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COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

38th meeting of the Committee of the Parties

Strasbourg, 3 July 2026
Palais de l'Europe, room 11, and online

Opening at 09:30

MEETING REPORT

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Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting

1. The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter referred to respectively as “the Committee” and “the Convention”) held its 38th meeting on 3 July 2026 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via Zoom. Pending the election of the new Chair of the Committee, the meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the draft agenda

2. The Executive Secretary invited the Committee to adopt the draft agenda of the meeting.
3. The agenda, as adopted by the Committee, is set out in Appendix I. The list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

Agenda item 3: Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties

4. The Executive Secretary noted that the first terms of office of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties had expired on 20 June. She recalled that the term of office of the Chair and the Vice-Chair was one year and could be renewed once. The Executive Secretary indicated that prior to the meeting, Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen (Finland) had expressed her interest to continue as Chair for a second term of office. No other candidates for the Chair were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen as its Chair by acclamation for a second term of office of one year.

5. Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her by electing her as Chair for a second term of office and stated that it was an honour to continue assuming this role and promoting the Convention and its implementation.

6. The Chair invited members to elect a new Vice-Chair of the Committee. She indicated that Ambassador Agnese Vilde (Latvia) had expressed her interest to run for a second term of office as Vice-Chair of the Committee. No other candidates were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Agnese Vilde as its Vice-Chair by acclamation for a second term of office of one year.

Agenda item 4: State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

7. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee (18 December 2025) and consequently the number of Parties to the Convention continued to stand at 48. She indicated that the invitation extended by the Committee of Ministers to Tunisia to accede to the Convention had expired on 7 February 2026, without an instrument of accession being submitted by Tunisia.

Agenda item 5: Exchange of views with the President of GRETA

8. The Chair invited Ms Conny Rijken, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), to take the floor for the periodic exchange of views with the Committee.

9. GRETA's President informed the Committee that since its last meeting, GRETA had held two plenary meetings, in March and in June 2026, and had published eight new country reports, concerning Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom, which were the subject of draft recommendations to be discussed at the current meeting. Further, at its meeting in June, GRETA had adopted a new draft guidance note on residence permits for victims of human trafficking (Article 14 of the Convention). GRETA had also made progress on the preparation of a new compendium of good practices in the implementation of the Convention, expected to be published in September. In addition,

GRETA had started reflecting on the focus and design of the fifth evaluation round of the Convention, which should be launched next year.

10. Furthermore, Ms Rijken noted that GRETA had recently published the 15th general report on its activities, covering the year 2025. The report included a thematic chapter on human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities, which had been identified in GRETA's country reports as a growing trend requiring urgent attention and action. GRETA's President stressed that failure to identify persons compelled to commit criminal offences as victims resulted in their being arrested, prosecuted, imprisoned and/or deported. This is why GRETA's 15th General report looked into the implementation of non-punishment provision enshrined in Article 26 of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention. Ms Rijken noted that the number of countries having adopted specific legal provisions on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking had increased following recommendations made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties. Nevertheless, progress remained incomplete, and in collaboration with the OSCE, GRETA intended to start work on new guidance on the implementation of the non-punishment provision.

11. In addition, GRETA's President indicated that at its meeting held in June, GRETA had agreed on a statement, based on an analytical report, affirming that the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of children of Ukraine in the context of Russia's war of aggression creates risks of human trafficking and may fall within the definition of trafficking in human beings under Article 4 of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention. Both the report and the statement had been circulated to the Committee for consideration at the present meeting.

12. Finally, GRETA's President highlighted that evolving geopolitical and security realities placed increasing pressure on states' institutional capacities and policy priorities, making it important to engage in a discussion on how to ensure that anti-trafficking frameworks remained effective and responsive to contemporary challenges. The full text of Ms Rijken's statement is set out in Appendix III.

13. The Chair thanked Ms Rijken for her observations and opened the floor for questions or comments concerning GRETA's work.

14. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Justice and Public Policy of Norway) thanked GRETA's President for the impressive overview of GRETA's activities, which demonstrated GRETA's ongoing touch with reality, and noted the value of continued co-operation with the OSCE to avoid duplication of efforts and increased effectiveness.

15. Ambassador Genka Georgieva (Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe) expressed appreciation of GRETA's work and the attention to vulnerabilities which create risks for human trafficking. She asked GRETA's President about the greatest implementation gaps and the practical tools to address them and to ensure that victims remain at the centre of efforts to combat human trafficking.

16. Ambassador Patrick Engelberg (Luxembourg) thanked GRETA's President for her intervention and expressed appreciation of the process of preparation of GRETA's report on Luxembourg.

17. GRETA's President indicated that while compliance with the provisions of the Convention had improved in terms of legislation, instructions and the development of National Referral Mechanisms for victims of trafficking, implementation on the ground was still lacking. The country reports drawn up by GRETA in the context of the 4th evaluation round of the Convention, focusing on vulnerabilities to human trafficking, demonstrated the need for increased prevention efforts. Ms Rijken referred to GRETA's guidance notes and compendium of good practices as practical tools to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. Finally, she stressed that the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking remained at the centre of GRETA's work.

Agenda item 6: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom (fourth evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

18. The Chair recalled that since the previous Committee meeting, GRETA had adopted and published eight final reports under the fourth evaluation round, concerning Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The eight draft recommendations based on these GRETA reports had been made available to the Committee on 5 June 2026 and members of the Committee had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 29 June 2026.

19. The Chair recalled that the draft recommendations were based on GRETA's findings and conclusions, consisting of a preamble, a part highlighting positive developments, and a recommendation based on the issues for urgent action identified in the respective GRETA's reports. Paragraph "B" drew attention to the recommendations that have been made repeatedly under the preceding rounds and should therefore be implemented as a matter of priority. The draft recommendations asked the national authorities to report back to the Committee on the measures taken to implement the recommendations within two years of their adoption.

Fourth evaluation round

6.1. Armenia

20. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Armenia and gave the floor Mr Aramayis Grigoryan (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia). Mr Grigoryan congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for their re-election and thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for the dedicated work and expert dialogue in preparing the report on Armenia. He noted that the report provided a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the situation in Armenia and underlined Armenia's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and continuing co-operation with GRETA and the Council of Europe in the area of combating human trafficking.

21. The Chair recalled that prior to the meeting, Azerbaijan had submitted a proposal for amending the draft recommendation concerning Armenia, which was circulated to the members of the Committee on 2 July 2026, and invited the representative of Azerbaijan to present the proposal. Ambassador Fakhraddin Ismayilov (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe) reaffirmed Azerbaijan's appreciation for GRETA's work and clarified that the proposal was not intended to oppose the report, but rather to make factual corrections to GRETA's report and the draft recommendation on Armenia. In relation to GRETA's report, Azerbaijan proposed to replace the references to "Karabakh" with "the Garabagh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan". In relation to the draft recommendation, Azerbaijan proposed to delete "from Karabakh" in the fifth indent of the part welcoming positive developments in Armenia, expressing the view that it would be more appropriate to refer to efforts made to provide support to refugees in general, which would not change the essence of the recommendation. Ambassador Ismayilov underlined that using incorrect toponyms reflects a conflictual past and fails to reflect current peace developments, including the initialisation of the peace treaty and mutual recognition of territorial integrity. He stressed that a standalone reference to "Karabakh" could be perceived as a direct challenge to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, supporting separatism and military revanchism. The full text of the amendment proposal submitted by Azerbaijan is set out in Appendix IV.

22. Mr Aramayis Grigoryan (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia) disagreed with the proposal made by Azerbaijan and underlined the importance of respecting GRETA's independence and impartiality and ensuring that monitoring bodies are free from political interference. He noted that the terminology used in the report and the draft recommendation was well-established and consistent with official Council of Europe documents. Further, he stressed that the recommendation should welcome the specific

efforts made by Armenia in relation to refugees from Karabakh, which reflected the content of GRETA's report.

23. The Chair invited GRETA's President to take the floor. Ms Rijken underlined that, during the drafting process of the report on Armenia, GRETA had sought advice from the Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations with a view to being consistent with other Council of Europe documents and, consequently, GRETA's report used the term "Karabakh". Further, she indicated that GRETA's report on Armenia had already been published and could not be changed. With regards to the draft recommendation, GRETA's President noted that it was based on GRETA's assessment, in particular paragraph 84 of the report on Armenia. She stressed that removing "from Karabakh" from the bullet point in question would not give credit to the specific efforts made by the Armenian authorities to reduce vulnerabilities to human trafficking of refugees from Karabakh and that welcoming efforts made concerning all refugees would go beyond GRETA's assessment. Finally, GRETA's President referred to the position taken by the Committee of the Parties at the previous meeting to rely on GRETA's assessment and avoid discussing amendment proposals which contest or alter GRETA's findings.

24. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Justice and Public Policy of Norway) thanked GRETA's President for recalling the decision taken by the Committee of the Parties at its previous meeting and proposed to take a vote on the amendment proposal made by Azerbaijan. He expressed the view that by preserving the text of the draft recommendation in its current form the Committee of the Parties would be focusing on its mandate and not taking a stand on geopolitics, which went beyond the remit of the Committee and should be discussed in other parts of the Council of Europe.

25. Mr Sencer Kağan Şenol (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Türkiye) expressed support for the amendment proposal made by Azerbaijan, noting that there was no reason to single out in particular refugees from Karabakh as GRETA's report referred also to other nationalities of refugees.

26. Ambassador Fakhraddin Ismayilov (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe) expressed the view that the political advice given to GRETA was not appropriate, stressing that the issue at stake was a political issue going beyond GRETA's mandate and that a territory of Azerbaijan could not be referred to as a standalone entity.

27. Mr John Hunter (Deputy Permanent Representative of Cyprus) expressed support for adopting the draft recommendation without an amendment.

28. Ambassador Fakhraddin Ismayilov (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe) stated that by referring to refugees in general, the recommendation would give more credit to Armenia and the delegation of Azerbaijan would not be against it if that would help with solving the issue at hand. He also suggested postponing the discussions and added that a possible postponing of the adoption of the recommendation should not stop Armenia from starting to implement its contents. He invited the delegations to take their time to address the sensitive terminology issue rather than rushing the process. Furthermore, he emphasized that even if GRETA's report itself could not be modified, the Committee could still adjust the recommendation to ensure alignment with international law and official terminology.

29. The Chair noted that it was not a common practice for the Committee to vote on draft recommendations, but if no consensus could be reached, taking a vote would be the solution. Alternatively, the adoption of the draft recommendation could be postponed to the next meeting in order to find a consensus. She recalled that the Committee had once in the past decided to postpone the adoption of a draft recommendation, concerning Georgia, to a later meeting.

30. Mr Aramayis Grigoryan (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe) stated that Armenia was in favour of adopting the recommendation at the current meeting in order for the Armenian authorities want to start implementing it as soon as possible.

31. Ambassador Fakhraddin Ismayilov (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe) expressed concerns that members of the Committee were not ready to take a position on a sensitive political matter going beyond GRETA's domain and suggested to come back to this agenda item at a later stage of the meeting or to postpone the discussion to the next meeting. The representatives of Lithuania and Iceland noted that they were not prepared to vote and agreed with the proposal to postpone the discussion to the end of the meeting. As there was no opposition in the room, the Chair suspended the discussion on this agenda item to the afternoon session.

32. In the afternoon, the Chair re-opened the discussion on the draft recommendation regarding Armenia.

33. Ambassador Fakhraddin Ismayilov (Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe) reiterated that Azerbaijan remains unable to accept the recommendation in its current form due to the incorrect reference to its sovereign territory, while emphasizing that the issue is strictly about respecting territorial integrity rather than challenging the substance of combating trafficking. He noted that many members of the Committee present in the room were not diplomats and should not be in a position to vote on such an important issue without instructions from their capitals, and they should be mindful of the political sensitivity of the matter, since a vote on the current phrasing would be perceived as a stance regarding respect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

34. Mr Aramayis Grigoryan (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe) reiterated the view that the recommendation should as initially proposed, stressing that the monitoring system of the Convention should focus on human trafficking rather than geopolitical issues and be free from political interference.

35. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Justice and Public Policy of Norway) reiterated his proposal to take a vote on the draft recommendation, which was seconded by the representatives of Sweden, Finland and Poland.

36. Mr Andreas Lins (Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria) stated that Austria was not in a position to either support or reject the amendment proposal. Noting that the Committee of the Parties should not be the forum to decide on issues of international law, he suggested to postpone the discussion on this agenda item in order for the Secretariat to conduct in-depth research on the issue and analyse how it was dealt with in other committees. He also suggested to request a written advice from DLAPIL on the issue.

37. Ambassador Haris Bašić (Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe) seconded the proposal to postpone the discussion of the draft recommendation on Armenia to the next meeting of the Committee of the Parties.

38. The Chair made an alternative proposal to adopt the draft recommendation on Armenia except for the disputed sentence, a decision on which would be postponed to the next meeting. This proposal was rejected by the representative of Armenia.

39. The Chair invited members to take a vote on whether the adoption of the draft recommendation on Armenia should be postponed. She recalled that, pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties (rule 20), procedural questions were decided by a simple majority of the vote cast.

40. As a result of the vote, 18 delegations were in favour of postponing the discussion, while 12 were against. Therefore, the discussion on the draft recommendation regarding Armenia was postponed to the 39th meeting of the Committee of the Parties.

