

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 in input. Please see [contact](#)

LSI NEWS

North Macedonian Study Visit on Compensation to the Netherlands

From 13-14 May, La Strada International co-organised with the Council of Europe a study visit for the **North Macedonian State Commission on Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes** to the Netherlands. La Strada International contributed to the book *Chapter 13 - A critical look at the criminalization of the "Use of Services" of trafficked persons*.

Book Launch: Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Around the World

On 13 May 2025, the book **Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Around the World** was launched. La Strada International contributed to the book. Chapter 13 - A critical look at the criminalization of the "Use of Services" of trafficked persons.

2025 Europe Regional Freedom From Slavery Forum

From 5-7 May, the **Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum** took place in Brussels. Stakeholders shared promising approaches to tackle forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour, and identified priorities for effective coordination, collaboration, mobilization, and ongoing corporate activity engagement by European States in partnership with La Strada International, Anti-Slavery International, ASTRA, and the governments of Belgium, France, and the UK.

Webinar | Where is the funding?

La Strada International, in collaboration with **Edinburgh Napier University**, hosted a webinar on 19 May examining the **Impact of Funding Cuts on Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Europe**, with speakers Annie Hillier, Isotta Rossini, Olga Di Pietro, Julia Machner, and Marija Anđelković sharing experiences, challenges, and strategies in navigating an increasingly difficult funding landscape.

Where has LSI been?

This month, La Strada International further participated in the final conference of the project **PROTECT Action Against Exploitation** on 8 May; the 20th anniversary event of the Dutch National Rapporteur on 15 May; **PICUM General Assembly 2025** on 15-16 May; a Benelux event on the T18 Directive revision on 23 May; and the **launch event** of the report on the nexus between CRISV and human trafficking for sexual exploitation on 26 May.

Co-signing of Statements of Concern

LSI endorsed an **open letter** to the Human Rights Council (HRC) urging Member States to mandate a country-wide extensive study that translates existing research and evidence into practical recommendations to providing States and institutions with tools, policies, and guidance to better integrate human rights into anti-corruption efforts.

LSI also co-signed a letter initiated by Transparency International and TI EU, who have been **strongly advocating** for the EU Council and Parliament to speed up and strengthen the robust provisions adopted by the European Parliament in the proposed directive.

Further, with over 300 national and international CSOs, La Strada International co-signed an **open letter** to the EU Commission to express concerns about the **"Transparency of Public Life"** bill, which enables the Hungarian government to target, defend and dissolve any organisation it designates as a threat to Hungarian sovereignty.

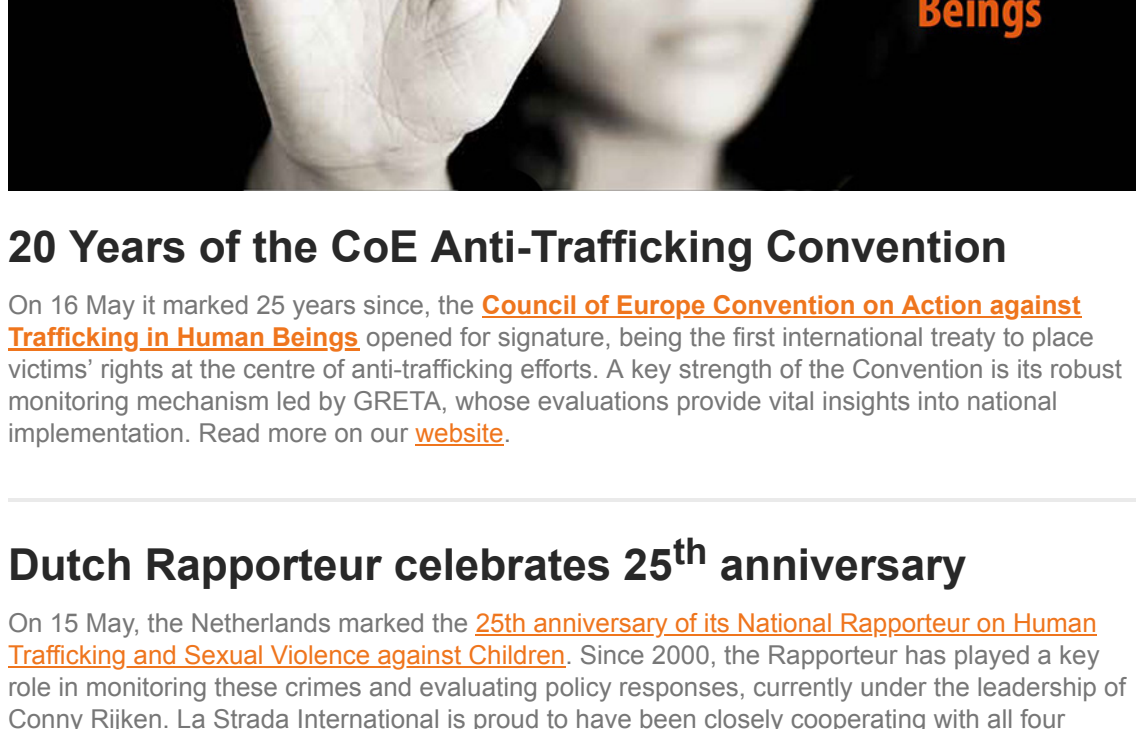
Finally, LSI signed, together with over 80 CSOs, a **joint letter** to Commissioner McGrath raising urgent concerns about the Security Decree and wider shrinking civic space and rule of law in Italy.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members

