



Victims of Human Trafficking in Asylum and Reception

The information presented in this fact sheet complements the developments reported in the [Asylum Report 2025](https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025/section-9-safeguards-children-and-applicants-special-needs). See more here: <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025/section-9-safeguards-children-and-applicants-special-needs>

Following up on [Situational Update No 21](#) from 19 August 2024, this fact sheet covers the period 1 July 2024-30 June 2025.

This year marks 20 years since the opening for signatures of the Council of Europe's Convention against Human Trafficking. The convention remains the strongest tool against human trafficking, which has prompted governments to make progress with legislation, policies and practices, transforming how countries tackle the most serious human rights violations.¹

Over the last year, the EU continued to develop tools for Member States to strengthen the early identification and protection of potential trafficking victims in asylum and reception systems. But EU+ countries are in a continuous race against traffickers. In this digital era, the forms of exploitation continue to evolve at a high speed to target new migratory flows. Trafficking perpetrators apply increasingly more sophisticated methods and technological tools to lure victims and particularly vulnerable populations, such as asylum seekers, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The rapidly-emerging new trends and the use of new technologies create additional challenges in the fight against smuggling networks and human trafficking. EU+ countries need to further ramp up efforts and focus on increasing their pace to tackle the exploitation.



Key developments in 2024-2025

Main developments at the EU level



May
2024

The Council adopted the [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) which introduces stronger safeguards and better identification and referral of the most vulnerable asylum applicants, including victims of trafficking.

July
2024

The [EU Anti-Trafficking Directive](#), which has been the foundation for the prevention and fight against human trafficking since 2011, was revised to address current trends and emerging challenges. The adopted revision entered into force in July 2024.

January
2025

The European Commission published its [5th report on the progress made in the EU in combating trafficking in human beings](#) which outlines the main anti-trafficking actions from 2021 to 2024. The report notes that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation remained the most prevalent form of exploitation in the EU during 2021-2022. Major challenges which persisted during the report period were difficulties in collecting data and evidence, the online presence of traffickers using new forms of exploitation and the link with high-level criminal organisations.

February
2025

The European Commission launched a [call for expression of interest](#) with the aim of renewing the composition of the EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings.

June
2025

The European Commission launched its [EU Anti-Trafficking Hub](#), an umbrella platform which supports EU Member States in the implementation of the revised [EU Anti-Trafficking Directive](#) and the [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings \(2021-2025\)](#). It also fosters the exchange of best practices and cooperation. A new strategy is being developed to build on progress made, address emerging challenges beyond 2025 and feed into national anti-trafficking action plans.

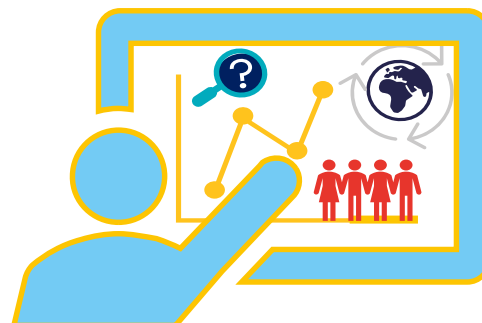


Observations and recommendations from international organisations

The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) called for [urgent political commitment](#) to address evolving threats of human trafficking, including the need to reinforce child protection systems and further invest in training and digital tools.²

GRETA published several country evaluation reports in the second semester of 2024 and first semester of 2025 for [Austria](#), [Croatia](#), [Cyprus](#), [Czechia](#), [Liechtenstein](#) and [Slovakia](#). In the country evaluations, GRETA urges for stronger and more proactive victim identification amongst asylum seekers and recommends more comprehensive and systematic vulnerability assessment procedures. For example, the evaluations for Austria, Croatia and Slovakia call on the authorities to take further measures to ensure that all unaccompanied and separated minors are placed in safe accommodation, have adequate assistance and are appointed legal guardians more rapidly to effectively protect them.^{3, 4, 5} In this context, a joint EU-Council of Europe project was launched in February 2025 to strengthen the capacities of national and federal state authorities to improve child victim identification and provide efficient referral and protection of child trafficking victims in Austria.⁶

Furthermore, GRETA stressed the need to further sensitise and train professionals for more effective interaction with asylum seekers. In the case of Czechia for example, GRETA observed that administrative judges may encounter challenges in managing cases related to human trafficking as they lack sufficient training in the area.⁷



Main developments at the national level



EU Member States must transpose several measures from the [EU Anti-Trafficking Directive](#) which was adopted in June 2024 into national law by July 2024⁸, namely the establishment of formal referral mechanisms and national anti-trafficking coordinators, the adoption and periodical update of national anti-trafficking action plans, and mandatory data collection including forced marriage, illegal adoption and exploitation of surrogacy in the definition of trafficking.

To this end, several EU+ countries launched or updated their national action plans and other policies to combat trafficking during 2024 and 2025, with specific references to victims in the asylum procedure or in reception systems. Several EU+ countries also introduced changes to their practices to better identify, refer and protect victims of trafficking.

