



RELIGIOUS IN EUROPE NETWORKING
AGAINST TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

RENAME SPRING NEWSLETTER

RENAME WORKING BOARD MEETING 2025 TAKES PLACE IN ATHENS: [PG: 21](#)

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WORKING BOARD MEETING [HERE!](#)

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**FEATURING HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS
THE RENAME NETWORK, JAN - MAR 2025**



MODERN SLAVERY: SR. IMELDA POOLE (IBVM) SPEAKS AT CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH:

Earlier this year, Sr. Imelda Poole MBE (IBVM) delivered a thought-provoking talk at Corpus Christi Church in Wokingham, addressing the critical issue of modern slavery and supporting victims of trafficking. Drawing from her extensive experience, Sr. Imelda highlighted global efforts to combat trafficking, the impact of technology, and practical steps individuals can take to make a difference.

The evening concluded with a prayer of hope and a lively Q&A session, reflecting the community's commitment to tackling this global crisis.

Read more [here](#).

EMERGING CHALLENGES AND RISKS FOR UKRAINIANS, UPDATES FROM CARITAS UKRAINE:

According to the National Bank of Ukraine, approximately 200,000 more Ukrainians are expected to migrate abroad this year. Last year, this figure was 500,000. The same report predicts that in 2026, 200,000 migrants will begin returning to Ukraine, with half a million expected to return in 2027.

However, social surveys indicate a growing number of Ukrainian migrants intend to remain abroad even after the war. As a result, a large-scale and rapid return of Ukrainian migrants is not anticipated.

Ongoing migration from Ukraine is primarily driven by high security risks, constant shelling, destruction, and a decline in living conditions. Over the past three years of full-scale war, there has also been a significant outflow of 17-year-old boys seeking safety abroad.



Due to martial law, Ukrainian men over the age of 18 are prohibited from leaving the country. As a result, many parents are sending their underage sons abroad before they reach adulthood. Parents of 15- and 16-year-old boys are increasingly searching for schools, colleges, or universities in other countries, with Poland and Slovakia being the most common choices. If the boys speak German, Austria and Germany are also popular destinations due to better living conditions and strong social protection systems.

However, these young boys face significant risks as they find themselves alone in foreign countries, often without parental supervision. Parents may not always be able to check if their child is attending school, what kind of environment they are in, or what influences they are exposed to.

For university students, dormitories provide housing. Younger students typically live in rented accommodations, sometimes with relatives. In response to this growing trend, travel agencies now offer services to help minors relocate. In many cases, a mother accompanies her son abroad before returning to Ukraine, leaving him to navigate life alone.

Reports from Caritas organizations in Romania and the Czech Republic, which assist Ukrainian refugees, confirm a rise in unaccompanied boys aged 16-17 arriving in groups. After obtaining temporary protection status, many of these boys disappear. Their whereabouts and activities remain unknown. Some may have been promised jobs, particularly in the Czech Republic, where education is no longer mandatory at 16. Without knowledge of the local language or legal

system, these young migrants are highly vulnerable to exploitation. A deeper investigation into this issue is urgently needed.

It is likely that young Ukrainian girls will also begin following their male peers abroad. Many young people feel uncertain about their future, even after the war ends. There is no guarantee of stability or economic opportunity, leading to a broader trend of youth migration. This situation presents significant challenges for Ukraine's future.

The Situation with Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children

At the start of the full-scale invasion, all orphanages in Ukraine were evacuated. More than 4,000 Ukrainian orphans were relocated to EU countries, but only half have been returned to Ukraine. Meanwhile, many children remain in Russian-occupied territories, with a large number forcibly deported to Russia. Repatriating these children remains extremely difficult.

Countries such as Italy and Switzerland, where child safety is prioritized over international agreements, have refused to return children to Ukraine while active hostilities continue. They have taken responsibility for the children currently on their territory.

In Switzerland, there was an incident in which Ukrainian state guardians mistreated evacuated orphans, leading authorities to remove the children from their care.

Caritas Poland is currently assisting 35 orphans evacuated from Ukraine, providing them with social and psychological support, as well as Polish language and integration courses. However, there is a growing need to improve communication and offer additional support to the guardians of these orphans.

Iryna Maievska
Head of the Safe Migration and Counter-Trafficking Program
Caritas Ukraine

(This update is shared by Natalia Holynska,
RENATE Working Board Member for Ukraine.)