6.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

41. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

42. Ambassador Haris Bašić (Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for their re-election and thanked GRETA for the adoption of the final report on Bosnia and Herzegovina. He highlighted some of the most important steps taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the adoption of a Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking for the period from 2024 to 2027, the appointment of a State Coordinator for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration for a term of four years, ongoing work on the establishment of a state compensation scheme for victims of human trafficking and the increase in the funding provided to NGOs for victim assistance. Noting that some areas still needed to improvement, he acknowledged the importance of the support provided by the Council of Europe through co-operation projects carried out by the Council of Europe. The full text of Ambassador Bašić's statement is set out in Appendix V.

43. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina and decided to request the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.3. France

44. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning France.

45. Ms Roxana Maracineanu (General Secretary of the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Against Violence and the Fight Against Human Trafficking - Miprof) thanked the GRETA delegation for its visit to France as part of the preparation of the country evaluation report. She emphasized that the report was a valuable tool for the French authorities, particularly in the current context in France and Europe where the rights of the most vulnerable people are increasingly being challenged. Furthermore, Ms Maracineanu highlighted the significant awareness-raising and training efforts undertaken by France since 2023, ahead of the Olympic Games in Paris, paying particular attention to children who are sexually exploited or forced into criminal activities. The training has including social workers, lawyers, prefecture officials issuing residence permits and healthcare professionals, aiming to change the way people view those who are exploited, particularly children who are victims of trafficking and exploitation. The full text of Ms Maracineanu's statement is set out in Appendix VI.

46. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of France and decided to request the Government of France to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.4. Latvia

47. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Latvia.

48. Ms Jekaterina Tulina (Deputy Permanent Representative of Latvia to the Council of Europe) expressed appreciation for GRETA's recommendations, which were seen by the Latvian authorities as an important contribution to strengthening the national response to human trafficking. She highlighted a number of measures taken by Latvia, including the preparation of draft legislation on the identification and referral of victims of trafficking, aimed at formalising the National Referral Mechanism, reviewing the application of the recovery and reflection period, and re-establishing the inter-institutional working group on combating human trafficking. At the same time, she acknowledged that a number of GRETA's recommendations concerned complex and cross-sectoral vulnerability factor and that addressing vulnerabilities required a comprehensive and sustained approach as well as adequate resources, training, reliable data, effective co-operation and continued political attention. The full text of Ms Tulina's statement is set out in Appendix VII.

49. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Latvia and decided to request the Government of Latvia to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.5. Malta

50. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Malta.

51. Ms Alexia Manduca (Manager, Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry for European Funds, Equality, Reforms and Social Dialogue of Malta) expressed appreciation of the professionalism and constructive co-operation demonstrated by GRETA and the Secretariat throughout the fourth evaluation round. Ms Manduca highlighted the ongoing work to develop a National Referral Mechanism and amend the anti-trafficking legislation by introducing, as an aggravating circumstance, the offence of human trafficking committed against a child, irrespective of the means used. She also reaffirmed the Maltese authorities' commitment to addressing GRETA's recommendations through the development and implementation of Malta's next Action Plan. The full text of Ms Manduca's statement is set out in Appendix VIII.

52. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Malta and decided to request the Government of Malta to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.6. Norway

53. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Norway.

54. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security) highlighted some of the measures taken by the authorities, including the adoption of a new Strategy against Human Trafficking shortly before GRETA's visit to Norway. Further, in June 2026, an amendment had been adopted to the Immigration Act, introducing a new criminal provision (section 108) which applies to exploitation of specific categories of foreigners who are particularly vulnerable. In addition, he noted that the Norwegian Human Rights Institution, which had been designated as independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, would organise on 15 September 2026 a seminar on GRETA's recommendations, with the participation of the political leadership of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, members of Parliament, representatives of civil society and the prosecution service. The full text of Mr Austad's statement is set out in Appendix IX.

55. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Norway and decided to request the Government of Norway to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.7 Portugal

56. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Portugal.

57. Ms Natalia Campbell (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Council of Europe) expressed appreciation to GRETA for its work in the framework of the fourth evaluation round and to the Secretariat for its sustained support. She highlighted a number of ongoing measures in the context of the implementation of the 5th National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan, covering the period 2025-2027, and the transposition of the revised Anti-trafficking Directive (EU) 2024/1712. Further, she referred to Portugal's investment in specialised victims assistance and protection, including multidisciplinary teams and dedicated accommodation structures, as well as the role of the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings in collecting, processing and analysing data to support evidence-based policy-making. The full text of Ms Campbell's statement is set out in Appendix X.

58. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Portugal and decided to request the Government of Portugal to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

6.8. United Kingdom

59. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning the United Kingdom.

60. Mr David Corlett (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe) thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for the report and for their continued engagement with the UK throughout this process. He welcomed the fact that the report recognised a number of positive developments in the UK, and referred to step taken to improve the National Referral Mechanism and strengthen the criminal justice response. As part of areas for further improvement identified in the report, he referred to ongoing work aimed at addressing vulnerabilities among at-risks groups, enhancing long-term support, legal assistance and compensation, as well as strengthening co-operation with online platforms and support for child victims. This included building on existing pilots such as devolved decision-making for children and expanding the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian's service to cover all of England and Wales. The full text of Mr Corlett's statement is set out in Appendix XI.

61. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of the United Kingdom and decided to request the Government of the United Kingdom to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 3 July 2028.

Agenda item 7: Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations

62. The Chair of the Committee noted that since the previous meeting of the Committee, reports concerning the steps taken to implement previous Committee of the Parties' recommendations had been submitted by the Governments Andorra, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Monaco, the Netherlands and Switzerland in the context of the third evaluation round. The authorities of Lithuania had asked for an extension of the deadline for submitting their report, which was 21 June 2026. The Chair invited the representatives of the countries concerned to take the floor.

Third evaluation round

7.1. Andorra

63. Ambassador Andreu Jordi (Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe) welcomed the organisation of a roundtable in Andorra in March 2026 which allowed to take stock of the progress made since the third evaluation round and identify areas in which the Council of Europe could provide further assistance to the Andorran authorities. Ambassador Jordi pointed out that the Andorran Government's report demonstrated substantial progress and reaffirmed Andorra's commitment to combatting human trafficking. The full text of Ambassador Jordi's statement is set out in Appendix XII.

64. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Andorran authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the Andorran authorities addressed all the urgent recommendations made in GRETA's third evaluation report, as well as other important aspects of the Convention's implementation. Among the tangible efforts made, she pointed out the adoption of a second "Strategic Policy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" for 2024-2027, the strengthening of the human resources of the labour inspectorate and the increase in proactive labour inspections. However, noting that no victims of human trafficking had been identified in Andorra, she noted the importance of proactive identification, as well the need to revise the conditions for granting residence permits to victims of trafficking.

7.2. Finland

65. Ms Marjatta Hiekka (Legal Counsellor in the Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) noted that GRETA's report and recommendations had provided an important framework for Finland's anti-trafficking efforts. She outlined the main measures taken by the Finnish authorities to implement GRETA's recommendations, including expanding training and awareness-raising activities for relevant professionals and reducing administrative barriers to facilitate victims' access to residence permits. She also highlighted key elements of the current National Action Plan, explaining that it shifted the focus from individual reforms to a systematic and monitored implementation process, with clear follow-up mechanisms. Finally, she emphasised the importance of co-ordinated action by States Parties, shared responsibility, and unwavering commitment in the fight against human trafficking. The full text of Ms Hiekka's statement is set out in Appendix XIII.

66. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Finnish authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the Finnish authorities addressed all urgent issues raised in GRETA's third evaluation report. Positive developments included the adoption of a new National Action Plan against Human Trafficking for 2026-2027 and the inclusion of forced marriage as a purpose of human trafficking in the Criminal Code. The report also referred to measures taken with a view to strengthening the criminal justice response to human trafficking, including expanding the investigative powers of the Finnish Border Guard to cover human trafficking offences not linked to the facilitation of illegal entry. However, the eligibility criteria for state compensation, in particular the requirement of significant damage, had not been amended. The length of criminal proceedings remained a major concern, undermining victims' access to justice and hampering the establishment of criminal liability. Moreover, no measures had been taken to address shortcomings in the provision of accommodation to male victims of trafficking.

7.3. Germany

67. Ms Yola Kretschmann (Division for Combating Trafficking of Human Beings and Prostitute Protection Act of the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany) welcomed the organisation of a roundtable in Berlin in February 2026 which allowed to take stock of the progress made since the publication of GRETA's third evaluation round on Germany. One notable development was the adoption of the first National Action Plan on the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking and Support for Victims, which covers all forms of trafficking in human beings as recommended by GRETA, as well as a specific National Action Plan against Labour Exploitation and Forced Labour. Legislative amendments have also been prepared with the aim of strengthening criminal prosecution, introducing a specific non-punishment provision and transposing the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive. The full text of Ms Kretschmann's statement is set out in Appendix XIV.

68. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the German authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the German authorities addressed all urgent recommendations from GRETA's third evaluation report. In addition to the already mentioned adoption of Germany's first National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking and the Protection of Victims, steps have been taken to improve access to state compensation for victims of trafficking. Further, the report referred to ongoing work on minimum standards for the identification, support and referral of victims, and efforts to improve data collection through the National Rapporteur Mechanism. Despite these improvements, the provision of safe accommodation for victims of human trafficking remained problematic, in particular for male and transgender victims. In addition, no further steps had been taken regarding residence permits for victims of trafficking and the issuing of a recovery and reflection period.

7.4. Hungary

69. Mr Zoltán Turai (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe) expressed appreciation of GRETA's report and indicated that the Hungarian authorities looked forward to continuing the co-operation with GRETA and the Committee of the Parties.

70. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Hungarian authorities' report. Ms Rijken stated that the report submitted by the Hungarian authorities referred to improved access to psychological assistance for victims of trafficking, through the opening of additional victim support centres. Further, steps had been taken to improve victim identification by paying specific attention to victims with disabilities and revising the list of indicators. Thanks to external financing provided by Switzerland, shelters for victims had hired social workers to support aftercare services. However, no progress had been made on including victims who are migrants with irregular residence status in the National Referral Mechanism. The Criminal Code provisions on human trafficking had not been amended as recommended by GRETA, but a bill pending before Parliament expanded the list of exploitative purposes in the criminalisation of human trafficking. No new developments regarding the recovery and reflection period were mentioned in the report.

7.5. Italy

71. Mr Alessandro Sasso (Head of the Unit for Interventions against Trafficking in Human Beings and Severe Labour Exploitation at the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Italian Prime Minister's Office) noted that Italy had taken several significant steps to strengthen victims' access to justice and effective remedy. In particular, a Legislative Decree was adopted on 4 June 2026 in order to implement the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, which, *inter alia*, regulates the recovery and reflection period for victims of trafficking, criminalises the use of services of trafficked persons and strengthens the state compensation mechanism. Further, financial resources for victim assistance had been increased. Other priority areas included strengthening the prevention, detection and combat against trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, as well as the application of the non-punishment principle. The full text of Mr Sasso's statement is set out in Appendix XV.

72. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Italian authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the Italian authorities addressed all the urgent recommendations made in GRETA's third evaluation report. She highlighted, in particular, the adoption of guidelines for the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism at the local level, activities to strengthen detection and support to victims of labour exploitation, as well as an increase in the number of investigations into human trafficking cases. However, Ms Rijken noted that there were certain areas where implementation challenges remained. In particular, there was still no specific provision on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking and it continues to be very difficult for victims of trafficking to obtain compensation. Furthermore, efforts to improve the housing conditions of migrant workers living in informal settlements and to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking were insufficient to make a substantial difference.

7.6. Lithuania

73. In the absence of a report from Lithuania, the Committee agreed to postpone the consideration of this item to its next meeting.

7.7. Monaco

74. Ambassador Gabriel Ravel (Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe) highlighted the steps taken by Monaco to implement the recommendation of the Committee of the Parties, in particular the adoption of a circular of the Department of Justice on 28 November 2025 concerning the identification of, and assistance to, victims of trafficking. He pointed out that, pursuant to the Monegasque Constitution, the Sovereign Ordinance No. 605 criminalises human trafficking and there is no need to insert this crime in the Criminal Code. Further, he underlined that a specific training module on the identification and protection of victims of trafficking had been developed. Moreover, work was ongoing on a draft circular on the Inter-agency co-ordination plan for the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking in human beings. The full text of Ambassador Ravel's statement is set out in Appendix XVI.

75. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Monegasque authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the Monegasque authorities addressed all the urgent recommendations made in GRETA's third evaluation report. Significant steps had been taken in several key areas, in particular through the adoption of the circular of the Department of Justice, the training of relevant professionals and awareness raising of the general public. Despite these improvements, GRETA's President underlined that several areas where further efforts were required, such as the proactive identification victims of human trafficking, the adoption of specific provisions relating to the recovery and reflection period and residence permits for victims of trafficking.

7.8. Netherlands

76. Mr Eros Puggioni (Policy Officer in the Department of Organised Crime of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security) thanked GRETA for its efforts and the recommendations contained in the report on the Netherlands. He expressed his appreciation for the constructive co-operation and communication with the GRETA Secretariat and apologised for not having met the deadline for submitting the interim report in December 2025. In the interest of time, he did not deliver his written statement orally. The full text of Mr Puggioni's statement is set out in Appendix XVII.

77. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Dutch authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report submitted by the Netherlands addressed all recommendations from GRETA's third evaluation report. It refers to several legislative developments, including the Admission of Supplied Workers Act, which introduces an authorisation system for companies supplying workers to other employers. Further, the Bill on the Modernisation and Expansion of the Criminalisation of Human Trafficking, which is currently before the Senate, expressly incorporates "abuse of a position of vulnerability" into the definition of human trafficking and introduces an explicit provision on the non-punishment of victims of human trafficking. Another bill sent to the House of Representatives criminalises the knowing use of services provided by victims of human trafficking. Despite these improvements, Ms Rijken highlighted several areas where further action was needed, including the adoption of a National Referral Mechanism for child victims of trafficking that takes account of their specific circumstances and needs, and steps to reduce the risk of unaccompanied migrant children disappearing from institutional care. Further, she noted that the identification of victims, on which assistance measures depends, remained linked to the prospects of investigating and prosecuting traffickers.

7.9. Switzerland

78. Mr Boris Mesaric (Head of the Department for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Migrant Trafficking of the Swiss Federal Police Office) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their re-election. He noted that Switzerland viewed the fight against human trafficking as an important mission to ensure the safety and protection of everyone on its territory and as part of the fight against organised crime, which is why human trafficking was included in the Federal Council's new strategy against organised crime. Further, he referred to a draft amendment to the Criminal Code. The full text of Mr Mesaric's statement is set out in Appendix XVIII.

79. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Swiss authorities' report. Ms Rijken stated that the report submitted by the Swiss authorities addressed the urgent recommendations made by the Committee of the Parties. She referred to the draft legislation proposing to amend the human trafficking offence in the Swiss Criminal Code and two recent Federal Tribunal judgments confirming that the international definition of trafficking, including the elements of act, means and exploitation, is applicable in Swiss law. Further, the brochure for labour and market inspectors had been updated and a national victim protection programme was reportedly ready for adoption. To improve the identification of child victims of trafficking, a national working group was preparing recommendations to the cantons, together with a factsheet and indicators. Nevertheless, Ms Rijken noted that some of the recommendations remained to be implemented, in particular those related to access to assistance under the

Victim Assistance Act for victims of trafficking identified in Switzerland who had been exploited abroad as well as victims' access to compensation.

Agenda item 8: Discussion on the risks of human trafficking in the context of the deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children

80. The Chair noted that Ms Julia Sachenko, an anti-trafficking and child protection expert, had joined the meeting online to present the report "Analysis of trafficking in human beings risks in the context of the displacement and deportation of Ukrainian children in the conditions of an international armed conflict". This analytical mapping report, prepared at the request of GRETA, examined key patterns, risks and legal and protection gaps related to the trafficking of Ukrainian children in the context of the forcible transfer and unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children. On the basis of the report, at its recent plenary meeting (22-26 June), GRETA had agreed on the text of a statement which was circulated to the Committee of the Parties on 2 July 2026.

81. Ms Sachenko noted that the analytical report she had prepared highlighted a number of recurring patterns placing unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children in situations of acute vulnerability and significantly increasing the risk of further abuse. They includes the transfer of children to closed camps and institutions under the guise of evacuation or recreational activities, their involvement in forced labour and domestic work, confiscation of identity documents, and changes in the children's legal status, guardianship and citizenship. A limited number of cases were recognised by the Ukrainian authorities as human trafficking where the requisite elements, including exploitative purpose, had been established and the children concerned were granted victim status. While the majority of documented cases were investigated in Ukraine as war crimes, the existence of such crimes did not exclude the possibility that elements of human trafficking could be present in individual cases. The analysis identified a number of factors that increased the risk of exploitation, including isolation, loss of legal ties with the country of origin, closed environments and the absence of independent monitoring. Ms Sachenko concluded that the application of the Convention may need to evolve in the context of armed conflict.

82. Ms Oleksandra Khamulenko (Head of the Department for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, Combating Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence of the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine) took the floor online and welcomed the preparation of the analytical report and statement by GRETA. She confirmed that, in several cases, evidence of exploitation, in particular forced labour, had been established, and the children concerned had been recognised as victims of human trafficking. Beyond these formally identified victims, the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer created risk of human trafficking, including through changes in guardianship and citizenship of the children.

83. The Chair suggested that the Committee of the Parties join the statement prepared by GRETA. The representatives of Montenegro and Lithuania strongly supported the statement and thanked GRETA for preparing it. The Chair proposed that the Committee take a decision by consensus on whether to associate itself with GRETA's statement through a silence procedure and invited members of the Committee to raise any objections by Tuesday, 7 July 2026, close of business.

Agenda item 9: Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations

84. Due to lack of time, this agenda item was not discussed.

Agenda item 10: Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties

85. Ms Larysa Bilozir (Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Smuggling and Trafficking of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) took the floor online and expressed her appreciation for the crucial work carried out by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties in monitoring, evaluating and driving national progress to ensure that the Convention remained responsive to evolving challenges. She recalled the latest Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2323 (2020), which called upon State Parties to ensure effective and timely implementation of all country-specific GRETA recommendations and invited them to consider common policies to combat human trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage or illegal adoption. Ms Bilozir stated that, as Rapporteur for the report “Need for enhanced international co-operation on combatting human trafficking”, her priority would be to focus on holding perpetrators to account and to protect victims, regardless of borders, and addressing the full cycle of trafficking - from recruitment to exploitation, whether sexual or forced labour. The full text of Ms Bilozir’s statement is set out in Appendix XIX.

Agenda item 11: Dates of future meetings

86. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on 27 November 2026.

87. The Chair recalled that at that meeting, the Committee would hold elections for GRETA members, and that the deadline for submitting candidates had been set at 27 September 2026, i.e. at the latest two months between the date of the election. She stressed that any candidatures received after the deadline would be treated as being submitted not in compliance with the requirements of Resolution CM/Res(2013)28 and the candidates would not be eligible to stand for election.

Agenda item 12: Other business

Agenda item 13: Adoption of the list of decisions taken

88. The Committee approved the decisions taken at the meeting, namely:

- adoption of recommendations in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom;
- postponing to the 39th meeting the adoption of the recommendation in respect of Armenia;
- postponing to the 39th meeting the examination of the report submitted in reply to the Committee of the Parties’ recommendations by Lithuania.

Thematic discussion on new trends in trafficking in human beings which pose particular challenges to State Parties and innovative solutions to address them

89. The Chair recalled that, at its last meeting, the Committee had decided to hold a thematic discussion on new trends in trafficking in human beings which pose particular challenges to State Parties and innovative solutions to address them. Subsequently, three thematic areas had been identified: (i) human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities, in particular of children; (ii) human trafficking of persons from Latin America, for sexual and other forms of exploitation; (iii) human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

Panel 1: Human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities, in particular of children

90. The Chair recalled that human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities accounted for an increasing number of identified victims, many of whom were children. The criminal offences that victims were compelled or forced to commit ranged from drug cultivation to property crimes and cybercrime. The Chair invited the speakers from three countries – Belgium, France and the Netherlands – where this form of exploitation had been identified as a growing trend to take the floor.

91. Mr Jean-François Minet (Attaché at the General Directorate for Legislation, Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights, Ministry of Justice of Belgium) presented Belgium's experience regarding human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities. He indicated that in 2024, 8 (6 children and 2 adults) of the 150 victims newly assisted by specialised centres were victims of this form of exploitation. Furthermore, between 2015 and 2024, Esperanto, the specialised centre for child victims, had provided support to 39 children considered to be potential victims of trafficking for the purposes of exploitation in criminal activities (out of a total of 109 children). Mr Minet presented several court cases relating to this form of exploitation that had been dealt with by the Belgian courts. In a case from 2024, the victims were two unaccompanied children exploited in drug trafficking. In another case of 2024, an adult victim had been exploited to carry out online scams via dating apps. Mr Minet outlined the priority measures implemented by Belgium to address this form of exploitation, including training for prosecutors and judges (compulsory training on human trafficking for trainee prosecutors and judges, regardless of their future specialisation), appointing specialised guardians for unaccompanied children, raising children's awareness of the risks of recruitment via online platforms, conducting of proactive investigations for this form of exploitation, and the value of having a legal provision enshrining the non-punishment principle.

92. Ms Roxana Maracineanu (General Secretary of the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Against Violence and the Fight Against Human Trafficking - Miprof) noted that among the 419 child victims assisted by NGOs in 2024, 43% were victims of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities. Ms Maracineanu explained that exploiters use psychoactive substances to establish and maintain their control over the victims. Runaway children are one of the main groups targeted by exploitation networks. She presented several recent cases illustrating this phenomenon. The most notable is the so-called "Trocadéro" case, in which seven persons were convicted in 2024 for human trafficking of unaccompanied children who were forced to commit thefts and take part in drug trafficking. In another case, in 2022, a court in Marseille classified a case involving children and young adults as human trafficking within the context of drug trafficking. Ms Maracineanu noted that French law includes provisions that prevent punishing trafficking victims for offences they were forced to commit. However, she pointed out that these provisions had certain limitations and that their implementation could sometimes be difficult in practice. Finally, Ms Maracineanu outlined the main challenges faced in protecting child victims. She particularly emphasised the need to strengthen the investigative capacities of the police and prosecutors, to ensure suitable shelter and housing solutions, as well as comprehensive care for victims, including effective access to medical care, especially as regards mental health and addictions. She also highlighted the importance of better protecting social workers, healthcare professionals, and everyone involved in reporting cases, as they can be exposed to risks because of their work.

93. Mr Eros Puggioni (Policy Officer at the Directorate General for Justice and Law Enforcement, Department of Organised Crime of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security) noted that victims of human trafficking are exploited in a wide range of criminal activities, including carrying out explosive attacks, committing drug-related offences (such as retrieving smuggled drugs from containers in Dutch ports), laundering money, transferring funds as "money mules" or "straw men", purchasing goods on credit for fraudulent purposes, as well as theft and robbery. Mr Puggioni explained that traffickers most commonly target homeless people, individuals with drug addictions and people from disadvantaged communities. However, a particularly concerning trend is the recruitment of youth, including children under the age of 12, as well as persons with mild intellectual disabilities. Victims are most often recruited online through social media and gaming platforms. Mr Puggioni presented the preventive measures implemented by the Dutch

authorities, which include the National Programme for Quality of Life and Safety (NPLV) and Keerpunt, an online platform financed by the Ministry of Justice and Security and operated by the Centre against Child and Human Trafficking. In addition, the National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan includes several measures specifically aimed at combating trafficking for the purpose of criminal exploitation. Finally, the Bill on the Modernisation and Expansion of the Criminalisation of Human Trafficking, which is currently before the Senate, introduces an explicit provision in the Criminal Code establishing the non-punishment principle for victims of human trafficking who have been compelled to engage in criminal activities.

Panel 2: Human trafficking of persons from Latin America, for sexual and other forms of exploitation

94. The Chair indicated that in recent years, there had been an increase in the number of victims of trafficking from Latin American countries, who arrived in Europe, usually transiting through Spain or Portugal, making use of the visa-free regime. She noted that trafficking networks recruited under false pretences young women and transgender persons who were then exploited in prostitution and moved around countries. In addition, a rise in cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation of persons from Latin America had been observed. The Chair indicated that there would be presentations from three countries – Germany, Norway and Poland – where human trafficking of persons from Latin America had been identified as a growing trend.

95. Ms Aleksandra Chołuj (Head of Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Being, Hate Crimes and for Supporting Actions in the area of EU Internal Security Policy, Department of Public Order, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of Poland) underlined that Poland had increasingly become a country of destination of foreign victims of human trafficking. Labour exploitation had been the predominant form of exploitation for many years in Poland and victims of Latin America were among the largest group of identified and assisted foreign victims, in particular men from Colombia. The main economic sectors of these victims were meat and food processing, construction, logistics and warehousing, as well as agriculture. The modus operandi of traffickers usually involved recruitment through online platforms, debt bondage and dependence on the employer for accommodation, transportation and regularisation of the stay, as well as restrictions of freedom of movement. Victims usually experienced language barriers and had low knowledge of their rights and fear of the authorities. Ms Chołuj underlined the main challenges faced by the authorities, including identification (difficulty to distinguish between human trafficking and forced labour), language and cultural barriers as well as insufficient capacities of shelters. In order to overcome these challenges, several actions were being taken by the Polish authorities including co-operation with the private sector, joint investigation teams (JIT) with Latin American countries, as well as cultural training for police officers.

96. Ms Sabrina Burkhart (Board member of KOK – the German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings) made a presentation on the situation in Germany concerning trafficking of persons from Latin America, who were mostly subjected to sexual exploitation. In Germany, prostitution is regulated by the 2017 Prostitute Protection Act, which aims to strengthen the sexual self-determination rights of persons engaged in prostitution, and combat crimes such as human trafficking, violence, exploitation of persons engaged in prostitution and pimping. Persons from Latin America arrived in Germany on false promised of legal employment, following which their documents were taken away and they are exploited in prostitution. In addition, there were cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, in particular in agriculture, cleaning services and the meat industry. The phenomenon of “poly-exploitation” – involving exploitation in prostitution and drug distribution – was also observed. Ms Burkhart analysed the push and pull factors underlying human trafficking and the need for measure to address them.

97. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of Norway) made a presentation on the exploitation of Colombian women in prostitution networks in Norway. He noted that in Norway, the Penal Code prohibited the purchase of sex, but selling sex was allowed. The visa-free regime allowed Colombian citizens to remain in Norway for up to 90 days. There had been an increase in the number of young women and transgender women from Colombia who arrived in Norway, usually via Spain, but more recently directly from Colombia (Medellin). Many of them had no prior experience in prostitution, had incorrect

knowledge about the legal situation, and were in debt and under pressure to sell sex. They moved around short-term rented flats and hotels where they provided sexual services advertised via commercial websites or social media platforms. In response, the police organised national days of action in 2025 during which 61 persons were checked. Most of the women were from Colombia and stated that they had arrived in Norway voluntarily, with practical support from friends. prostitution, had incorrect knowledge about the legal situation, and were in debt and under pressure to sell sex. They moved around short-term rented flats and hotels where they provided sexual services advertised via commercial websites or social media platforms. Mr Austad referred to an ongoing mapping exercise carried out by Pro Sentret (Oslo Municipality's support centre for individuals involved in the exchange of sexual services, which functions as Norway's National Resource Centre on prostitution issues), based on individual and group interviews, with the report being expected in early 2027.

Panel 3: Human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation

98. The Chair noted that trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation was on the rise, accounting for 40% of all detected cases of trafficking globally, and that this form of trafficking had emerged as the predominant form of exploitation in some European countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, Finland, Poland, Moldova and Greece. To address this worrying trend, in September 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe had adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)21 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. The recommendation called on Council of Europe member states to adopt laws, policies and strategies which address human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, following a human rights-based and victim-centred approach, and its Explanatory memorandum provided a roadmap for action. The Chair recalled that implementation of the Recommendation should be examined by the Committee of Ministers, in co-operation with other relevant bodies and the participation of relevant stakeholders, no later than five years after its adoption, i.e. by September 2027. The Chair indicated that presentation would be made from three countries - Finland, Georgia and Germany - where this form of exploitation had been identified as a growing trend.

99. Ms Venla Roth (Government Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator at the Ministry of Justice of Finland) focused on two closely related issues: labour exploitation and the exploitation risks faced by international students, a phenomenon that had become an increasing concern in Finland. Ms Roth emphasised the central role of the labour inspectorate in preventing labour exploitation. She also noted that residence permit options for victims of labour exploitation had been strengthened, encouraging victims to come forward and seek assistance. Low-threshold support was available through the National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking, as well as through civil society organisations. Ms Roth further explained that legislative reforms introduced in 2022 were designed to facilitate international students' access to Finland and to strengthen the country's attractiveness as a study destination. At the same time, the opportunities for students' family members to accompany them were expanded. Following these reforms, the number of incoming students and accompanying family members had increased significantly. However, many originated from countries with lower living standards, and subsequent reporting had highlighted concerns relating to financial hardship and labour exploitation. Ms Roth described the factors contributing to these vulnerabilities, including the role of dishonest agents and other intermediaries who provided misleading information about employment opportunities and living costs in Finland. In some cases, individuals entered Finland or the Schengen area on a student residence permit without a genuine intention to pursue studies, which made them dependent on informal networks or intermediaries and increased their exposure to exploitation. Ms Roth indicated that Finland was in the process of preparing legislative amendments to address these concerns and strengthen oversight of the system. Finally, Ms Roth stressed the need for increased attention to prevention and consideration of how different policy measures impact human trafficking and exploitation.

100. Ms Ana Ivanishvili (Deputy Head of the International Relations and Legal Co-operation Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia) noted that, in recent years, the number of cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation (which includes exploitation in begging) had increased in Georgia and most of them concern children exploited in begging by family members. She presented several measures implemented by the Georgian authorities in order to prevent and combat trafficking for the purpose of labour

exploitation, including special mobile groups to identify children in street situations and the adoption of the National Strategy for 2025-2030 on the protection of children in street situations. In addition, the budget and number of labour inspectors had been increased. Further, amendments to the Law on Labour Migration were passed in 2025 in order to strengthen the protection of migrant workers, including through a system for registering and monitoring employment of foreign workers. A special working group was also established by the Public Prosecutor's Office, with law enforcement and labour inspectors, on trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. Other priority activities included a Memorandum of Understanding between relevant agencies to refer possible cases of labour exploitation, as well as training activities and sensitisation.

101. Mr Tobias Seitz (Researcher and Policy Adviser at the National Rapporteur Mechanism on Trafficking in Human Beings, German Institute for Human Rights) highlighted different measure taken by Germany to prevent and combat human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, including the adoption of the first National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking and Protect Trafficked Persons in December 2024, and the National Action Plan against Labour Exploitation and Forced Labour in February 2025. Further, there had been an increase in specialised support organisations for victims of labour exploitation, the opening of the first specialised shelter for victims of labour exploitation in Berlin, enhanced training for relevant professionals, and the implementation of an e-learning tool for law enforcement. Mr Seitz identified a number of challenges, including the increasing number of victims from third countries, in particular Latin America, South and South-East Asia, the lack of regulation of private labour recruiters and subcontractor chains, especially in the delivery and logistics sectors, and difficulties in identifying exploited workers, including in relation to granting them a recovery and reflection period and applying the non-punishment principle. Ms Seitz noted that the ban on subcontracting in the meat industry had produced positive results on working conditions in the sector and therefore discussions on introducing similar bans in other sectors, in particular delivery and logistics, were underway. Finally, he referred to relevant activities of the Independent National Rapporteur/German Institute for Human Rights, including studies on accommodation for victims of labour exploitation and cross-border referrals of victims of human trafficking, as well as the forthcoming second monitoring report on human trafficking in Germany.

102. Due to lack of time, only one intervention could be taken from the floor. Ambassador Rosa Velázquez Álvarez (Permanent Representative of Spain to the Council of Europe) noted that in Spain, victims of human trafficking were granted residence permits entitling them to work, which was important for their rehabilitation and resocialisation. She highlighted the importance of dialogue with countries of origin and multilateral co-operation.

103. The Chair thanked all speakers for their highly relevant and informative presentations and stressed that this discussion during the meeting of the Committee of the Parties had been a good opportunity for mutual learning and sharing.

Appendix I

Agenda

Morning session (09:30 – 12:00)

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda
3. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties
4. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
5. Exchange of views with the President of GRETA
6. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom (fourth evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

Fourth evaluation round

- 6.1. Armenia
 - 6.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - 6.3. France
 - 6.4. Latvia
 - 6.5. Malta
 - 6.6. Norway
 - 6.7. Portugal
 - 6.8. United Kingdom
7. Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations

Third evaluation round

- 7.1. Andorra
- 7.2. Finland
- 7.3. Germany
- 7.4. Hungary
- 7.5. Italy
- 7.6. Lithuania
- 7.7. Monaco
- 7.8. Netherlands
- 7.9. Switzerland

8. Discussion on the risks of human trafficking in the context of the deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children
9. Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations
10. Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties
11. Dates of future meetings
12. Other business
13. Adoption of the list of decisions taken

12:00 – 13:30 Buffet lunch at the Blue Restaurant

Afternoon session (13:30 – 16:00)

Thematic discussion on new trends in trafficking in human beings which pose particular challenges to State Parties and innovative solutions to address them

Panel 1: Human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities, in particular of children

Speakers

- Belgium: Mr Jean-François Minet
Attaché, Ministry of Justice, General Directorate Legislation, Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights, Criminal Policy Service, Organised Crime Unit, Trafficking and smuggling in human beings
- France: Ms Roxana Maracineanu
General Secretary of MIPROF (Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains - *Interministerial Task Force for the Protection of Women against Violence and the Fight against Human Trafficking*)
- Netherlands: Mr Eros Puggioni
Policy Officer, Ministry of Justice and Security, Directorate General for Justice and Law Enforcement, Department of Organised Crime

Panel 2: Human trafficking of persons from Latin America, for sexual and other forms of exploitation

Speakers

- Germany: Ms Sabrina Burkhart
Board member, KOK - German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings
- Norway: Mr Jan Austad
Senior Adviser, Ministry of Justice and Public Security
- Poland: Ms Aleksandra Chołuj
Head of Unit for Combating THB, Hate Crimes and for Supporting Actions in the area of EU Internal Security Policy, Department of Public Order, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration

Panel 3: Human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation

Speakers

Finland: Ms Venla Roth
Government Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, Ministry of Justice

Georgia: Ms Ana Ivanishvili
Deputy Head, International Relations and Legal Co-operation Department, Ministry of Justice

Germany: Mr Tobias Seitz
Researcher and Policy Adviser, National Rapporteur Mechanism on Trafficking in Human Beings
German Institute for Human Rights

Appendix II

List of participants

Members of the Committee of the Parties Membres du Comité des Parties

ALBANIA / ALBANIE

Mr Sohrab Orujov (*online / en ligne*)
Head of Division of the Main Department on the Fight
against Human Trafficking
Ministry of Internal Affairs

ANDORRA / ANDORRE

M. Andreu Jordi
Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire
Représentant Permanent
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Mme Olimpia Torres Barros
Représentante Permanente Adjointe
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Mme Eva Garcia Lluelles (*online / en ligne*)
Chef de la Section des Relations Internationales et
Coopération juridique
Département de la Justice et de l'intérieur

Mme Marta Villagrasa Noguera (*online / en ligne*)
Lawyer
Section des Relations Internationales et Coopération
juridique
Département de la Justice et de l'intérieur

ARMENIA / ARMÉNIE

Mr Aramays Grigoryan
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

Mr Andreas Lins
Deputy Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAÏDJAN

Mr Fakhraddin Ismayilov
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Mr Sanan Aliyev
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Mr Jonathan Piepers
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Mr Jean-François Minet
Attaché
Ministry of Justice
General Directorate Legislation, Civil Liberties and
Fundamental Rights
Criminal Policy Service
Organised Crime Unit
Trafficking and smuggling in human beings

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE

Mr Haris Bašić
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Ms Dragana Kremenovic Kusmuk
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

BULGARIA / BULGARIE

Ms Genka Georgieva
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Ms Vanya Georgieva (*online / en ligne*)
Senior Expert
Secretariat of the National Commission
for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

CROATIA / CROATIE

Mr Ivan Bušić
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

CYPRUS / CHYPRE

Mr John Hunter
Deputy Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Mr Andreas Hadjigeorgiou
Officer of Justice and Public Order A'
Department of Human Rights, Anti-Crime and
Correctional Policy
Ministry of Justice and Public Order

CZECH REPUBLIC / RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE

Ms Olga Šimáčková
Office of the Director General for International and
European Cooperation
Ministry of Justice

DENMARK / DANEMARK

Mr Jan Rasmussen
Deputy Chief Superintendent
Danish Border Police

ESTONIA / ESTONIE

Ms Merit Kaasik
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

FINLAND / FINLANDE

Ms Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen (*Chair / Présidente*)
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Ms Marjatta Hiekka
Legal Counsellor
Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Ms Venla Roth
Government Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator
Ministry of Justice

FRANCE

M. Robin Caballero
Adjoint au Représentant Permanent
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

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Mr David Corlett
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Participants of the Committee of the Parties Participants du Comité des Parties

COUNCIL OF EUROPE BODIES /
ORGANES DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr Michael O' Flaherty
(*apologised/excused*)

*PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE / ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DU
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Ms Larysa Bilozir (*online / en ligne*)
Chairperson
Subcommittee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in
Human Beings,
PACE Committee on Migration
Refugees and Displaced Persons

Others / Autres

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON ACTION AGAINST
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS /
GROUPE D'EXPERTS SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA
TRAITE DES ÊTRES HUMAINS (GRETA)

Ms Conny Rijken
President of GRETA

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Secretariat / Secrétariat

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Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA and Committee of the Parties) /
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Ms Petya Nestorova
Executive Secretary

Mr Elvin Aliyev
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Mr Mesut Bedirhanoglu
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Interpreters / Interprètes

Mr Luke Tilden
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Appendix III

Statement by Ms Conny Rijken, President of GRETA

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the last meeting of the Committee of the Parties on 18 December 2025, GRETA has held two plenary meetings, in March and last week, and has published eight new country reports, concerning Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom. These eight reports, issued under the fourth round of evaluation of the Convention, are the subject of draft recommendations that you will discuss and adopt today.

At its plenary meeting held last week, GRETA adopted a new draft guidance note on residence permits for victims of human trafficking (Article 14 of the Convention), which will be published next week. The regularisation of the legal status of victims of trafficking is key for their access to assistance and also enables victims to remain in the country and participate in trafficking-related investigations and trials. Residence status offers victims a framework that guarantees their safety and stability, and can enable them to access justice. GRETA has aimed, through the guidance note, to address existing shortcomings in the granting of residence permits to trafficking victims, and to provide practical recommendations.

Further, GRETA has made progress on the preparation of a new compendium of good practices in the implementation of the Convention, which is expected to be published in September.

In addition, GRETA has started reflecting on the focus and design of the fifth evaluation round of the Convention, which should be launched next year.

GRETA has continued developing synergies with other Council of Europe bodies and recently held an exchange with the European Committee of Social Rights, as well as collaborating with the Council of Europe Police Network to organise a conference on "Strengthening Police Responses to Trafficking in Human Beings: Applying Council of Europe Standards in Practice", which took place in the last two days.

GRETA recently published the 15th general report on its activities, covering the year 2025, which includes a thematic chapter on human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities. This form of trafficking is on the rise in Europe and requires urgent attention and action. For example, forced criminality has emerged as the main form of exploitation of child victims of trafficking in the United Kingdom, affecting predominantly UK children. In Croatia, criminal exploitation accounted for nearly a third of the identified victims in the period 2020-2024. In Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Denmark and the Netherlands, trafficking for criminal exploitation accounted for between 7% and 15% of victims.

