

STATEMENT**18 December 2025****INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY****Protect People on the Move from Exploitation****La Strada International - Trafficked en Route**

Trafficking for labour exploitation in Europe continues to be **highly invisible and underreported**. Migrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable for exploitation, including en route when they move through non-European and European transit countries towards their destinations.

Trafficking for labour exploitation often occurs when people seek better work opportunities and are targeted by abusive recruiters or exploitative employers, increasingly through online channels. When third-country nationals experience labour abuse or human trafficking, **accessing justice remains complex, and many are left without adequate assistance and protection**, despite existing EU legislation.

The EU (AMIF)-funded Trafficked en Route project aims to address gaps in the identification, assistance and protection of people across migration routes.

Our Call to Action

On this International Migrants Day, we call for bold and coordinated action to **prevent and address exploitation and human trafficking** in Europe.

- 1. Strengthen Early Identification Along Migrant Routes:** Equip border authorities, labour inspectors, NGOs, social services and first responders within countries with clear indicators and guidance to identify human trafficking and severe labour exploitation at early stages, including during transit and arrival.
- 2. Raise Awareness Among Third-Country Nationals:** Develop targeted, multilingual information and awareness campaigns to inform migrants about their labour rights, the risks of exploitation and available support mechanisms before departure, during transit and upon arrival.
- 3. Expand Safe and Legal Migration Pathways:** Increase accessible labour migration channels, humanitarian visas and regularisation mechanisms to reduce reliance on irregular routes and intermediaries, which significantly increases the risk of exploitation and human trafficking.
- 4. Guarantee Safe Reporting and Complaint Mechanisms Through Effective Firewalls:** Establish clear and binding firewalls between victim support services and immigration enforcement to ensure that reporting exploitation or filing complaints about human trafficking does not result in detention, deportation, or other negative immigration consequences.
- 5. Ensure Unconditional Support and Protection:** Guarantee access to assistance, shelter, healthcare, legal aid, and compensation for victims regardless of their migration or residence status, in line with EU and international obligations.
- 6. Improve Transnational Assistance and Protection Mechanisms:** Enhance cross-border cooperation and referral between states and civil society to ensure continuity of protection, referral and support for victims moving across countries.
- 7. Invest in Training for Frontline Professionals:** Provide regular, specialised training for professionals, who may encounter victims, including law enforcement, labour inspectors, asylum authorities, health professionals, and civil society actors.
- 8. Increase Research and Monitoring of Recruitment and Exploitation Schemes:** Support data collection and research on online recruitment practices, intermediaries, and exploitative labour schemes to improve oversight and adequate policy responses, preventive measures and accountability.