- **FairWork** will celebrate its 25th anniversary on 5 June in Amsterdam. See [FairWork](#).
- **ASTRA**, in cooperation with the Belgrade Airport, raises visibility for ASTRA's Campaign **"Let's all be counter"**, which promotes the SOS hotline number 11600 for missing children, around the International Day of Missing Children on May 25. In one year, this number was called 641 times and 343 times legal, medical and psycho-social support services were provided for children and parents.
- **ACCSEM** has been **highlighted** by GAATW exploring the organisation's foundation and its current line of anti-trafficking action across Spain, and current challenges.
- **MRCI's** team is **running** the VHI Women's Mini Marathon on 1 June to raise funds for MRCI's work on justice, equality and empowerment for migrant workers in Ireland. Last year alone, MRCI supported 3,393 migrant workers and their families including 66 people facing severe labour exploitation and 9 suspected cases of trafficking. You can still **donate**.
- **ASB** published **new factbooks** for businesses on how to understand state-imposed forced labour under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and provides recommendations to businesses on how to address state-imposed forced labour in line with international standards on responsible business conduct.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?



20 Years of the CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention

On 16 May it marked 25 years since, the **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** opened for signature, being the first international treaty to place victims' rights at the centre of anti-trafficking efforts. A key strength of the Convention is its robust monitoring mechanism led by GRETA, whose evaluations provide vital insights into national implementation. Read more on our [website](#).

Dutch Rapporteur celebrates 25th anniversary

On 15 May, the Netherlands marked the **25th anniversary of its National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence against Children**. Since 2000, the Rapporteur has played a key role in monitoring these crimes and evaluating policy responses, currently under the leadership of Conny Rijken. La Strada International is proud to have been closely cooperating with all four National Rapporteurs and looks forward to continuing the cooperation, monitor, and report on efforts to combat human trafficking and protect the (human) rights of vulnerable individuals.

EU Developments: Tightening Migration Rules & Promoting Returns

Recently, on 20 May, LIBE voted in favour on its draft report for a **new European Regulation**, as part of the EU Facilitator's Package, which is set to increase the criminalisation and surveillance of human rights defenders and people on the move. Earlier, more than 120 organisations signed a **statement** urging the EU to reject the European Council proposal in its entirety. Read also the [PROTECT/Survey analysis](#) for more details.

The European People's Party also adopted a **position paper** supporting stricter migration measures, including asylum suspensions, limits on family reunification, and expanded deportation powers. These policies might heighten the vulnerability of third-country nationals, limit their access to rights, and increase the risk of human trafficking.

Furthermore, on 19 May, the EU Council and Parliament agreed to gradually introduce the **Entry/Exit digital border management system** (EES) over a period of six months. This system will record non-EU nationals' data and ensure EU Member States real-time access to their personal data affecting the governance of migration such as international trade, policy tools for the protection of the Schengen area. In addition, the in March proposed **Return Regulation**, to replace the 2008 Return Directive, now under **Cooperation review**, paves the way for the establishment of 'return hubs' in third countries, as the European Commission proposed to **assist the 'safe third country'**, removing the requirement for a connection between the applicant and the safe third country.

