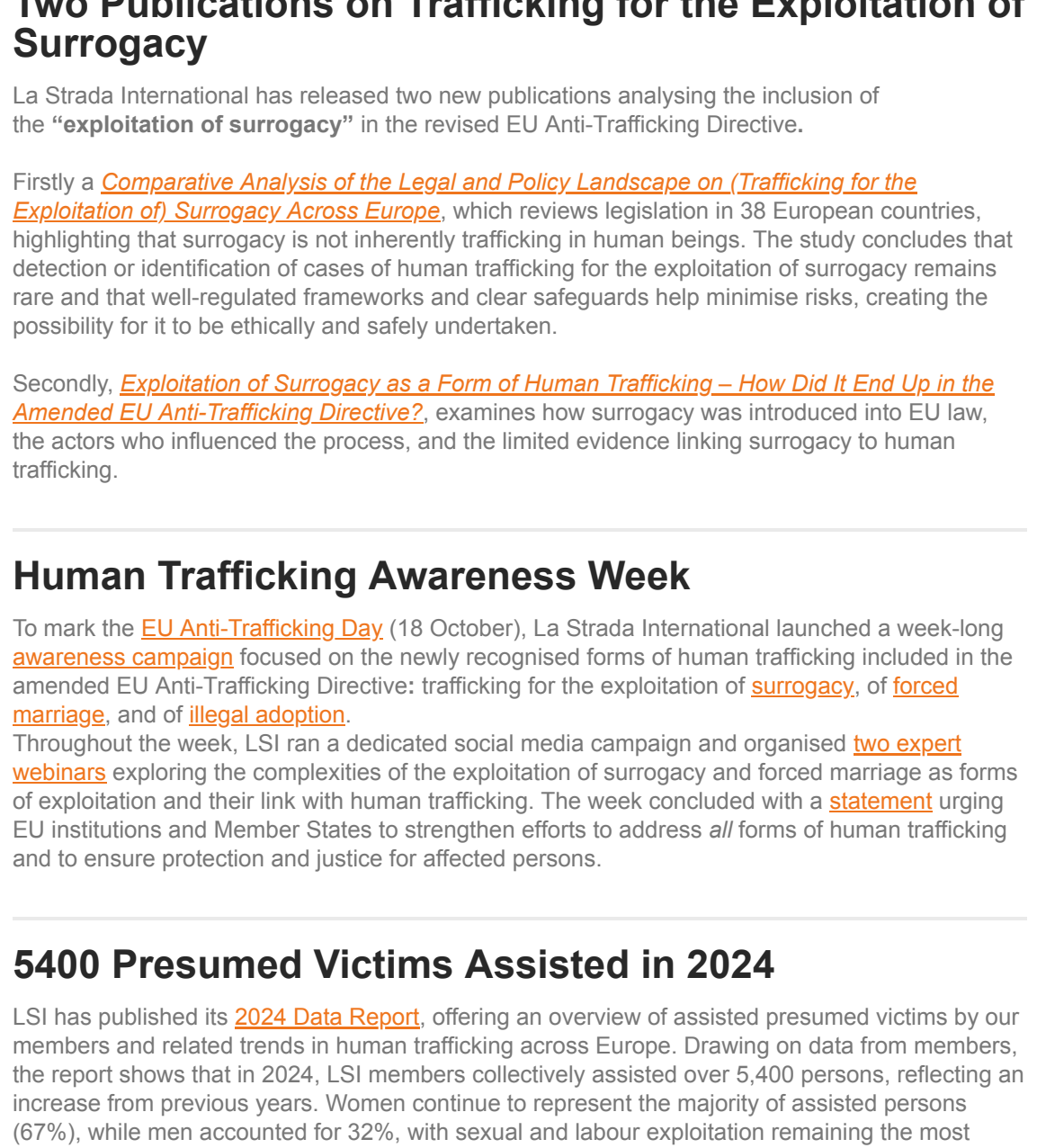


NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2025

La Strada International wishes to inform you and contribute to your development 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](#).

Do You or Someone You Know Needs Help? To report suspicions of human trafficking, seek advice or support, check our [emergency help](#) and [hotline numbers](#).

