

Concept note

The year 2025 marks significant milestones in the global fight against human trafficking. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Notably, the Convention was adopted in Warsaw and opened for signature in May 2005. It was the first international treaty to place the protection of victims' rights at the core of anti-trafficking efforts.

Today, all Council of Europe member states have ratified the Convention, reinforcing its role as a powerful and unifying instrument in combating human trafficking and protecting its victims.

This year La Strada International, La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Human Beings and Slavery in Poland and La Strada Czech Republic also celebrate their 30th anniversaries. On 15 September 2005, the first La Strada project was launched by NGOs in Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Poland. Now La Strada International is a European NGO Platform against trafficking in human beings, uniting 33 members across 24 European countries.

While these are important milestones, there is unfortunately still much effort to take to realise the prevention of human trafficking and to ensure the protection of trafficked persons rights. We operate in a challenging European and global context, marked by increasing globalisation, armed conflicts, and wars that affect the lives of millions and drive migration and displacement —often accompanied by heightened risks of exploitation and abuse.

Despite the existence of legal and policy frameworks, we continue to witness a lack of adequate implementation. This results in poor identification of trafficked persons, and low rates of effective investigations and prosecutions, ultimately hindering victims' access to justice. Moreover, policy responses too often remain focused on combating crime and restricting migration and asylum, rather than addressing the root causes of human trafficking or investing in stronger protections for victims and vulnerable groups.

Strong anti-migration and anti-gender policies further fuel the discrimination of migrants, thereby increasing the likelihood of migrants being susceptible to situations of exploitation and abuse. This hostile environment makes it increasingly difficult to advocate for the rights of trafficked persons and others at risk.

Another significant challenge is the rapid expansion of the anti-trafficking field in recent years. While this growth has brought increased attention and activity, it has also resulted in overlaps, competition among actors for financial resources, especially in the context of the current severe funding cuts. These dynamics highlight the urgent need for improved coordination and monitoring

To reflect back on the evolution and impact of anti-trafficking legislation, policies and efforts undertaken across Europe in the past decades, a conference will be organised by the Ministry of Interior and Administration of Poland, together with the Anti-Trafficking Division of the Council of Europe, La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Human Beings and Slavery and

La Strada International. The event will bring together Polish and international policy makers, practitioners, civil society actors and other experts.

Jointly, we will reflect on the past three decades, and discuss remaining challenges and gaps and examine the impact of anti-trafficking legislation, policies, and efforts undertaken across Europe and beyond. How effective have these measures been, and how optimistic can we be about the current state of play? What lessons have been learned, and what challenges remain?

We will also consider the impact of migration and anti-gender policies on the rights of trafficked persons and related vulnerable groups, next to the shrinking civic space in Europe. Next to that, the event will explore what is needed in the coming years to effectively combat human trafficking.

The working languages will be Polish and English.

Public Event

**“30 Years Anti-Trafficking Work in Europe & supporting Victim Rights -
How to effectively address human trafficking and ensure that trafficked persons receive
protection and support?”**

**Thursday 18 September 2025,
12.00 – 16.30 PM**

5 Batorego Street, Warsaw, Poland (Ministry of the Interior and Administration)

Programme

12.00- 12.20 Opening (from 11.30 Coffee & arrival of participants)

Welcome & Opening statements, by

- **Mr. Czesław Mroczek**, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Interior and Administration
- **Ms. Agata Furgała** - Director of the Department for Public Order (Ministry of the Interior and Administration) and the Polish Anti-Trafficking Coordinator;
- **Ms. Petya Nestorova** - Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe;
- **Ms. Irena Dawid-Olczyk** - Director La Strada Poland Foundation against Trafficking in human trafficking and Slavery;
- **Ms. Suzanne Hoff** - International Coordinator of La Strada International.

12.20 – 13.00 Looking Back

Moderation by Mona Chamass, Director CCEM

- **Ms. Nadia Kozhouharova**, Psychologist, Animus Association Foundation Bulgaria – Reflection on 30 years of developments in the anti-trafficking field.
- **Ms. Siobhán Mullally**, UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children (*online*); Reflection on Global developments and Challenges
- **Ms. Diane Schmitt**, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (*online*), Reflection on legal and policy developments at EU level and ways forward

13.00 – 14.15 - Panel I – Currently Challenges & opportunities

Moderation by Ms. Aleksandra Chołuj (Ministry of the Interior and Administration)

Based on the overview provided of 30 years anti-trafficking work, this panel will reflect further on the current challenges and opportunities. What challenges do we see today and how do they impact the anti-trafficking work?

- **Ms. Agata Furgała**, Polish National anti-trafficking Coordinator, Department for Public Order (Ministry of the Interior and Administration);
- **Ms. Liliana Sorrentino**, Legal officer, Division of International Protection, UNHCR;
- **Ms. Irina Alkhovka**, Belarusian Women's Human Rights Defender in exile.

Followed by a Q & A.

14.15 – 15.00 Lunch & networking

15.00 – 16.15 Panel II - The way forward, what do we need to address in the coming year

Moderation by Sarah de Hovre, Director of PAG-Asa

This panel looks at how we ensure more commitment & better impact of our work and be ready for challenges ahead.

- **Ms. Petya Nestorova**, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe;
- **Ms. Irena Dawid-Olczyk**, Director La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Human Beings and Slavery;
- **Jean-Benoit Manhes**, Deputy Co-Ordinator, Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Office of Special Rep/Co-ordinator for Combating Human Trafficking
- **Ms. Suzanne Hoff**, International Coordinator, La Strada International.

Followed by a Q & A.

16.15 – 16.30 Concluding and Closing by Ms. Agata Furgała - Director of the Department for Public Order (Ministry of the Interior and Administration) and the Polish Anti-Trafficking Coordinator