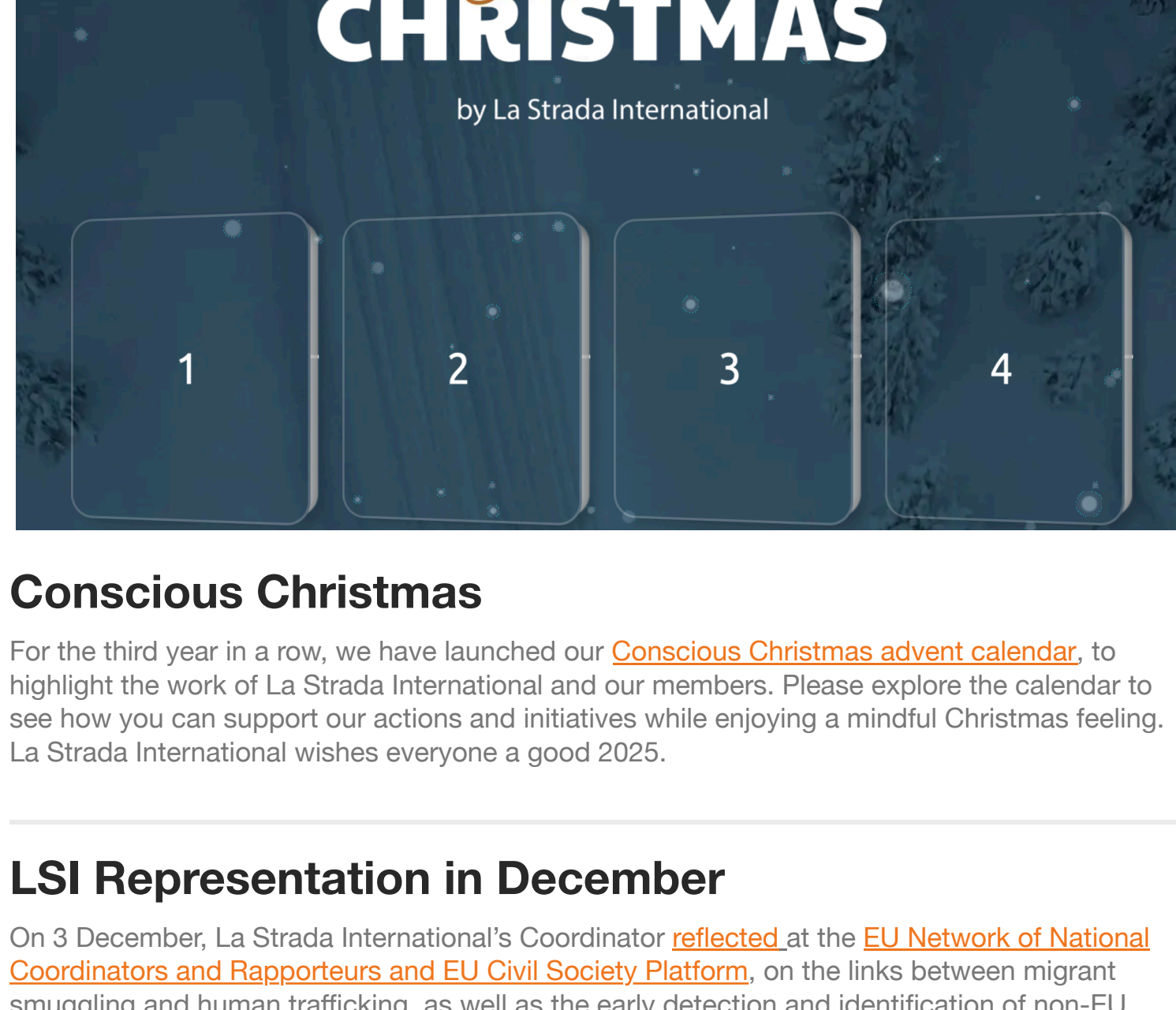


NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2024

La Strada International wishes to inform and update you on developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and activities of the Platform and member organisations. We welcome your feedback and input. Please [e-mail us](#).

