

**Effective Education for People Working with Vulnerable Persons  
Conference, 25 May 2017**

**[Salutations]  
Dear Friends,**

**It is my pleasure to join you at today's event, highlighting the important work that has been done by the Cross Culture International Foundation in Malta, and your partners in the United Kingdom, Romania, and Slovenia.**

**I am informed that you have collaborated on three outputs, directly targeted at improving the wellbeing and social inclusion of vulnerable Third Country Nationals.**

**These outputs are a training manual, an online training course, and a mobile application. Each of these initiatives builds on the other, to provide an effective source of information and connection for vulnerable people from Malta, the United Kingdom, Romania, and Slovenia.**

**Through this work, you are not only effectively supporting the professionals who work with vulnerable persons, but your efforts will go to great lengths to empower the people experiencing vulnerability and precarity, themselves.**

**It is this point that I shall elaborate upon, during my remarks, and which, I believe, we need to do more to emphasise across our European Union and beyond.**

**Education is a powerful tool for empowerment and change. Access to education promotes wellbeing in the face of life's challenges, and the determination to meet changes in life situation or circumstance, with a sense of resilience and security.**

**There is no doubt that we are living in times of extraordinary changes, which are reshaping the ways we live and work. Momentous changes are affecting all life on our planet, and leading us to reassess our place in the world.**

**The changes we are experiencing now, across our nations and the entire world, offer us choices.**

**The same technology that is being used, through this project, to connect vulnerable persons with opportunities for empowerment, is also being used to foster disruptions and disconnections, and to spread messages of hatred.**

**Access to education and employment, which will strengthen communities in one part of the world, must be measured against the precarity and endangerment that is still being experienced in other places.**

**We cannot afford to forget the sense of powerlessness and despair which is leading people to undertake uncertain journeys, abandoning their homes in search of a better life for themselves and their families.**

**Real progress and real development is only possible when it improves the lives of us all. Real change is the result of choices we all make, together.**

**We can only make the right choices when we work as a team, in synergy.**

**We can only make the right choices when we are active citizens who feel included within our communities and societies, not only by making ourselves heard, but also by promoting meaningful action for change within our nations.**

**The project being launched today is an example, from civil society, of the practical initiatives we can undertake to make the right choices; choices for stronger communities, for more resilient societies, and for more peaceful nations.**

**The project being launched today shows us a range of inspiring ways to prioritise the needs of vulnerable people; to connect them with professional assistance, in order to build healthier lives; and to create the necessary pathways towards full participation within society.**

**Many people often find themselves as newcomers in societies which are, all too often, ill-equipped to effectively meet their basic needs. This is of special concern where issues of vulnerability are concerned.**

**Vulnerability is a broad phenomenon, which encompasses economic precarity but also includes health risks, both physical and mental; trauma as a result of violence, such as smuggling and trafficking; social exclusion; and all the things which create a sense of insecurity or defencelessness.**

**At their root, many instances of vulnerability point to a larger problem, namely, the imbalances of power which operate within our societies.**

**These imbalances are all the more obvious when talking about the experiences of Third Country Nationals, who have more limited access to information about their rights, and less access to assistance and support.**

**As a result of such imbalances, many vulnerable individuals are excluded from full and equitable participation in society.**

**Such a state of affairs runs contrary to the processes of democratic participation and equitable inclusion, which we all believe are the essential foundation of our societies.**

**However, if large numbers of people are being denied access to education, to employment, or to much-needed psycho-social assistance, then how can we talk about healthy and fully functional democracies?**

**When groups are excluded, then the whole of society suffers.**

**Finding innovative ways of connecting educators and professionals with people who are experiencing difficulties is the first step towards remedying the imbalances of power, and potential, being experienced by vulnerable people.**

**We must not only address the immediate material needs of highly vulnerable people, such as those who have human trafficking or smuggling, but also their long-term health care, and inclusion within our communities.**

**Thanks to the transnational synergies brought about by this project, you are sharing good practices and opportunities across borders. These partnerships shall, I am sure, strengthen the relationships between participating organisations and their members, but also across civil society and all sectors that work with Third Country Nationals.**

**In concluding, let me urge all stakeholders to make use of the tools that are being launched today; the training manual, the online platform and e-course, and the mobile application.**

**Using these tools, professionals will be better able to identify and assist vulnerable Third Country Nationals, to implement effective**

**systems of protection, and reaching out to safeguard victims from harm.**

**Thank you for the work you have done, and I augur great success to this project and its future outcomes.**