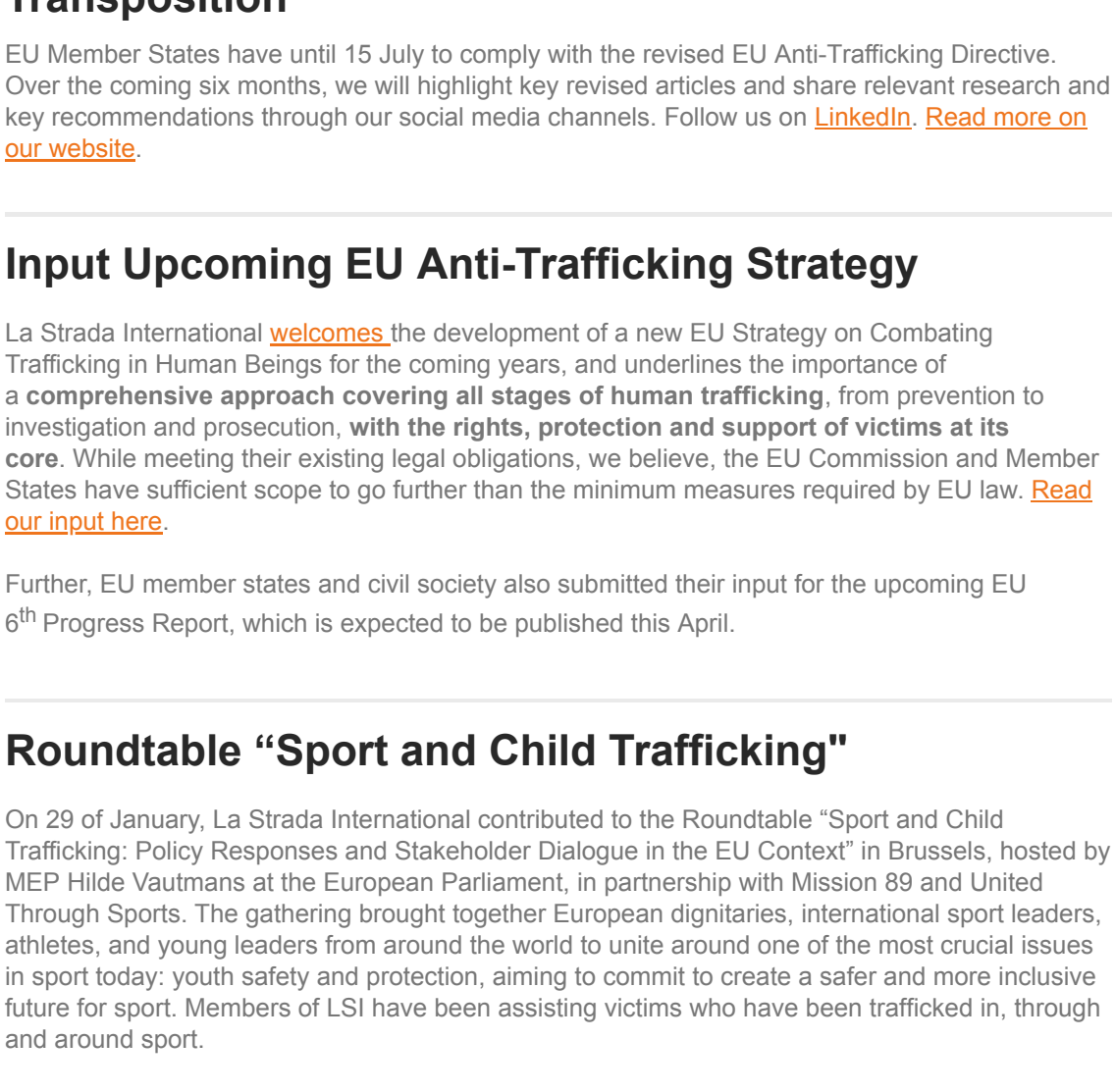


NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2026

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](#).

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

LSI NEWS



Victim Protection Starts with Anti-Trafficking Law Transposition

EU Member States have until 15 July to comply with the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive. Over the coming six months, we will highlight key revised articles and share relevant research and key recommendations through our social media channels. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#). [Read more on our website](#).