APT IRELAND (ACT TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING) BEGIN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

APT Ireland has initiated a nationwide awareness campaign aimed at reaching victims of human trafficking (HT) through key public spaces. Recognizing that over 80% of

trafficking victims will seek medical attention from a healthcare professional within their first year of exploitation, APT Ireland is prioritizing the distribution of awareness posters in healthcare settings across the country.

This campaign is an ongoing effort to ensure that vital information reaches those who need it most. In addition to healthcare facilities, the posters will be displayed in churches, police stations, and universities, maximizing visibility in places where victims or those who can support them may encounter the message.

APT Ireland is also calling upon congregations and communities to assist in spreading awareness. While the campaign is launching now, it is not intended to have an endpoint; rather, it will be a sustained effort to educate, inform, and provide pathways to safety for those affected by trafficking. For more information on how to get involved, please contact [APT Ireland](#) or continue reading below.

CAN YOU HELP?

If you think that you can hang some of these posters where you live then please email presinterprovjustice@gmail.com. They are A4 and can be hung in the waiting rooms of Accident + Emergency, Dentistries, Doctors, Physiotherapists, Chemists, Post Offices, Churches, Garda Stations and similar.

Mr. Brian O' Toole
On Behalf of APT Ireland

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA: EVENTS ACROSS THE RENATE NETWORK



ZADRIMA UNITES IN PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, ALBANIA

On February 7th 2025, in the heart of Zadrime, the community gathered in observance of The International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking, Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, an initiative proclaimed by Pope Francis and recognized globally. This event, organized by the URAT Network, a coalition of 11 organizations operating in Albania, aims to raise awareness and strengthen collective efforts to combat this devastating phenomenon.

After a decade of organizing this event in Tirana and last year in Durrës, this year's gathering takes place in Zadrime, a region with deep historical and symbolic significance to the cause. A poignant reminder of this issue remains in the legacy of Father Antonio Sciarra, an unforgettable figure in the community. His dedication and mission left a lasting impact, reflected in the monuments he established in memory of the lost daughters of Zadrime—a painful testament to unknown fates and a call for justice and awareness.

This event was hosted by the Diocese of Sapa, with the support of the Parish of Blinisht, the Venerini Sisters, Rosalba House, and the organization Peace Ambassadors.

On the 10th anniversary of The International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking, Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, the URAT Network brought together communities, clergy, and youth in a powerful gathering to honour Saint Josephine Bakhita. Held at the Albanian Church of the Martyrs and Jubilee, an enduring symbol of suffering and resilience, the event served as a poignant reminder of the ongoing fight for freedom, dignity, and justice.

- The House Rosalba 1 Girls delivered a compelling theatrical performance, transforming a real-life story into a moving artistic expression.
- Complementing this, the House Rosalba 2 Girls presented an inspiring choreography to a song written by Sister Arta Suli, based on true experiences of hardship and survival.

A central highlight of the event was the procession led by the Ambassadors of Peace Youth, who illuminated the church with their presence, bringing light, hope, and solemnity to the occasion. The liturgical ceremony was presided over by Father Emiljan Paloka, while Dom Mark Pashkja, representing the Bishop's Conference, delivered an insightful message on the Church's social teachings and its commitment to defending human dignity.

A special tribute was dedicated to Father Antonio Sciarra, the Missionary of Hope, by Sister Alma Zogu, recognizing his lifelong service and the enduring impact of his mission in this region.

Mariana Meshi, Executive Director of Different and Equal. and leader of the URAT Network, emphasised the significance of commemorating this milestone in a place of deep spiritual and historical meaning. She reaffirmed the urgent need for action, and collective effort to combat human trafficking, a challenge that persists worldwide. This gathering was more than a remembrance – it was a renewal of commitment to standing against injustice and supporting those in need.

This day serves as a powerful call to action – for faith communities, civil society organisations, and state institutions—to continue the fight against human trafficking and to build pathways of hope for those at risk and those seeking to rebuild their lives.



EVENTS FROM BRUSSELS MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA.

On February 6th, members of various religious congregations gathered in Brussels to celebrate the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking. The event, held at the Chapel of St. Gertrude in Etterbeek, was a powerful gathering of solidarity and prayer for the victims of human trafficking, migration, and climate displacement.

Religious communities such as the Sisters of the Assumption, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Good Shepherd, Hospital Sisters of Sacred Heart, Spiritans, and Missionaries of Africa were joined by women and men from the local Christian community. Together, they participated in a Vigil titled “Ambassadors of Hope: Together Against Human Trafficking,” walking in solidarity across continents, remembering those affected by these grave issues.