LSI NEWS



Two Publications on Trafficking for the Exploitation of Surrogacy

La Strada International has released two new publications analysing the inclusion of the "exploitation of surrogacy" in the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive.

Firstly a [Comparative Analysis of the Legal and Policy Landscape on Trafficking for the Exploitation of Surrogacy Across Europe](#), which reviews legislation in 38 European countries, highlighting that surrogacy is not inherently trafficking in human beings. The study concludes that detection or identification of cases of human trafficking for the exploitation of surrogacy remains rare and that well-regulated frameworks and clear safeguards help minimise risks, creating the possibility for it to be ethically and safely undertaken.

Secondly, [Exploitation of Surrogacy as a Form of Human Trafficking – How Did It End Up in the Amended EU Anti-Trafficking Directive?](#) examines how surrogacy was introduced into EU law, the actors who influenced the process, and the limited evidence linking surrogacy to human trafficking.

Human Trafficking Awareness Week

To mark the [EU Anti-Trafficking Day](#) (18 October), La Strada International launched a week-long [awareness campaign](#) focused on the newly recognised forms of human trafficking included in the amended EU Anti-Trafficking Directive: trafficking for the exploitation of [surrogacy](#), of [forced marriage](#), and of [illegal adoption](#).

Throughout the week, LSI ran a dedicated social media campaign and organised [two expert webinars](#) exploring the complexities of the exploitation of surrogacy and forced marriage as forms of exploitation and their link with human trafficking. The week concluded with a [statement](#) urging EU institutions and Member States to strengthen efforts to address all forms of human trafficking and to ensure protection and justice for affected persons.

5400 Presumed Victims Identified in 2024

LSI has published its [2024 Data Report](#), offering an overview of assisted presumed victims by our members and related trends in human trafficking across Europe. Drawing on data from members, the report shows that in 2024, LSI members collectively assisted over 5,400 persons, reflecting an increase from previous years. Women continue to represent the majority of assisted persons (87%), while men accounted for 32%, with sexual and labour exploitation remaining the most frequently reported forms. Notably, two-thirds (66%) of the assisted persons were citizens of non-European countries. See also national data reports from our members [Czechia](#) (the Netherlands) and [COK](#) (Germany).

OSCE Visit to the Netherlands

On 31 October, the OSCE Special Representative, Kari Johnstone, visited La Strada International, to meet with us and representatives of other civil society organisations - FairWork, SHOP, Salvation Army and the Red Cross - as part of a full week country visit to the Netherlands from 27-31 October 2025. We discussed the new Draft Dutch legislation and action plan, assistance to victims of human trafficking, and challenges around access to justice for undocumented workers, next to safe reporting, unconditional support (social path), and the non-punishment principle. The OSCE will publish a report on the country visit to the Netherlands.

Bosnian Study Visit to the Netherlands

From 6 to 9 October, La Strada International, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, co-organised a [study visit of a Bosnian delegation](#) to the Netherlands. The delegation - composed of free legal aid providers and officials from the Ministries of Security and Justice - came to learn firsthand about the Dutch model and practices for providing legal assistance and compensation to victims of human trafficking.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