EU Labour Rights Advancements

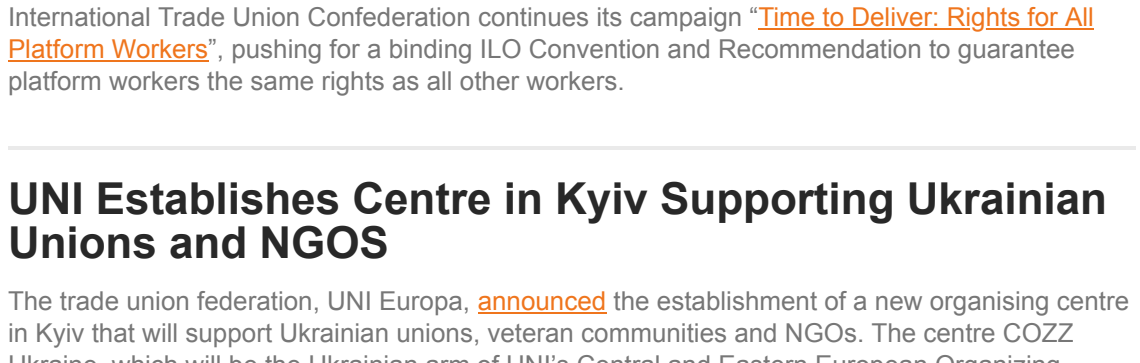
Dialogues on the **EU Talent Pool** are currently **ongoing**, alongside a pilot project by EURES that supports people fleeing the war in Ukraine in finding jobs within the EU.

The European Parliament's Employment Committee (EMPL) **voted in favour** of a significant reform to EU public procurement rules, aiming to **link public procurement more directly to compliance with collective bargaining and respect for workers' rights**. This reform is a key opportunity to ensure the possibility of excluding companies that do not respect workers' rights and allowing for simpler procedures for public entities that want to promote quality jobs through public procurement.

The Commission is also developing a **Quality Jobs Roadmap**, which is expected by the end of 2025. While part of EU's strategy to promote European competitiveness, it aims to promote decent working conditions, collective bargaining and much more. LSI hopes it includes provisions to guide EUMs in better integrating migrant workers and ensuring fair working conditions for all.

Sweden Expands Criminalisation of Sex Work

On May 20, the Swedish parliament voted for expansion of its criminalisation of sex work. The proposed law seeks to include the purchase of sexual acts performed remotely, such as webcamming and erotic modelling, under criminal liability. The European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (ESWA) published an **Open Letter** and campaign, which was signed by more than 1350 organisations, experts and other individuals, including LSI. See [campaign video](#). Further, ESWA released a **press release** encouraging international events to question this legal reform and its wider consequences.



France: Justice and Labour Rights

The **French Supreme upholds Vinci Constructions Grand Projects** (VCGP) indictment over the use of forced labour among migrant workers on its Qatar construction. The case, initiated by Laura Bourgeois (Sherpa) in 2014, includes evidence of working under extreme heat with insufficient water and shade, passport confiscation, high recruitment fees, inefficient access to showers in accommodations, and lack of adequate food.

In France, undocumented workers who built the Adidas Arena for the Olympic Games are still without **legal status** despite deal with Olympic contractors. Following protests due to poor working conditions, workers and their union continue to fight for their promised right to regularisation.

ITUC Calls for Global Rules to Protect Platform Workers

International Trade Union Confederation continues its campaign **"Time to Deliver: Rights for All Platform Workers"**, pushing for a binding ILO Convention and Recommendation to guarantee platform workers the same rights as all other workers.