LSI NEWS



Conscious Christmas

For the third year in a row, we have launched our [Conscious Christmas advent calendar](#), to highlight the work of La Strada International and our members. Please explore the calendar to see how you can support our actions and initiatives while enjoying a mindful Christmas feeling. La Strada International wishes everyone a good 2025.

LSI Representation in December

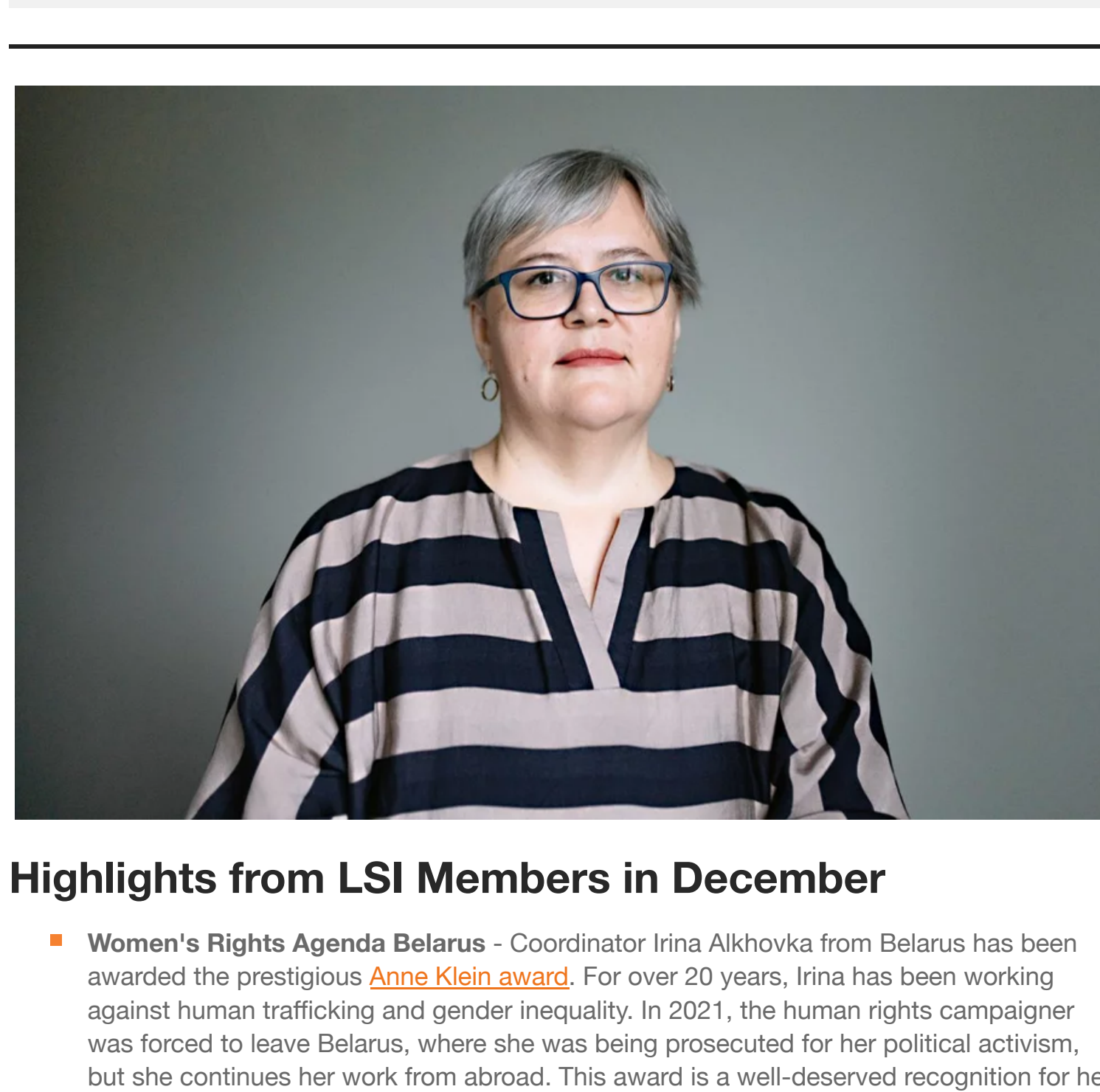
On 3 December, La Strada International's Coordinator [reflected](#) at the [EU Network of National Coordinators and Rapporteurs and EU Civil Society Platform](#), on the links between migrant smuggling and human trafficking as well as the early detection and identification of non-EU victims.