Human trafficking for exploitation in criminal activities, in which victims are compelled to commit crimes, is often linked to other forms of organised crime such as drug trafficking, property crimes, migrant smuggling, money laundering, document fraud and online scams. The recruitment of victims is often initiated online, via job announcements, service advertisements, gaming sites and social media.

In its report, GRETA underlines the vulnerability factors that traffickers exploit to compel victims to carry out criminal activities, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, precarious migration status, disabilities and addictions. Children and young people are exposed to numerous risk factors, especially unaccompanied or separated minors, children in residential care and from disadvantaged minorities.

Failure to identify persons compelled to commit criminal offences as victims results in their being arrested, prosecuted, imprisoned and/or deported. This is why human trafficking for exploitation in criminal activities is directly related to the application of the non-punishment provision enshrined in Article 26 of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention, which requires states parties to provide for the possibility

of not imposing penalties on victims of trafficking in human beings for their involvement in unlawful activities, to the extent that they have been compelled to do so.

GRETA's 15th General report looks into the implementation of Article 26 of the Convention. It is positive to note the number of countries which have adopted specific legal provisions concerning the non-punishment of victims of trafficking has increased following recommendations made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties. Their number currently stands at 22 and more State Parties to the Convention have draft legislation under way. Nevertheless, progress remains incomplete, and GRETA calls on States Parties to continue strengthening their legal frameworks and practices. In collaboration with the OSCE, GRETA will be working on preparing guidance on the implementation of the non-punishment provision.

The next annual meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs, which is co-organised with the OSCE on a rotating basis, will take place in Vienna on 28-29 September. The topics that have been selected for discussion are the identification of victims of human trafficking in detention settings, the role of municipalities and regions in preventing and combating human trafficking, and the application of the non-punishment principle, and integrating anti-trafficking responses into broader organised crime strategies.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

As part of its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention, GRETA has repeatedly highlighted the risks of human trafficking of Ukrainian children, which are amplified by the ongoing war in Ukraine and mass displacement. GRETA contributed to the work of the Council of Europe [Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine](#) and the preparation of the [report](#) "Understanding the risks of human trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation, of children of Ukraine". Following a visit to Ukraine in May 2024, GRETA issued a [report](#) which highlighted that the deportation of children from temporary occupied territories to the Russian Federation create risks of human trafficking. Earlier this year, GRETA initiated the preparation of an analytical report by an external consultant, which was discussed at our plenary meeting last week, and on the basis on which GRETA adopted a statement. Both the report and the statement have been circulated to you as documents for today's meeting. In this statement, GRETA affirms that the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of children of Ukraine in the context of Russia's war of aggression creates risks of human trafficking and may fall within the definition of trafficking in human beings under Article 4 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

The current geopolitical environment has underscored the continued importance of a rules-based international order grounded in international law and multilateral co-operation. In the field of trafficking in human beings, this is particularly important. International and regional legal instruments have been essential in shaping state obligations, victim protection standards, prevention measures, and cross-border co-operation. They provide not only normative guidance, but also practical tools for accountability, institutional co-ordination, and rights-based responses. At the same time, evolving geopolitical and security realities place increasing pressure on states' institutional capacities and policy priorities, making it important to ensure that anti-trafficking frameworks remain effective and responsive to contemporary challenges. It would be important to engage in an exchange between policymakers, practitioners, legal experts and international organisations on why international legal frameworks matter in practice in the anti-trafficking field, what their current limitations are, and how they can be strengthened in a changing political environment. The Committee of the Parties to the Convention could provide an appropriate framework for such an exchange.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Appendix IV

Proposal of the Government of Azerbaijan for amendments to the draft Recommendation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia (CP/Rec(2026)01prov)

AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
AVROPA ŞURASI YANINDA
DAİMİ NÜMAYƏNDƏLİYİ



REPRÉSENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA
RÉPUBLIQUE D'AZERBAÏDJAN
AUPRÈS DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CE – 009/26

Strasbourg, 24 June 2026

Dear Madam Chairperson,
Dear Ambassador,

In view of the upcoming 38th meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, scheduled to take place on 3 July 2026, I am writing to you regarding the draft Recommendation on the implementation of the Convention by Armenia (4th evaluation round).

Following a comprehensive review of the draft text by the relevant authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I would like to submit to the consideration of the Committee and the Secretariat of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) following observations and ensuing amendments.

First of all, we note that the evaluation report on Armenia refers on multiple occasions to an internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, namely to the Garabagh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, the reference in question is not unfortunately in line with the established international practice and UN-verified nomenclature and geographical references concerning the sovereign territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Therefore, to ensure the full consistency across all related international documentation, we kindly request to correct the terminology within the main evaluation report itself, by replacing the current phrasing "Karabakh" with the internationally recognized designation of "the Garabagh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan." We believe that this adjustment will ensure the accuracy and legal consistency of the evaluation report.

././.

Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen
Permanent Representative of Finland,
Chairperson of the Committee of the Parties
of the Council of Europe Convention on
Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Cc: Ms. Petya Nestorova
Executive Secretary of
the Council of Europe Convention on
Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Second, the GRETA's evaluation report on Armenia notes broader regional movements, and then, the relevant statistical data and substantive assessments indicate that asylum seekers and refugees in Armenia originate from multiple countries, including Ukraine, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Syria. Therefore, to accurately reflect the comprehensive scope and findings of the GRETA evaluation report, any clause welcoming the relevant governmental efforts should remain general and aligned with the overall findings of the report. Consequently, we propose to amend as follows the fifth indent in the draft recommendation:

- the efforts made to provide support to refugees ~~from Karabakh~~ with a view to reducing their vulnerabilities to human trafficking;

Please accept, Madam Chairperson, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Fakhraddin Ismayilov
Permanent Representative

Appendix V

Statement by Ambassador Haris Basic, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe

Thank you, President,

At the outset, please allow me to wish you, Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen, every success in the old/new role as the Chair as well as to Ambassador Agnese Vilde as the Vice Chair of the Committee of the Parties.

On behalf of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to thank the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings for the adoption of the final report in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at its 56th meeting held in March this year.

In preparation of the report, GRETA used the reply to the questionnaire by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and information received from civil society. In addition, an evaluation visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina took place in May 2025 to hold meetings, collect additional information and examine the practical implementation of adopted measures. During the visit, the GRETA delegation met representatives of relevant institutions, at state level and lower levels, representatives of civil society, representatives of NGOs, victims of trafficking as well as representatives of the international community presented in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina examined the draft report prepared by GRETA and did not have comments on the final report.

As you can see from the Report and the Recommendations, Bosnia and Herzegovina has taken several measures and thus achieved progress in the implementation of the Convention, namely in the field of legislation, institutional and procedural questions/matters. And GRETA recognized that in its report, for which we are grateful.

Let me highlight the most important activities taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina recently:

- Adoption of the Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period from 2024 to 2027, which is conceptually and content-wise significantly based on European Union standards and other international guidelines in the field of combating human trafficking, which is of particular importance for us on our way to the European Union.
- Adoption of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy against Human Trafficking 2024-2027, for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the meantime, action plans were adopted for the entities, Brčko District and the cantons.
- The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina appointed the State Coordinator for the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration at the beginning of 2025, for a term of four years.
- The legal procedure for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the Council of Europe Convention against trafficking in human organs (known as the Santiago de Compostela Convention) was implemented. The Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Convention in March this year and the ratification procedure is ongoing. By acceding to the Convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina shows a strong determination in the fight against the unauthorized trade in human organs and joins the initiative of strengthening the mechanisms of international cooperation for the prevention and effective sanctioning of such practice.

- By signing the Santiago de Compostela Convention, and before that the Medicrime Convention in 2015 and the Oviedo Convention in 2005, Bosnia and Herzegovina concluded the accession health-related CoE instruments, thereby facilitating their more successful implementation.

- Also, I must draw your attention to the fact that at the end of 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Computer Crime on Enhanced Cooperation and Discovery of Electronic Evidence and the ratification procedure is ongoing.

- In 2023, an assessment study on the establishment of a state compensation scheme for victims of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina was prepared. The strategy for combating human trafficking for the period from 2024 to 2027 states as one of the strategic measures "Establishment of mechanisms for compensation of victims of human trafficking".

- During 2025, the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed Protocols on housing and care for victims of human trafficking with four non-governmental organizations, namely: Association "Women from Una" from Bihać, Association "Budućnost" from Modriča, Foundation "Lara" from Bijeljina and Association "Women of BiH" from Mostar. In accordance with the signed protocols and submitted reports of non-governmental organizations on the number of housed victims of human trafficking, the number of user days, and the assistance provided, non-governmental organizations were paid funds in the total amount of 190,000.00 KM (97,000 euros), while an increase in the allocation of funds for this purpose is planned in 2026.

Ms. President,

It is evident that there are areas that need to be further improved and measures should be taken to address the issues in the field of access to justice for victims of trafficking in human beings, to guarantee effective access to compensation for victims, to strengthen the criminal justice response, etc.

Here, I have to emphasize the importance of Council of Europe's support and the project on [Strengthening anti-trafficking responses in Bosnia and Herzegovina through systemic reform, policy development and comprehensive support for victims](#), which will be implemented under the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2026-2029. We believe its implementation will help us to comply with this recommendation until July 2028.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue close cooperation with GRETA regarding the fulfilment of our obligations.

Thank you.

Appendix VI

Statement by Ms Roxana Maracineanu, Secretary General of MIPROF (Interministerial taskforce on combating violence against women and human trafficking), France

Madam President,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Ladies and gentlemen,

France extends its warmest congratulations on your respective re-elections.

I would like to begin by thanking the GRETA delegation that visited France from 16 to 25 June 2025 and in particular Ulrike Haberl-Schwarz and Peter Van Hauwermeiren, as well as Council of Europe administrative officers Parvine Ghadami and Mesut Bedirhanoglu.

GRETA's evaluation of France's public policy response is invaluable to the ministries involved in combating trafficking, particularly MIPROF, the national anti-trafficking co-ordinator, which also maintains close ties with the various NGOs that provide support to victims of trafficking in France.

Current political and parliamentary developments in France and across Europe are calling into question the rights of the most vulnerable – people whose journeys into exile are frequently marked by violence. Nevertheless, we have managed to safeguard certain rights and make progress in France. For example, we have succeeded in increasing the number of places in the national reception scheme. However, we recognise that we owe more to victims and to the organisations that support them.

France has made it a point of honour to be transparent, organising GRETA's visit to places where much progress is still needed, such as the overseas territories. GRETA visited Martinique and French Guiana, where trafficking is not yet sufficiently detected, particularly when it comes to illegal goldmining. GRETA also visited the northern coast of France, around Calais, where camps house thousands of people hoping to reach England, with the tragic consequences we are all aware of, including deaths during attempts to cross the Channel. A group of specialist organisations has compiled an alarming report on the situation of minors in these camps, which was shared with GRETA.

I would like to highlight the training programme that was launched in 2023 ahead of a global sporting event, the Olympic and Paralympic Games, hosted by our country. We are continuing these training sessions with the national judicial service training college in major cities across France. Beyond this partnership, local authorities also reach out to us, as do the police and gendarmerie, and the women's rights offices who have been supporting pathways out of prostitution since the 2016 French abolitionist prostitution law, which criminalises clients and regards people in prostitution as victims of a system of sexual exploitation. In 2024 and 2025, MIPROF organised or participated in 55 sessions, training more than 7 000 people throughout France. These sessions aimed to help professionals better understand what trafficking is and to change their view of and approach towards those who are exploited, whatever the form of exploitation.

But I am thinking in particular of young children who are sexually exploited or forced into criminal activities and who are entirely in the thrall of their exploiters. These children have invariably suffered violence prior to exploitation and have had particularly traumatic life experiences. They can sometimes feel that they "get something out of" the relationships formed with their exploiters, which can seriously hamper the response of law enforcement, the judiciary and sometimes even frontline organisations.

In our training, we strive to bring together professionals from across relevant fields in each region, so that they can meet, get to know one another and build lasting working relationships. This includes:

- social workers

- members of the judiciary
- lawyers
- NGOs providing assistance to victims
- staff at the prefectures who issue residence permits
- healthcare professionals who are experts on the continuum of violence.

Since the beginning of 2026, 10 multidisciplinary training sessions have been held. These sessions foster collective reflection on the subject and the sharing of expertise, which is particularly valuable for taking a holistic approach to supporting victims. Bringing this issue into the public domain has also set the judiciary on a path towards the more widespread use of this offence, and there is a growing awareness of the importance of relying on it to classify cases as accurately as possible in the light of their gravity.

Training prosecutors to make greater use of the offence of trafficking in human beings alongside the offences of pimping and labour exploitation remains a key priority for us.

Lastly, I should mention that our annual European Anti-Trafficking Day event, which will take place around 18 October, will be an opportunity to hear the views of journalists, film-makers, investigative reporters and screenwriters who carry out serious, in-depth investigative work.

Thank you very much.

Appendix VII

Statement by Ms Jekaterina Tulina,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Latvia to the Council of Europe

Latvia highly values GRETA's recommendations as an important contribution to the further strengthening of the national response to trafficking in human beings. They provide a comprehensive and constructive assessment of the existing framework and reaffirm that combating trafficking is not solely a matter of criminal justice, but also a broader agenda of human rights protection, prevention, social inclusion and the reduction of vulnerability.