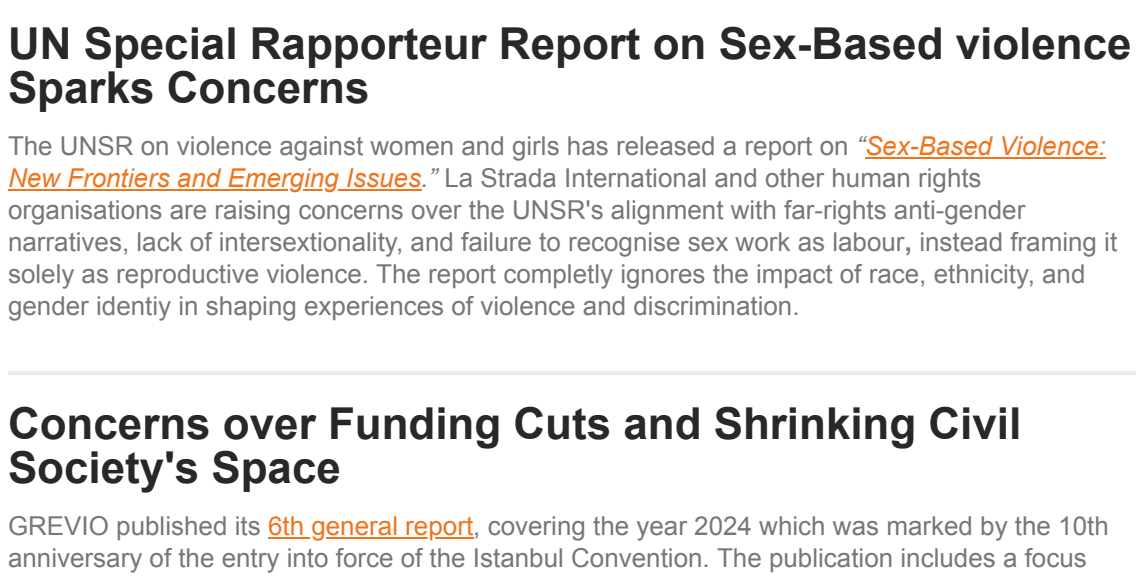
UNI Establishes Centre in Kyiv Supporting Ukrainian Unions and NGOS

The trade union federation, UNI Europe, **announced** the establishment of a new organising centre in Kyiv that will support Ukrainian unions, veteran communities and NGOs. The centre COZZ Ukraine, which will be the Ukrainian arm of UNI's Central and Eastern European Organizing Centre's (COEZ), has grown out of years-long support for that country's workers and refugees.

Open Letter: Risks of Reopening the GDPR

CSOs have co-signed an **open letter** urging the European Commission to reject any attempts to reopen the EU Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Reopening GDPR could undermine some of its core principles, such as data minimisation and purpose limitation. These safeguards are a fundamental part of our advocacy against policies that could impact migrants' rights, leading to increased data sharing and reporting obligations.

WHAT IS NEW?



Conflict-Related Sexual Violence & Trafficking

On 26 May, a Conference was held in Brussels to present the report **"Understanding the nexus between conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation"**, commissioned by **SRSG Patricia Veloso's Team of Experts on the Rule of Law**. The report, authored by LSI's board member Eefje de Volder and Anne-Marie de Brouwer of IMPACT, offers a comparative analysis of 20 national frameworks, with a special focus on Ukraine, examining diverse legal, geographical, and cultural contexts. It identifies key challenges such as legal fragmentation, lack of protocols, training, and inter-agency cooperation. The authors propose comprehensive strategies, including strengthening capacity building, implementing survivor-centred policies, enhancing victim support systems, improving data collection and monitoring.

UN Special Rapporteur Report on Human Trafficking

The UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children published its report on **Migrant domestic workers and trafficking in persons: prevention, rights protection and access to justice**. The UNSR examines the limits of current legal and policy frameworks that contribute to risks of trafficking in persons for migrant domestic workers, including in the enforcement of labour laws, limited access to safe and regular migration, tied visas, and a lack of access to justice and effective remedies. Special attention is paid to the intersections of gender, race, and migration status in the context of domestic work. A more detailed analysis is available on our [website](#).

UN Special Rapporteur Report on Sex-Based Violence Sparks Concerns

The UNSR on violence against women and girls has released a report on **"Sex-Based Violence: New Frontiers and Emerging Issues"**. La Strada International and other human rights organisations are raising concerns over the UNSR's alignment with Berights anti-gender narratives, lack of intersectionality, and failure to recognise sex work as labour, instead framing it solely as reproductive violence. The report completely ignores the impact of race, ethnicity, and gender identity in shaping experiences of violence and discrimination.