On 10 December, we co-organised a [workshop](#), at the EIGE [Gender Equality Forum](#), focusing on the new EU [VAWD Directive](#) and advancing prevention, support, and justice for victims of gender-based violence. In relation to this, we launched a [joint statement](#) on Human Rights Day. We also attended the ESVA [launch](#) of the [report Exposed from All Sides](#) and the related [policy brief](#) in the European Parliament on the role of [policing in sex workers' access to justice](#). Additionally, we joined the meeting of the [BENELUX](#) on Human Trafficking and Technology on 12 December. LSI further contributed to the kick-off meeting of the COMCRIM project on 16 and 17 December.

COMCRIM Project Kicks Off

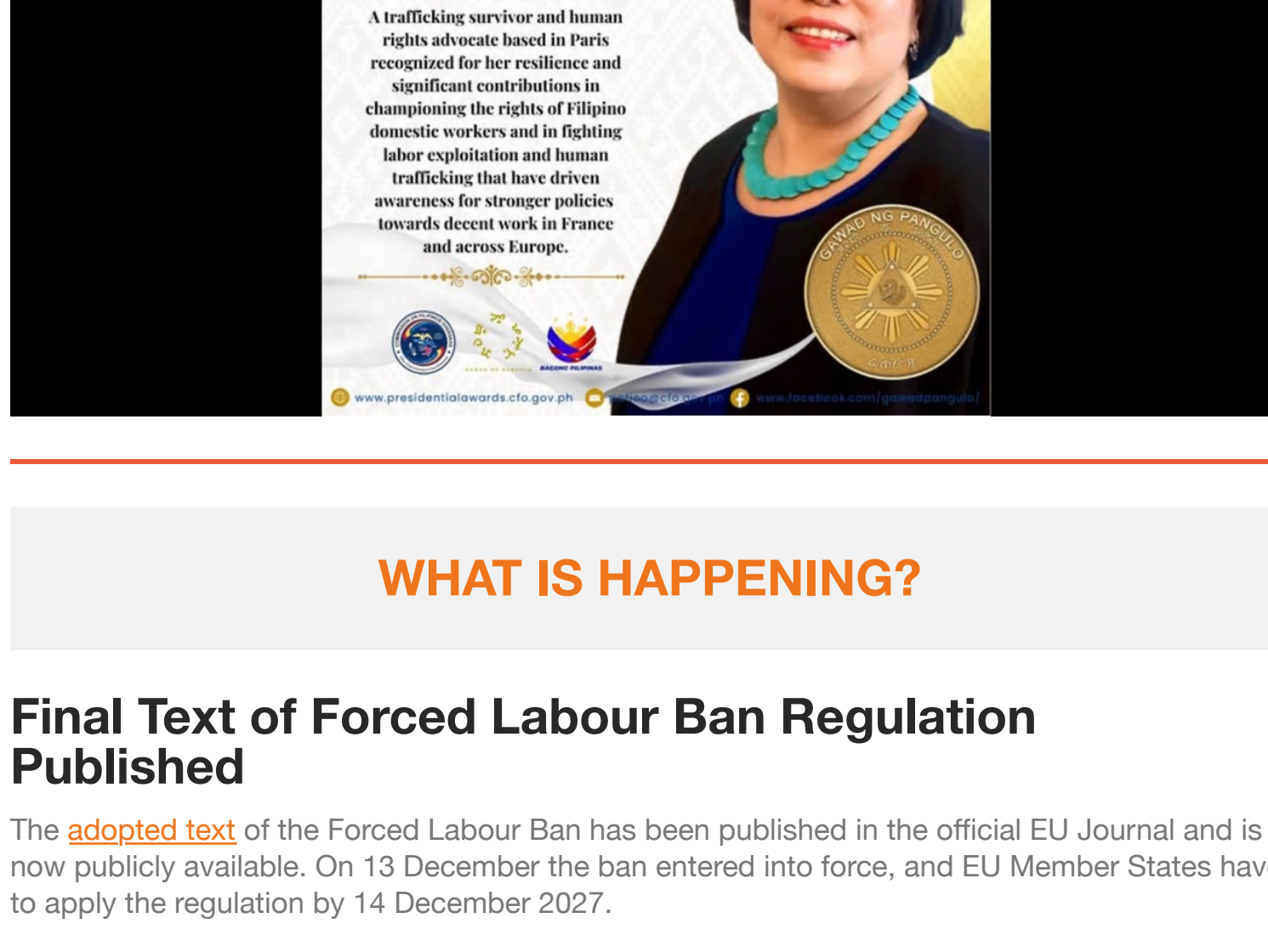
[COMCRIM](#) is an interdisciplinary Dutch research project, with a focus on crimes that undermine democracy and the rule of law, including in the areas of human trafficking, money laundering and corruption. La Strada International, jointly with our Dutch members FairWork and CoMensha, scholars, financial institutions, and several other private and public partners, form the project consortium, which is coordinated by the University of Maastricht. LSI is also part of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The project examines how such crimes can be detected in unconventional data sources, such as banking records, follow the money, and discern criminal networks, patterns, and effects. Follow the project via [LinkedIn](#).

