



Religious in Europe Networking  
Against Trafficking and Exploitation

# Annual Report 2023-2024

**ENDING  
TRAFFICKING  
BEGINS WITH US.**



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Ending trafficking begins with us.

# 18-24 March 2024, Sofia, Bulgaria: **Working Board meeting**



## Report by Patricia Mulhall, CSB, published in ICN 22 March 2024.

Twenty-six members of RENATE Working Board met in the city of Sofia, Bulgaria from the 18-23 March 2024 to share on issues of human trafficking, in each of the European countries where members work in Shelters with victims, advocate on their behalf, raise awareness of this crime against human dignity and human rights.

RENATE is a Faith-based organisation, consisting of women Religious and a few men, consecrated as well as lay, whose sole aim is to eliminate human trafficking and exploitation particularly where they live and work in Europe. The RENATE Europe Network adopts a Victim-Centred, Human Rights, Trauma-informed approach in relation to the Law. There are a number of shelters run by RENATE Network members across Europe, caring for victims of human trafficking. One of the most heart-rending reports came from Natalya, Ukraine, where the invasion of Russia since

February 2022 has had a dramatic impact, traumatising an entire population particularly children. Over 6 million refugees fleeing Ukraine are recorded across Europe, while an estimated 8 million others are displaced within the country. Air alarms, war strikes, shelling, bombing – all the daily realities in the country. Air alerts announced approximately 14,870 times since 2022. On average, there were 47 air alarms per day. Just imagine the effects of these on the people! War & Drone strikes, shelling, and bombing continue to

inflict devastating damage across Ukraine, particularly in conflict zones. Civilians endure constant fear and uncertainty. Whole towns and villages are reduced to rubble. The ongoing conflict exacerbates a humanitarian crisis, leaving communities struggling to access basic necessities and essential services amidst the chaos.

In UKRAINE, children and the elderly and infirm are too often those in vulnerable situations who are most impacted by war and conflict. The figures are staggering since 2022: In the case of children: 525 are dead; 1255 wounded; 2,099 disappeared; 24,345 found; 19,546 deported or forcibly displaced of which 388 returned.

Even as we gathered in Sofia, Russia launched its largest missile attack on the Capital Kiev with over 30 missiles fired.

In solidarity with Ukraine and the many victims of human trafficking, RENATE gathers to remember in prayer those whose human dignity and rights are violated on a daily basis.

RENATE Network is staunch in its commitment to support and stand in solidarity with victims of human trafficking and to work towards a world free of modern slavery. "

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**In planning the work for 2023 & beyond, the Core group relied upon key documents which would form the basis for forward planning and prioritisation of the work, the most fundamental of which are the RENATE Core Mission and Vision statements; Policy documents and the mandate arrived at in Fatima, Portugal, when RENATE members convened the 3rd RENATE Assembly.**

## **RENATE** Mandate

**This mandate focused on three key areas into the future:**



### **>> Identity**

Working towards a better understanding of RENATE identity, rooted in the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, with human dignity and human rights at its heart, so that the message of RENATE filters into the public arena, particularly through social media.



### **>> Education & Capacity-Building**

Education and Capacity-building so that an informed public would be mobilised to work towards the elimination of human trafficking while being well-versed in the issues related to it. These would include education on prevention, protection, prosecution, advocacy & campaigning, safeguarding rights, information regarding supply-chain issues related to the violation of worker rights, fair wages and modern slavery.



### **>> Networking**

Strengthening the work of RENATE through collaboration with other Network bodies of Church and NGOs so as to achieve greater impact in realising the dream of eliminating human trafficking by 2030.

## Other Key Documents

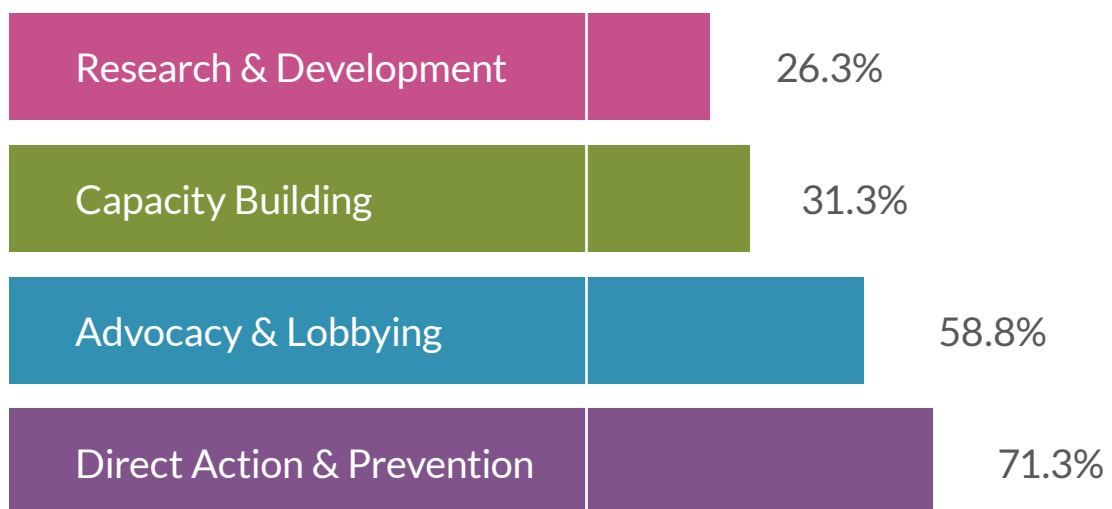
RENATE's funding application to the Conrad Hilton Sister's Foundation, is a document which guides the Core group's work and targets, having secured funding for RENATE's mission for the period 1 November 2022 to 1 November 2024.

An additional key document was the Monitoring and Evaluation Report (2022). This report represents feedback from the RENATE membership across the 31 member countries.



## Main areas of service

Main areas of service delivery from the RENATE Network for the period:



## Guest speakers at **RENATE Working Board Meeting - Sofia, 18-23 March 2024.**



**Adina Bălan,**  
CJ.

Sister Adina Balan, CJ, generously shared her time with us over the Working Board meeting, in her capacity not only as a RENATE member but also in her capacity as the European Regional representative for Talitha Kum. In this regard, Adina shared information about the forthcoming Talitha Kum Assembly taking place in Rome, 18-24 May 2024.

RENATE is delighted to be represented by six delegates; Marie Power, HFB, RENATE Co-President; Ivonne van de Kar, RENATE CO-President; Brian O' Toole (Ireland); Joana Lipowska FMM, Poland; Fr. Roman Lahisz CSsR (UKRAINE) and Stanka Oršolić SND, Bosnia/Croatia/Herzegovina & Serbia.

In her presentation, Adina presented an overview of the previous Talitha Kum Assembly held in 2019 and moved on to the objectives and hopes for the upcoming Assembly 2024, not least being a celebration of 15 years for Talitha Kum!

Adina took the Working Board through the timeline of "Journeying Together Towards 2024" and posed two questions for the delegates to reflect upon in advance of the Assembly.

We very much look forward to the outcome of the Assembly and continued collaboration together with Talitha Kum on a common mission to combat human trafficking and exploitation.