The vigil was filled with prayers, reflections, and testimonies from different continents, providing a space for both personal and collective prayer. The refrain, inspired by Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1, echoed through the chapel: “New heavens and a new earth are coming, which your goodness will give us! New heavens and a new earth are coming, where your justice will dwell.”

We invoked Josephine Bakhita, a saint who endured enslavement and was later liberated, asking for her intercession in breaking the chains of those trafficked today. Her prayer was recited, and the event concluded with the powerful song "Oh Freedom," symbolizing the shared commitment to fight for freedom and justice.

Before leaving, each participant received a small footprint as a symbol of their personal commitment to addressing human trafficking, climate injustice, and forced migration. The event not only provided a space for prayer but also an opportunity for networking and encouraging future actions. Conversations continued afterward as new contacts were made and ideas for further initiatives were shared.

Sr. Francoise Coppieters, Sr. Bénédicte Goorissen, and Fr. Andreas Göpfert, members of the preparation team, reflected on the success of the event and the fruitful collaboration that inspired everyone involved. Looking ahead, they are already planning next year's event, which will take place during the day to ensure that religious sisters and brothers of all ages, especially during the winter months, can participate.

We look forward to continuing the work of raising awareness and standing in solidarity against human trafficking in Brussels and beyond.



Fr. Andreas Göpfert, M.Afr



NEWS FROM RENATE MEMBER SR. KLARA MARIE STRÁNÍKOVÁ(SCSC)



On The International Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking, 8 February, Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, the outreach team in Prague carried out a regular visit to local nightclubs, reaching out to those in need of comfort and hope. That evening, two establishments were visited, and gifts were distributed — beautifully crafted bags featuring original handmade angel decorations, along with a Bible verse. As always, informational leaflets with essential contact details and support resources were also provided.

At the first club, the visit was brief, with conversations taking place with the women, followed by a short prayer. However, in the second venue, an opportunity arose to organize a meaningful communal prayer. Holding hands, prayers were offered for families, personal struggles, and above all, for healing and deliverance from anything that may be binding them. The women expressed deep gratitude for this moment of connection and faith. The outreach team also left feeling thankful, recognizing the blessing of having an uninterrupted space to share this prayer.

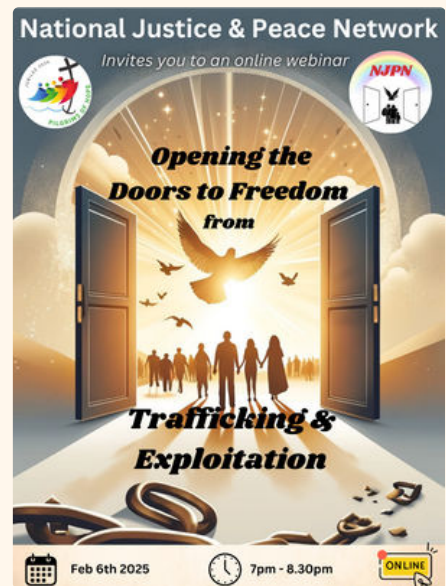
As part of ongoing prevention programs, Sr. Klara Marie was honored to be invited to give a four-hour lecture to foster families in late January as part of their training course (Cestou Necestou; Training Program).

The importance of speaking directly to parents of children from vulnerable social backgrounds, as well as to girls from diagnostic institutions, remains vital. These young individuals are among those most at risk of exploitation and human trafficking. Raising awareness and providing education in these settings is crucial in preventing future harm and ensuring these children and young women receive the protection and support they need.

IRELAND MARKS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA.WITH POWERFUL EVENTS AND A CALL TO ACTION:

The International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, commemorated annually on February 8th, continues to serve as a profound reminder of the ongoing fight against human trafficking. Across Ireland and beyond, numerous initiatives took place this year, dedicated to justice, awareness, and action. Among the many events that unfolded, a standout gathering was organised by the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) in the UK, coordinated by Brian O'Toole (RENATE Member and country representative for Ireland), who also represents the Presentation Sisters in the UK.

What began as a modest initiative, initially envisioned to draw an audience of 40 to 50 people, quickly transformed into an extraordinary gathering. The event, titled 'Throwing Open the Doors to Freedom from Trafficking and Exploitation', far surpassed expectations. With over 255 registrants and 140 active participants on the night, it became a powerful forum for education, reflection, and action. The event featured three key speakers: Sr. Imelda Poole (IBVM), Mr. Kevin Hyland, the UK's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and RENATE's Mr. Brian O'Toole, Director at the Presentation Sister's Justice Desk.