LSI MEMBERS NEWS



Highlights from LSI Members in December

- **Women's Rights Agenda Belarus** - Coordinator Irina Alkhovka from Belarus has been awarded the prestigious [Anna Kolesa award](#). For over 20 years, Irina has been working against human trafficking and gender inequality. In 2021, the human rights campaigner was forced to leave Belarus, where she was being prosecuted for her political activism, but she continues her work from abroad. This award is a well-deserved recognition for her commitment.
- **ACCEM** published a [report](#) (only in Spanish) on the nexus between climate change and human trafficking. Through an analysis of concrete cases, the report provides relevant arguments for the debate on the causal link, which should help relevant stakeholders to improve their ability to identify and assist potential victims of trafficking who are exploited in the context of – and because of – environmental degradation.
- **La Strada Poland** believes that the only effective and appropriate step to combat and prevent human trafficking in Poland is through a comprehensive Act on Combating Human Trafficking, as currently regulations on human trafficking – especially supporting victims – are scattered across several legal acts. Since 2021, the organisation has been lobbying for such an act and has now put forward an initiative to change the legislation, which has been positively received by the relevant authorities.
- **CCEM's** long standing Advisor – Zita Cabala has received the 2024 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PFI/O) under the Banang Award category by the Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO). As a former domestic worker and victim of human trafficking in France, she was assisted by CCEM. She later worked for a national Union in charge of domestic workers rights, and established her own association in Paris. She is still supporting domestic workers and is a board member of CCEM, where she is also supporting victims of THB. Zita has also cooperated with La Strada International to reflect on 'survivors participation' and she also was a former member of ISTAC. See [here](#) the recording of award ceremony in the Philippines, where Zita spoke. See more [here](#).



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Final Text of Forced Labour Ban Regulation Published

The [adopted text](#) of the Forced Labour Ban has been published in the official EU Journal and is now publicly available. On 13 December the ban entered into force, and EU Member States have to apply the regulation by 14 December 2027.

In December 2024, a BBC investigation alleged that several own brand 'Italian' tomato purees sold in UK supermarkets (including Asda, Tesco, Morrisons and Waitrose) appear to contain tomatoes grown and picked in China. See the [blog](#) by our member Anti-Slavery International and their [explanation](#) of the ban.

Jointly with them, Human Rights Watch and others, we are working on collecting practices and information for guidelines on due diligence and remedies for workers to ensure that EU Member States adequately transpose the ban in the coming years.