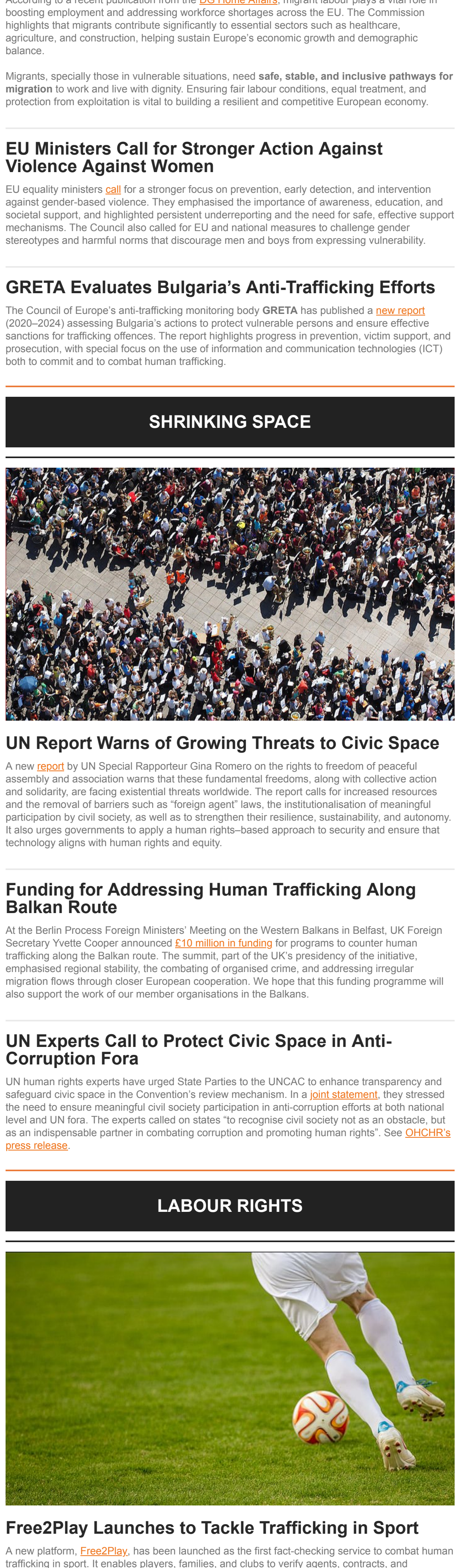
Highlights from LSI Members

- **EU Anti-Trafficking Day:** Across Europe, LSI members marked 18 October, the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, with awareness-raising events, campaigns, and discussions highlighting the realities of human trafficking and the need for stronger protection, prevention, and accountability. [Explore our members' initiatives and activities here.](#)
- **CECM**, in France, together with 19 like-minded organisations, has launched the [Fair Picking](#) campaign to raise awareness about exploitation in Europe's food industry. Inspired by the documentary ["The Pickers"](#), the campaign highlights that around two million migrant workers are employed in the agri-food sector, many facing low wages, exploitative conditions, and inadequate living standards. The initiative calls for fair treatment, decent work, and stronger protections for all workers in the food supply chain.
- **Open Gate**, from North Macedonia, has published a new [Analysis on Forced Marriage](#). The report reflects the experiences of many, particularly girls from marginalised communities across Europe, whose lives are constrained by poverty, social stigma, and institutional neglect. It highlights how coercion in anti-trafficking cases, often disguised as "tradition", and how economic hardship is used to justify exploitation. The analysis also offers concrete recommendations. See also their paper on the [Position and Rights of Victims in Criminal Proceedings \(Case Study No.1\)](#) and [Case Study No.2](#).
- **MRCI**, from Ireland, has held an online information session titled "Migrant Workers: Know Your Employment Rights and Labour Exploitation." The webinar provided practical guidance on recognising signs of labour exploitation and understanding employment rights as a migrant worker. The [recording](#) and [presentation](#) slides are now available.
- **LEFO IBF** and **La Strada** contributed to the conference ["Building Resilience Now: Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings in Times of Crisis"](#), taking place on 16 October at the Vienna School of International Studies and online. A recording of the conference is still to be shared.

HIGHLIGHTS

CJEU Clarifies Scope of Compensation for Victims of Violent Crime

The [Court of Justice of the European Union](#) (CJEU), in the context of the Irish compensation scheme, [clarified](#) that although the 2004 Compensation Directive does not explicitly mention non-material harm suffered by victims of intentional crimes, its broad wording does not limit the scope of compensation. The Court held that "no distinction can be drawn according to the types of harm which the victims of the crimes committed may have suffered or the consequences to which those victims may be exposed". It further underlined that measures to facilitate compensation form part of the realisation of the objective of ensuring the protection of the persons concerned from harm.



European Parliament Rejects Omnibus I Mandate to Weaken Sustainability Rules

Last October, the European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) [approved a compromise](#) under the Omnibus Simplification Package to scale back corporate sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements within the EU's Green Deal framework. The agreement raises reporting thresholds and limits liability and supply chain obligations, reflecting political pressure to ease regulatory burdens amid Europe's shift to the right. However, on 22 November, the Parliament [rejected](#) the JURI Committee's Omnibus I mandate, reopening negotiations and giving pro-EU forces a chance to safeguard human rights, access to justice, and corporate accountability.