**Link to Adina's presentation:**  
[CLICK HERE](#)



**Professor Anna Rowlands**  
St. Hilda Chair in Catholic Social Thought & Practice, Durham University, UK.

Professor Anna Rowlands prepared a presentation on the topic "How to bring the voices of the marginalized into the Synodal process."

Based on Pope Francis' vision of a synodal way, Professor Rowlands presented the marginalized as key protagonists of the Synod.

Professor Rowlands referenced a number of Synod reports; raised some questions as to how the Synod responded to the principal theme of bringing the marginalized into the Synodal process and posed the key question as we progress towards 2024;

***"How can voices be heard, and contributions be made AT THE DIFFERENT ECCLESIAL LEVELS?"***

In terms of Synod preparation 2024/'25, One of the ten working groups will focus on questions of listening at the margins - so RENATE has a chance to contribute its own wisdom to this working group between now and July 2025.

**Professor Rowlands shared the 5 questions which the Working groups will be considering and then challenged us to reflect upon how RENATE's work addresses these realities by considering the following questions:**

1. How does your work already contribute to realizing these goals and AT THE DIFFERENT LEVELS? How can the wider Church learn from you, and those you work with?
2. What temptations does the RENATE Network face in carrying out this work? How do the priorities of the Synod help to focus your own self-reflection and ongoing learning?
3. Where are synodal practices at work in the way you accompany the most marginalized?
4. How Synodal is the RENATE Network? What learning do you have to do?
5. How does the RENATE Network enable those who are marginalized to be protagonists, socially and theologically?

**Professor Rowland's presentation is available at:**

[CLICK HERE](#)

# RENATE Methodologies

RENATE's work via online platforms continued beyond the COVID pandemic period. The modus operandi online is via Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

## RENATE ONLINE

- » CSW: March 2023
- » Symposiums
- » Zoom Teams: Many Platforms
- » Crisis Management
- » Discernment & reorientation
- » All Task Groups, Core Groups, Board Meetings, Training and Retreats
- » Remote Presentations

In-person meetings have taken place whereby the new Core Group met together in Brussels 19-22 January 2023, as part of a team-building exercise to work and plan together for the years ahead. The Core group met once more in person at the end of the year, 7-10 December 2023, to review the year and plan for 2024.

A third in-person meeting of the Core group took place as they attended a Retreat together, which took place at the Mount St. Paul's Retreat Centre in Malta, Wednesday 27 September to 3 October. Fr. Pace led the retreat which was beneficial to all who attended. And while essentially the retreat was to be an opportunity to reflect, refresh and renew, there were still operational meetings on some of the days!



MEMBERS OF THE CORE GROUP GATHERED AT THE RETREAT IN MALTA.



# 5-9 June 2023, Germany: RENATE Working Board meeting

One of the main events of 2023 was the RENATE Working Board for 2022, which took place in St. Ottilien, Germany, from 5-9 June. Below is a taste of how the Board meeting went!

The meeting was situated in the beautiful Monastery grounds of St. Ottilien, in Bavaria, Germany and was the ideal location for the members to meet, work, reflect and share together.

The week was enriched by input from guests such as Ms. Martina Liebsch, MD of Catholic Forum “Living in Illegality,” at the German Bishops’ Conference, who spoke about the following:



- The German Bishops Conference and their Working Group against Human Trafficking.
- The work on Migrants with irregular status.
- Some figures about THB in Germany
- Short spotlight on Ukrainian Refugees and Human Trafficking.
- The cooperation with the Santa Marta Group and the European Action Plan.

Sr. Abby Avelino, MM, International Co-ordinator of Talitha Kum joined us remotely and presented on its International organisational Committee; Talitha Kum’s organisational structure and also about current & future events.

Working Board members were inspired by input from Mother Mechtilde Thurmer, OSB, Abbess of the Benedictine Abbey of Maria Frieden in the Bavarian town of Kirchsletten. Mother Mechtilde has been a constant champion of those whose lives are on the margins and living in peace and harmony with nature and humankind. She received the Gottingen Peace Prize for her commitment in 2021.



## The following are highlights from what Mother Mechtild shared

She prevails upon the collective supports of her contacts in the medical profession e.g., doctors, psychologists, psychotherapists etc. to assist immigrants and refugees. Hers is a community of elderly, so money is not in abundance but still they manage. Shared about how the media became interested in her, especially having featured in The Tablet in an article written by Cardinal Czerny. She acknowledged the great support she receives from supporters living in the United States.

Emphasised how it is possible for positive news to go around and not just the negative.

Parting words from Mother Mechtild, encouraging action!

*"It helps praying-even if I do nothing else, but to help someone in need is every bit as important as praying."*

*"The silent need their voices to be heard. The violent are too loud and the peaceful are too quiet."*

*"Men too are suffering, especially living under such awful conditions as migrants without permits."*

The morning coffee break provided an opportunity for the members to meet & interact with Mother Mechtild, who remained with the meeting until lunchtime. The final guest speaker at the Working Board meeting was Ms. Laura Lechner, JADWIGA, Germany.

Ms. Lechner represents JADWIGA, which offers counselling and support services in Germany, to victims of human trafficking and forced marriage. The organisation supports victims forced to work as prostitutes, or forced to steal, sell drugs or cheat and to beg; They also assist those who are exploited and not paid for work. JADWIGA came to our attention through the recommendation of the Dr. Markus Grimm, from the German Bishops' Conference and is a member of KoK. Laura presented a comprehensive overview of the work of specialised counselling centres 'JADWIGA', offering comprehensive support and assistance to those affected in crisis situations and advocating for the rights of victims of human trafficking and forced marriage.



### TALITHA KUM INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE For the period 2023-2026 ( three years - renewal)

**Coordinator: Sr. Abby Avelino, MM (UISG-Rome)**

**Africa: Sr. Yvonne Bambara, RGS (Burkina Faso)**

**Asia: Sr. Paula, SPC (Thailand)**

**Europe: Sr. Adina Balan, CJ Romania**

**Latin America: Sr. Carmen Ugarte Garcia, OSR (Mexico)**

**North America: Sr. IsaBelleCouliard, (Canada)**

**Oceania: Sr. Colleen Jackson, RSCJ (Australia)**

Approved by the UISG Executive Board (2023)



The following is a compilation of the feedback from the group work, discussing/reviewing and learning from the Assembly.

### **RENATE Identity**

RENATE Identity was the priority point for most discussions. It was viewed as an important consideration for strengthening the network and important in the context of the new leadership. Key questions were "Who are we?", "What are we becoming?" The title "Religious in Europe" might no longer be fit for purpose due to the increasing involvement of lay people in the overall network.

### **In-person Networking**

Members shared that the RENATE Assembly was a great opportunity to meet in person and network and agreed that inclusiveness is the hallmark of RENATE. Acknowledged the great way the youth were involved in Portugal at the RENATE Assembly (2022) by the local coordinators and congratulations was extended to them for their contributions to the success of the Assembly. The group also thanked Susan Daily for her beautiful illustrations which enriched the overall Assembly.

### **Strength of a wider faith-based Network**

The strength of being part of a wider network and being part of a faith-based network was a very important point to make, one which everyone present valued.

### **Rebirth after COVID**

The gathering at the Assembly felt almost like a rebirth, after the COVID lockdown, citing themes such as Identity, memberships, new plans, how to keep going, opportunity to enjoy almost a full orchestra of musicians (!) at the daily Liturgies plus the Theological reflections which drew us all together and acted as a springboard for the work of the next day.