EU Members States Reach Agreement on Criminal Law on Migrant Smuggling

On 13 December, the EU Council [agreed](#) on its position on an EU law on preventing and countering migrant smuggling. The agreed text foresees that 'intentionally assisting a third-country national to enter, transit across or stay within the territory of any of the European Union member states, in exchange for financial or material benefit constitutes a criminal offence'. While there is reference to a humanitarian clause, to prevent the criminalising of people who are aiding close family members of irregular migrants or assuring basic human needs, it remains to be seen how EU Member States apply this. Read more on [our website](#) or in Statewatch's [critical assessment](#).

In the same week, Germany and the UK have [signed a joint action plan](#) to address human smuggling jointly, focusing on prosecuting smuggling syndicates involved in small-boat crossings to the UK.

EC Position on Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

On 13 December, the European Council [agreed](#) its position on a EU proposal criminalising all forms of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including those enabled or facilitated by online tools. The proposed law also introduces higher penalties and contains more specific requirements for prevention and assistance to victims. The EU Parliament has not yet established its position.

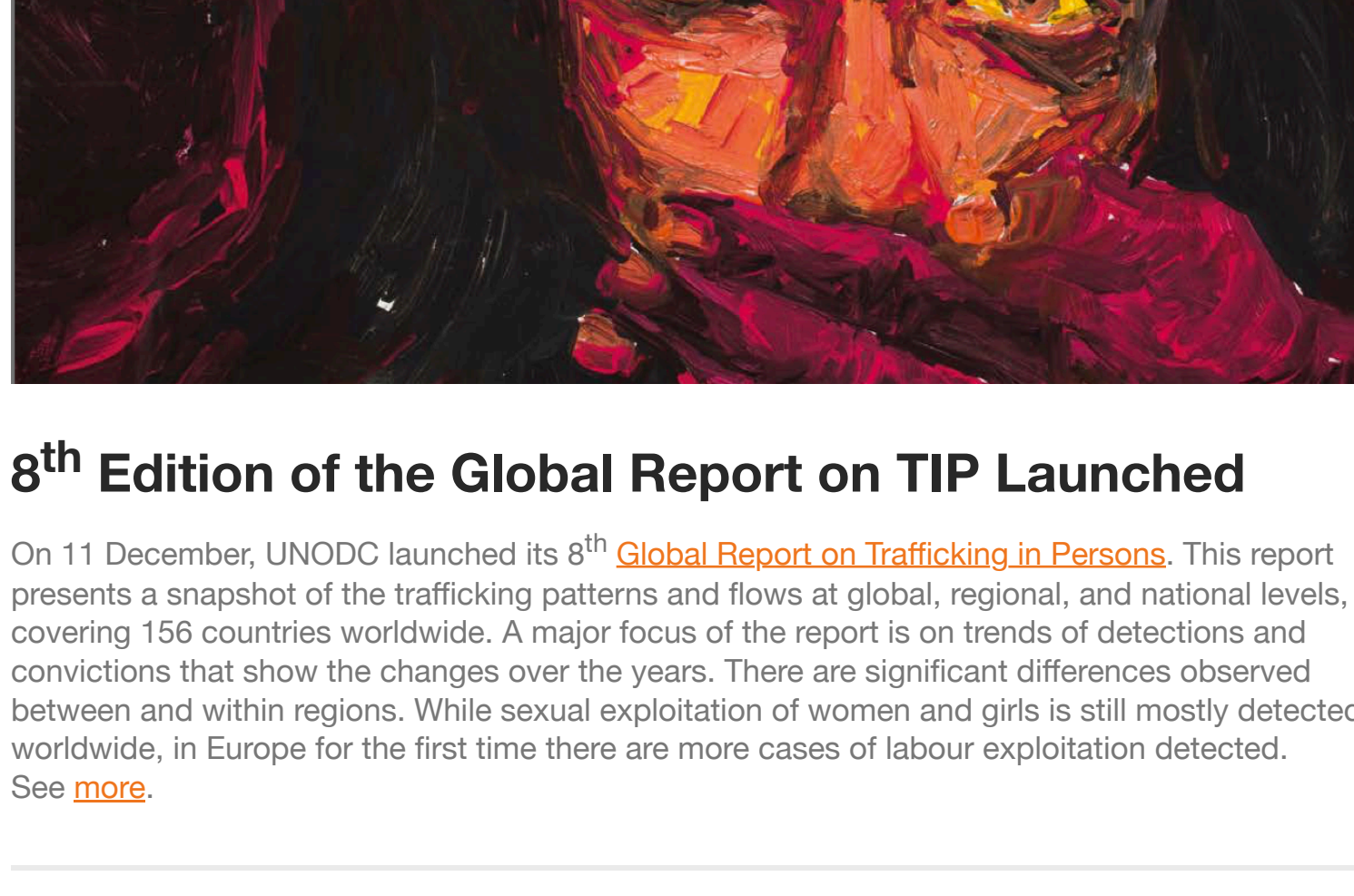
Apple Sued Over Online Child Sexual Abuse Materials