A new [Frank Bold analysis](#) of 100 EU corporate reports shows that companies are already moving beyond minimum legal obligations, presenting increasingly structured and comparable sustainability disclosures. The study highlights that the very transparency requirements some policymakers seek to dismantle are already driving meaningful change in corporate behaviour.

10-Year Overview of Human Trafficking in the EU

Eurostat's latest report analysing [ten years of EU data on trafficking in human beings](#) (2013-2023) reveals that sexual exploitation remains the most prevalent form of trafficking, with steady numbers over the years. However, recent years have seen an increase in forced labour.

In total, over 83,000 victims were registered during the decade, with steady increases since 2020 - a trend that does not necessarily mean there are more trafficking cases, but rather reflects better identification and reporting, as the actual number of victims is believed to be much higher. Women continue to make up the majority of registered victims, while the proportion of men and non-EU nationals has grown significantly, reflecting shifting migration routes and changing trafficking patterns. The highest numbers of registered victims were reported among Romanian, Nigerian, and French nationals.

New UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and Human Trafficking

The UN Human Rights Council has launched a call for applications for the (first time) combined mandate of [Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and Human Trafficking](#). The Human Rights Council seeks qualified independent rights experts to commit to investigating and reporting on forms of Slavery and trafficking from a human right-based, victim-centered approach, promoting prevention, protection, and accountability, and advising states on effective rights-respecting measures. Deadline: 8 December 2025 at 12 noon Geneva time.



Ukraine: Future of the Temporary Protection Directive and Protection Gaps

On 29 October, [PICUM](#), in collaboration with the [EPC](#), the [IBC Europe](#), and the [Egmont Institute](#), organised a [policy dialogue](#) on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) across Europe. The event explored how to avoid inconsistencies and protection gaps, how to balance the individual needs of displaced persons with Ukraine's reintegration capacity and long-term priorities, and the role of the EU in ensuring a coordinated and equitable response.

Discussions underlined the need to prevent selective solidarity and people becoming undocumented by ensuring access to residence statuses for longer-term stay to vulnerable groups and low-skilled workers, addressing exploitative practices and building safeguards. [Read this interview with Martin Ruhs and Henriët Baas](#) on how the TPD was implemented, based on their study measuring the divergences in protection for displaced persons from Ukraine.

New IOM Study on Trafficking Vulnerabilities Linked to the War in Ukraine

IOM Moldova has released the [first comprehensive study](#) on trafficking vulnerabilities linked to the war in Ukraine that focuses specifically on Moldova. The research provides new data on how displacement and existing socio-economic inequalities interact to shape risk, offering evidence-based recommendations to strengthen protection and inclusion measures.

Migrant Labour Recognised as Key to Strengthening EU Employment

According to a recent publication from the [DG Home Affairs](#), migrant labour plays a vital role in boosting employment and addressing workforce shortages across the EU. The Commission highlights that migrants contribute significantly to essential sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and construction, helping sustain Europe's economic growth and demographic balance.

Migrants, especially those in vulnerable situations, need [safe, stable, and inclusive pathways](#) for migration to work and live with dignity. Ensuring fair labour conditions, equal treatment, and protection from exploitation is vital to building a resilient and competitive European economy.