Input Upcoming EU Anti-Trafficking Strategy

La Strada International [welcomes](#) the development of a new EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the coming years, and underlines the importance of a **comprehensive approach covering all stages of human trafficking**, from prevention to investigation and prosecution, **with the rights, protection and support of victims at its core**. While meeting their existing legal obligations, we believe, the EU Commission and Member States have sufficient scope to go further than the minimum measures required by EU law. [Read our input here](#).

Further, EU member states and civil society also submitted their input for the upcoming EU 6th Progress Report, which is expected to be published this April.

Roundtable “Sport and Child Trafficking”

On 29 of January, La Strada International contributed to the Roundtable “Sport and Child Trafficking: Policy Responses and Stakeholder Dialogue in the EU Context” in Brussels, hosted by MEP Hilde Vautmans at the European Parliament, in partnership with Mission 89 and United Through Sports. The gathering brought together European dignitaries, international sport leaders, athletes, and young leaders from around the world to unite around one of the most crucial issues in sport today: youth safety and protection, aiming to commit to create a safer and more inclusive future for sport. Members of LSI have been assisting victims who have been trafficked in, through and around sport.



Looking Back at 2025

2025 was a special year for La Strada International, as it marked our 30th anniversary. We made a dedicated [video](#) to reflect on this journey. See also the [video](#) of our NGO Platform Meeting in Warsaw, Poland. In 2025, LSI actively contributed to European and international policy debates, connecting those with grassroots practice. Through research, advocacy and exchange, we strengthened victim-centred approaches and helped safeguard civil society space. [Read more about our work and impact in 2025 here](#).

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members

- FLEX** launched its new [report](#) on 20 January in the UK national Parliament. The report analyses the seafarer and fishing-related visa and entry clearance policies in the UK, and their specific impact on migrant fishers, exploitation in the fishery sector. See [more](#).
- RIKU** has been assisting large groups of exploited Thai berry pickers in Finland and there are more than 70 ongoing court cases related to the issue. A documentary film called [Blood Berries](#), now recounts the story of team workers who travelled to Finland and Sweden to pick berries. RIKU's blog theme for 2025 focuses on [online scams](#), aiming to alert for its risks and signs - you can report online scams [here](#).
- KOK** has published its [2025 Annual Report](#), highlighting their efforts to set the political direction combating trafficking in human beings and exploitation, with KOK specialised counselling centres registered a total of 868 cases of human trafficking in 2024.
- FIZ**, from Switzerland, offers (free) [practical training modules](#) on human trafficking identification and on contacting with victims, to anyone interested. The course provides foundational knowledge on legal frameworks, identification and procedural paths. In 2026 the course will take place in Zurich on 20 February, 22 May, 25 August and 23 November. For registrations contact: [contact@fiz-info.ch](#).
- CCEM, CoMensh, ACCEM and MIST** also provided input for the forthcoming EU Anti-Trafficking Strategy. Read their input here: [CCEM](#), [CoMensha](#), [ACCEM](#) and [MIST](#).

HIGHLIGHTS



Eurostat: 2024 Data on Human Trafficking Across the EU

Eurostat has published its [latest figures on human trafficking](#) (2024). A total of **9,678 registered victims** were recorded (8% decrease), marking a break in the upward trend. However, fluctuations should be interpreted with caution, as they often reflect changes in identification practices rather than actual decreases in human trafficking.

Women and girls are still the most registered victims (63%). Sexual exploitation remains the most commonly recorded form (46%), while labour exploitation continues to increase (37%). The majority of registered victims (64%) were third-country nationals, highlighting the continued links between lack of safe and stable migration pathways, vulnerability and exploitation. The data point persistent issues in identification, even though the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive introduced new legislative measures to improve reporting and access to assistance. Read our [full analysis on our website](#) and also [LSI's 2024 data report](#).

Revised Victims' Rights Directive Expected in February

Following the [political agreement](#) reached on 10 December, the revised Victims' Rights Directive is expected to be formally adopted in February. While the final text is still to be published after its adoption, it is clear that the revision introduces higher standards across several victims' rights. However, ambitious proposals by the EU Commission and the EU Parliament to strengthen compensation, ensure effective access to justice, and establish safe and accessible reporting mechanisms, which we strongly welcomed, were not supported by the Council, and still lack mandatory requirements.



Montenegro: New Guidelines for Access to Compensation

The Supreme Court of Montenegro has introduced [new guidelines](#) to strengthen access to compensation to victims of human trafficking. The guidelines allow compensation claims to be decided and enforced directly within criminal proceedings, removing the need for separate civil cases, marking a crucial step in improving access to justice. The reform follows UNODC research showing that, over a five-year period, no trafficking survivors in Montenegro received compensation.