Victims of child sexual abuse [sued Apple for \\$1.2 billion](#), alleging that the company abandoned a 2021 system developed to detect abusive material and allegedly failed to prevent the proliferation of child sexual abuse material on iCloud and other platforms. A similar class action lawsuit was filed against the Tech giant in August, alleging violations of sex trafficking and consumer protection laws. See [more](#).

GRETA 4th Round Monitoring Visits and Support to Malta

In December, the Council of Europe's Monitoring body, GRETA carried out its fourth evaluation visits to [Montenegro](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and to [Malta](#). In the UK, also members of La Strada International were met. These evaluation visits focussed on vulnerabilities to human trafficking and measures taken by States Parties to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders.

WHAT IS NEW?



8th Edition of the Global Report on TIP Launched

On 11 December, UNODC launched its 8th [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#). This report presents a snapshot of the trafficking patterns and flows at global, regional, and national levels, covering 156 countries worldwide. A major focus of the report is on trends of detections and convictions that show the changes over the years. There are significant differences observed between and within regions. While sexual exploitation of women and girls is still mostly detected worldwide, in Europe for the first time there are more cases of labour exploitation detected. See [more](#).

FRA Studies for Labour Inspectorates and on Victim Rights

The European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has published the first part of an EU law training manual, ["How workplace inspectors can protect third-country workers' rights"](#). Part 2 and 3 of the manual – which includes exercises for the different training modules and guidance for trainers on how to best deliver the training – will soon be available on the FRA website, next to Power Point presentations to support the training sessions. The manual might still be translated into other languages. Through PICUM, LSI and members have provided input for this manual.

The FRA also published a paper titled ["Stepping up the response to victims of crime: FRA's findings on challenges and solutions"](#). This paper outlines key challenges and solutions when it comes to promoting and protecting victims' rights across the EU, drawing on FRA research conducted over the past decade.

ECA Report on Impact of Third-Country on Integration of AMIF-Funding Nationals

The [European Court of Auditors \(ECA\)](#) published a report on [Integration of third-country nationals in the EU – Relevant support from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund but its impact could not yet be demonstrated](#).

While the auditors recognise that measures financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) were demonstrated for supporting integration, they criticise the risk that the administrative complexity of the supported programmes may limit their added value and the fact that the programmes are not always tailored to needs. Furthermore, the auditors found that the information provided by Member States about the effects achieved was unreliable. Click [here](#) to consult the special report and the press release, available in 24 EU languages.

Beyond Trafficking and Slavery Articles on How Migration Became a Criminal Offence

Over the last few decades, irregular migration; crossing borders without permission has become a criminal offence in many countries. Among those prosecuted are people fleeing war and escaping persecution and seeking international protection. These migrants and refugees, as well as solidarity actors, such as rescue workers, are also increasingly at risk of being labelled as 'smugglers' for the purposes of prosecution. In [Beyond Trafficking and Slavery's](#) new series on [how migration became a criminal offence](#), 10 authors do a deep dive into the criminalisation of migration and solidarity in the UK and Europe. Some of the contributors to the series have been [accused of espionage](#), people smuggling, and [facilitating 'illegal entry arrival'](#).