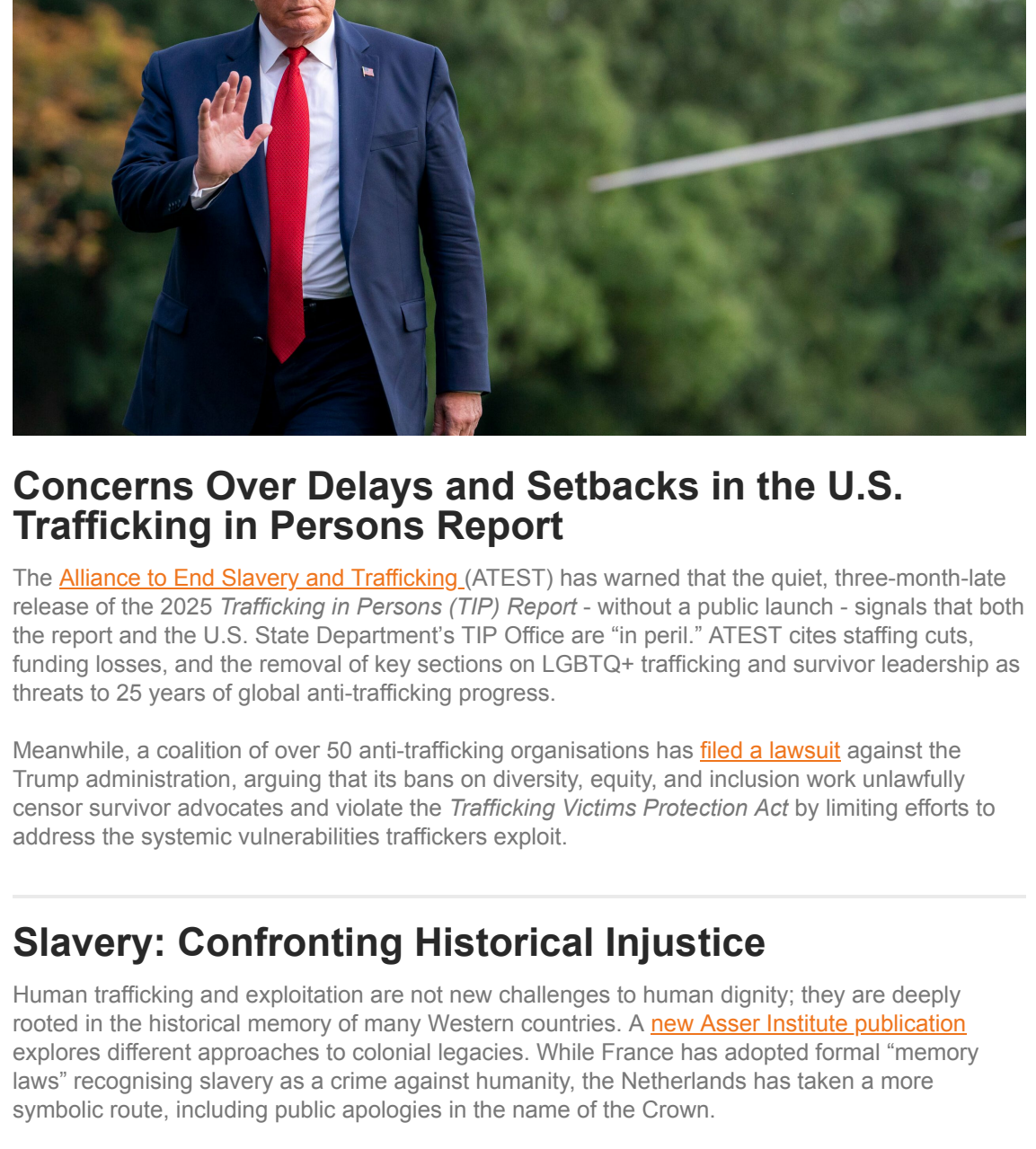
EU Ministers Call for Stronger Action Against Violence Against Women

EU equality ministers [call](#) for a stronger focus on prevention, early detection, and intervention against gender-based violence. They emphasised the importance of awareness, education, and societal support, and highlighted persistent underreporting and the need for safe, effective support mechanisms. The Council also called for EU and national measures to challenge gender stereotypes and harmful norms that discourage men and boys from expressing vulnerability.

GRETA Evaluates Bulgaria's Anti-Trafficking Efforts

The Council of Europe's anti-trafficking monitoring body GRETA has published a [new report](#) (2020-2024) assessing Bulgaria's actions to protect vulnerable persons and ensure effective remedies for trafficking offences. The report highlights progress in prevention, victim support, and prosecution, with special focus on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) both to commit and to combat human trafficking.