Finally, the sacredness of being in Fatima itself was appreciated by one and all.



## RENATE Internal Rules

The Working Board meeting went through the revisions necessary to cover the current reality where there are now two Co-Presidents instead of one President.

*Title III-Structure of RENATE* – was amended with the addition of ‘Article 1.2 Presidential Team’ to reflect the new arrangements for shared presidency.

Ultimately, it was agreed that while we cannot legislate for EVERYTHING, we must try to keep the Internal Rules as uncomplicated as possible. Members are reminded of the obligations to inform/update their own respective organisations in their own country.

## Article 2. Funding

Sufficient funds have been secured for the next two years, through the good offices of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

- Addition:- The addition of "...People of all Faith traditions" is to be added.
- Action:- need to define the time period for membership of the Working Board.
- Adoption of the Internal Rules with revisions as of 8 June 2023.
- 18 in favour of the revisions.
- No recorded abstentions.
- RENATE Core group member, Ms. Ardita Korriku Keraj presented the Core group's Action Plan & Implementation.

- Action plan 2023-2024 presented by Ardita Keraj Korriku, Core group member
- Link to presentation: <https://tinyurl.com/ype77szs>

This refers to work to be completed in 2023 & 2024, which is the funded period.

It is based on the application to Conrad Hilton for funding, which in turn informed RENATE's Strategic Plan.

A key objective this year, post-COVID, was to focus on Human & Strategic Development & Healing Processes.

A new dimension is the survivor training in leadership & human & economic empowerment – which took place in two venues in Albania by the end of 2023.

It may be possible to extend this possibility of training to other member countries in 2024, members were invited to let Anne know of their interest and she will update the Core Group.

This training was supposed to engage 20 survivors in intensive training in areas such as economic empowerment, self-sufficiency and skills to enhance their self-esteem. After the training, they will be alumni/models for others who are part of the shelters, to share their stories. There is further updates on this initiative further along in this report, under the Survivor Leadership Training Programme.



## Update from the new European representative on Talitha Kum International Coordination Committee:

Sr. Adina Balan,  
CJ.



Adina explained that her role is to coordinate and facilitate networking, through consultation internationally across Europe.

There are 6 networks in Europe which coordinate directly with Talitha Kum and inform the Talitha Kum Database. This may lead to duplication of content, which Adina is going to clarify at a later stage.

Adina explained that the variety of languages, mentalities and legal systems is such that Talitha Kum requires international coordination. Adina spoke about the frequency

of meetings at which she has been present since her uptake March 2023.

Referenced both the Dicastery for Integral Human Development and also the Dicastery for Religious life, these are the main partners for us in relation to the Vatican.

The above is just an insight into the content and workings of a very enjoyable and productive Working Board meeting, which was as a result of a lot of preparations and time during 2023.

## UN CSW67 6-17 March, 2023.

**Theme for this year:-  
"Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women & girls."**



Members of the various RENATE Task groups presented on their work during a 90-minute webinar at the CSW Virtual Portal, which took place on 15 March 2023.

It was agreed that RENATE participates/presents one webinar, not 10 as heretofore. This year's presentations focused on the victims, the perpetrators, the issue of "Demand," and finally on society in general- actions and inactions.

As always, RENATE is grateful to the generosity and assistance of Winifred Doherty, OLCGS and the Congregation of Our lady of the Good Shepherd, who kindly shared their Virtual platform with RENATE for this webinar.

Recordings of all presentations at this event, and previous RENATE presentations at CSW conferences, can be accessed at [renate-europe.net/documents/csw-webinar-recordings/](https://renate-europe.net/documents/csw-webinar-recordings/)

# RENATE Development

Christopher Poole, Director of Client Development EMEA-Performance Solutions by Milliken & Company, continued his work with the Development Task group, building upon the meetings held prior to the RENATE Assembly. The work has been furthered by the mandate arising from the Assembly. The Task group embarked on a RENATE Strategy Review during 2023, with the following objectives identified:

Theme	Objective
Empower Victims	Increase significantly the empowerment of victims to share their stories, lead activities, gather support data & research
Trafficking Demand Prevention	Increase significantly the focus and resources dedicated to trafficking demand prevention, partnering with trafficking prevention organisations to provide tools and support to our at-risk communities
Increase Survivor Activities	Focus on survivors joining the RENATE network to benefit from both front-line and "care" activities (e.g. retreats)
Internal Communication	Increase significantly the frequency and consistency of communication across the Network
Funding for Education etc.	Increase membership funding for education, shelter and support to build the life skills and resilience of victims
Face of RENATE Network	Learn how to present RENATE to select organisations/networks
Fundraising	Dramatically increase fundraising with mechanisms that make giving easy, accessible and informative for the donor
Collaboration with Networks	Task Groups to target select organisations/networks that help them deliver their mandate/responsibilities
NGO Partnerships	Establish a priority list of NGO partners for collaboration (those that share our values)
Service Offer	Develop an offer of services & resources for corporations that support their ethical ambitions and values
Corporate Partnerships	Enhance corporate partnerships to generate pro bono support for RENATE Network.

Arising from consideration, discussion and discernment at the RENATE 2023 Working Board meeting, the following five themes or pillars were arrived at:

Theme	Objective
<b>Empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase significantly the empowerment of victims to share their stories, lead activities, gather support data &amp; research.</li> <li>• Focus on survivors joining the RENATE network to benefit from both frontline &amp; "care" activities (Retreats etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Trafficking Demand Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase significantly the focus and resources dedicated to trafficking demand prevention, partnering with trafficking prevention organisations to provide tools and support to our at-risk communities</li> </ul>
<b>Communications</b> Combine theme 4 (Internal communication) + theme 6 (Face of RENATE network)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase significantly the frequency and consistency of communication across the Network (sharing Vision, plans, successes, latest status).</li> <li>• Learn how to present RENATE to select organisations &amp; networks.</li> </ul>
<b>Fundraising</b> Combine theme 5 (Funding for Education) + theme 7 (Fundraising) + theme 10 (Service Offer) + theme 11 (Corporate Partnerships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase membership funding for education, shelter and support to build the life skills and resilience of victims.</li> <li>• Dramatically increase fundraising with mechanisms that make giving easy, accessible and informative for the donor.</li> <li>• Develop an offer of services &amp; resources for corporations that support their ethical ambitions and values.</li> <li>• Enhance corporate partnerships to enhance pro-bono support for the RENATE Network.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships/Working Together</b> Combine theme 8 (Collaboration with networks) + theme 9 (NGO Partnerships) under one theme/heading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task Groups to target select organisations/networks that help them deliver their mandate/responsibilities.</li> <li>• Establish a priority list of NGO partners for collaboration (those that share our values).</li> </ul>

These five macro themes or pillars together with the RENATE mandate, will inform the strategic thinking and planning going forward. A lot has been achieved thus far and there is more to do!

Our sincere thanks to Christopher, for his generosity in sharing his gifts and talents, and for his ongoing commitment to the Development Planning process with RENATE.