UN Report on the Global Compact on Migration Calls for Rights-Based Solutions

The latest biennial [report](#) by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the [Global Compact on Migration](#) (GCM), reinforces the critical need for rights-based, gender-transformative labour migration policies. Despite the advances, the report highlights urgent issues, including the perilous nature of migration, rising xenophobia and discrimination against migrants, inadequate responses to climate-driven migration, and insufficient resources. To address these challenges, the report introduces a [voluntary framework](#) of indicators to help Member States evaluate GCM implementation, align migration policies with the 2030 Agenda, and improve data collection, as well as [key recommendations](#) on providing humanitarian assistance to migrants.

New Reports by Dutch National Rapporteur and Belvised Myria

The revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive now requires EU Member States to establish cooperation arrangements or protocols with the asylum authorities to ensure that assistance, support, and protection are provided to victims, next to ensuring complementarity and coordination between anti-trafficking authorities and asylum services. In the Netherlands, organisations within the asylum chain have already the task of identifying victims of human trafficking among asylum applicants.

Reason for the Dutch Rapporteur, Conny Rijken, to examine how the identification of human trafficking in the asylum chain and reception works. The [research report](#) explores where signals are registered, which signals are noticed, and which bottlenecks professionals involved experience.

On 10 December, the Dutch Rapporteur also published her [Monitor Human Trafficking 2019 – 2023](#). Both reports are currently only available in Dutch, but English summaries will be soon released. On 18 December, Myria, the Belgian Federal Migration Centre, launched its [2023 annual report](#) on trafficking and smuggling of human beings.

Ethics in Modern Slavery Research

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) released their new [report Ethics in Modern Slavery Research: Principles and Practice](#), offering practical guidance to researchers and organisations on how to ethically engage with modern slavery and human trafficking research. The report outlines key ethical principles, including respecting autonomy, minimizing harm, and ensuring justice for those involved. It also highlights the importance of meaningful collaboration with survivors and affected communities. It addresses challenges and opportunities in governance, co-production, trauma-informed approaches, and ethical legacies, providing actionable steps for improving research practices.

