

*Speech of the  
National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children  
in the Netherlands*  
Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen

*at the occasion of*  
Conference 'Putting Rantsev into Practice  
Amsterdam, 18 April 2013

Ladies and gentlemen,

Earlier this week I spoke at a trafficking conference in St Petersburg. I spoke of a comprehensive approach and of course I mentioned the Rantsev case. Not extensively. Though none of the other Russian speakers referred to the European court's ruling, one thing was clear: Thousands of young, pretty Russian girls are still flocking out of their country, often on an artist visa, following Rantseva's plight.

This morning, I would like to focus on three aspects predominant in the fight against trafficking: Reliable data, a comprehensive approach, and the role of the judiciary.

The first objective in an effective fight against human trafficking is to make the phenomenon visible. That was the key message of my last report: Human trafficking that is hidden must be revealed – and once brought to light, it must be better recorded. Data are necessary in order to guide further research. We need knowledge-based policies.

We know human trafficking is mostly hidden and victims are often unwilling or afraid to speak out.

We know there is a large 'dark number'.

Therefore, we must also know that statistical trends based *only* on the number of known cases usually do not sufficiently reflect the *actual* threat.

The number of known cases depends on the public attention for human trafficking, on the priorities of law enforcement, or on the method by which victims are registered.

So when analysing the data, it is important to be aware of the specific context in which they were collected.

Data show the rate between domestic and cross border trafficking.

Data show which police regions bring forth the most trafficking cases.

Data show the number of court acquittals.

But figures alone do not paint the full picture.

This applies equally to the EU figures published last Monday.

Statistical findings are important. But they need qualitative back-up.

I will share with you the results of two of my recent studies.

First my study on a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach at a local level. Of course, the core issue of this conference. Human trafficking is of a nature and scale that it cannot be dealt with by law enforcement alone.

This was shown crystal clear yesterday by the Dutch chief prosecutor.

Many more stakeholders are needed.

My research showed that many of the *smaller* local authorities still are not sufficiently aware of the problem, or turn a blind eye. Thinking that trafficking is limited to prostitution areas, many smaller municipalities fail to see that this crime affects them too. Since my research was published several municipalities have begun to realise this and have started to execute their responsibility.

My recommendations involved the need for cooperation and sharing of information, two key issues addressed at this conference. But they also involved a serious role for and commitment of civil society. NGOs that care for and shelter victims. Not somewhere in the back seat but right there at the front row.

In order to effectively prosecute, law enforcement needs the victim.

Needs the victims statement.

Getting that statement requires trust.

That is where law enforcement needs NGOs.

They too play an essential part in an integrated approach.

Although about a third of the known victims in The Netherlands are victims of domestic trafficking, the majority come from other countries, other cultures. Addressing them as Dutch victims may not prove effective.

They might need a tailor-made approach.

Anthropological research among female workers in Chinese beauty parlours has given us insight into their closed community. The independent status of the academic researchers helped to gain the women's trust. It appeared that two concepts influenced their willingness to speak: the concept of *quanxi*, or social relations, and *manzi*, 'having face'.

Such information may be decisive for the effectiveness of police actions and the information one gets from the victims. Partnering up with the academic world can thus increase the effectiveness.

So not just *you* but civil society and the academic world can also be part of the integrated approach.

The next partner I would like to have a role of some sorts is the judiciary. Of course, they are independent, but they too need to feel the urgency.

After all, combating trafficking does not end with prosecuting; we need convictions.

Data on acquittals led me to examine the jurisprudence on trafficking.

What I found is that establishing proof can be difficult, partly because victims statements may not be consistent.

What I showed is that human trafficking cases have many legal pitfalls, for prosecutors *and* judges.

Without experience in trying these cases, those pitfalls are hard to avoid.

Police and prosecution have long since decided that this subject required specialist knowledge, not just concerning the law but also, for instance, on the psychological effects on victims.

The *judiciary* however did not consider it a specialism.

The outcome of my research has shown that this reflected in their rulings.

It has taken me four years and two extensive research projects, but we are now the first country to appoint specialised judges.

This conference is in essence about cooperation, joining forces and seeking new partners in the fight against trafficking. The aim is to move forward. That calls for boldness and a broadening of the perspective. I have emphasized the need for the involvement of NGOs. I have highlighted two relatively new partners: the academic world and the judiciary.

But we must look beyond and seek new bedfellows. Trade unions for example, who up till now have not really embraced the migrant worker as they should.

And what about private enterprises?

In 2011 Google funded SlaveryFootprint, and recently granted 3 million dollars to connect anti-trafficking hotlines.

And what about the media?

CNN is committed to ending modern-day slavery and features stories of exploitation from around the globe. In the UK, The Guardian has taken up a similar responsibility.

The media can be powerful allies in our common fight against human trafficking. I believe they should be encouraged to take up this role. That is why my office has developed a course for investigative journalism for UNESCO. Through their reporting, the media can raise awareness among the general public. They can give the Rantseva's of this world a face.

Thank you