# Schools project: anti-human trafficking awareness raising >>

RENATE members in 21 European countries have embarked on anti-human trafficking presentations in schools in their respective countries. In some cases, if schools are unavailable to participate, the awareness raising programme can run in parishes/youth groups and community centres as alternative possibilities. The members of the Awareness-raising task group have collated the content of each presentation and collate the addresses of the schools which have participated in the initiative, together with demographic information. (Fig. 1). The 2nd round of the initiative runs from 1 March to 15 September 2024, with all of the information is to be finalised in 2024.

Fig. 1 - Collated information as of December 2023

COUNTRY	REPRESENTATIVE	IN PROGRESS	COMPLETE	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Lithuania	Arunya Bertonye		X	50
Croatia	Viktorija Simic		X	40 (2 SCHOOLS)
Bosnia	Marina Pregernik		X	60
Slovakia	Eliska Kotuchova		X	100
England	Mary Patricia Mulhall		X	120
England	Imelda Poole		X	Approx. 1995 (2 SCHOOLS)
Albania	Aferdita Gjoni		X	27
Albania	Imelda Poole		X	30
France	Maria Manoel		X	91
Poland	Gabriela Hasiura		X	20
Serbia	Stanka Orsolc		X	15
Malta	Maria Borg Pellicano		X	Approx. 150
Czech Republic	Klara Maria Stranikova		X	Approx 500
Spain	Pilar Gonzalez Cano		X	
Netherlands	Ivonne van de Kar		X	
Ukraine	Natalia Holynska		X	Approx. 500
Italy	Mary Beth Lloyd	X		
Romania	Sr. Inocentia		X	250+
Hungary	Judit Knab		X	
Bulgaria	Joana Terzieva	X		
Greece	Rania Ioakeimidou			
Austria	Magdalena Eichinger	X		
Portugal	Eugenia Costas	X		
Germany	Maria Decker			
Ireland	RENATE/APT Member		X	Approx. 2000
Kosovo	Jakup Sabedini	X		
Macedonia	Dejan Strackovski			
Montenegro				



## Total students reached by awareness-raising projects to date:

# 6,071

FEMALE	MALE	REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
31	19	€250	Report received
21	19	No claim received	Report received
		€0	Report received
		No claim received	Report received
		No claim received	Report received
		€0	Report received
		€5	Report received
		€0	Report received
		No claim received	Report received
		€0	Report received
7	8	No claim received	Report received
150		No claim received	Awaiting report
		€0	Awaiting report
			Project moving slowly.
		€250	Report received
		€250	Report received
			Difficulty with working in schools
			Due to be held in January 2024
			Suggested AR session on "Loveboy" Method. No recent update.
N/A	N/A	N/A	Report received
			Difficulty with working in schools
			Contact Unknown

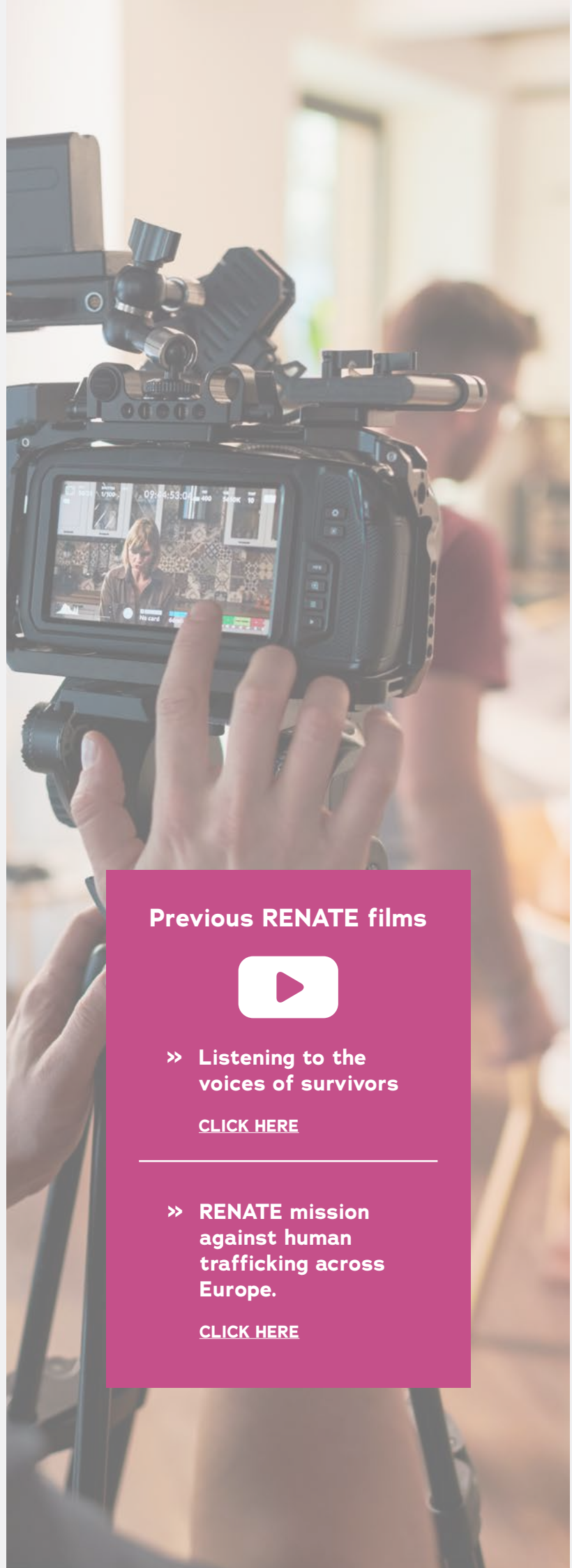


## RENATE Film



Based on the value of film and digital media to convey information, it was agreed that RENATE produce a documentary film about the work of the Foundation in the anti-human trafficking field, as an initiative of the Advocacy Task group. The original plan was modified from the creation of 3 'shorts' to increase and create 6 'shorts.' Ideally, it was planned to have 3 films ready by 15 July, for use for 30 July 2023 and the rest to be completed by mid-September, for use on 18 October, 2023.

Involving 6 RENATE member countries, the Task group embraced the creativity behind the creation of the short films, with a view to raising awareness about the work of RENATE across Europe and ultimately be a resource for use by RENATE members & wider dissemination. Regrettably, RENATE member Ewa Kusikova from Slovakia was unavailable, but the Task group now works with Gini George, SSpS, (M.A. Radio & Television, NUI Maynooth) a radio & TV producer, based in Dublin, Ireland. Final production date is summer 2024.



### Previous RENATE films



» **Listening to the voices of survivors**

[CLICK HERE](#)

» **RENATE mission against human trafficking across Europe.**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## RENATE Retreats: both in-person & online.



### Members' Online Retreat, 22-30 July 2023

Organised by the members of the House of Prayer task group and designed and led by Gabriela Mezinger, SJC, Hungary, this was RENATE's first provision of an online retreat. The retreat was organised in the format of a Novena preceding the World Day against Trafficking in Human Persons, 30th July.

The Motto chosen for the online retreat was:  
*"Show how wonderful is your kindness,  
 you who save those who seek protection  
 by taking refuge at your right hand." Psalm  
 17.7.*

The online retreat took the format of an Introductory Prayer followed by reading of a Scripture passage and finally, personal reflection promoted by some text.

