Dear (MEP)

I am concerned about the incidence of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Irish hotels. As you know, sex trafficking is a highly lucrative crime from which organised criminal networks derive enormous profits every year in Ireland and across Europe. Hotels are a common venue for sex trade activities and, as such, their staff are well-placed to alert authorities to suspected cases of human trafficking.

The recent publication of the European Commission’s COMBAT Toolkit to raise awareness of human trafficking among those in the hospitality sector is a positive development. The Toolkit has been endorsed by the UN World Tourism Organisation and HOTREC (the European association of hoteliers) and is a valuable resource in the fight against human trafficking. The availability of this resource alone, however, is not enough. Regulations must be put in place to ensure that those employed across the hospitality and tourism sector are aware of human trafficking, and the crucial role they can play in combatting it.

As my representative in the European Parliament, I ask you to take action on this issue. Regulated training for hospitality and tourism workers, enforceable by law in the same way as other health and safety training obligations must be complied with in law, would be a simple and effective way of disrupting the criminal activities of human traffickers.

Here in Ireland, the MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts to Counter Child Prostitution and Trafficking in the Hospitality Sector) Campaign has been working with hotels across the country to raise awareness of sex trafficking. The level of awareness of this issue among hotel staff and management is often very limited, despite the fact that sex trafficking occurs in hotels around the country. This campaign has highlighted the necessity of training for all hospitality staff and the most effective way of ensuring that this kind of training becomes an industry norm is to mandate it at EU level.

As awareness of the urgency with which we must deal with human trafficking across all sectors in society comes to the fore in Ireland, particularly in light of the recent legislation criminalising the purchase of sex, this is an opportune moment to regulate anti-sex trafficking training in the hospitality and tourism sector in line with best practices in combatting this heinous crime.

Yours