With a diverse audience, the speakers took time to illuminate the realities of human trafficking by sharing the story of St. Bakhita. To enhance this narrative, they incorporated Let the Oppressed Go Free, a striking visual representation of the issue by artist Timothy Schmalz.

Throughout the session, participants were captivated by the discussion and palpable sense of St. Bakhita's presence filled the space, making for a deeply moving experience. Sr. Imelda Poole summed up the sentiment of the evening beautifully: "If we just do the ordinary things well, extraordinary change can happen."

CARITAS SLOVAKIA, COMMEMORATING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA.



As part of the liturgical commemoration of St. Bakhita and the International Day of Awareness and Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking, RENATE's membership partners, CARITAS Slovakia, participated in a series of meaningful activities to honor her legacy and advocate against human trafficking.

On this special occasion, a Holy Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Martin in Bratislava. At the conclusion of the Mass, attendees received a blessing with the relic of St. Bakhita, a moment of profound spiritual significance.

Additionally, a prayer segment was broadcast on Radio Lumen, allowing a wider audience to join in prayer and reflection. From January 31st to February 7th, a Novena to St. Bakhita was aired daily on the same station, fostering a deepened devotion and raising awareness of the ongoing issue of human trafficking.

In their continued efforts to educate and engage communities, CARITAS Slovakia also distributed a specially designed calendar throughout January. This calendar served as both a tribute to St. Bakhita and a tool for increasing awareness about human trafficking, encouraging individuals to remain vigilant and proactive in combating this global issue. Through these initiatives, CARITAS Slovakia strives to honor the spirit of St. Bakhita, support victims of trafficking, and work towards a world free from exploitation and injustice.

VIGIL HELD IN MESSINA, ITALY TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA.

To celebrate the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, a Vigil was held in Messina, Italy. Below, are some impression of that Vigil, as shared by attendees.



"When I hear stories of exploitation, abuse, discrimination... I ask myself what I can do... the Vigil allowed me to feel somehow close to all those who live in such situations... it was such an intense moment, lived in meditation and prayer... I asked Our Lord to help us not to be indifferent and that the Hope that something can change never fails..."

"The testimonies we have heard lead me to think that only with a loving and caring welcome free from conditioning can women and men who are victims of trafficking escape from the slavery and violence in which they live and recognize the merciful love of Jesus."

United in this commitment, Sr. Tina Ventimiglia,
Franciscan Sisters of the Poor - Messina, Italy

CARITAS UKRAINE JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING, 8 FEBRUARY, FEAST OF ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA.

At the national level, 7 local Caritas organizations held a prayer and/or the Holy Liturgy, where a special prayer was read for the victims of human trafficking, disadvantaged, exploited, those in captivity, and for those who help them. The prayer was attended by local directors, clergy, staff and volunteers. A video prayer was also created and published and shared on the [Facebook](#) page of Caritas Ukraine.

At the international level:

On the eve of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, a representative of Caritas Ukraine took part in the presentation of the strategic goals of the COATNET network.

On February 7, representatives of Caritas Ukraine and local organizations took part in an online marathon organized by the religious community Talitha Kum, including a video about assistance to the survivor, a video with thematic children's drawings and a video prayer in different languages, including a Ukrainian fragment; Maria Kutna, a representative of Caritas Ternopil, took part in the events dedicated to St. Bakhita's Day in Rome as an ambassador of hope. Together with young people from different countries, she took part in a silent march carrying a poster with the name of a Ukrainian who became a victim of labor exploitation during the occupation. The ambassadors of hope passed through the gates of mercy in Vatican and had a private audience with the Pope. The Holy Father greeted our representative in Ukrainian.

Pope Francis emphasized "We cannot remain indifferent and, like you, we must join our forces, our voices and call everyone to account to fight this form of crime that preys on the most vulnerable".

Natalia Holynska, Counter Trafficking Project Manager, Caritas Ukraine

NEWS AND EVENTS IN ALBANIA ORGANIZED BY "VATRA" PSYCHO-SOCIALE CENTER, MARCH 2025":

Within the framework of March 8, International Women's Day, "Vatra" Psycho-Social Center, in collaboration with Vlora Public Library and the students of "Ali Demi" public high school, organized a discussion forum on the topic "Changing social norms to combat violence against girls and women".

During the discussions, the causes of violence, exploitation, abuse and bullying in schools and social networks, the consequences they leave on the lives of individuals and society, as well as the importance of education and

awareness-raising for the treatment and response to these phenomena were emphasized.