UNSR on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and Trafficking, and on the Sale of Children

The Consultative Group to the President of the Human Rights Council's [report](#), on the 17 vacant UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) mandates, included the newly merged mandate of the **UNSR on contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons and on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children**. Appointments are expected to be made at the Council's 61st session (23 February–2 April 2026).

For the slavery and trafficking mandate, the application attracted 47 eligible candidates. Following interviews, the Consultative Group recommended Katarina Schwarz (New Zealand), Anđi Hoxhaj (Albania) and Aidan McQuade (Ireland), in that order, all based in the UK. We have closely worked with Aidan, when he was the Director of our member Anti-Slavery International. Katarina Schwarz is Associate Professor of Antislavery Law and Policy in the School of Law and Associate Director (Law and Policy) in the rights lab at the University of Nottingham. For the mandate on the sale, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse of children basis – subject to renewal by the Council - the shortlisted candidates are Ai Kihara-Hunt (Japan), Claire Fenton-Glynn (Australia) and Olamide Sekinat Adedokun (Nigeria). [See here more information](#).

Advocacy for Independent Rapporteurs in Bulgaria and Ukraine

In Bulgaria, a [policy lab](#) (14/01) explored European models of independent National Rapporteurs on trafficking, focusing on monitoring, data analysis, and evidence-based policy. Experts highlighted the need for independence from policy coordination, access to reliable data, engagement with academia, and adequate resources to move people, evade controls, and address accountability at every stage of the trafficking process, cutting across borders, sectors and institutions.

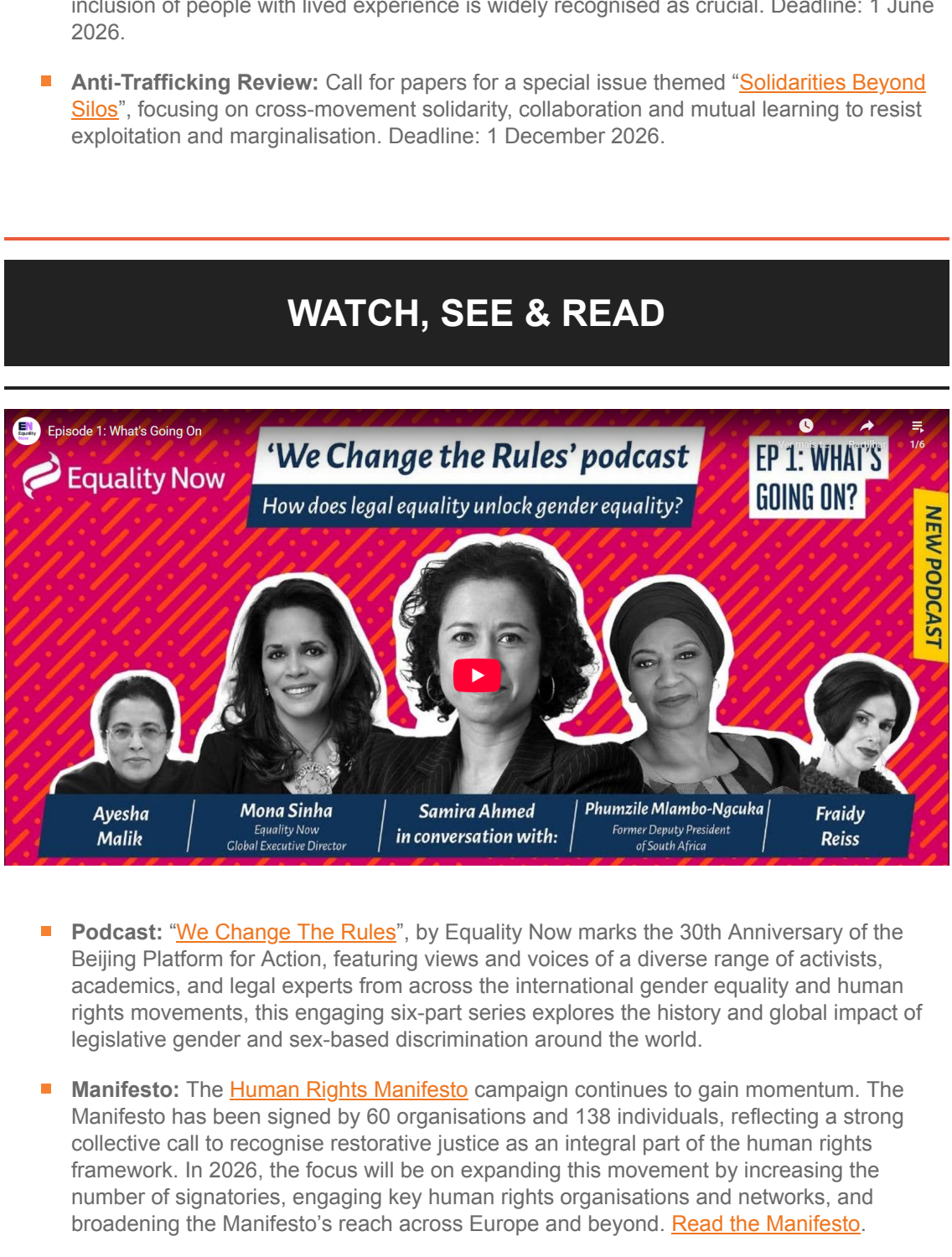
In Ukraine, the Minister of Social Policy has publicly stated that an independent National Rapporteur on trafficking should be integrated into a new State Anti-Trafficking Programme designed with EU standards, even though the amended EU Anti-Trafficking Directive unfortunately no longer binds EUMS to establish national rapporteurs. However, the ‘carrying out of assessments of trends in trafficking in human beings, the measuring of results of anti-trafficking actions, including the gathering of statistics in close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in this field, and reporting’ is still required.

