

SUBMISSION FROM GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY

GCU Briefing Document

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) welcomes the Scottish Parliament debate on the subject of human trafficking. At GCU we recognise that human trafficking is a hugely serious and complicated problem. It is addressed in our learning and teaching in a postgraduate module called 'Human Rights' which forms part of GCU's innovative work-based learning MSc in Citizenship and Human Rights.

Furthermore, Dr Kiril Shaparov a programme leader for MSc Citizenship and Human Rights, is currently working on the development of a collaborative study of human trafficking with international partners in Hungary, Russia and Ukraine.

Dr Sharapov, an expert in the field of human trafficking, is to undertake the biggest study ever into the public's attitude towards the problem – and how consumers' spending habits contribute towards it.

Key points that will be included in the research will include:

- Examining the widespread misconception that human trafficking is only associated with the illegal sex trade, where people are forced into prostitution after being trafficked across borders.
- Examining whether a growing demand for cheap goods and services, and lack of public awareness of trafficking, are obscuring our concern for the welfare of the migrant workers involved.
- Examining how demand and lack of awareness fuel the exploitation of migrant workers, many of whom work in a wide variety of everyday situations, including care homes, hotels, construction, the service industry and the UK's meat and poultry processing sector.

Dr Shaparov expands:

“Discussions of trafficking remain dominated by stories of exploitation, abuse and violence in the UK's sex industry, yet trafficking happens all around us. Generally, consumers do not question who made their hotel beds or who processed their joints of meat, and not many are asking why trafficking is still happening and is said to be increasing,

“Trafficking is not just the issue of badly controlled borders, or economic migrants or criminals. It should be looked at from the perspective of why people are smuggled and trafficked here – there is a demand for cheap and exploitable labour. The rising costs of energy and raw materials and the continuing economic downturn are having a direct impact on the price of consumer goods.

“This creates downward pressure on wages and an increasing demand for cheap labour that can be easily intimidated, for example by physical violence, threats of deportation or to the security of family back home, and exploited.”

Dr Sharapov’s research comes as the most recent British Social Attitudes report (December 2011) revealed that people are less likely to make personal sacrifices to protect the environment and safeguard others, for example, those willing to buy Fair Trade goods has fallen from 43 per cent in 2001 to 26 per cent now.

His research project has attracted a 200,000 Euro grant, the maximum available, from the European Commission’s FP7 Marie Curie fund.

Dr Sharapov’s work will focus on the UK (where people are trafficked to), Ukraine (where people are trafficked from) and Hungary (where people are trafficked through). He will be based at Central European University in Budapest for the duration of his two-year study, which it is hoped will lead to policy changes relating to human trafficking at national as well as international level.

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