This was a considerable commitment by the House of Prayer Task group and in particular by Sr. Gabriela Mezinger who prepared the entire content for the nine days and to whom we are immensely grateful.



### Core group retreat, 27 September-3 October, 2023, Malta.

The Core group retreat took place at the Mount St. Paul's Retreat Centre in Malta, where Fr. Pace led the retreat which was beneficial to all who attended. And while essentially the retreat was to be an opportunity to reflect, refresh and renew, there were still operational meetings on some of the days!

### Members' in-person Retreat, 18-23 September 2023, Malta.

10 RENATE members participated in a retreat led by Fr. Pace at the Mount St. Paul's Retreat Centre, Malta. Thanks to Patricia Mulhall, CSB, for also attending and looking after the retreatants from the moment of their arrival to departure.

The evaluations were unanimous in their appreciation for the opportunity to take time out; rest, reflect and renew. The participants were also unanimous in their feedback that such retreats could possibly last for a full week, discounting the days at the beginning and at the end for travel!

# Survivor Leadership Training

This initiative has been prioritised as RENATE continues to give voice to victims and survivors of human trafficking and exploitation.

To date, 20 female survivors with lived experience of human trafficking and exploitation have completed the first Survivor Leadership Training programme, in Albania, which was really a pilot programme in 2023. RENATE member Anxhela Bruci devised the Programme. It is available in English and comprises content for the trainers and practical sheets which participants complete.

The focus of the programme is on personal leadership and human and economic empowerment. Ultimately, it is planned that numbers of survivors will act as alumni in shelters, day centres and/or mobile units after completing the training.

Feedback from those presenting and accompanying this pilot, state that it was a bigger responsibility than originally planned, with a lot more work involved. Based on the experience in Albania, offering the programme really requires 3 persons. The first run of the Programme was presented over four full days, covering two modules each day. It was residential, taking place in a hotel in Tirana, from Thursday to Sunday.

The 2nd Programme took place in Vlora, Albania, twice weekly for a month and was non-residential. A Certificate of participation was awarded at the end. Additionally, each participant was awarded €165 for their own personal development, to be spent under supervision of their social worker, who ensures receipts for their expenditure.



An interesting development has occurred whereby some male RENATE members have raised the possibility of offering the programme to male survivors of human trafficking, beginning with a pilot for males living in Albania. It is acknowledged that there needs to be a great sensitivity around implementing the programme to women mainly, however, in light of this call from male members of RENATE, it was agreed to explore the possibility of running a programme to empower male potential victims of human trafficking/exploitation/abuse/ in Albania.

Discussions on this will take place in the new year (2024) to see if the current programme is appropriate for a male audience or should it be modified, as there definitely is a gender consideration. Watch this space!

We are most grateful to Anxhela Bruci, Irena Kraja and Brikena Puka who acted as the trainers with the survivor Leadership Programme in Albania and to Ardita Korriku Keraj, RENATE Core Group member for her accompaniment and journeying with the team throughout.

The next Leadership Training for Survivors is due to take place in Greece in 2024.

**Please find below the link to the report on the pilot of the Programme held in Albania:**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## RENATE Anti-Human Trafficking Campaigns

RENATE members play an active role in campaigns, as an effective means of awareness-raising, prevention and protection against human trafficking and exploitation. When one combines online campaigns, webinars and social media posts, prayer vigils and individual presentations and talks, it is fair to say that each day sees an increase in impact beyond the actual numbers attending on the original specific dates.

Of particular note are dates such as 8 February (Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, the International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking); the 30 July (World Day against Trafficking in Persons) and 30 October (The EU Anti-Trafficking Day).

1500 + people have been reached as a result of campaigns centred on International calendar events e.g. 8 February 'Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, where RENATE held an online Prayer vigil and 31 member countries held similar vigils nationally; RENATE held a side-event online at CSW67 (March 6-7, 2023) which had attendance of 50 online delegates and continues to have hits; 30 July World Day against Trafficking in Persons, with RENATE members running social media campaigns via Facebook & Twitter, plus a UN GiftBox campaign in Albania which travelled to five different urban and sub-urban communities; 18 October, the EU anti-trafficking Day, saw RENATE members host talks at local community/parishes in Italy, France, Ireland, the UK, Portugal, Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic; a podcast in the UK and a webinar at the Council of Europe (subsequently deferred to 2024, due to circumstances at the Council of Europe).

Full details of the various campaigns are available in the news section of the RENATE website at [renate-europe.net/blogour-work](https://renate-europe.net/blogour-work)

## Law Research



The original Research Proposal was to explore the training and resources available to legal practitioners in 6 countries who provide legal assistance to victims of trafficking.

The issues covered in the research will include identification, immigration, criminal investigation, and compensation.

Research has been funded for a duration of 9 months by the Conrad Hilton Foundation, and includes 14-20 semi-structured interviews, with translation in certain circumstances.

The Law Task group continued its research in 2023 to support awareness-raising re. Legal Aid provision- or lack thereof- for victims & survivors of Human Trafficking, in 2023 with St. Mary's University, Twickenham, UK. Data collection from the 6 participating countries was progressed whereby interviews and questionnaires with a dozen professionals are due for conclusion in early 2024. RENATE members of the URAT Albania network, organised a conference attended by 80 people in-person and an additional 50 people online, to bring forward the urgent call to include comprehensive legislation in Albania's National Action Plan, on anti-human trafficking.

**Please see link for the Law Task group update on the research to date:**

[CLICK HERE](#)



# RENATE Trainings/ Capacity- building webinars

## RENATE members' training on the SDGs

This training took place online via Zoom, on 19, 20 & 21 April, 08:30- 11:30 (UK), on the topic of the implementation SDGs and their role in consideration of anti-human trafficking. We are grateful to all those who participated from not only across the RENATE network but also from Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. Our thanks to RENATE members Ms. Ivonne van de Kar (RENATE Co-President) and Mr. Brian O' Toole for providing a comprehensive and insightful programme, which opened everyone's eyes and ears to how vital it is that we all play our part to ensure the implementation of the SDGs.



To access the recording:  
[CLICK HERE](#)

## Supply Chains and Human Trafficking

The second RENATE members' training took place 7, 8 & 9 November 2023, on the issue of "Supply Chains and Human Trafficking." We are most grateful to the following esteemed colleagues;

### Ms. Alison Rahill

Executive Officer & ACAN Programme Manager, at the Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network

who presented on the topic:  
"Assess and address modern slavery risk in social services."

### Ms. Martina Liebsch

MD of 'Living in Illegality' & the Working Group against Trafficking in Human Beings, German Bishops Conference

spoke to us about developing an:  
"Action Plan on Human Trafficking, with a focus on Supply Chains."

## Ms. H el ene de Rengerve

Senior EU Adviser at Anti-Slavery.org

shared about:

"The work of anti-slavery.org to assess, address and mitigate the risk of modern slavery in everyday operations and supply chains."

## Professor Alexander Trautrim

Professor of Supply Chain Management, Nottingham University Business School, UK,

spoke about:

"Modern Slavery; SDG 8.7 & what we can do in our Supply Chains."