La Strada International emphasises that independency of monitoring bodies is essential to maintain public trust, ensure objective evaluation of anti-trafficking policies, and prevent conflicts of interest between monitoring and policy implementation.

Hidden Links Between Corruption and UNSR on Trafficking

UNODC has published a [study](#) examining the relationship between corruption and human trafficking. The research shows how corruption enables traffickers to move people, evade controls, and escape accountability at every stage of the trafficking process, cutting across borders, sectors and institutions.

LABOUR RIGHTS



Labour Rights in Europe

The European Committee of Social Rights has published its [Conclusions on Labour Rights for 2025](#), highlighting exploitative-like working conditions across Europe. The findings point to sectors allowing working weeks exceeding 60 hours, insufficient protections for digital platform workers, athletes, subcontracted and self-employed workers, as well as failures to promote adequate collective bargaining and undue restrictions on the right to strike. In total, the Committee adopted 213 conclusions, including 171 findings of non-conformity concerning 23 European countries, of which 12 are EUMS.

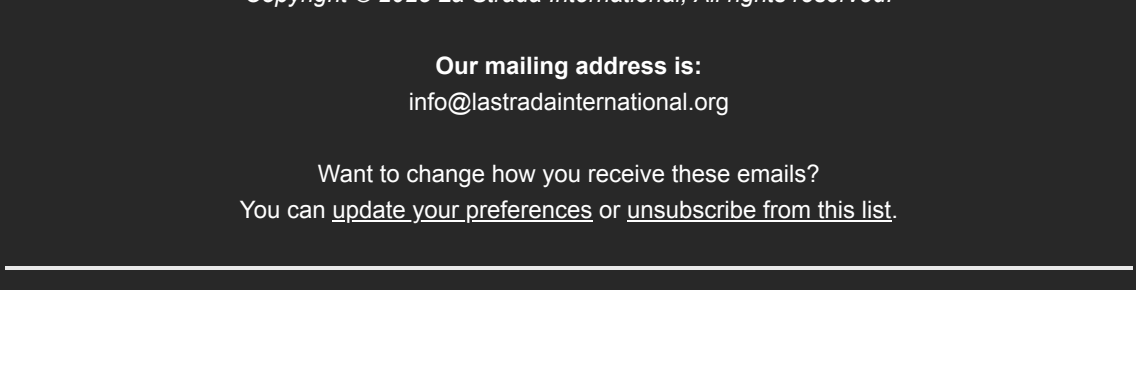
Labour Exploitation Checklist

HEUNI published [“Nordic Perspectives on Labour Exploitation”](#) accompanied by a free checklist to support labour inspectors, inspection authorities and trade union representatives in identifying links between occupational safety and health breaches, labour exploitation and work-related crime. Focusing on the Nordic European countries, the report examines concrete connections between work environment risks, labour exploitation and broader work-related criminality, offering practical tools to strengthen detection and prevention.