In response, Latvia has undertaken a number of important steps. A draft law on the identification and referral of victims of trafficking has been elaborated and we look forward to its earliest adoption. This legislative initiative seeks to formalise the National Referral Mechanism, clarify the roles and responsibilities of the institutions involved, and strengthen early identification and timely referral to appropriate support services.

In light of GRETA's guidance, we carefully reconsidered the recovery and reflection period. The revised approach provides for the possibility to extend the period up to 180 days, makes it available to all foreign nationals, not only third-country nationals, and introduces an appeal procedure. Importantly, cooperation with the police is not a precondition during this period. The same principle applies to Latvian citizens, who may access social rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking without being required to cooperate with law enforcement authorities.

Latvia has also re-established the inter-institutional working group on combating trafficking in human beings, adopted a national action plan, and, since 2020 we publish annual reports on the situation. These reports bring together statistical data, analysis of emerging trends and relevant warning signs, thereby supporting a timely, coordinated and evidence-informed response.

Meanwhile, Latvia fully recognises that a number of GRETA's recommendations relates to deeply complex vulnerability factors. These concern, among others, children leaving institutional care, asylum seekers and unaccompanied children, persons with disabilities, Roma communities, homeless persons, migrant workers, and women and girls exposed to exploitation in prostitution. Such issues are inherently cross-sectoral and cannot be addressed by any single institution acting alone.

These vulnerabilities are embedded in complex social ecosystems, shaped by individual circumstances as well as micro- and macro-level factors. Meaningful progress therefore requires a comprehensive approach combining social, economic, educational, psychological and protective measures. Awareness-raising remains important, but information alone cannot eliminate the structural and personal vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit.

For this reason, progress in these areas should be understood as a gradual and sustained process. Reducing vulnerability requires long-term commitment, targeted measures, close institutional alignment and the consistent involvement of all relevant actors. It also requires adequate resources, professional training, reliable data, effective cooperation and continued political attention.

Latvia is grateful for GRETA's recommendations, which serve not only as an assessment of progress, but also as a valuable roadmap for future action. They support our daily work in planning, coordinating and justifying the resources necessary to build a stronger, more coherent and victim-centred response to trafficking in human beings.

Appendix VIII

Statement by Ms Alexia Manduca,
Manager II, Human Rights Directorate, Ministry for European Funds, Equality, Reforms and
Social Dialogue, Malta

Madam Chair,

Distinguished members of the Committee of the Parties,

Allow me to begin by expressing Malta's sincere gratitude to GRETA and the Secretariat for their continued professionalism, constructive cooperation and valuable engagement throughout the fourth evaluation round. We are particularly appreciative for the country visit to Malta, held in December 2024, which provided an open and meaningful opportunity for dialogue with the national authorities and all relevant stakeholders involved in combating trafficking in human beings. The discussions were both insightful and constructive, enabling a comprehensive exchange on the progress achieved, the challenges that remain, and the way forward in this important area of work.

Malta welcomes GRETA's fourth evaluation report and recognises it as a key tool in strengthening our national response to trafficking in human beings. We appreciate the balanced approach adopted in the report, which acknowledges the significant progress made while also identifying areas where further action is required. The Maltese authorities have carefully examined the findings and recommendations, including the clarifications sought during the reporting process, and remain committed to addressing the gaps identified.

The report recognises a number of important developments undertaken in recent years, notably the adoption of Malta's National Strategy and Action Plan on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2024–2030) which incorporates measures addressing previous GRETA recommendations and promotes the meaningful engagement of survivors in anti-trafficking efforts.

The report also acknowledges the expansion of support services for victims including through the work of the operation of a dedicated safe house, enhanced specialisation among law enforcement, prosecutors and members of the judiciary, strengthened legislative safeguards for child victims, and continued efforts to improve the protection of migrant workers and prevent labour exploitation, also through the employment agencies regulations.

Malta's priorities in the fight against human trafficking remain firmly centred on a victim-centred, human rights-based, gender and child sensitive and multidisciplinary approach. This is clearly reflected in the National Strategy and Action Plan. Looking ahead, we remain committed to further strengthening prevention measures, improving early identification of victims, enhancing protection and assistance mechanisms, ensuring effective investigations and prosecutions, and reinforcing cooperation among all relevant national and international partners.

I would also like to note that Malta takes good note of the recommendations outlined by GRETA and takes these observations seriously. At the national level, we will continue reviewing our legislative and operational frameworks, particularly in areas relating to labour exploitation, the protection of vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers, proactive victim identification, access to justice and compensation for victims, and the efficiency of judicial proceedings.

Malta is currently developing a National Referral Mechanism through a Multidisciplinary Working Group, established in close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders. Moreover, and in line with the Recommendations received, we are in the final stages of amending our anti-trafficking legislation to

introduce as an aggravating circumstance the offence of human trafficking committed against a child, irrespective of the means used.

These are just two examples of how the recommendations are being carefully considered within the implementation of Malta's National Anti-Trafficking Strategy. We will continue to address the recommendations through the development and implementation of Malta's next Action Plan, ensuring that our response remains evidence-based, coordinated and responsive to emerging risks.

Going forward, I would like to reiterate that Malta remains fully committed to maintaining its constructive dialogue with GRETA and the Committee of the Parties. We view this monitoring process as an opportunity to further strengthen our national framework. We remain steadfast in our commitment to preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings, protecting the rights and dignity of victims, and ensuring that our policies and practices continue to evolve in line with the Convention and international standards. Malta will continue to collaborate with its European and international partners to address this serious crime.

Thank you.

Appendix IX

Statement by Mr Jan Austad,
Senior Adviser, Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Norway

I work in the Police Department of the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and have been the Norwegian Contact person appointed to liaise with GRETA since the start. In June 2025, I had the pleasure to welcome and host – for the fourth time - a delegation from GRETA. I can reassure GRETA that when a delegation arrives in Norway for the fifth time, you will be met by a fresh face.

In addition to holding meetings in Oslo, the GRETA delegation travelled to Bergen and for the first time to the city of Trondheim.

In Trondheim, GRETA was told of plans to create a municipal plan of action against THB, and the setting up of an interdisciplinary working group involving a wide range of stakeholders.

I have been informed that the visit from GRETA was seen as a much-needed inspiration to give priority to the work on an action plan, which had been put on hold for some time. A draft of an action plan was sent out for public consultation this winter.

We value the possibility the GRETA visits provide for engaging a high number of Norwegian stakeholders. A few remarks concerning recent developments.

The GRETA report mentions that a new National Strategy against Human Trafficking for the period 2025-2030 was launched in May 2025. We had the aim of finalizing the Strategy in time for GRETA's arrival, and just made it.

Since the launch, we have strengthened the administrative capacity of authorities responsible for anti-trafficking efforts.

A short mention of a legal change:

Paragraph 166 of the GRETA report, mentions ongoing discussions about the need for introducing a new criminal offence of labour exploitation which does not reach the threshold of THB.

In June this year, Parliament voted to introduce such an offence, by changing section 108a of the Immigration Act.

The new provision, in addition to affecting those who "propose" work or housing to the foreigner, will also affect employers, landlords and others who are responsible for the exploitation in an employment or housing relationship.

The new criminal provision applies to exploitation of specific categories of foreigners who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, including foreigners who are dependent on their employment or housing situation in order to have legal residence in Norway, asylum seekers, foreigners with illegal residence, and foreigners who do not have a residence permit or permanent right of residence, and who are here to engage in begging.

The provision is intended to cover cases of exploitation of a foreigner's situation that do not reach the threshold for human trafficking under the Criminal Code, to a greater extent than the current provision. The changes come into force in September, and we hope practitioners will find it useful.

The Norwegian Human Rights Institution was designated as independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in March 2025. We are in close contact with the Rapporteurs office, in order to ensure that they are provided with access to relevant information from the authorities to enable them to fulfil their role. We are also in agreement that in the new anti-trafficking structures it is vital to avoid duplication of efforts.

On September 15th, The Rapporteurs office will organize a short seminar on GRETA's recommendations. The political leadership from my Ministry is due to attend, and some members of Parliament will be invited, as well as representatives of civil society and the prosecution service.

We are grateful for the work that GRETA and the Secretariat has done in order to produce the report on Norway. The recommendations from the Committee of the Parties to be adopted today, will now be discussed in the interministerial working group, and steps will be taken to giving priority to implementing recommendations in points 1 and 4.

Thank you.

Appendix X

Statement by Ms Natália Campbell,
Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Council of Europe

Dear Madam Chair,
Dear President of GRETA,
Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Portugal wishes, first and foremost, to express its sincere appreciation to GRETA for the valuable work undertaken in the framework of the fourth evaluation round, and to the Secretariat for its sustained and dedicated support throughout this process.

Portugal welcomes with particular regard the open, constructive and fruitful dialogue that has been established with GRETA. The evaluation process has afforded a singular opportunity not only to take stock of the progress achieved by Portugal, but also to reflect with depth upon the challenges that remain and to identify the areas in which further efforts are required.

Portugal approaches GRETA's conclusions and recommendations in a spirit of full cooperation and continuous improvement, reaffirming its unwavering commitment to the effective implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and to ensuring that the national response remains firmly anchored in human rights, the protection of victims and the prosecution of those responsible for these grave crimes.

Portugal is currently taking the requisite steps to transpose Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024, amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. This legislative development will strengthen the national criminal-law framework and expressly extend its scope to new forms of exploitation, including those associated with surrogacy arrangements, forced marriage and illegal adoption. It will further contribute to greater alignment between the Portuguese legal order and the relevant European and international instruments, in response to the growing complexity and diversification of trafficking-related forms of exploitation, including those facilitated by digital means and arising in transnational contexts of vulnerability.

At the level of public policy, Portugal continues to implement the Fifth National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Human Beings, covering the period 2025-2027. The Plan is structured around three core strategic objectives: strengthening knowledge, information and awareness of the phenomenon; enhancing victims' access to their rights through more qualified and effective intervention; and preventing and combating the organized criminal networks associated with trafficking in human beings.

The national response is grounded in a multidisciplinary and victim-centered approach, bringing together public authorities, law-enforcement bodies and judicial authorities, alongside services in the labour, migration, social and health spheres, in coordination with the civil-society organizations participating in the national support and protection network for victims of trafficking.

Portugal also continues to invest in specialized assistance and protection responses, including multidisciplinary teams and dedicated accommodation structures, designed to support the identification, protection, stabilization, recovery and empowerment of victims.

Particular mention should be made of the role of the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings in the collection, processing and analysis of data, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, to the monitoring of referrals and identifications, and to the development of policies that are responsive to continuously evolving realities.

Capacity-building remains a central priority. Portugal has continued to reinforce training for law-enforcement agents, magistrates and professionals in the labour, migration, social, education and health sectors, as well as for civil-society organizations, with a view to enhancing early identification, referral and the protection of victims.

Given the inherently transnational nature of trafficking in human beings, Portugal also attaches particular importance to the strengthening of inter-institutional and international cooperation. Portugal will continue to work in close coordination with all relevant national and international partners in pursuit of an effective, coordinated and victim-centered response.

Portugal has given careful consideration to GRETA's conclusions and proposals for action. It fully acknowledges that further progress is required in a number of areas and will pursue the relevant follow-up measures within the framework of the Fifth National Action Plan, the ongoing legislative work and the continued cooperation among all competent entities.

Portugal reiterates its readiness to maintain a close and constructive dialogue with GRETA, the Secretariat and the Committee of the Parties, and its resolve to continue working towards the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

Appendix XI

Statement by Mr David Corlett,
Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe

Thank you, Chair.

- I would like to begin by thanking GRETA and Secretariat colleagues for their fourth evaluation report, and for their continued engagement with the UK throughout this process. We also appreciate the contributions of civil society and delivery partners. We welcome the constructive nature of this evaluation and the opportunity it provides to reflect on progress made, as well as areas where further work is ongoing.
- The UK welcomes the report's recognition of a number of positive developments in the UK's response to trafficking in human beings. Since the last evaluation period, we have strengthened our evidence base on vulnerability, including through research and engagement with survivors, to better inform prevention efforts.
- The UK has also continued to invest in the National Referral Mechanism, expanding decision-making capacity, improving training, and progressing reforms aimed at reducing delays and improving the quality and consistency of decisions. As a result, cases awaiting decisions have reduced by 84%, from a peak of 29,275 cases in 2022 to 4,748 cases, while average decision times have fallen from 76 days at the end of 2025 to 51 days. We have also seen continued confidence in the system, with 23,411 referrals received in 2025, the highest number recorded and an increase of 22% compared to the previous year.
- The Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract continues to provide tailored, specialist assistance to adult victims, while pilots such as devolved decision-making for children are helping to improve identification and safeguarding outcomes. We have also taken steps to strengthen the criminal justice response, including through updated guidance and training on the non-punishment principle and the use of digital tools to support investigations.
- The UK notes the areas identified in the report for further consideration including addressing vulnerabilities among at-risk groups, improving timeliness of decision-making, and enhancing access to longer-term support, legal assistance, and compensation. These are areas we continue to consider as part of ongoing work and reform.
- The UK also recognises GRETA's call to strengthen cooperation with online platforms and are building on the Online Safety Act, alongside ongoing engagement with industry, to improve monitoring, data sharing and the disruption of online-enabled trafficking.
- In addition, the UK notes GRETA's recommendation to strengthen support for child victims, including further improving the support for young people during transition to adulthood. We are also building on existing pilots such as devolved decision-making for children and expanding the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian's service to cover all of England and Wales, alongside wider work to improve safeguarding and outcomes for young people.
- We have also recently introduced further legislation to support ongoing reforms to the modern slavery system and will continue to engage constructively with GRETA's recommendations as this work progresses. We look forward to updating the Committee on further progress through the Convention's monitoring process.
- Thank you.

