

MECPATHS under the Displacement of Persons:

The focus of MECPATHS is child protection against trafficking with the hospitality sector. The following news from this month is much cause for concern:



The number of unaccompanied child migrants arriving in Ireland is on the rise once again (approximately 100-130 each year), including minors from Greece under the EU Relocation Programme and Ireland's Calais Special Project (CSP). The Child and Family Agency, Tusla, has a role in providing care and protection for any unaccompanied minors who present seeking asylum. Many of these children have suffered extreme trauma and make up one of the most vulnerable groups of individuals in Ireland, therefore making them increasingly susceptible to traffickers operating within this country.

Europol issued a report on October 18th, 2018. For the first time ever on such a scale, this report provides an in-depth picture of the features of criminal networks involved in one of the most ominous crimes of all – the abuse of vulnerable children. The report identified Ireland as a destination country for victims of child trafficking networks, particularly from Nigeria.

On Monday, October 15th 2018, MECPATHS met with Chief/Superintendent Daly (Head of Garda National Protective Services Bureau - GNPBS) and Detective/Superintendent McCarthy (Head of the Human Trafficking Investigation and Coordination Unit), at Harcourt Square. We received clarity around the reporting protocol for hotels and were assured of their complete support of the work we are doing.

On Thursday, October 18th 2018, MECPATHS met with Minister Charlie Flanagan (Office of the Minister for Justice and Equality, Houses of the Oireachtas, Leinster House) and Paul Gunning (Principal Officer of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, of the Department of Justice and Equality - AHTU). Together, we acknowledged EU Anti-Trafficking Day and had an opportunity to explain the work of MECPATHS in great detail. The Minister showed a keen interest in the project and asked many engaging questions. He commended us on the work we are doing and told us to keep up the good work.

MECPATHS continues to raise awareness around child sex trafficking in Ireland by empowering hotel staff and management to be able to recognise the indicators and know how to report suspicions should they arise. MECPATHS also partners with Travel and Tourism colleges across the country and have recently facilitated 5 workshops around this issue at Shannon College of Hotel Management, and 1 at Griffith College.