Concerns over Funding Cuts and Shrinking Civil Society's Space

GREVIO published its **6th general report**, covering the year 2024 which was marked by the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention. The publication includes a focus section highlighting the actions of women's rights NGOs addressing violence against women and drawing attention to "a shrinking space for women's rights defenders".

A recent UN Women's new report, **"Aa Breaking Point"**, reveals that half of women's human rights organizations aiding women are under crisis and may shut down within 6 months due to global aid cuts. Despite being essential frontline responders, 90% of surveyed CSOs are under-resourced.

A **new article** from the European Democracy Hub, explores the impact of recent US aid cuts on CSOs and how European actors can help bridge the gap. Looking forward, the authors offer strategic recommendations for European actors to support and reinforce their impact.

GAATW's Special Issue on Family and Community in Trafficking

The new **GAATW Anti-Trafficking Review Special Issue** provide a contextualised understanding of the role of family and community at each stage of the migration and human trafficking (THB) process. Overall, the issue demonstrates that families and communities play an important role in migration and THB. In many cases, the crime would not occur without the involvement of families, yet families are key to helping victims leave and recover from situations of exploitation. Hence families' needs and concerns must be part of a comprehensive human rights approach.

EU-SOCTA 2025: The Changing DNA of Organised Crime

Europol released its **EU-SOCTA 2025** report, which explores key vulnerabilities exploited by human traffickers, the latest tactics, and the role of criminal networks in perpetuating exploitation. The report raises concerns for the increasing involvement of young perpetrators in violent crimes, including child sexual abuse and THB. See also Europol Podcast Episodes on [The changing DNA of crime](#) and [Low criminal networks destabilise the EU](#).

Victims' Rights Across the EU

Victim Support Europe (VSE) has published the Benelux Final Report, assessing **how victims' rights are upheld across 23 EU countries**. The report highlights that victims often face barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights, stemming from systemic shortcomings and a lack of coordination by relevant authorities. The report highlights key improvements since 2016, as well as areas where urgent action is still needed, including for victims of human trafficking.

Gaps in UK's National Referral Mechanism

The report **"Refusal to Consent: Factors influencing the uptake of modern Slavery support under the National Referral Mechanism"** (NRM) was launched this May during a **webinar** exploring why many potential victims of THB in the UK decline support through the NRM and practical ways to strengthen victim engagement and access to support. In 2024 alone, nearly 6,000 human trafficking victims **refused UK government support** over fears of deportation. Strengthening trust and access to the NRM is essential to ensure effective protection.

Roadmap on Labour Exploitation in Sweden

The Council of the Baltic Sea States presents a new publication of the CAPE project, outlining a **roadmap for Sweden** to improve Sweden's approach to addressing human trafficking for labour exploitation. Importantly, among other recommendations, the paper highlights the importance of victim assistance, National Referral Mechanisms, access to rights and remedies, as well as prevention strategies.

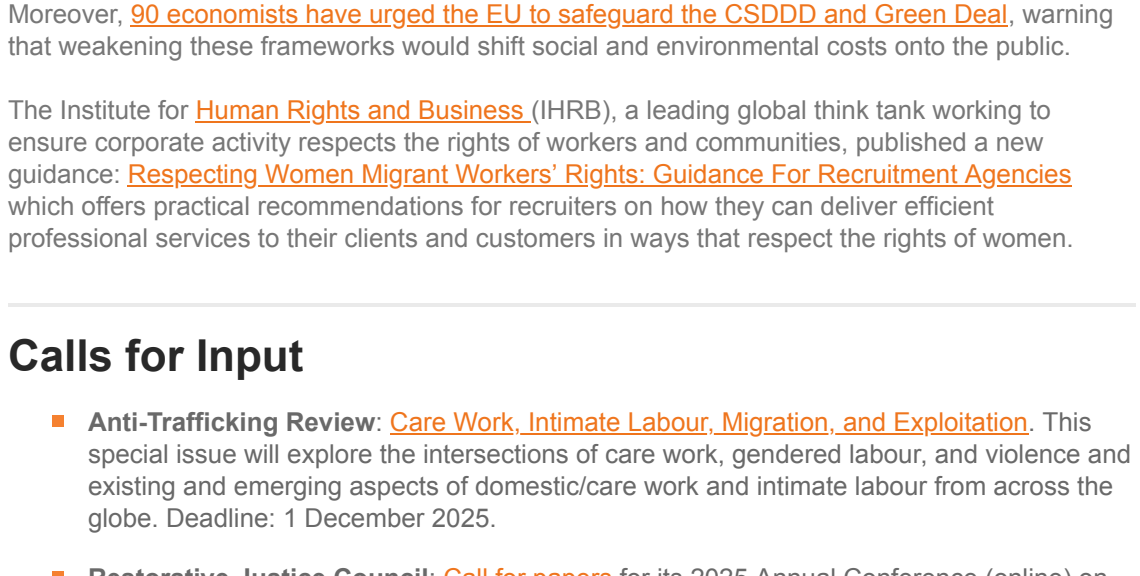
Labour Abuses in Russian Military Drones Programme

