

COALESCE

PRESS RELEASE



Funded by the European Union's
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund



Coalesce - Legal, Psycho-social and economic empowerment for the integration of women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation

DATE 02/04/2021

We are very pleased to start a new project COALESCE, which began in January 2021, funded by the AMIF Fund and led by the [Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies \(MIGS\)](#), in partnership with [Cyprus Refugee Council](#), [CARITAS Cyprus](#), [IROKO Onlus \(Italy\)](#), [Marta Centre \(Latvia\)](#), [European Network of Migrant Women](#), [Immigrant Council Ireland](#), [Solwodi \(Germany\)](#), [Klapeida \(Lithuania\)](#).

Coalesce is a two-year transnational project involving six European countries: Cyprus, Latvia, Italy, Lithuania, Ireland, and Germany.

The objective of the project is to provide support to the female migrant victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in Europe by providing gender-specific psycho-social, legal and economic support and assistance to third-country national women victims of sex trafficking, and to develop synergies and complementarities in facilitating needs identification, assistance and support, and improve transnational cooperation among front line professionals and practitioners. The proposal's aim is to place the voices and authentic opinions of trafficked women at the centre of implementation.

Trafficking in human beings (THB) in the EU is a major problem, which shows no signs of decreasing. Trafficking continues to be a key threat in the EU, while trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is the most widely spread form of exploitation (Europol, 2018). Female victims represent 77% of all victims, while trafficking for sexual exploitation represents 65% of the overall registered trafficking crimes (based on EU stats excluding the UK data, EC progress report, 2018). These statistics make it abundantly clear that we need to pay particular attention to the trafficking of women on the one hand, and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation on the other.

As of late, the phenomenon of human trafficking has been greatly shaped by and entangled with significant migration flows into and within the EU. In 2018 for example, Europol reported that organised criminal groups involved in THB often exploit existing migratory routes to traffic victims into and within the EU. The same Europol report exposes the nexus between asylum and human trafficking. Frontex (Risk analysis report, 2018) finds a significant increase in the number of Nigerian women and girls (increasingly minors) in mixed migration flows to Italy, intended for supply to the European sex trade. Similarly, the IOM reported a 600% increase, in a three year period, of the number of potential female victims primarily from Nigeria.

Through the COALESCE project we aim to have an updated picture of the phenomenon of trafficking for sexual exploitation across the EU, with a particular emphasis on capturing the experiences of trafficked women. We will explore complexities added due to their immigration status, cultural specificity, limited eligibility to general state-funded services, lack of support networks, increasing racism and xenophobia, which make the integration assistance demanding. Through this research and front line work, we aim to equip governments and service providers with the knowledge and tools necessary, simultaneously requiring gender-specificity, violence against women expertise as well as intersectional competence.

Project code: 958133 — COALESCE — AMIF-2019-AG-CALL



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