The students shared their experiences and concerns they encounter in social relations, addressing the topics of gender roles in the family and society, as well as the problems of violation of women's rights. They emphasised the challenging reality of a still patriarchal society and the importance of changing this regressive spirit.

Since last year, with funding from the National Youth Agency and the Minister of State for Youth and Children, Vatra Center has been supporting survivors accommodated in the shelter with services to improve their psychosocial well-being. Individual and group psychological therapy, play therapy, yoga and fitness, music therapy, therapy through painting and graphic art, hand crafts, gardening are some of the activities that survivors are pursuing. Such activities seem to have an impact not only on the recovery from trauma and psychological problems, but also on setting future goals for full reintegration into social life. In this presentation we would like to focus on therapy through painting and graphic art.

The painting class is led by an expert painter. The feelings experienced during these activities are also treated by the center's psychologist to identify emotions and their expression. All paintings realized within the framework of the project will be displayed in exhibitions and awareness events where Vatra Center participates throughout the year.





RENATE IN MALTA: SR. MARGARET GONZI'S FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION:

To mark the International Day of Prayer Against Human Trafficking, Liam Michael Quinn, Congregational Communications Manager, Rome, interviewed Sr. Margaret Gonzi on her involvement with the RENATE network. Here is an excerpt from that interview.

How did you come to be involved with RENATE?

The foundress of RENATE, Sr. Imelda Poole MLW, invited me in 2015 to serve as a representative from Malta on their Working Board. Before joining RENATE, I was unaware of the full extent of the inhumanity, cruelty, and brutality involved in the exploitation of people as slaves and commodities – whether through sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labor, or even organ harvesting.

As a RENATE Working Board member, I have had the privilege of attending board meetings across various European countries, where I met religious sisters and lay partners working with courage and deep compassion for the most vulnerable. Through these encounters, I have come to understand the horrors that trafficked persons endure.

What is your experience of human trafficking in Malta?

The escalating migration situation in Malta has significantly impacted our work. As the Malta Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU) report on Human Trafficking for 2024 points out, people who are willingly smuggled across borders may find themselves vulnerable to traffickers who exploit their desperation. In human smuggling, the transport itself is the source of profit, whereas in human trafficking, profits are generated by the exploitation of individuals following their transportation, recruitment, or transfer stage.

In Malta, the Good Shepherd Sisters' Dar Merhba Bik Foundation offers two residential services for female victims and survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence: Dar Merhba Bik and Dar Santa Bakhita. As a volunteer at both shelters, I offer support to women from many different countries, such as Ukraine, Albania, Nigeria, and the Philippines, who are often victims of domestic violence and trafficking. In 2024, for example, 62 women and 65 children found refuge with us.

How do we prevent human trafficking as a society?

I've met so many courageous women who have dedicated their lives to ending human trafficking. These experiences have shaped my approach to the issue and have inspired me to continue supporting survivors and advocating for systemic change. We all have a role to play in preventing human trafficking by staying vigilant, educating others, and working towards a society where exploitation is no longer tolerated. Every life is valuable, and each effort, no matter how small, makes a difference. RENATE brings together religious and lay partners from 31 European countries to collaborate on efforts to protect victims, raise awareness, and foster systemic change.

Read more [here](#).

2ND CATHOLIC CONFERENCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING, ORGANISED BY THE COMMISSION OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (COMECE) TAKES PLACE IN BERLIN, REPORT BY MARTINA LIEBSCH.

The 2nd Catholic Conference against Human Trafficking took place in Berlin on the 10th and 11th of February with the title "Recognize Human Trafficking - protect and involve survivors".

The working group on human trafficking, which is part of the Migration Commission of the German Bishops' Conference, and the Catholic Academy in Berlin had been invited to this event. This year's conference had a strong international character. Speakers from Austria, the Netherlands, and Great Britain, as well as from the EU Commission looked beyond national borders, established European contexts, and reported on the fight against the various forms of modern slavery in their countries. Among them was Ivonne van de Kar, Co-President of Renate.

The need for transnational cooperation was emphasized by the chairperson of the working group on human trafficking, Auxiliary Bishop Ansgar Puff (Cologne): "Human traffickers often operate in borderless networks. That is why we must also cooperate internationally for countermeasures.