SHRINKING SPACE



UN Report Warns of Growing Threats to Civic Space

A new [report](#) by UN Special Rapporteur Gina Romero on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association warns that these fundamental freedoms, along with collective action and solidarity, are facing existential threats worldwide. The report calls for increased resources and the removal of barriers such as "foreign agent" laws, the institutionalisation of meaningful participation by civil society, as well as to strengthen their resilience, sustainability, and autonomy. It also urges governments to apply a human rights-based approach to security and ensure that technology aligns with human rights and equity.

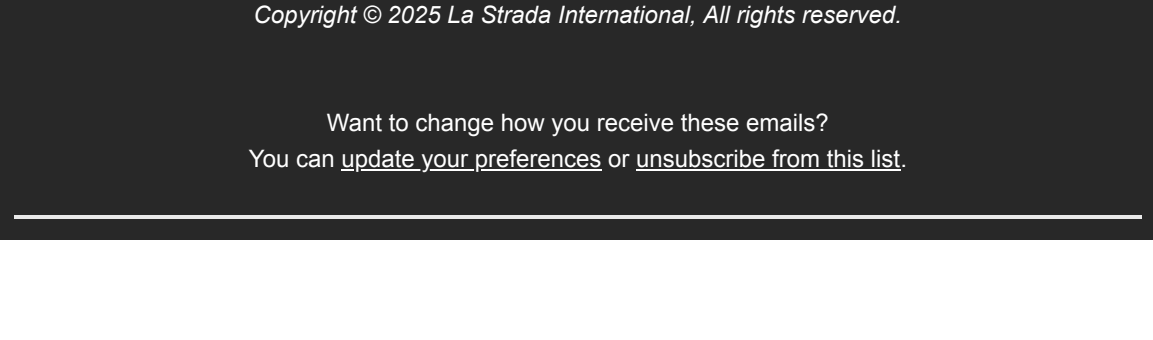
Funding for Addressing Human Trafficking Along Balkan Route

At the Berlin Process Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Western Balkans in Belfast, UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper announced [£10 million in funding](#) for programs to counter human trafficking along the Balkan route. The summit, part of the UK's response to the next six months. The system will digitally record entries and exits of non-EU nationals travelling for short stays, collecting passport data, fingerprints, and facial images, which will be stored for up to 3 years. Many organisations have raised concerns about data protection and privacy risks linked to the storage and use of biometric information.

UN Experts Call to Protect Civic Space in Anti-Corruption Fora

UN human rights experts have urged State Parties to the UNCAC to enhance transparency and safeguard civic space in the Convention's review mechanism. In a [joint statement](#), they stressed the need to ensure meaningful civil society participation in anti-corruption efforts at both national level and UN fora. The experts called on states "to recognise civil society not as an obstacle, but as an indispensable partner in combating corruption and promoting human rights". See [OHCHR's press release](#).

LABOUR RIGHTS



Free2Play Launches to Tackle Trafficking in Sport

A new platform, [Free2Play](#), has been launched as the first fact-checking service to combat human trafficking in sport. It enables players, families, and clubs to verify agents, contracts, and academies, promoting transparency and helping prevent the exploitation of young athletes.

Greece Adopts Controversial Labour Law Extending Work Hours

The Greek Parliament has [approved](#) a contentious labour law allowing 13-hour workdays, despite widespread opposition, nationwide strikes, and union warnings that the reform increases the risk of worker exploitation.

(FAIR) MIGRATION

EU Launches New Biometric Border Management System

On 12 October 2025, the [new Entry/Exit digital border management system](#) (EES) was launched and will be rolled out across 29 European countries by the end of the year for the next six months. The system will digitally record entries and exits of non-EU nationals travelling for short stays, collecting passport data, fingerprints, and facial images, which will be stored for up to 3 years. Many organisations have raised concerns about data protection and privacy risks linked to the storage and use of biometric information.

UN Experts Warn EU Against Rights Risks in Migrant Smuggling Rules

Three UN Special Rapporteurs - on trafficking in persons, human rights defenders, and the human rights of migrants - have sent a [joint letter](#) to EU lawmakers expressing concern over the proposed reforms to the [EU Facilitation Directive](#). They caution that the draft rules "raise serious doubts about their compatibility with international human rights obligations" and could lead to the criminalisation of migrants, as well as those offering assistance for family or humanitarian reasons.