## Dr. Peter Clausing

Partner Sudmexikos

shared about:

"A consideration of Germany's national legislation and the upcoming European legislation on Supply Chains"





# Preparation for RENATE attendance at Talitha Kum Assembly, 18-24 May 2024.

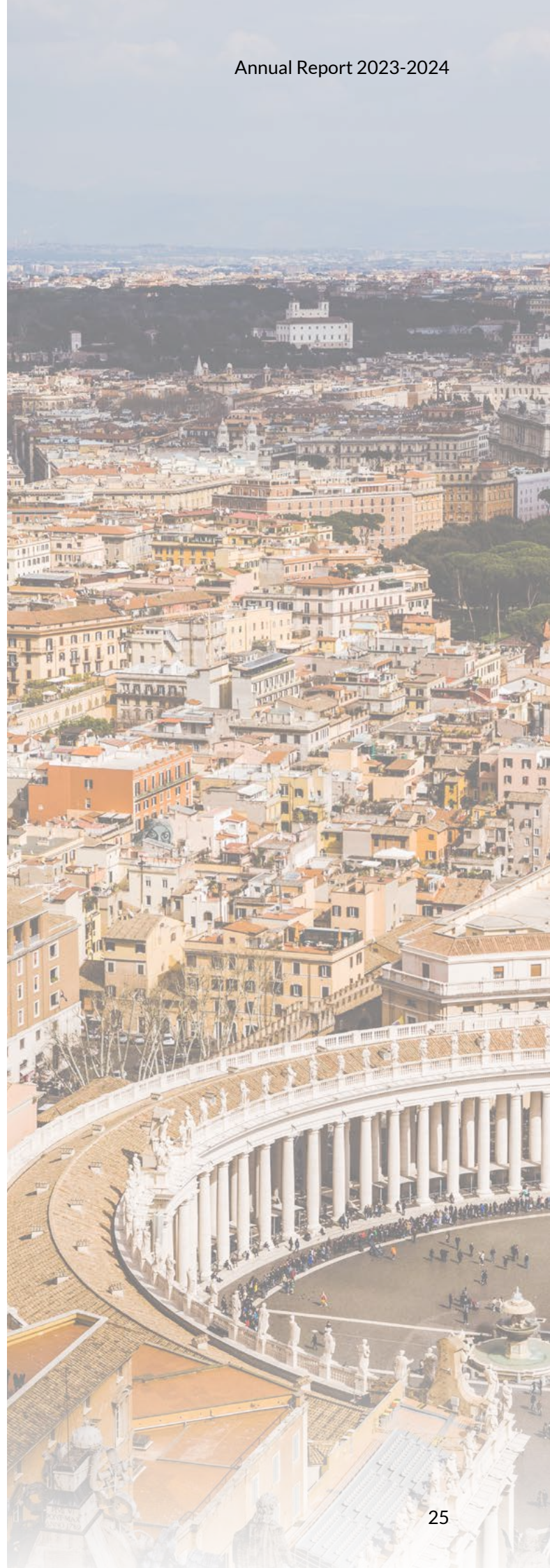
RENATE appreciates the invitation to send six delegates to attend the Talitha Kum Assembly in Rome, in May 2024. Both RENATE Co-Presidents Marie Power HFB & Ms. Ivonne van de Kar, will attend, together with Sr. Stanka Orsilić SND, (representing both Serbia & Croatia on the RENATE Working Board); Sr. Joanna Lipowska FMM (Poland); Fr. Roman Lahisz (UKRAINE) & Mr. Brian O' Toole (Ireland).

Additional RENATE members will represent their own respective organisations, such as Ms. Ana Majko will represent ARSIS Albania and Sr. Liz Byrne IBVM will represent APT Ireland.

Journeying together towards the Assembly, has seen RENATE members contribute to the Listening Exercises conducted throughout the latter part of 2023, with questions and suggestions provided by Talitha Kum to be used as a guide for gathering voices from the grassroots and journeying together across the entire Talitha Kum International Network towards the General Assembly.

**Link to the collated responses from the RENATE Network:**

[CLICK HERE](#)



# RENATE Task Groups

**Reference has been made throughout this report about specific undertakings by the RENATE Task groups.**

Link to the document detailing information on the RENATE Task Groups:  
[CLICK HERE](#)



## Advocacy

Following our meeting in Lviv, Ukraine in November 2018, when we formed the Advocacy Group, the RENATE Working Board pledged to prepare for a collective RENATE Voice on issues related to anti-trafficking, with particular focus on the trafficking of children, which seems to be a neglected area. Link to report:

- [CLICK HERE](#)



## Development

Please see report on the Development Task group on [page 14](#).



## Awareness-raising

Comprising 15 members from 12 RENATE member countries, the Awareness-raising task group work from Ephesians 4:16: *"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."*

In this regard, the work of the Awareness-raising task group takes many forms and across various platforms cross-borders and cross-culturally throughout Europe. From webinars; podcasts; Zoom meetings; engagement with and talks to various groupings, through to conducting a cross-European Awareness-raising programme amongst schools and their wider communities, Awareness-raising initiatives are dynamic and evolving, as you will see in the recording which is at the start of this link to the Awareness-raising task group report:

- [CLICK HERE](#)



## Communications and Social Media

This group has focused on communicating more news from grassroots level. Sorcha Mallen, RENATE Communications Team continues the practise of sending a weekly email to the membership requesting their news. In turn, that news is posted to the RENATE website by the Website manager Greg Savvides and Anne Kelleher, RENATE Communications Team, subsequently posts to RENATE's Face Book and X feeds, plus Sorcha updates on Instagram.

Following a consideration of the ongoing problems with the RENATE's mail server, a new service provider (Egg design, Ireland) has been contracted to RENATE. Our thanks to Annie Bannister for her work since the very beginning of RENATE and for finalising the transfer of access codes etc. to enable EggDesign take over the service provision to RENATE for Communications purposes.

Apart from the work and ministry of each RENATE member which promotes the mission and vision of RENATE, the print and visual mediums such as the RENATE banners, logo, Newsletters, information leaflets etc. all serve

very real and valid promotional purposes.

The RENATE Logo doesn't seem to be fresh any longer. It has been decided to have a professional look at it but not change it too much, just tweak it a little but not design a completely new logo.

It is planned to incorporate the logo into pins/banners/bags/folders/leaflets/Newsletters etc. and ultimately any revisions must ensure the logo design is capable of high-quality resolution for future publications.

In any case, this will be work to be undertaken in 2024.

The RENATE website has not been revised in at least six years and has become too 'heavy.' However, this is a more expensive undertaking and more likely to be undertaken within a future funding period, when a professional website designer can be approached to look at the overall re-design.

Link to the Communications & Social Media Team report:

- <https://tinyurl.com/38y34y8p>

# RENATE Task Groups Continued



## EU Institutions & the Council of Europe

RENATE enjoys participatory status at the Council of Europe, as a member of the Conference of INGOs and is a member of the Council of Europe Migration Committee.

One of its plans was to present a webinar on the issue of Human Trafficking, entitled;

In 2022, it was decided to combine the International Day of Migration (17 October) with the EU Anti-Human Trafficking Day (18 October).

Regrettably due to practical circumstances at the CoINGOs, the planned webinar by the Council of Europe Task group, had to be deferred to 2024. We are grateful to all the members of the task group for their ongoing dedication and commitment.