Appendix XII

Statement by Ambassador Andreu Jordi, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by greeting you warmly and thanking you for this forum for discussion.

The evaluation process for the Principality of Andorra began in May 2022 and included a field visit to our country in November that year.

Since then, an ongoing dialogue has been established between the group of experts and the Andorran representatives; a process which, although challenging at times, has yielded good results.

In this context, we welcome the round-table discussion held by GRETA and the Andorran authorities in Andorra on 10 March 2026.

That highly productive meeting had a dual objective: to take stock of the progress made since the publication of GRETA's third report and the Committee of the Parties' Recommendation and also to identify areas in which the Council of Europe could provide further advice and assistance to the Andorran authorities for planning and implementing measures to combat trafficking in human beings.

Following these various discussions and in order to implement the recommendations made, the Government communicated on 23 June 2026 the measures that have been adopted to comply with the Committee of the Parties' guidance.

These steps reflect substantial progress and reaffirm our country's unwavering commitment to combating trafficking in human beings.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix XIII

Statement by Ms Marjatta Hiekka,
Legal Counsellor, Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions,
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

Madame Chair, dear colleagues,

It is a privilege to address you today on Finland's activities in implementing the recommendations received under the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and to explain how the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking for 2026–2027 further strengthens these efforts. As a human rights violation, human trafficking is a complex and evolving crime. Addressing it effectively requires not only commitment but also continuous evaluation and improvement. The recommendations provided to Finland in 2024 have served as an important framework guiding our work.

In addition, the roundtable discussion organized in collaboration with the Council of Europe Secretariat in March 2026 served as an important forum to bring together all relevant actors, both public authorities and civil society, and to exchange views on measures taken and further action needed to combat human trafficking effectively.

Finland has approached the recommendations with a clear objective: to translate them into practical, measurable improvements in prevention, protection and prosecution.

Firstly, one of the central recommendations concerned victims' rights and access to compensation. To address these recommendations, I would like to highlight three main measures:

- ensuring that evidence of financial harm and criminal profit is systematically collected during investigations;
- increasing the use of financial investigations and asset confiscation to support compensation claims; and
- expanding support through the National Assistance System, enabling victims to receive help even before court proceedings.

Secondly, Finland has taken decisive steps to strengthen the effectiveness of its criminal justice response, directly responding to concerns about the under-classification of trafficking offences and the need for more effective sanctions by:

- expanding specialised training for police, prosecutors, and judges;
- reinforcing the national specialised investigative structure to handle complex trafficking cases; and
- increasing authorities' use of financial, digital, and cross-border evidence and reducing reliance on victim testimony.

At the legislative level, these reforms have clarified the definition of trafficking, including recognising forced marriage as a form of trafficking.

Thirdly, with regard to protecting victims in migration and asylum procedures, Finland has strengthened its approach by:

- placing individual risk assessments at the centre of decisions under the Dublin procedure;
- strictly applying the principle of non-refoulement to prevent re-trafficking; and
- using the sovereignty clause when necessary to ensure protection.

These measures ensure that human rights considerations remain at the forefront of asylum decisions.

Fourthly, in response to the recommendation to enhance protection, accommodation, and support, Finland has further strengthened victim support systems by:

- using the National Assistance System to provide accommodation, healthcare, legal aid, and psychosocial support; and
- tailoring accommodation to individual needs and safety risks, with support available to all victims regardless of gender.

Fifthly, to prevent child trafficking, Finland has focused on addressing trafficking affecting children by:

- expanding training and awareness-raising among professionals; and
- developing tools and projects to address risks such as children going missing from care and online exploitation.

Lastly, to ensure secure residence status for victims, Finland has improved access to residence permits by:

- strengthening the reflection period as a legal safeguard;
- enabling residence permits to be granted on the basis of vulnerability, without requiring cooperation in criminal proceedings; and
- easing administrative barriers, such as strict documentation requirements.

Madam Chair,

I would like to conclude by highlighting some components of the current 2026–2027 Action Plan.

The Action Plan

- brings together 43 measures under a unified strategic framework;
- ensures cross-administrative coordination, improving cooperation between authorities;
- targets emerging challenges such as online exploitation, organised crime links and child trafficking.

Most importantly, it shifts the focus from isolated reforms to a systematic, monitored implementation process, with clear follow-up until the end of 2027.

In conclusion, Finland's response to the recommendations demonstrates a clear commitment to effective and meaningful action in combatting trafficking in human beings, in close cooperation with public authorities and civil society.

While challenges remain, Finland is committed to continuous improvement, international cooperation, and upholding human dignity.

Human trafficking cannot be eliminated by one country alone. It requires joint action, shared responsibility, and unwavering commitment.

Let us continue working together to ensure that no one is left unprotected, and that protection, justice and support reach every victim.

Thank you.

Appendix XIV

Statement by Ms Yola Kretschmann,
Representative of Division 302 on Combating Trafficking of Human Beings and Prostitute
Protection Act, German Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Thank you, Chair.

In the third round of evaluations, GRETA visited Germany in 2023, and, earlier this year, a valuable round table was organised.

GRETA's recommendations highlighted, among other points, the need to develop a national action plan, to improve victim identification, and to ensure the application of the non-punishment principle.

Although combating THB remains high on the political agenda, too many people are still affected by it. For instance, in 2024, there were 246 minor victims of THB and 465 adult victims of THB for the purpose of sexual exploitation - still the most common form of the crime.

We welcome GRETA's recommendations and have submitted a comprehensive response out-lining the measures Germany has taken over the past two years.

I would now like to highlight the main milestones:

National Action Plans

- Two comprehensive National Action Plans were adopted.
- The "*National Action Plan on the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking and Support for Victims*" covers all forms of trafficking in human beings.
- The plan comprises 126 measures across four areas: prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership.
- Each measure has defined responsibilities, timelines, and indicators, and progress will be monitored annually starting this year.
- Also the "*National Action Plan against Labour Exploitation and Forced Labour*" was adopted in 2025. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was the lead ministry.
- Its 83 measures focus on various objectives, such as the promotion and expansion of targeted low-threshold services providing advice and support to workers, cross-border networking, and raising awareness among public authorities, social partners and enterprises.
- In addition, the federal states have developed 125 measures in this area.
- The implementation of the National Action Plan has started and it will be continuously developed together with the federal states, social partners and civil society.

Law Revisions and Non-Punishment Principle

- In May 2026 the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection published a re-revised draft bill to strengthen the criminal prosecution of THB and sexual exploitation.
- The draft bill intends to implement the amended EU directive on preventing and combating THB and fundamentally reform criminal law relating to THB.
- In order to implement the directive, the definition of THB will be extended to include the exploitation of surrogacy, forced marriage and illegal adoption.
- Additionally, a general criminal liability for the intentional use of services provided by a victim of THB will be introduced.

- Regarding the implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle, Germany has taken further steps to address GRETA's concerns.
- The draft bill revises the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and adds a new provision that further highlights and strengthens the Non-Punishment Principle.
- At the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, the federal states decided to amend the guidelines governing criminal and administrative fine proceedings. According to these amendments, public prosecutors should drop charges against victims of THB if they were compelled to commit a less serious offence.

Focal Point

- Dear colleagues, I am glad to share, that just recently, the Federal Government established a National Focal Point in line with the amended EU Directive.
- The National Focal Point will serve as a contact point for bodies responsible for the cross-border referral of victims, in order to promote victim identification and access to support services for those affected.
- The Focal Point for criminal investigations will be located at the Federal Criminal Police Office.
- The Focal Point for referrals to specialised counselling centres will be hosted by the German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- The purpose of this structure is to meet the individual needs of victims and to ensure a structured referral and support system.

We thank the Council of Europe, GRETA, and the Committee of the Parties for their continued support and look forward to further deepening our joint efforts.

Thank you.

Appendix XV

Statement by Mr Alessandro Sasso,
Head of the Unit for Interventions against Trafficking in Human Beings and Severe Labour
Exploitation, Office for Anti-Trafficking Policies, Department for Equal Opportunities,
Prime Minister's Office, Italy

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is an honour to present a brief overview of Italy's progress in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, highlighting some of the key measures undertaken and the advances made in implementing the recommendations addressed to our country by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties.

1. Access to justice and effective remedies:

- Italy has taken several significant steps to strengthen victims' access to justice and effective remedies.
- The most significant recent development has been the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1712. The legislative decree n°115/2026, adopted on 4 June 2026, introduces several provisions that directly respond to recommendations repeatedly raised by GRETA. These include a dedicated provision establishing the right to a recovery and reflection period for presumed victims, as well as statutory guarantees ensuring access to legal information on all available protection pathways, including international protection.
- The decree further strengthens victims' right to compensation by increasing the amount available through the national compensation mechanism from a minimum of EUR 1,500 to a maximum of EUR 10,000 per victim, while also simplifying the relevant application procedures.
- Attention has also been devoted to measures aimed at discouraging demand. In line with Article 18 of the Convention and GRETA's recommendations, the new Article 601.1 of the Criminal Code introduces a specific offence criminalising the knowing use of services provided by victims of trafficking, thereby strengthening efforts to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation.
- Complementing these legislative developments, the new National Action Plan against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation 2026–2028, which is currently in its final stage of preparation and pending formal approval, places renewed emphasis on access to rights and remedies, specialised training for justice sector professionals, and the strengthening of victim protection mechanisms.
- At the institutional level, the national governance framework has been reinforced through the recent reorganisation of the Department for Equal Opportunities and the establishment of a dedicated Office for Policies on Trafficking in Human Beings and Severe Exploitation, aimed at enhancing coordination, monitoring and policy implementation.
- These institutional reforms have been accompanied by a further increase in the financial resources allocated to the Anti-Trafficking Fund, strengthening the capacity of the 21 Anti-Trafficking Projects operating nationwide to provide legal assistance, support victims throughout judicial proceedings and facilitate access to remedies.

2. Identification and protection of victims

- Proactive and early identification of victims has also been one of Italy's key priorities in recent years and represents a central pillar of the provisions transposing Directive (EU) 2024/1712 and the new National Action Plan 2026–2028.
- The legislative decree provides for the involvement of anti-trafficking organisations from the earliest stages of arrival on national territory and strengthens coordination mechanisms between the anti-trafficking protection system and the international protection system.

- The new Action Plan places particular emphasis on the early identification of victims of trafficking among third-country nationals, notably at border crossing points, within reception facilities, and throughout first and second-instance international protection procedures.
- The objective is to ensure that indicators of trafficking are detected as early as possible and that potential victims are promptly referred to specialised assistance services.
- Italy has also continued to consolidate the implementation of the 2023 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including through dedicated training activities targeting law enforcement authorities, reception centre personnel and other frontline professionals.
- In 2026, the Department for Equal Opportunities published the Guidelines for the Local Implementation of the National Referral Mechanism, aimed at promoting a more consistent and effective application of referral procedures across the national territory including through multi-agency memoranda of understanding which involve all relevant stakeholders at a local level.
- Additional operational guidance has been developed through the publication of specific guidelines on the early identification of victims of trafficking at borders, addressed to Prefectures, law enforcement agencies, border police officers and reception centre staff.
- At the local level, numerous multi-agency cooperation protocols have been signed to strengthen early identification procedures and facilitate referrals to specialised antitrafficking services. At the same time, multidisciplinary and multi-agency training initiatives have been further expanded to enhance the capacity of all relevant actors to recognise indicators of trafficking and respond appropriately.
- Furthermore, the Department for Equal Opportunities has actively contributed to the development of new Standard Operating Procedures for screening activities under the screening regulation 2024/1356. These procedures are intended to ensure the prompt identification of trafficking victims during screening procedures, facilitate referrals to anti-trafficking projects and guarantee access to the recovery and reflection period.

They also ensure that identified or presumed victims may benefit from the safeguards provided by law, including the possibility of being channelled out of border procedures when appropriate.

- Attention has also been devoted to children, including unaccompanied and separated minors, as well as mothers with children, both within the new National Action Plan 2026–2028 and in the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- In the NRM and SOPs attention have been given to children and other particularly vulnerable persons, and the Department for Equal Opportunities contributed to the Ministry of the Interior's Handbook on the Reception and Protection of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors.
- Coordination between the anti-trafficking system, local social services and the reception system has been further strengthened, including through specific cooperation agreement between the DEO and the National Council of Social Workers (CNOAS).
- Increased attention has also been devoted to the identification of victims in border and migration contexts, including airports, in response to evolving trafficking routes and patterns of arrival. In this regard, the DEO has concluded a cooperation agreement with the National Civil Aviation Authority (ENAC).

4. Measures to effectively prevent, detect and combat trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation

- Italy has further strengthened coordination between the anti-trafficking system and the assistance system for victims of labor exploitation, notably through enhanced collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the National Labour Inspectorate and other relevant stakeholders at both strategic and operational levels.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies actively contributed to the drafting of the new National Action Plan against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation 2026–2028, while the Department, in its capacity as National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, participates in the development of the National Action Plan against Labour Exploitation.