Call for Submissions: Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

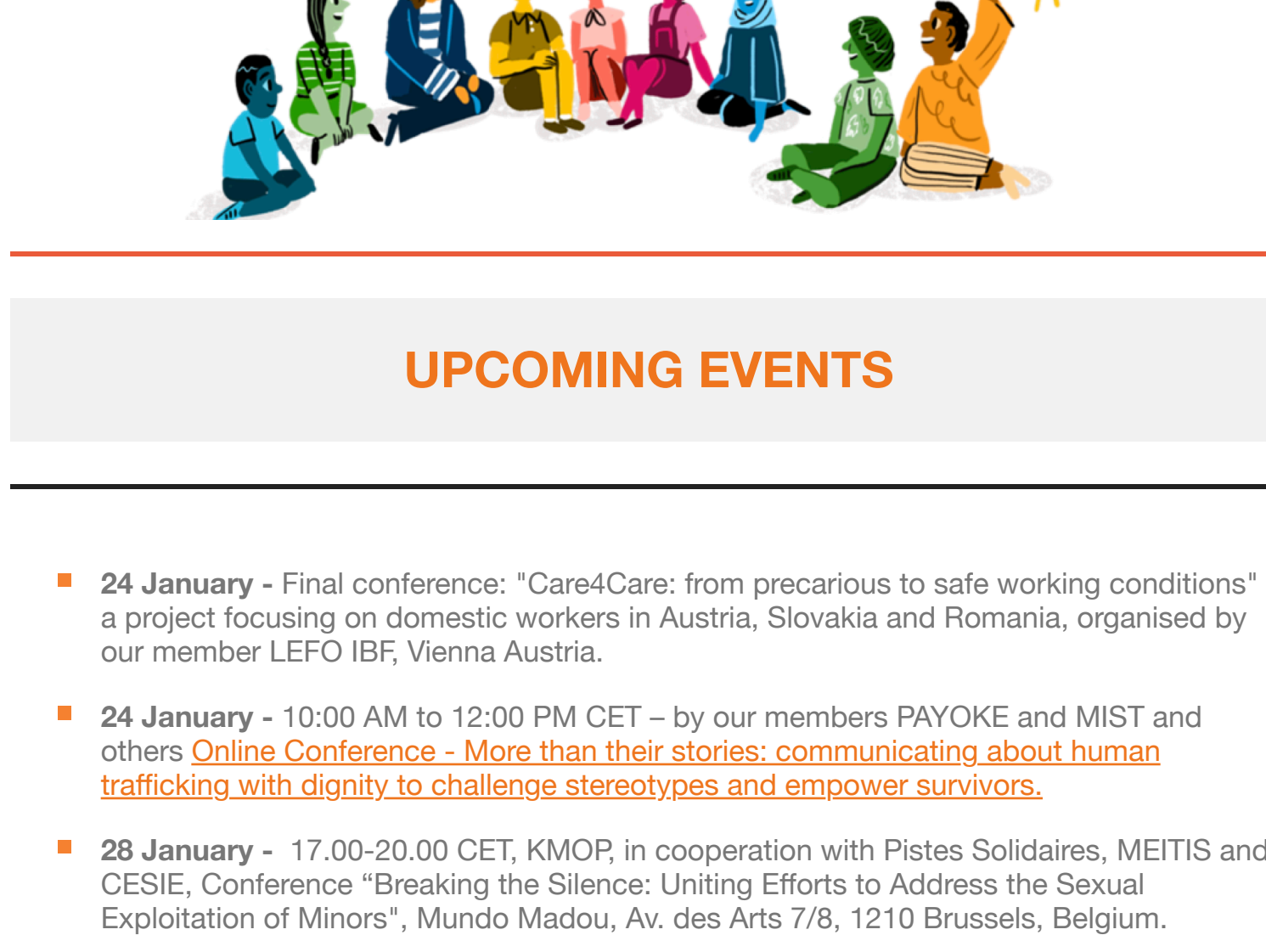
The [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#) invites individuals, groups and organisations to submit contributions on violations of international human rights law humanitarian law, and other crimes linked to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Submissions may address specific incidents or broader patterns of violations, including attacks on civilians, enforced disappearances, gender-based violence, and the forced deportation of Ukrainian children and have to be submitted by 31 January 2025. For more details, visit the [official page](#).

Russia's Coerced Fostering and Adoption of Ukrainian Children

President Vladimir Putin, of Russia and senior Kremlin officials "intentionally and directly" [authorized a program of coerced fostering and adoption of Ukrainian children](#), a [Yale University report](#) found. The report provides strong new evidence for a war crimes case against Putin and other officials, the researchers said.

Summary Report on What Needs to be Done to End Violence Against Children

Between July and October 2024, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children consulted with approximately 1700 children from over 110 countries to gather their perspectives on what children expect their governments to do in the next six years to end all forms of violence against children. See the [summary report](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **24 January** - Final conference: "Care4Care: from precarious to safe working conditions" – a project focusing on domestic workers in Austria, Slovakia and Romania, organised by our member LEFO IBF, Vienna, Austria.
- **24 January** - 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM CET – by our members PAYOKIA and MST and others [Online Conference - More than their stories: communicating about human trafficking with dignity to challenge stereotypes and empower survivors](#).
- **28 January** - 17:00-20:00 CET, KMOR, in cooperation with Pistes Solidaires, METIS and CESIE. Conference "Breaking the Silence: Uniting Efforts to Address the Sexual Exploitation of Minors", Mundo Madou, Av. des Arts 718, 1210 Brussels, Belgium.
- **29 January** - CBSB Webinar: Final findings from 2KNOW research on domestic and online sexual violence against children - [Read more](#).
- **4 February** - 2KNOW Project Final Conference at the European Parliament in Brussels (or online) hosted by [Protect Children](#) on ending online crimes of sexual violence against children. [Read more](#).

Happy Holidays!

La Strada International thanks everyone for the good cooperation in 2024 and wishes everyone a peaceful and exploitation-free 2025.

Support us

We are fully dependent on donations and subsidies. By making a donation, you will help us continue our monitoring and advocacy work to ensure accountability for the effective implementation of European anti-trafficking policies and the support to trafficked persons.