A new **programme** from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime has found evidence of misleading recruitment and abusive working conditions within Asbaba Start, a recruitment program linked to Russia's Abkhaz Special Economic Zone, where military drones are produced. The program reportedly relies on young migrant workers' work, many of whom misled into joining what they believed to be a work-study programme. The report calls for further investigation and greater prevention and protection measures.

ILO Report on Temporary Labour Migration

On 15 May, ILO launched the book **"Temporary labour migration: Towards social justice?"** which explores the barriers to social justice arising from the design of temporary labour migration programmes and suggests ways to overcome these obstacles. Authors, including Fabiola Merens (who previously collaborated with LSI on the DemandAT project 2014-17), discussed issues such as shifting paradigms on temporary labour migration, new mobility programmes and areas that affect the governance of migration such as international trade, policy tools for the protection of migrant workers, and historical lessons to help improve migration policies. You can still [watch the launch event online](#).

Also in May, ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) launched a **new report**, **"Through the Approaches Taken by Workers' Organizations to Drive Formalization"**, spotlighting the critical role of trade unions in tackling informality in the world.



IOM Report: 2024 - The Deadliest Year for Migrants and Countries in Crisis

A new report by **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, **"Migrant Migrants and Countries in Crisis"**, reveals that more than 52,000 people have died globally since 2014 while fleeing crisis-affected countries, representing 72% of all recorded migrant deaths. The year 2024 marks the highest death toll on record, and the deadliest year for migrants in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Central America, with over 8,700 deaths for the second consecutive year. The report underlines that migrating are not taking dangerous journeys out of choice, but out of desperation, significantly increasing the risk of human trafficking.

Migration in Europe: From Migration Paths to Disinformation

A **new study** led by Professor Martin Ruhs shows that, across Europe, **policies restrict policies that give migrants migrants pathways to legal status**, under specific conditions, such as a minimum length of stay and a clean criminal record - over those that do not. However, public support regarding access to rights, such as health care or subsidies, varied.

Get to know the **Directory of Migration Research Institutions**, a comprehensive database that maps migration research centres across the globe – it has been updated!

The **European Commission** published a study examining how **disinformation narratives on migration** fuel fear and anti-migration sentiments across Europe by spreading false stories. The study finds that dominant narratives portray migrants as a threat to Europeans' health, wealth, and identity. It also analyses the main actors and disinformation, revealing that much of the disinformation is homegrown and that not only foreign state or non-state actors, but also cross-border networks, are responsible for perpetuating these harmful narratives.

UK: Border Security Contracts & Work Ban Impacts on Female Asylum Seekers

A new **investigation** has uncovered 217 government contracts and over £3.5bn in public money paid to private companies connected to border management and asylum seekers in the past 7 years. This includes contracts related to the regulation of people moving across the English Channel in small boats and for the provision of indirect services. See [scrubsheet](#).

A **report** by Women for Refugee Women found that the UK's work ban for asylum seekers is forcing 10% of female asylum seekers into sex work, trapping many in abusive relationships due to extreme poverty. Based on interviews with 117 women, it highlights how the ban leaves women unable to afford essentials, increases vulnerability to exploitation, and harms their mental health.