- In addition, a dedicated coordination platform has recently been established under the AMIF programme to identify synergies and strengthen complementarities between anti-trafficking and labour exploitation interventions.
- The prevention of labour exploitation and trafficking for labour exploitation purposes occupies a more prominent place in the new National Action Plan 2026–2028, which includes dedicated actions to improve victim identification, particularly in contexts where migrants live and work under exploitative conditions, such as informal settlements, strengthen multi-agency coordination, enhance cooperation with labour inspection authorities and promote a more integrated response involving antitrafficking actors, labour institutions and social partners.

5. Application of the non-punishment principle

- While Italian legislation does not contain a specific standalone provision on the non-punishment principle, its application is ensured through the existing general criminal law defences and a well-established case law. Italian courts have consistently recognised the need to consider the coercion, abuse and exploitation experienced by victims of trafficking when assessing criminal liability for offences committed as a direct consequence of their trafficking situation.
- At the same time, significant efforts have been undertaken to raise awareness and strengthen the capacity of institutional actors, particularly members of the judiciary, to identify victims of trafficking and to avoid the criminalisation of unlawful acts that are directly linked to their exploitation.
- Further progress has been achieved through the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1712. Article 5 of the legislative decree expressly provides for specialised training activities for judicial authorities on trafficking in human beings, including the application of the non-punishment principle and a victim-centred approach.
- Moreover, the issue has been incorporated into the priorities of the new National Action Plan against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation 2026–2028, which foresees dedicated training, awareness-raising and coordination activities aimed at promoting a consistent understanding and application of the principle among all relevant actors involved in the identification, protection and assistance of victims.

Closing

- Distinguished delegates, while significant progresses have been achieved in recent years, Italy remains fully aware that important challenges persist and require continued attention.
- Looking ahead, efforts will be needed to further strengthen the effectiveness of investigations, prosecutions and convictions for trafficking in human beings, while ensuring that victims have effective access to justice and compensation.
- Another key priority will be the full and consistent implementation of the National Referral Mechanism throughout the national territory and of the New National Action Plan, ensuring that all relevant actors contribute to the common effort and apply common standards and procedures regardless of geographical location.
- Italy will also continue to devote special attention to children, particularly unaccompanied and separated minors, as well as to victims identified in migration and border contexts, where vulnerabilities to trafficking remain especially acute. Strengthening early identification, protection measures and inter-agency cooperation in these settings will remain a priority.
- Finally, as trafficking patterns continue to evolve, Italy is committed to further enhancing its capacity to address emerging forms of exploitation, strengthen multiagency cooperation and ensure that victim-centred approaches remain at the core of all anti-trafficking policies and interventions.

Thank you for your attention and for the continued cooperation and support provided by GRETA, the Committee of the Parties and all our international partners in our common efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.

Appendix XVI

Statement by Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe

Executive Secretary of the Convention,

Madam President of GRETA,

Dear Colleagues,

Monaco wishes to begin by thanking the Committee of the Parties for the Recommendation adopted on 21 June 2024, which is a valuable tool for guiding and further developing the Principality's efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. My delegation wishes to take the opportunity of this meeting to present a summary of Monaco's responses to each of the key areas covered in the Recommendation.

I should like to begin by highlighting the most significant aspect of our response: the adoption on 28 November 2025 of Circular No. 2025-47 of the Department of Justice on identification of and support for victims of trafficking and the interagency co-ordination plan. This was circulated to all relevant departments and directly addresses several of the concerns expressed by the Committee.

The circular sets out a practical method for identifying presumed victims based on a range of indicators broken down into several categories. It establishes a clear procedure for reporting cases to the Public Prosecutor's Office and ensures immediate co-ordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Social Services for the purpose of providing shelter and medical, psychological and social assistance. It also includes specific safeguards for minors, in particular a presumption of minority if there are doubts about their age, and provides a template interview report suited to the various types of exploitation.

Lastly, this circular specifically lays down the principle of not punishing victims who are forced to commit offences, in addition to the ordinary law provisions applicable to acting under compulsion.

I would also like to point out that all victims are guaranteed assistance, without any conditions.

Regardless of their nationality or immigration status, presumed victims of trafficking are provided with shelter and psychological, social and material support, arranged by the Department of Social Welfare and Social Services in co-operation with partner associations. In emergencies, treatment, including psychological support, is provided free of charge by the Princess Grace Hospital (CHPG), regardless of individuals' administrative status.

In addition, with regard to the legal framework for law enforcement, Monaco would point out that the criminalisation of trafficking, based on sovereign Order No 605 of 1 August 2006, as amended, covers all forms of exploitation. Under Article 68 of the Constitution, the fact that this offence is established by sovereign order means that it is fully effective without it being legally necessary to include it in the Criminal Code. Circular No. 2025-47 strengthens this framework by encouraging the judicial authorities always to classify cases as trafficking where all constituent elements are present, rather than as less serious offences.

Our delegation would also like to highlight the increased efforts to combat labour exploitation. The Department of Employment and the Labour Inspectorate are continuing their inspections, including unannounced inspections, with a workforce that ensures a high local presence given the size of the

country. Specific training on victim identification has been provided for the staff concerned and confidential reporting mechanisms are available to all workers regardless of their status.

Regarding the enhanced protection of minors, Monaco would point out that child protection remains an ongoing priority, with the mandatory presence of a lawyer and systematic audiovisual recording of interviews with minors, specialist investigation teams and referral to the Princess Charlène Children's Home where necessary.

Lastly, Monaco has developed an online training module on victim identification and protection, which is now accessible to all government officials, and is continuing to provide specialist training, in particular together with the ALC Association under the Ac.Sé scheme, and at the Monegasque Institute for Training in the Legal Professions.

In conclusion, Monaco wishes to inform the Committee that a draft circular on the interagency co-ordination plan is being drawn up, involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Department of Justice and the Department of Legal Affairs. It will consolidate the institutional network already in place and boost the impact of the action undertaken as part of a multi-sectoral approach.

With regard to the residence conditions for victims, the issuing of temporary residence permits has been identified as a possible solution, within the context of the co-operation mechanisms that exist with France.

Madam President,

These developments demonstrate Monaco's ongoing commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Committee of the Parties, in a spirit of constructive dialogue with GRETA. We remain at your disposal to provide any further clarification the Committee may deem necessary.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix XVII

Statement by Mr Eros Puggioni,
Policy Officer, Directorate General for Justice and Law Enforcement,
Department of Organised Crime,
Ministry of Justice and Security, The Netherlands

First of all, we would like to thank GRETA for the research it conducted and for the valuable recommendations in the report aimed at strengthening the response to human trafficking in the Netherlands. We appreciate the pleasant collaboration and communication with the GRETA secretariat. And we would like to take this opportunity once again to apologize for missing last December's deadline and thank GRETA for their patience and understanding.

GRETA's recommendations address a number of overarching themes in the fight against human trafficking. I will therefore discuss the various recommendations from the report on a theme-by-theme basis.

Labour exploitation

In its report, GRETA emphasizes that efforts to combat labor exploitation can be improved and intensified by strengthening the investigation and prosecution of labor exploitation by increasing the capacity of all relevant actors involved in this effort, improving cooperation, and enhancing the training of inspectors. The Netherlands must also take steps to regulate temporary employment agencies. Several steps have been taken to follow-up on this recommendation.

- In 2023, the Investigation Service of the Dutch Labor Inspectorate established the Labor Exploitation Investigation Unit, which consolidates all criminal investigations in the field of labor exploitation.
- the "Good Employment Practices" program aims to improve compliance with laws and regulations in sectors and supply chains where the risks of labor exploitation are greatest, such as agriculture and horticulture, distribution, and
- The expansion and modernization of the criminalization of human trafficking (Section 273f), which, among other things, makes it possible to address labor-related abuses that do not constitute labor exploitation through the new offense of "serious harm"
- The Act on the Licensing and Provision of Workers, which is expected to take effect on January 1, 2028. This law introduces a licensing system for staffing agencies, under which companies may only provide workers if they have obtained a license to do so.

Minors who are victims of human trafficking

To improve the protection of minors, GRETA has recommended, among other things, that the national referral mechanism take this group into account, that the special concerns and needs of this group be addressed, and that greater attention be paid to digital literacy.

- At this time, the bill to implement the revised EU directive - which will implement or clarify many of these aspects within the framework of current Dutch policy - is currently under consideration.
- For example, professionals assist minor victims in filing reports; the questioning of this group is subject to strict requirements, including that it be conducted by specialists; and the Ministry of the Interior has developed a digital children's rights strategy to enhance the digital resilience of children and their communities.
- The National Action Plan includes a specific action line - Action Line 6 - dedicated to strengthening the position of minor victims by, among other things, providing practical guidance for improving the identification, protection, and support of minor victims.

Identifying Human Trafficking in the Asylum and Migration Process

- According to GRETA, the Netherlands should pay more attention to identifying and locating victims of human trafficking among asylum seekers.
- The Central Agency for the Reception plays an important role in this regard. There is a reporting procedure for identifying signs of human trafficking, training sessions are provided on the subject, and there are designated human trafficking liaisons.

Strengthening the Criminal Justice Approach

- Strengthening the criminal justice response is a key recommendation from GRETA that not only aims to prosecute and punish perpetrators but also to protect victims.
- The bill to expand and modernize the criminalization of human trafficking is currently before the Senate.
- The bill introduces the offense of “serious harm,” which will make it easier to address labor-related abuses that do not constitute labor exploitation.
- In addition, this bill enshrines the principle of non-punishment in law to better protect victims.
- It is expected that more cases of human trafficking will be able to be investigated and addressed under criminal law.

Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking

- GRETA emphasizes the importance of identifying victims of human trafficking as such and the associated support and protection measures.
- Under Action Line 3 of the action plan, a broad-based working group is working to improve the identification of victims and the protection of victims.
- Currently, the possibility is being explored of designating a fourth party from the healthcare sector that - in addition to the police, the NLA, and the Kmar - can also identify even the “slightest indication” of human trafficking and offer the reflection period.
- In addition, the conditions under which an independent and multidisciplinary committee could be established to formally determine victim status outside the criminal justice process are being explored.

Appendix XVIII

Statement by Mr Boris Mesaric, Head of the Unit against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP), Federal Office of Police (Fedpol), Switzerland

Thank you Madams President and Vice-President, and let me begin by congratulating you on your election. Switzerland regards combating trafficking in human beings as a key task for ensuring the safety and protection of all people within its territory. Efforts to combat trafficking in human beings help to ensure a safe society and guarantee an environment in which freedom and human rights are upheld.

In Switzerland, the fight against trafficking in human beings is increasingly seen as part of the fight against organised crime. This is because structured and well organised criminal networks are often involved in trafficking in human beings. That is why trafficking in human beings is also included in the Federal Council's new strategy to tackle organised crime. This results in new synergies in collaboration with all the departments responsible for criminal prosecution.

Switzerland will not repeat the measures aimed at implementing the urgent recommendations here; they can be consulted in the report. However, I can say today that, in the meantime, the Federal Council has instructed the Federal Office of Justice to prepare a draft amendment to Article 182 of the Criminal Code in line with the recommendation.

It is important to understand that implementing the measures is complex, depends on political processes and involves a large number of bodies. The work on implementing these recommendations will not end with this report but will continue for as long as necessary, as will the work on the other recommendations in the evaluation. Combating trafficking in human beings is an ongoing task that will almost never be completed.

Yesterday, all members of the Committee of the Parties received a submission from several Swiss NGOs concerning implementation of the urgent recommendations. Until the email was received yesterday, the Swiss delegation was unaware of the existence of such a report by those NGOs. We were most surprised because an approach of this kind is unusual. It is not possible at such short notice to analyse the allegations set out in the report by these NGOs and take a stance in this regard. The Swiss delegation will therefore refrain from answering questions relating to their report.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix XIX

Statement by Ms Larysa Bilozir,
Chairperson, Subcommittee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings,
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Thank you, Chair,

It is an honour to join the Committee of Parties today to represent the Parliamentary Assembly as we take stock of anti-trafficking activities across Council of Europe bodies. Within PACE I have a dual role: I am the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as Rapporteur for the forthcoming report “Need for enhanced international co-operation on combatting human trafficking.”

First and foremost, let me express my appreciation for the crucial work carried out by GRETA and this Committee of the Parties. Your tireless efforts to monitor, evaluate, and drive national progress ensure that the Convention remains responsive to evolving challenges - including new patterns of exploitation and vulnerabilities affecting migrants and other victims of trafficking.

I wish to recall the latest Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2323 (2020), which called Parties to ensure effective and timely implementation of all country-specific GRETA recommendations and invites them to consider common policies to combat human trafficking for the purpose of forced marriage or illegal adoption. It further urged states to establish dedicated anti-trafficking commissioners or ombudspersons that can serve as main contact points for victims—an initiative that could strengthen identification, coordination, and support for victims.

We, National parliamentarians stand ready to support the domestic implementation of all Committee of Parties recommendations.

As Rapporteur for the report “Need for enhanced international co-operation on combatting human trafficking” my priority will be to focus on holding perpetrators to account and to protect victims, regardless of borders, and addressing the full cycle of trafficking—from recruitment to exploitation, whether sexual or forced labour. Victim protection must be at the heart of anti-trafficking measures. Countries of destination bear a particular responsibility to review policy and strengthen mechanisms for criminal liability, ensuring victims are not just recognised, but assisted and protected throughout their journey to justice.

I look forward to engaging further with the Committee of Parties and GRETA in the framework of this report, to strengthen our collective response to trafficking and ensure that our commitments translate into meaningful outcomes for victims.

Thank you.