensive services for women who are mothers and for the children as well – so there is this breach between the service provision for women, but also for children. Another issue is developing independent skills in women. And this sounds maybe kind of self-explanatory: but as a service provider, how do you structure your services in a way, that women do not become dependent on your services, but rather develop the skills where they can be independent in this world and continue with their own independent life. When you provide services, be it food packages or legal advice, do you make women depend, that they always need to come to your organization or do you teach them to orient themselves in the legal system. When it comes to medical assistance, which is a huge issue for women exploited in prostitution, do you take into account issues such as

FGM, gynecological services, even reconstructive surgeries that women might require from the brutal and violence in prostitution. The same counts for psychological assistance, safe and appropriate accommodation – the question of shelters is extremely important. Because you see what we know from our members: women who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation require comprehensive services. It is never enough to put women in a shelter and think the problem is fixed. It is never enough to just give her legal advice or only offer her language classes. The most successful and most impactful programs that we know that really help women they are always comprehensive. And they are always tailor-made and needs-based, based on the specific case of every individual woman. And what those cases can be, we have an understanding in the European context, that prostitution is something, ok, you just see women on the street when they are prostituted. We have this in Brussels, for example, or we have it, of course, in the countries that fully legalized prostitution. Or they are in brothels. But there are many other forms of sexual exploitation that are completely concealed from the eye. We have the intersection between forced marriage and sexual exploitation, both connected also to trafficking. We have a lot of cases where women are trafficked by a family member within their own neighborhood. And this is where there is the understanding that everybody thinks well it's a transnational crime that requires movement of people across the borders – not necessarily. And those cases are not very visible, but they are always identified by specialized services. Because they sit under this umbrella of violence against women and to see this as a form of violence against women you need what we call the gender-perspective. And this brings me to the last point of the whole violence against women sector that specialist organizations who absolutely need support at this point, we saw it from the report of ODIHR that there is huge pressure on the service providers, but they can't emphasize enough how important it is to provide funding, financial support, structural support to the specialist organizations who are dealing with violence against women from which you can borrow the practical tools for supporting and assisting female, migrant – in our case – victims of trafficking. And all of this of course requires very clear legal framework. If sexual exploitation is not seen as something that needs to be fully eliminated and prevented from happening in the first place, then such support and exit services will not be provided. And I am going to finish here and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you!

(Unverified transcript by Caroline Sander (GGMH) - Do not quote)