The Solution: Regular Migration Pathways

At the Global Forum on Migration and Development, OHCHR launched a paper on [Leveraging Regular Migration Pathways for Human Rights](#). The report stresses that when safe and accessible migration routes are absent, inaccessible or insecure, people on the move are pushed into irregular pathways, increasing their vulnerability, as well as the risk of exploitation and human rights violations. There is a need for inclusive, stable, and secure migration pathways. It calls on governments to scale up, diversify, and improve regular migration options as a foundation for rights-based migration governance, social cohesion, and dignity for all.

Concerns Over UK-France Returns Scheme Amid Trafficking Reports

An Iranian asylum seeker reported to France under the UK's new "one in, one out" migration deal has re-entered the UK by a small boat, claiming exploitation by traffickers and fearing for his life in France. [Rights groups report increasing cases of violence and forced labour](#) among migrants in northern France, raising concerns over the safety and viability of the returns scheme as Channel crossings reach record levels.

Eurocarers Calls for Inclusion of Migrant Care Workers in EU Care Strategies

Eurocarers released a position paper [Integrating Migrant Care into European and National Long-Term Care Strategies](#), highlighting major gaps in care provision across Europe. The organisation argues that migrant care workers - often informal and invisible - are essential to the sector, yet face poor conditions that harm both carers and care recipients. Eurocarers urges the EU and member states to address these shortcomings and align policies with the goals of the European Care Strategy.

MEPs Urge End to EU Support for Libyan Security Forces

Nearly 40 MEPs have [urged](#) the European Commission to halt financial and operational support to Libyan security forces, citing rising violence against humanitarian and migrant vessels. The call follows [new evidence](#) from an Italian journalist who filmed Libyan militias allegedly throwing migrants into the sea during a Mediterranean rescue operation. The NGO [Mediterranean Saving Humans](#), which coordinates rescue efforts, has submitted footage to prosecutors as the International Criminal Court, urging human trafficking charges against those involved. They warned that continued cooperation with actors linked to human rights abuses undermines the EU's credibility and contributes to regional instability.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Major Gaps in Compensation for Victims of Human Trafficking

New data revealed that fewer than 1% of the thousands of victims of human trafficking identified in recent years have received financial compensation. Experts also confirmed that compensation through criminal proceedings is also rare, as authorities often fail to identify or freeze traffickers' assets, leaving victims without access to justice or recourse on available remedies. The findings underscore the urgent need for training officials to recognise trafficking indicators and to strengthen victims' access to compensation and recovery support.

Knowledge Hub for Ukrainian Judiciary

The Asser Institute has launched a [Knowledge Hub on International Criminal Law](#) to strengthen human rights' capacity to address war crimes and other international crimes. With over seven million people displaced abroad and four million internally displaced and conflict have heightened vulnerabilities, which increases the risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Strengthening judicial capacity is crucial to safeguarding justice and human rights.

BUSINESS ACCOUNTABILITY

Two Years of the German Supply Chain Act

The German Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (CECHR) has released [Two Years of the German Supply Chain Act](#), an interim assessment showing that the law is already generating positive effects, yet it also reveals gaps in enforcement. Following the government's announcement to abolish reporting requirements and restrict sanctions to cases of "severe human rights violations", both companies and enforcement authorities appear to be paying less attention to complaints and affected individuals.

The Fast Fashion Waste Mountain

As part of the Clean Clothes Campaign's [Fashioning a Just Transition](#) programme, Arisa has published [The Fast Fashion Waste Mountain](#), the first in a new series exploring the social and environmental impacts of textile recycling. The paper offers practical advice and exposes the vast amount of clothing and textile waste generated by the fast fashion industry. It calls on the textile recycling and links to responsible business conduct. Contributions to the [Fashioning a Just Transition Manifesto](#) are open until 16 November 2025.