A leitmotif of this year's event was the protection and empowerment of victims.. Experts and a survivor who had once fallen into the clutches of human traffickers investigated the question of who the victims are and how they want to be seen. The survivor emphasised that people should not look at them only as victims. "Being a victim is a temporary status but not their identity" she said. Auxiliary Bishop Puff emphasized: "Persons who have survived human trafficking can become ambassadors of hope through their testimony. When encouraged, they can also provide support to others, a warning to potential victims, and key players in the struggle. against modern slavery."

Protection, support, and compensation for victims are also central components of the recently adopted National Action Plan on Human Trafficking, which was presented by the expert of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Dr. Alice Muth. This National Action Plan also addresses the difficulties of prosecuting traffickers.



A panel composed of a prosecutor, a researcher and a practitioner discussed how to improve the prosecution of perpetrators. The lawyers pointed out that transnational money flows and perpetrator networks make it difficult to identify the perpetrators. For example, it is often difficult to prove that assets come from human trafficking and can be confiscated.

The connections between migration policy and human trafficking were highlighted by Prof. Petra Daňková (Würzburg-Schweinfurt University of Applied Sciences). She pointed to the often unexpected consequences of a restrictive migration policy that counteracts the intended goals. Instead of reducing migration, it forces people to choose riskier options, making them more vulnerable to exploitation on their way to Europe and once they arrive there.

In 2022, the Working Group against Human Trafficking of the German Bishops' Conference formulated nine concrete recommendations for action in a European Action Plan against Human Trafficking. These recommendations were reviewed in various working groups at the meeting. On a positive note, it was noted that improvements in the area of slavery-free supply chains have been made by the national and European supply chain laws. Nevertheless, there is a need for further education and advice for companies so that they can uncover exploitation and forced labour.

Members of this working group are Caritas Germany, Fraueninformationszentrum (FIZ) Stuttgart, IN VIA Germany, Justice and Peace Germany, Die Malteser, Missio Germany, Renovabis, Solwodi Contractors.

"We are happy to acknowledge the progress that has been made," said Auxiliary Bishop Puff. "In the new legislative period, the Bundestag and the government have still a lot of work to do in the fight against human trafficking. This applies to legal reforms as well as the provision of resources." It is planned that the Catholic Symposium against Human Trafficking, which is aimed at interested parties from science and practice as well as from the church, administration, politics and judicial authorities, will take place every two years in the future, in conjunction with the Catholic World Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking (8 February).

RENATE PRESENTS AT CSW69:

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a landmark commitment to gender equality that continues to shape advocacy efforts worldwide. From 10–21 March 2025, the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) convened in New York, bringing together governments, NGOs, and activists to assess progress, share challenges, and reaffirm commitments to advancing women's rights.

As part of CSW69's parallel events, RENATE was proud to host an online webinar on 20 March 2025 at 17:30 (UK time). This event highlighted significant findings from our recent legal research, examined the power of film as a medium for advocacy, and celebrated the launch of our Shelters and Safe Houses booklet—an essential resource for those working in anti-trafficking and victim support services.

The event began with an introduction that set the stage for an evening of powerful discussions and impactful initiatives. One of the key highlights was the launch of the new film *Fragile Life (Ukraine)*, a poignant documentary shedding light on the vulnerabilities of trafficking victims in conflict zones. This was followed by the presentation of *Lives Torn Apart by War*, a compelling new publication by CARITAS that details the intersection of human trafficking and war in Ukraine. This booklet, prepared by CARITAS Ukraine (similar to Trocaire / CAFOD), is divided into two parts.

The first half is in Ukrainian, while the second half is an English translation. It was shared by Natalia Holynska, our Ukrainian RENATE Board Representative, and is available for sharing and reading online.

A key moment in the webinar was the introduction and launch of the *Shelters and Safe Houses* publication, which underscores the importance of secure spaces for survivors and serves as a vital tool for practitioners and advocates supporting trafficking survivors. The event also featured the screening of *Against The Shadows (Albania)*, a powerful film exploring the realities of trafficking in Albania and efforts to combat it.

The session continued with insights from the Law Task Group, presenting research on 'Legal Practitioners Work with Victims of Human Trafficking', and the training required to undertake this work and resources to aid them in five countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom. Sr. Adina Balan (CJ) contributed a valuable perspective on legal research in Romania, emphasizing how laws can be strengthened to better safeguard trafficking victims. Another significant film launch followed, this time with *Beyond Borders (Ireland and the UK)*, which explores the cross-border dimensions of trafficking and the necessity for collaborative action.