Migrant Workers in Farm-to-Fork Sectors

A [new cross-country report](#) examines the living and working conditions of migrant workers in farm-to-fork sectors. The report by DignityFIRM and others draws on three case studies conducted in the cities of Amsterdam, Seville and Wrocław. The research analyses the structural factors contributing to migrant workers' precariousness, alongside the strategies of response and resistance developed by workers and support organisations in each context. Learn more [here](#).

(FAIR) MIGRATION



Council of Europe Considers Changes to Human Rights Rules on Migration

The Council of Europe is considering a review of how human rights rules apply to migration under the European Convention on Human Rights, following pressure from a group of State Parties arguing that current human rights standards limit their ability to manage irregular migration and deportations. At a recent informal meeting in Strasbourg, ministers from 27 countries, of which 19 EUMS and 8 non-EU countries, issued a [joint statement](#) proposing to limit certain rights of migrants within the Convention and discussed the preparation of a political declaration, expected to be considered at a formal session in Moldova in May 2026. Human rights groups have warned against any weakening of safeguards, with Amnesty International calling the statement a [“moral retreat”](#). Read also: [The Risk of Politicising the ECHR over Migration](#).

At the same time, there is a growing policy focus on people smuggling rather than on prevention of human trafficking and protection of affected persons. Recent developments include [Germany](#) adopting new measures to crack down on smuggling to the UK, and [Greece](#) deepening cooperation on crime and migration with Turkey.

The Role of Counselling and Reintegration in Return Decision-Making

A new research paper, [To Leave or Stay?](#), examines the role of counselling and reintegration assistance in the return decision-making of migrants ordered to leave the Netherlands. The study finds that decisions are strongly influenced by family and community expectations, care obligations, conditions in countries of origin and, and existing support networks.

While counselling and reintegration assistance play a limited role in influencing return decisions, the research highlights that choices to return are often made under significant constraints. Such assistance is rarely migrants' first choice and has limited impact.

Resettlement Commitments Must Be Upheld Under the EU's New Admission Plan

ECRE has published a [joint statement](#) following the adoption of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan (URP), welcoming it as a step towards placing resettlement at the core of the EU's renewed approach to asylum and migration. The statement however warns against any backtracking on resettlement commitments. ECRE and the other undersigned organisations urge EUMS to fulfil and exceed their current pledges, which remain insufficient in light of global needs. Refugees are particularly vulnerable, increasing risks of exploitation and human trafficking, making it all the more necessary to strengthen resettlement commitments.

UK: Criminalising Migration

In early January, [new immigration-related criminal offences](#) came into force in the UK, expanding the state's powers to criminalise and imprison people making unauthorised journeys. UNHCR has expressed [concern](#) that the measures will target migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, further undermining their access to protection.

Unseen published [“Restoring belief, reducing criminality”](#), assessing the impact of modern slavery provisions within the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, the Illegal Migration Act 2023 and the Safety of Rwanda Act 2024. The research draws on official Home Office figures, data from the [Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline](#), and interviews with police, professionals on the frontline and survivors. Concluding that policies designed to curb ‘irregular’ migration have weakened both victim protection and law enforcement capability.

Council’s Position on the Return Proposal

An analysis of the [“The Council of the EU’s Position on the Return Proposal”](#) highlights how the return erodes existing human rights protections, such as allowing for the disregard of the principle of non-refoulement, expanding the legal basis for detention, promoting the establishment of return hubs and weakening child-specific safeguards.

ACCESS TO RIGHTS

GAATW Analysis on Criminal Law Approaches to Trafficking in Persons

Following a two-day consultation held in Bangkok in November 2025, attended by La Strada International, GAATW published a [Critical Analysis of Criminal Law Approaches to Trafficking in Persons](#). The analysis reflects on the limitations of a predominantly punitive, criminal law-focused response, which prioritises prosecuting traffickers but has delivered limited results while often sidelining victim-centred approaches, and it also explores alternative frameworks.

New Cooperation to Strengthen Accountability and Rule of Law in Ukraine

The T.M.C. Asser Institute and the European Union Advisory Mission for Ukraine have signed a [cooperation agreement](#) to strengthen expertise, capacity-building and application of international humanitarian and criminal law in the areas of law, international crimes, and accountability in Ukraine. Strengthening justice systems and legal frameworks is particularly relevant in the context of heightened risks of human trafficking and exploitation linked to conflict, displacement, and post-war recovery.

Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

UNFPA, UNICEF and Save the Children's [report](#) also explores how technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) manifests from childhood through older age, emphasising the need for a life-course approach that reflects the distinct needs of children, adolescents and adults. This report is complemented by UN Women's report on [“Global trends to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls: A continuum of emerging practices”](#). It details trends and contextual differences, offering a nuanced understanding of TFGBV interventions across different platforms and contexts. Read also [“Tracking countries' efforts on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls”](#) and [“Tipping point: The chilling escalation of violence against women in the public sphere in the age of AI”](#).

Preventing Violence Against Women

The WHO has published the second edition of the [RESPECT Women: Preventing Violence against Women](#) framework. The updated framework supports policymakers with the latest evidence-based interventions across seven strategies reflected in the RESPECT acronym. It outlines key risk and protective factors and underscores the need to address underlying vulnerabilities, including poverty, lack of access to services, and conflict.

Read also Spotlight Initiative's report [“A Sustainable Legacy: Insights and evidence from seed investments to end violence against women and girls”](#), which explores the sustainability of its achievements and approaches two years after the closure of its first phase of programmes and draws on insights from virtual interviews and surveys that included 106 stakeholders from governments, civil society organizations, the UN, the EU and other partners.

CHILD LABOUR & EXPLOITATION

Expert Group Network for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse

The EU Commission has [launched](#) the [Expert Group Network for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse](#) in Brussels on 12 and 13 January, following its announcement in August as part of efforts to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation, as set in the EU [strategy](#) on the matter.

Further, the European Commission has proposed extending the [Interim Regulation](#) allowing online service providers to continue the voluntary detection and reporting of child sexual abuse, which is otherwise set to expire in 2026. The proposal now awaits adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

UN Child Rights Committee Report on Spain

[UN Child Rights Committee](#) convened in Geneva for its first [session](#) of 2026 to review five countries, including [Spain](#), on 21 and 22 January. The Committee has concluded its consideration of Spain's [seventh periodic report](#) under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, commending recent legislation that provides comprehensive protection for children and adolescents against violence, while also raising concerns about how Spain is addressing child poverty and limiting children's exposure to violent practices, such as bullying.

CIVIL SOCIETY



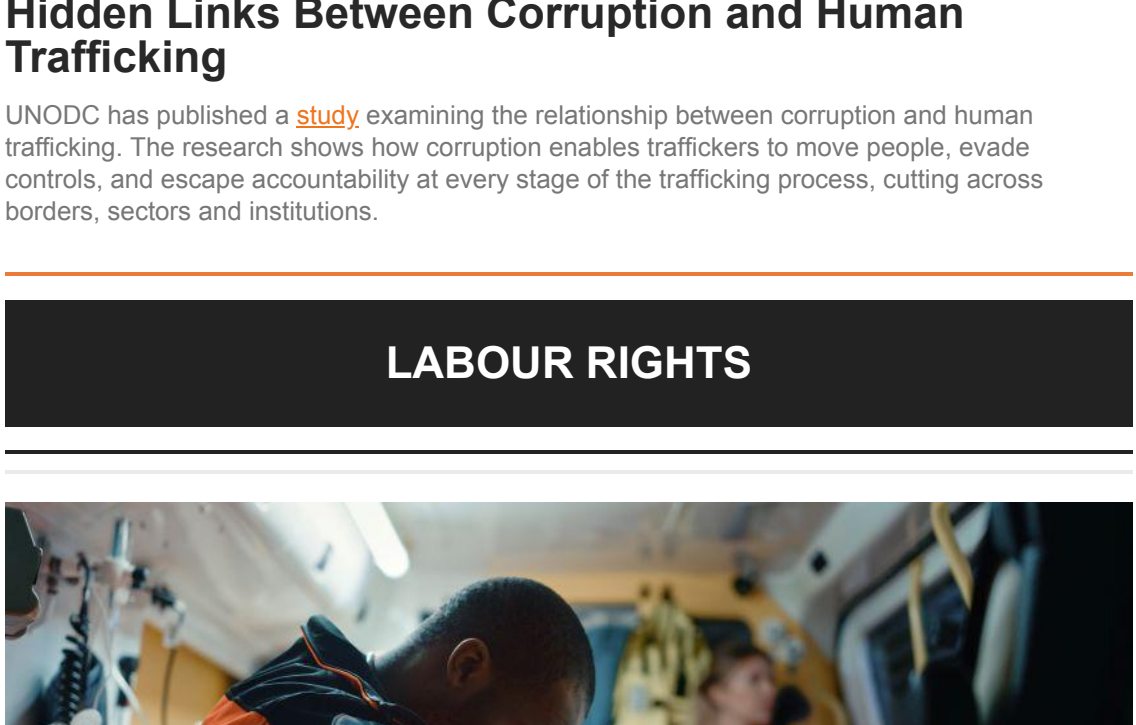
EU Boosts Pro Bono Legal Support for Civil Society