ACCESS TO RIGHTS

UN Convention Against Cybercrime Signed in Hanoi

On 25-26 October 2025, and together with the UN Environment Secretariat, the UN Convention Against Cybercrime was signed in Hanoi, Vietnam. The treaty aims to strengthen international cooperation against crimes committed in and through the digital sphere, including online recruitment and exploitation, marking a major milestone in global digital governance. Its success, however, will depend on effective national implementation and strong safeguards for human rights and data protection. Civil society has also warned that, without these safeguards, the treaty could be misused to restrict civic space and fundamental freedoms. The [Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime](#) presented new research on cyber scams and cyber-enabled organised crime during the event.

CALLS FOR INPUT

- **GREVIO:** NGOs are invited to submit shadow reports as part of [GREVIO's evaluation procedure](#) to assess the EU's compliance with the Istanbul Convention by the baseline [evaluation questionnaire](#). Deadline: 28 November 2025.
- **Centre for Migration Studies:** [Call for papers](#) for the international conference [Bridging the Gap? Rethinking Engagement between Migration Research, Policies and Practices](#). The conference invites empirical, conceptual, theoretical and/or methodological contributions addressing gaps or omissions in discourses on migration research, policy and practice related to Africa. Deadline to submit abstracts: 23 November 2025.
- **Anti-Trafficking Review:** calls for papers for a new issue themed ["Care Work, Intimate Labour, Migration, and Exploitation"](#). The aim is to analyse the living and working conditions of care workers and intimate labourers and the policies and practices that affect them positively or negatively. Deadline: 1 December 2025.
- **IESGO:** published a [call for inputs](#) for their upcoming thematic report on Violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women. Deadline: 15 January 2026.

Concerns Over Delays and Setbacks in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report

The [Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking](#) (ATEST) has warned that the quiet, three-monthly release of the [2025 Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\) Report](#) - without a public launch - signals both the report and the U.S. State Department's TIP Office is "in peril". ATEST cites staffing cuts, funding losses, and the removal of key sections on LGBTIQ+ trafficking and survivor leadership as threats to 25 years of global anti-trafficking progress.

Meanwhile, a coalition of over 50 anti-trafficking organisations has [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Trump administration, arguing that its bans on diversity, equity and inclusion work unlawfully censor survivor advocates and violate the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act](#) by limiting efforts to address the systemic vulnerabilities traffickers exploit.

Slavery: Confronting Historical Injustice

Human trafficking and exploitation are not new challenges to human dignity: they are deeply rooted in the historical memory of many Western countries. A [new Asser Institute publication](#) explores different approaches to colonial legacies. While France has adopted formal "memory laws" recognising slavery as a crime against humanity, the Netherlands has taken a more symbolic route, including public apologies in the name of the "Glorious" and "Free" empires.

EU Funding & Me App

DG Justice launched [EU Funding & Me](#), a new mobile app synchronised with the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. The app offers easy, on-the-go access to EU funding opportunities, project results, news, and events - a practical tool for anyone seeking EU support or partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Movie:** At the Venice Film Festival, director Stephan Komandarev presented [Made in EU](#), a documentary inspired by the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#), exposing labour exploitation in Bulgarian textile factories producing for Western brands. Komandarev contrasts EU labour laws with harsh realities of low pay and poor conditions, especially for women in rural areas. The film aims to spark debate on social justice, economic inequality, and the true meaning behind the "Made in EU" label. [Watch his interview here.](#)
- **Podcast:** The [latest episode](#) of the four-part podcast series ["A Queer's"](#) brings attention to women whose work often remains unseen - domestic workers. It sheds light on their precarious working conditions, isolation within private homes, and the lack of recognition for their essential role that blurs the line between personal and professional life.
- **Blog:** Did you know that OECD governments have committed to advancing responsible business conduct policies and laws? In 2022, the OECD adopted a Recommendation, championed by OECD Watch, urging states to introduce binding corporate accountability laws, strengthen procurement and export credit standards, and ensure access to remedy for affected communities. Civil society can use this tool to remind governments of their commitments and push for concrete action. [Read more here.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 25 - 27 November - [14th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights](#), hybrid.
- 3 - 4 December - [European Forum against Trafficking and Organised Crime](#) (TFBOC 2025) organised by CBSS & Europa, in Stockholm, Sweden. Addressing law enforcement stakeholders in the anti-trafficking field is especially encouraged.

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.

[Donate Now](#)