The event concluded with a final round-up, providing space for questions and reflections. A heartfelt thank you to all contributors and attendees, in particular, Mrs. Anne Kelleher for her moderating of the session and Mr. Brian O'Toole for collating a comprehensive summary of the event.

RENATE WORKING BOARD MEETING – MARCH 10TH-15TH 2025, ATHENS, GREECE.



From March 10th to 15th, 2025, the RENATE Working Board Members,, Core Group, Co-Presidents, and Communications Team gathered in Athens, Greece, for a productive and inspiring Working Board meeting. Moderated by Dr. Mary McHugh - whose dedication and expertise continue to be invaluable to our network - the week was a time of collaboration, reflection, and strategic planning for the year ahead.

Our gathering began with delegates traveling from across Europe, arriving at the Central Hotel in Athens on Monday, March 10th.

The official sessions commenced on Tuesday, March 11th, with a powerful discussion on cooperation in the fight against human trafficking. A distinguished panel of guest speakers, including representatives from religious organizations, civil society, and political and governmental institutions in Greece, shared insights on the importance of collaboration in tackling this pressing issue.

Following this, each of RENATE's seven active task groups presented reports on their ongoing work, highlighting progress, challenges, and future goals. We also heard updates from our Co-Presidents, Marie Power (HFB) and Ivonne van de Kar, and were grateful for the expertly prepared Monitoring and Evaluation Report by Anne Kelleher, which provided critical insights into RENATE's impact and effectiveness.



A significant moment of this year's meeting was the appointment of new members to the RENATE Working Board. While we are very excited to welcome our new members, we also bid a heartfelt farewell to valued members of our Core Group who stepped down this year: Joana Terzieva, Jakup Sabedini, Ardita Korriku, and Judit Knab (CJ). Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping RENATE's mission, and they will be deeply missed.

At the same time, we were delighted to welcome Sister Stanka Orsolc (SND) and Marianna Meshi as new members of the Core Group.

As part of a strategic decision, the Working Board and Core Group also agreed to streamline the team, ensuring a more focused approach to RENATE's ongoing work.

One of the key features of the week was the launch of the RENATE Shelters and Safe Houses brochure on Thursday, March 13th. The event featured presentations from nine shelters included in the booklet, each providing crucial support to survivors of human trafficking across Europe. This resource serves as a testament to the collective efforts within our network to offer safe spaces and rehabilitation for those in need.

With the core work of the Working Board meeting concluded, Friday, March 14th, offered an opportunity to explore the rich history of Athens. Delegates were treated to a guided tour of the Acropolis and the Acropolis Museum, followed by a meaningful visit to Community House Damaris, a vital project supporting vulnerable women and survivors of trafficking. You can read more about this [here](#).

Each evening, we gathered for the Eucharist, a moment of shared faith and reflection that reinforced our unity as a network. The week was a resounding success, strengthening our collective vision for RENATE's future, reinforcing partnerships, and deepening relationships within our community.

As we move forward, the insights and commitments from this meeting will guide us in our continued mission to combat human trafficking and support survivors across Europe.

RENATE LAUNCHES SHELTERS AND SAFE HOUSES BOOKLET

Following our official launch at the RENATE Working Board Meeting, we are proud to share our Shelters and Safe Houses Booklet, a comprehensive resource highlighting the vital work being carried out across our network. This booklet provides an in-depth look at the nine active shelters and safe houses that are part of the RENATE network, offering a glimpse into the transformative and life-saving support being provided to those in need.



Through these pages, you will witness the dedication, resilience, and compassion that define RENATE's mission in providing safe spaces for survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. Each shelter and safe house plays a crucial role in offering protection, healing, and empowerment, helping individuals reclaim their dignity and rebuild their lives.

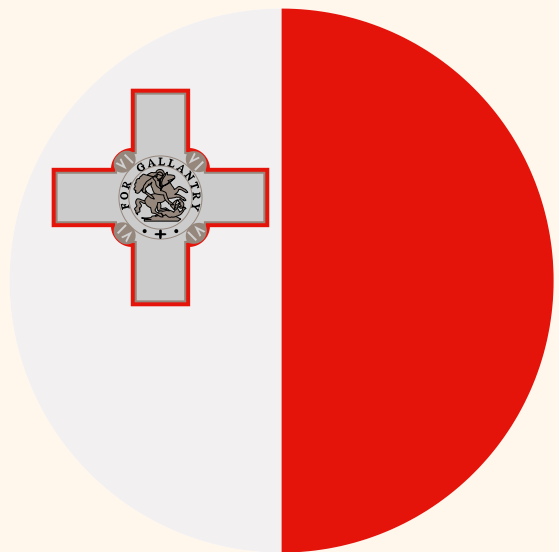
We warmly invite you to explore the booklet, share it widely, and help us amplify the impact of this work. If you feel moved by the stories and efforts detailed within, we encourage you to make a donation—100% of which will go directly to supporting the RENATE shelters and safe houses. More details on how to contribute can be found at the end of the booklet.