The European Commission has [committed](#) to connecting pro bono lawyers with civil society organisations, creating a more favourable environment for collaboration between legal professionals and CSOs. The move also strengthens the role of legal clearinghouses such as Pro Publico and PILnet.

CALLS FOR INPUT

- European Commission:** [Public consultation](#) to gather views from across civil society on how to enhance the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. Deadline: 6 February 2026.
- UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls:** [Call for input](#) for her next report to the Human Rights Council. The consultation seeks information on how states are addressing violence against women and girls, including prevention measures, access to justice, protection mechanisms and support services. Deadline: 06 February 2026.
- UNODC:** Call for applications for non-governmental stakeholders for the [2026 Constructive Dialogues on Firearms, Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Migrants, and Technical Assistance & Intersecting Policies: Agenda Item 1](#). Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons will take place on 28 June. Deadline: 15 February.
- European Commission:** [Public consultation](#) to gather views from across civil society to contribute to dismantling high-risk criminal networks and to identify and prosecute their ringleaders. Deadline: 10 April 2026.
- Anti-Trafficking Review:** Call for papers for a special issue themed [“Engaging Impacted Communities”](#). The aim is to examine engagement with impacted communities as the inclusion of people with lived experience is widely recognised as crucial. Deadline: 1 June 2026.
- Anti-Trafficking Review:** Call for papers for a special issue themed [“Solidarities Beyond Silos”](#), focusing on cross-movement solidarity, collaboration and mutual learning to resist exploitation and marginalisation. Deadline: 1 December 2026.

WATCH, SEE & READ



- Podcast: [“We Change The Rules”](#), by Equality Now marks the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, featuring views and voices of a diverse range of activists, academics, and legal experts from across the international gender equality and human rights movements, this engaging six-part series explores the history and global impact of legislative gender and sex-based discrimination around the world.
- Manifesto:** The [Human Rights Manifesto](#) campaign continues to gain momentum. The Manifesto has been signed by 80 organisations and 138 individuals, reflecting a strong collective call to recognise restorative justice as an integral part of the human rights framework. In 2026, the focus will be on expanding this movement by increasing the number of signatories, engaging key human rights organisations and networks, and broadening the Manifesto's reach across Europe and beyond. [Read the Manifesto](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 6 February** - Roundtable in Sarajevo convened under the [EU4FAST](#) partnership, in collaboration with UNDP FAST and UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 11 - 12 February** - OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector, Paris and online. A common denominator of the discussions is the [OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector](#). Registrations for the forum opened in October.
- 23 February - 2 April** - [61st regular session of the UN Human Rights Council](#) (HRC 61). Geneva. NGOs with ECOSOC status may submit requests for side events and written statements via the [OHCHR Events platform](#). Register via the [Platform](#).
- 24 February** - Five years since Russian's invasion of Ukraine.
- 24 - 25 February** - Forced Labour Expert Group meeting, Brussels, Belgium (closed meeting).
- 24 - 25 February** - ERA online conference [Protecting Family Life and Children's Rights](#). The conference will address recent developments in family law and human rights, including ECHR case law on children's rights, international child abduction, foster care, adoption, surrogacy and gender reassignment. More information can be found on the [seminar programme](#).
- 26 - 28 February** - [Fourth World Conference on Gender Equality](#), Rotterdam, Netherlands. An academic conference examining key gender equality challenges from both micro and macro perspectives. [Register here](#).
- 9 - 20 March** - [70th Commission on the Status of Women](#) (UN Headquarters – New York, United States).
- 11 - 12 May** - Freedom from Slavery Global Forum in Istanbul, [register here](#).

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.

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