## House of Prayer

This Task group convened every six weeks throughout the past year. We are grateful to this task group for the beautiful and inspiring prayer-services they have provided us again this year. These have set the tone and provided a context for events such as the RENATE Prayer Service for 8 February; the 30 July and 18 October International Days against Human Trafficking; RENATE Trainings have begun and concluded with prayers and reflections devised specifically by the House of Prayer Task group; each day of RENATE's annual Working Board meetings are cradled in prayer as each morning prayer is devised by the House of Prayer Task group and of course, this past year has seen the development of a self-directed online retreat, created by the RENATE house of Prayer Task group.

Faith and prayer are the bedrock upon which RENATE is founded and such is the positive feedback from the membership that the Task group has now embarked upon providing a quarterly prayer service online. These will commence with the 8 February Prayer service in 2024 and the next service will coincide with the 2nd quarter (April through June); the 3rd quarter (July-September) and the final will coincide with the 18 October, in the 4th and final quarter of the year.

**Link to House of Prayer task group report:**

- [CLICK HERE](#)



## Law Task Group

The Law task group is the largest of the RENATE Task groups, comprising 22 members from 12 countries across the RENATE network. They are currently working on research which explores the provision or otherwise of legal aid to those with the lived experience of Human Trafficking. The research focuses on the following six RENATE member countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Germany, England & Wales, Romania and Spain. It is hoped to launch the research in the summer of 2024.

New areas of activity for the RENATE Law Task group include the following;

- Engage with UN Events e.g. CSW, CSocD, HLPF etc. (we are doing this anyway!)
- Develop a list of concerns and recommendations for each country in RENATE (advocacy) - are these legal concerns?
- Develop a database/directory of services and providers across Europe as we had begun in 2023
- Revisiting research done to include new countries
- Engage in further training on Migration - is this law issues or migration generally?
- We send out to the RENATE network "Law Watch" when legal issues regarding trafficking are in the news
- Build a database of pro bono lawyers highlighting country jurisdiction in which they can practice
- Develop digital guides for accessing free legal help for trafficking victims by country (Add to Help Section in RENATE website)
- Look at training RENATE members on European law (with country by country differences)
- Produce a template best practice law against human trafficking for Europe
- Follow through on the need for training of lawyers in Human Trafficking and especially for legal aid lawyers
- We need support and guidelines (for NGOs), according to the law in assessing migrants

Link to Law Task group's Law Watch News feed:

[CLICK HERE](#)



## Shelter & Safe Houses task group

Because there has not always been a consistent presence. Individually the members each have a purpose but not so much together! It was decided the members of the Shelter Task Group would meet in person early in 2024 (e.g. Eindhoven) to build capacity together and share best practices. The Task group will also take the opportunity at the RENATE Working Board meeting in March, to invite participation of members from other Shelters/Safe Houses across the RENATE membership.

This past year has seen the Shelter & Safe Houses Task Group explore the possibility of running an 'in-person' retreat for those who run the shelters, under the heading 'Care for the Carers.' Another suggestion coming from this Task group is to explore the possibility to create a small brochure on "Good practices for Shelters working with Victims of Human Trafficking." Partners present their models and the Task group members can collate them & create an online publication. It can be incorporated into Advocacy & awareness-raising & all other dimensions of the other Task groups.

And a final possible action, is to create a book of stories, where beneficiaries share recipes/jewellery making/artwork etc. It looks like 2023 has been an inspiring year for the members of this Task group and we look forward to what 2024 will produce!

**Link to Shelters' and Safe Houses' Task group report:**

[CLICK HERE](#)

# RENATE's extended mission and direct action in the areas of awareness-raising, prevention and protection

against human trafficking in war-ravaged

# UKRAINE

Thanks to funding from Mísean Cara (Ireland's Overseas Aid grants) RENATE was able to support 5 Religious sisters (RENATE members) and 30 of their associates/partners in three countries Poland, Hungary & UKRAINE itself, in their work with displaced Ukrainians due to the war, so as to prevent, protect & raise awareness about Human Trafficking. This outreach has directly and positively impacted the lives of 500 women and children with lived experiences as a result of the war.

The RENATE Co-Presidents & Core Group oversaw the entire implementation of the Emergency response provision, including updates from the sisters on the frontlines and reviewing all reports emanating from same. As the war continues, RENATE members have

adapted initiatives to address the ongoing situation for women & girls during war, from awareness-raising through to practical survival supports and vocational training and integration initiatives, now to provision of psychological and trauma therapies.

Sadly, and worryingly, the war in UKRAINE does not look as if it will cease anytime soon. RENATE is grateful for the two rounds of funding received from Mísean Cara (Ireland), which helped in the first place with the provision of Human Trafficking prevention and awareness-raising initiatives in Poland, Hungary and the UKRAINE. The second round of funding assisted the RENATE members in the provision of follow-on supports to displaced persons in countries bordering the UKRAINE; assimilation; language acquisition; vocational

trainings and psycho-social supports to people deeply traumatised by the war.

Due to already receiving funds on two successive occasions and with unprecedented demands on Mísean Cara's funding, RENATE was unable to secure further funding for 2024.

A possibility to secure funding from the ARISE Foundation for the provision of supports to membership in the UKRAINE, was anticipated at an exploratory meeting in December 2023 with the ARISE Director of Programmes UK. Regrettably, as we reached the end of 2023, the funding did not materialise. RENATE remains committed to prevention and anti-human trafficking in the UKRAINE and we will have to look at strategic ways to forge alliances in order to highlight and help the plight of the most vulnerable.

## A Key Challenge during the past year.

The increase in the migratory flows continues to impact and make demands on RENATE members at grassroots level, catering to the needs of victims who are fearful of discovery and forced repatriation.

The growing exponential intolerance by European countries for migrants, is challenging to the membership who are working for mutual understanding of the fact that such intolerance creates ideal situations for traffickers to ply their trade.

The increase in trafficking of minors brings with it the challenge for our membership at every level, to pursue the implementation of codes of civil rights and international agreements specific to minors.

Particularly challenging are also the additional emotional demands when working with children trauma-

tised and harmed beyond belief.

Shelters are increasingly filled with victims who are minors. This has 'NIMBY' (not in my backyard) implications and especially regarding safeguarding.

The increase of cyber trafficking and the lack of law covering this crime has a massive impact on the work.

The vulnerability of journalists who report the crime is also increasingly apparent to us in our ministry.

It's unknown whether or not we will see any alleviations to the above, especially with the growing instability of world peace.

But awareness in itself is key and therefore, we proceed bravely.

## Key learnings during the past year.

Key learnings begin with the importance of constant communication and in particular, the value of 'in-person' meetings. From the RENATE Assembly in November 2022 and right through the reporting period, members have ALL expressed gratitude for the profound impact of being able to gather together in-person, after the restrictions of COVID.

Practically, it is not always possible to frequently gather in-person but we have placed an emphasis on in-country membership meetings, as well as opportunities to meet as a network at Working Board meetings; conducting research; presence at the Council of Europe; campaigns such as the UN GiftBox campaign and attendance at RENATE in-person retreats.

This learning will support our members in what can often be a spiritually lonely and personally demanding mission.

The value of having an Action Plan to adhere to is appreciated. The evolving field of Human Trafficking is such that one could be torn in many directions trying to

cater to many demands. An Action Plan keeps us to task and on mission when we could so easily be stretched to reach so many, many emerging needs.