FILM AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: A PROJECT IN MALTA

The Filmmaking for Social Change project, led by Cross Culture International Foundation, harnesses the power of film to raise awareness about human trafficking. This initiative equips young people, migrants, and youth workers with hands-on skills in documentary filmmaking, using accessible tools like mobile phones and computers.

Participants not only learn technical aspects of film production—storytelling, directing, editing—but also develop confidence, teamwork, and creativity.

In collaboration with professional filmmakers, they create short films that highlight the realities of human trafficking and empower victims by educating them about their rights and support options. Beyond awareness-raising, the project contributes to advocacy efforts by informing the public and service providers about trafficking indicators and prevention strategies. Research conducted across three participating countries will further shape the project's impact, influencing both policy and the final documentary.



This project is being implemented in partnership with Shelter Safe House (Latvia) and Step Up Stop Slavery (Cyprus), and is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU.

Ms. Hedwig Bvumburah, Project Manager.



RENATE WORKING BOARD VISITS COMMUNITY HOUSE DAMARIS, ATHENS.

Community House Damaris is a non-governmental organisation with a mission to empower women and their children who have been sexually exploited and trafficked with the opportunity to recovery, restoration, and reintegration. We were lucky enough to visit with the team and Dina Petrou, during the final day of our Working Board Meeting.

Founded in 2015 as a front-line solution to combating the high rates of young women and girls experiencing human trafficking and exploitation in Athens, Community House Damaris meets the emotional, physical, and educational needs of women, and their children, escaping gender-based violence.

Community House Damaris' Program is designed to guide survivors into full rehabilitation and reintegration into society by addressing needs such as mental Health - all of the program participants receive a psychiatric assessment, and at the same time, they undergo regular counselling sessions as part of their mental health care - and Addressing Poverty - The courses of the program prepare and train the beneficiaries to join the labor market, while taking into account their interests and inclinations, with the aim of vocational practice and financial independence.

Community House Damaris operates a Learning Center where beneficiaries attend a holistic program of personal recovery, skill acquisition, and social integration to develop their potential and become productive members of society, and offers access to medical services for the beneficiaries and their children.

It was an immense pleasure to visit with Dina and her team. Thank you!
For more information please, visit: www.damaris.gr

SR. IMELDA POOLE (IBVM), REPORTS ON POLICY EVIDENCE CENTRE (PEC) CONFERENCE, MARKING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT.



On 5th March 2025, the Policy Evidence Centre (PEC) marked the 10th anniversary of the Modern Slavery Act with a conference reflecting on progress and future action. RENATE's Sr. Imelda Poole attended, reaffirming the organization's commitment to fighting human trafficking.

Despite legislative advancements, modern slavery has quadrupled in the past decade, with child trafficking rising by 44%, while prosecutions remain low.

Experts called for urgent reforms, emphasizing a victim-centered, human rights-based approach. The Modern Slavery Act's weak industry accountability and outdated protections for survivors, especially migrants, remain critical concerns.

Survivors must be active decision-makers, not just storytellers, stressed Jane Hasonder, Chair of Hope for Justice. The conference highlighted the need for structured career pathways, trauma-informed training, and stronger corporate responsibility in supply chains.

Anti-Slavery Commissioner Eleanor Lyons called for a cross-government strategy and a Survivor Advisory Council to drive systemic change. The conference underscored the need for survivor-led reforms, stricter legal mechanisms, and global collaboration.

[Read more here.](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND NEWSLETTERS

- [STOP Trafficking January Newsletter.](#)
- [STOP Trafficking February Newsletter.](#)
- [STOP Trafficking March Newsletter.](#)
- [STOP Trafficking April Newsletter.](#)
- [KAVOD Annual Report 2024](#)
- [Resources and Recordings from RENATE's Input at CSW69](#)

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communications@renate-europe.net



www.facebook.com/renateurope



www.instagram.com/renate_europe



twitter.com/RenateEurope1

Newsletter Content Compilation:
Sorcha Mallen

Graphic Design:
Sorcha Mallen

Newsletter Proof Editor:
Anne Kelleher