- **Croatia:** In October 2024, the government adopted its [national plan for combating trafficking in human beings](#) for the period 2024-2030, jointly with an [action plan](#) for the period 2024-2026 to better prevent human trafficking and improve the identification

and referral of trafficking victims.⁹ The plan foresees activities focusing on information provision for migrants, asylum applicants and other vulnerable groups and on training for relevant stakeholders.¹⁰

- **Germany:** In December 2024, the federal government adopted its first [national action plan](#) for a 4-year period. The national action plan refers to the continuous development of identification procedures for vulnerable applicants in the asylum procedure and maintaining and expanding existing referral mechanisms to specialised counselling centres. The plan foresees to continue and promote existing pilot projects, and to develop a concept for a specialised unit to identify protection needs among refugees.^{11, 12}
- **France:** In January 2025, various institutional and local stakeholders, including the French Office for the Immigration and the Integration (OFII), the regional prefecture, the public prosecutor of the appeals court, the city of Bordeaux, the university hospital centre and five civil society organisations,¹ adopted a charter to protect and support female asylum applicants who are victims of violence or trafficking. The charter underlines the importance of detecting, supporting and protecting vulnerable women throughout their asylum application process, in particular by providing emergency accommodation places in the region of Nouvelle-Aquitaine to ensure their safety.¹³
- **Poland:** Poland adopted its [national action plan](#) for the period 2025-2027 in March 2025.¹⁴ The main objectives of the plan include raising the standard of support provided to victims, improving the effectiveness of the institutions responsible for prosecuting and enhancing knowledge about human trafficking.¹⁵

Recent case law related to trafficking in human beings in asylum and reception systems

- ✚ Netherlands (7 May 2025): The Council of State ruled that the Minister for Asylum and Migration must conduct a risk assessment on reprisals by human traffickers upon the applicant's return to Nigeria, and take into account the risks mentioned in the EUAA's Country Guidance: Nigeria (October 2021),

<https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=5022&returnurl=%2fPages%2fsearch.aspx>



- ✚ Belgium (23 October 2024): The Council for Alien Law Litigation (CALL) granted international protection to a woman from Guinea on grounds of membership of a particular social group of women, after reassessing the psychological and medical evidence submitted in the subsequent application and considering her experiences of sexual violence and human trafficking in Belgium.

<https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4950&returnurl=%2fPages%2fsearch.aspx>

¹ Civil society organisations: France terre d'asile, Centre d'accueil et de consultation information sexualités, CEID-Pôle prostitution, Ruelle Relais urbain d'échanges et de lutte contre l'exploitation and Groupe SOS Solidarités.

- ✚ Italy (27 September 2024): The Court of Cassation ruled that the lower court failed to adequately assess the narrative of a Nigerian applicant in light of trafficking indicators and affirmed the duty of referral for formal identification as a victim of trafficking.
<https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4678&returnurl=%2fPages%2fsearch.aspx>
- ✚ Greece (11 July 2024): The Independent Appeals Committee granted subsidiary protection to an applicant from Sierra Leone who was a victim of labour exploitation and human trafficking. A return to his home country would lead to a situation of extreme economic and mental impoverishment.
<https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=5030&returnurl=%2fPages%2fsearch.aspx>



To search for more developments by topic, country or year, consult the [National Asylum Developments Database](#).

To read more case law related to asylum, consult the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

For more information, please contact: asylum.report@euaa.europa.eu

Sources

Please see [Sources on Asylum 2024](#) for the full list of over 1,300 references which were consulted for the Asylum Report 2024.

¹ Council of Europe (16 May 2025). [20 years of putting victims first: Council of Europe Convention remains strongest tool against human trafficking](#).

² Council of Europe (6 June 2025). [Human trafficking: Council of Europe experts call for stronger political commitment in the face of growing threats](#).

³ Council of Europe, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (11 March 2025). [Fourth evaluation round, Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking, Evaluation report Austria](#).

⁴ Council of Europe, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (19 June 2025). [Fourth evaluation round, Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking, Evaluation report Croatia](#).

⁵ Council of Europe, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (26 March 2025). [Fourth evaluation round, Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking, Evaluation report Slovak Republic](#).

⁶ Council of Europe (February 2025). [Improving the support services for child victims of trafficking in Austria \(2025-2026\)](#).

⁷ Council of Europe, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (11 October 2024). [Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Czech Republic](#).

⁸ European Commission (12 July 2024), Stronger EU rules to fight trafficking in human beings enter into force, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/stronger-eu-rules-fight-trafficking-human-beings-enter-force-2024-07-12_en

⁹ Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia | Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova Republike Hrvatske (31 October 2024). [Potpredsjednik Vlade RH i ministar Božinović na sjednici Vlade predstavio prijedlog Nacionalnog plana za suzbijanje trgovanja ljudima za razdoblje do 2030](#) [Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Božinović presented the proposal of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period until 2030 at the Government session].

¹⁰ Council of Europe, Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (19 June 2025). [Fourth evaluation round, Measures to prevent and detect vulnerabilities to human trafficking, Evaluation report Croatia](#).

¹¹ Federal Ministry of the Interior | Bundesministerium des Innern (11 December 2024). [Pressemitteilung: Gemeinsam gegen das Verbrechen Menschenhandel](#) [Press release: Together against the crimes of human trafficking].

¹¹ Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth | Bundesministerium für Bildung, Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (11 December 2024). [Nationaler Aktionsplan zur Prävention und Bekämpfung des Menschenhandels und zum Schutz der Betroffenen](#) [National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking and to Protect Trafficked Persons].

¹³ French Office for immigration and Integration | Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (OFII) (30 January 2025). [L'OFII engagé pour protéger les femmes demandeuses d'asile et réfugiées victimes de violences ou de traite humaine](#) [OFII supports female asylum applicants who are victims of violence or human trafficking].

¹⁴ Council of Europe (19 June 2025). [Report submitted by the authorities of Poland on measures taken to comply with Committee of the Parties Recommendation CP/Rec\(2023\)05 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Third evaluation round](#).

¹⁵ Government of Poland (19 March 2025). [National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings 2025-2027](#).