Omnibus Proposal: OHCHR, Businesses and Economists Demand EU Sustainability Rules

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a **Commentary on the Omnibus Proposal**, highlighting the risk of undermining risk-based human rights due diligence, the flawed approach to simplification, and the adverse impacts of shifting responsibility.

A **study** by the #WeAreEurope collective, surveying over 1,000 companies in 26 countries, found that 61% of companies the CSRD and 61% oppose the Omnibus reform. Contrary to lobbying claims, most companies see the CSRD as beneficial, with 88% viewing it as aligned with Europe's values. Moreover, **90 economists have urged the EU to abandon the CSDDD and Green Deal**, warning that weakening these frameworks would harm social and environmental standards to the public.

The Institute for **Human Rights and Business** (IHBR), a leading global think tank working to ensure corporate activity respects the rights of workers and communities, published a new guidance: **Resourcing Women Migrant Workers' Rights: Guidance For Recruitment Agencies** which offers practical recommendations for recruiters on how they can deliver efficient professional services to their clients and workers in ways that respect the rights of women.

Calls for Input

- **Anti-Trafficking Review**: **Care Work, Intimate Labour, Migration, and Exploitation**. This special issue will explore the intersections of care work, gendered labour, and violence and existing and emerging aspects of domestic care work and intimate labour from across the globe. Deadline: 1 December 2025.
- **Restorative Justice Council**: **Call for papers** for its 2025 Annual Conference (online) on 17-18 November, inviting contributions on how restorative justice can drive systemic change. This event will bring together a diverse range of participants to explore how restorative justice and practice can support meaningful change across systems and relationships. For more information contact: [enquire@restorativejustice.org.uk](#). Deadline: 27 June 2025.
- **EU** Contribute to the **#WeAreEurope's Civil Society** consultation of the 2025 mid-term review of the **Strategy** by strengthening the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and highlight remaining gaps and challenges, next to suggesting new measures to further strengthen the Charter's application between 2026 and 2030. Deadline: 30 of May.
- **Alliance 8.7**: Members of the Alliance are invited to **complete this form** for a mapping exercise by the Alliance's Action Group on Supply Chains to provide an overview of efforts, research, policy and advocacy support, capacity building and tools, and actions to accelerate the progress towards ending child labour, forced labour, and THB in supply chains.
- **UN Constructive Dialogues**: **Register now!** UN Constructive Dialogues on human trafficking and smuggling that will be both held in October. Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons: 8 October 2025. Constructive Dialogue on the Smuggling of Migrants: 13 October 2025. Deadline: 16 June.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **3 June** - DATA MISSING Final (Hybrid) Conference, by Missing Children Europe in Brussels. [In-person registration](#) & [online registration](#).
- **3 June** - The International Centre for Migration Policy Development is organising a webinar on exit strategies for the EU's temporary protection regime beyond March 2026. [Register here](#).
- **6 June** - PICUM's online event: The EU facilitation directive - criminalizing migrants, humanitarian aid and human rights defenders? Please register [here](#).
- **10 - 11 June** - Council of Europe High Level Conference Empowering Change: Technology and AI in the Fight Against Human Trafficking, Malta.
- **2 - 13 June** - 113th **International Labour Conference**, Geneva, Switzerland. Decent work in the Platform Economy is one of the topics to be discussed.
- **11 June** - Conference EMN Netherlands **Labour migration towards the Netherlands and the EU: solution, challenge, or necessity?**, The Hague.
- **12 - 13 June** - **European Daytime Cleaning Alliance Conference**, Brussels, Belgium.
- **17 June** - (Hybrid) Workshop: From Research to Policy - Insights from the societal-oriented research on Human Trafficking under the EU-funded VANGUARD Project, Leuven, Belgium. [Register here](#).
- **18 - 19 June** - UNODC, Regional Expert Group Meeting (REGM), "Hidden Victims, Visible Crimes: Addressing Forced Criminality in Human Trafficking Cases in South Eastern Europe", Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **19 June** - Conference **(Re)Mapping Mobility, Migration, Thresholds, and the Politics of Displacement** – Refugee Work, by Napier University exploring contemporary experiences of (voluntary and forced) mobility and migration, Edinburgh.
- **24 - 26 June** - UNODC global forum for survivors, Vienna, Austria.

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.