The value of flexibility is not to be ignored especially when having to consider unplanned needs and demands arising- e.g. the continuing increase in the trafficking of minors and its ensuing impact on those who work to prevent and combat Human Trafficking. The challenge of increased Cyber trafficking opens new doors for advocacy and safeguarding. And above all, the flexibility required of us to attend to those impacted by war on our continent.

Learning from the above, action-responses have sometimes to be re-evaluated and timelines revised but not to the detriment of the overall focus and mission.



## In memory of Lea Ackermann Solwodi founder (86), deceased



The religious and women's rights activist Lea Ackermann died on October 31, 2023, at the age of 86. This was announced by the association "Solidarity with women in distress" (SOLWODI), which was founded by her.

Sister Lea has worked for women for over 30 years and freed hundreds of people from forced prostitution.

Excerpt from an article from the Episcopal Press Office:

Lea Ackermann was actually sent to Kenya by her order "Mission Sisters of Our Lady of Africa/White Sisters" in 1985 to train teachers. But she wanted to do something for people who had absolutely no chance. She turned to fighting poverty driven prostitution and campaigned for girls and women who, out of need, sold their bodies "for five cents for five minutes". She founded "Solwodi" and built a network of advice centers and shelters in

Germany. When she realized that forced prostitution and the slave trade in girls and women were also flourishing in Germany, she continued her fight there too. As a current case, she presented the fate of a 16-year-old African girl who was kidnapped to Germany and had to work in a brothel. She confided in a policewoman and came to Solwodi, as one of many thousands of women alone in Germany who turned to the aid organization for advice and protection. There are now also contact points in Romania, Hungary and Austria and "Solgidi" (gi = girls) for the daughters of the women are looked after by "Solwodi".

Solwodi's main tasks are still informing the public, providing concrete help for girls and women, for example by accompanying them on official visits or arranging German courses and legal advice, as well as setting up shelters.

From the obituary of the "Solwodi" association:

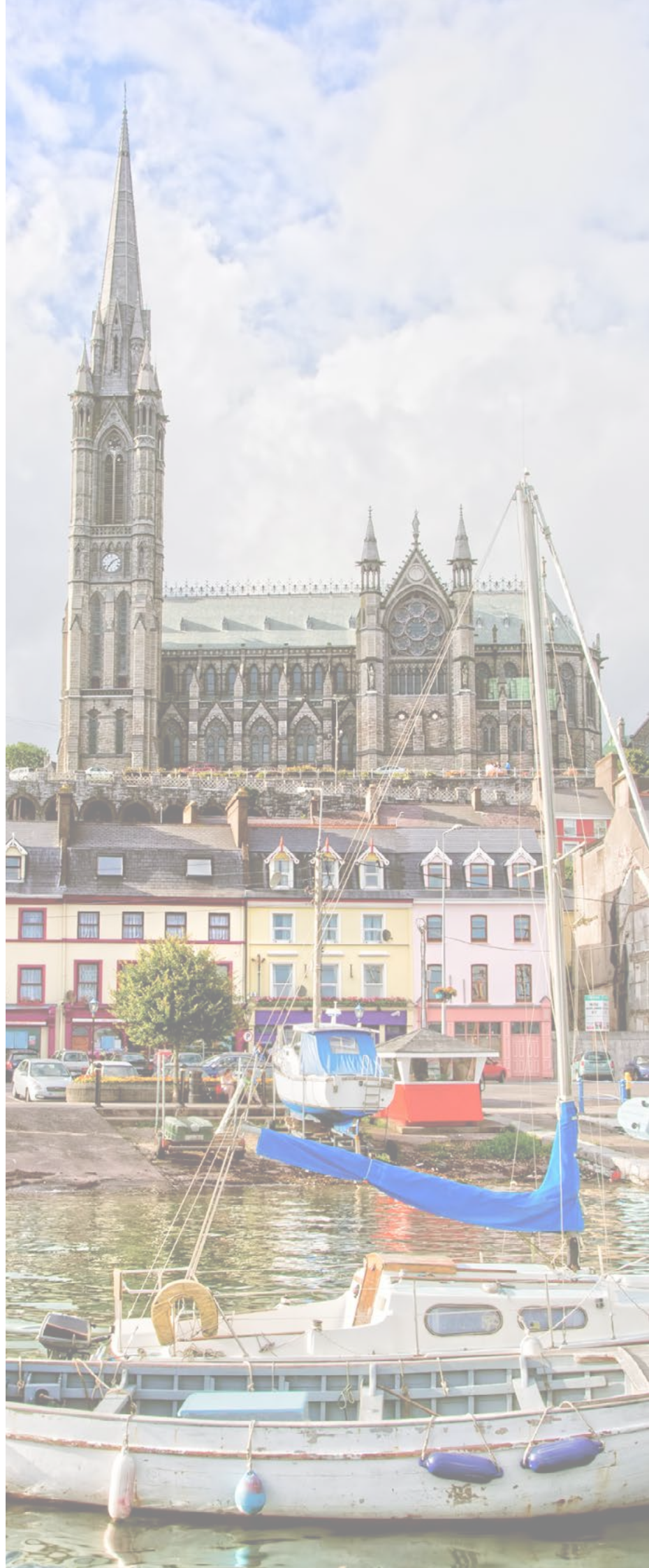
With Sr. Lea, SOLWODI loses a strong personality and charismatic founder. It is thanks to her that issues such as prostitution and gender-based violence first came onto the agenda in the late 1980s. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that the group of particularly vulnerable women, i.e. women with a migration or refugee history and who have experienced violence, receive support and have a voice. The fact that SOLWODI is now represented at 18 locations with 21 specialist advice centers and is a contact point for over 2,000 women every year is the great achievement of a lifetime.

Sister Lea Ackermann is buried in Trier. May she rest in peace in her Eternal home.

## Meeting with the Director of Strategy for the **Santa Marta Group**

Marie Power, RENATE Co-President met with Kevin Hyland, at his invitation, on Wednesday 13 December 2023, to discuss RENATE's working together with Santa Marta.

Santa Marta has initiated engagement with Parishes now throughout the UK, raising awareness about human trafficking. The Santa Marta group are holding their 2024 Conference in Cork, Ireland and it is hoped that RENATE will have representation present. Networking across borders and amongst NGOs and Civil Society actors is an essential commitment on the part of RENATE if we are to deliver on the mission and vision of the foundation.



# Appendices

## RENATE Country group reports, in alphabetical order.

- » Albania. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Austria. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Belgium. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Bosnia + Croatia + Herzegovina +Serbia. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Czech Republic. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Greece. Greece [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Hungary. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Ireland. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Netherlands. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Poland. [CLICK HERE](#) and accompanying narrative for slides: [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Portugal. [CLICK HERE](#) Romania. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Slovakia. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Spain. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » United Kingdom. [CLICK HERE](#)
- » Ukraine. [CLICK HERE](#)

End.

Report compiled by Anne Kelleher, as RENATE Secretariat.

Design/graphics and layout by Gregory Savvides, RENATE Website manager

# Join in online with the RENATE Network.



**Email:** [Communications@renate-europe.net](mailto:Communications@renate-europe.net)



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