

RELIGIOUS IN EUROPE NETWORKING AGAINST TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

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2025
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DIALOGUE ON
HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
TAKES PLACE IN
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WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS: A POWERFUL GATHERING OF HOPE AND SOLIDARITY

On 30th July, RENATE marked the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with a moving online event that brought together members and friends from across the network for prayer, reflection, and storytelling.

During the gathering, we proudly launched the final two RENATE films, Against the Shadows (Albania) and Fragile Life (Ukraine).



Each film offers a powerful glimpse into the lived realities of human trafficking and the courageous efforts being made to bring light, dignity, and hope to survivors. Since then, Caritas Ukraine has developed the Fragile Life book, a remarkable companion to the film featuring the real stories of survivors and those who accompany them on the journey toward healing.

You can view both films and the Fragile Life publication through the links: <u>Watch: Against the Shadows</u> <u>Watch: Fragile Life</u> <u>Read: Fragile Life</u>

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW UISG EXECUTIVE BOARD



RENATE extends heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected Executive Board of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). We offer special congratulations to Sr. Oonah O'Shea, Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, newly appointed President, and Sr. Graciela Francovig, Daughters of Jesus, newly appointed Vice-President.

We hold them in prayer as they continue this important ministry of service, discernment and collaboration for religious life worldwide. RENATE looks forward to continued partnership with UISG in fostering justice, dignity and hope, especially for those on the margins.



CARITAS BAKHITA HOUSE CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF FREEDOM AND HOPE

On 30th June, Caritas Bakhita House in London marked its 10th anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving at Westminster Cathedral, celebrated by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, followed by a joyful weekend gathering of past and present guests, staff, and volunteers.

Since opening in 2015, the safe house has welcomed 214 women and 18 babies from 50 countries, providing trauma-informed care, legal and medical support, and helping survivors rebuild their lives. Guests have also contributed to securing over 223 years of prison sentences for traffickers.

Head of Caritas Bakhita House, Karen Anstiss, reflected: "Every day of freedom is an achievement for our women... the last 10 years have brought countless reminders of just how life-changing this work is."

RENATE warmly congratulates Caritas Bakhita House on this remarkable milestone and celebrates all who have contributed to ten years of healing, hope, and transformation.



WORKSHOP AND PRAYER AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING – STARI JANKOVCI, CROATIA

On 10th July 2025, the Parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Stari Jankovci and the Catholic Association Radost held a workshop and prayer service focused on the prevention of human trafficking.





Led by Sr. Victoria Šimić SCSC, a member of RENATE and the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, the event engaged young people through reflection, discussion, and prayer, helping them understand the realities of trafficking and how to raise awareness among their peers.

The evening concluded with Mass and adoration, animated by young parishioners, who prayed especially for victims of trafficking and for all working to end this injustice.

RENATE commends Sr. Victoria, the parish community, and the youth of Stari Jankovci for their heartfelt commitment to prevention and prayer.

CARITAS UKRAINE, MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA UNITE TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE UKRAINIANS

Three national Caritas organizations, Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania, have joined forces in a new cross-border project to assist Ukrainian refugees, returnees, and potential victims of human trafficking.

The initiative aims to reduce the negative effects of the war and address the growing risks of exploitation among displaced and vulnerable populations across the three countries. With many Ukrainians now returning home or moving through border regions, coordinated action is vital to ensure safe transit, access to support, and protection from trafficking.



this collaboration, Through Caritas partners working to strengthen are identification, prevention, and reintegration efforts, ensuring those most at risk receive the care and protection they deserve.

Prepared by Natalia Holynska, Project Manager, Caritas Ukraine. caritas.ua

RENATE RELEASES 2024 ANNUAL REPORT: A YEAR OF ACTION AND GRATITUDE

As we look back on 2024, we offer heartfelt thanks to all our members for another remarkable year of action, collaboration, and hope.

From the launch of new RENATE films and the Shelters & Safe Houses booklet, to the Law Task Group's groundbreaking research on legal practitioners' work with victims of trafficking, this year has been rich in progress and purpose. Members continued to represent RENATE at the Council of Europe and CSW68, led training and retreats, empowered survivor leadership, and strengthened partnerships with Talitha Kum, UISG, and many others across the globe.

Amid global unrest and the ongoing challenges of human trafficking, your dedication continues to inspire.

You can read the full **RENATE 2024 Annual Report here.**





PREVENTIVE ACTION AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING – LECTURE AND PRAYER IN KREPŠIĆ, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SR. VIKTORIJA SIMIC, SCSC



On 7th August 2025, the Parish of the Queen of the Rosary in Krepšić hosted a lecture and prayer service on human trafficking, led by Sr. Victoria Šimić, SCSC from Croatia.



Held ahead of the parish's feast celebrations, the event drew many faithful who listened with interest and joined in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, praying for victims of trafficking. Sr. Victoria also shared the inspiring story of St. Josephine Bakhita,

patron saint of victims of human trafficking, offering prayer cards to encourage continued reflection and awareness. This marked Sr. Victoria's first talk on human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a meaningful step in spreading awareness and compassion across borders.

SOLWODI 2024 ANNUAL REPORT: BETWEEN STATISTICS AND PERSONAL STORIES

SOLWODI's 2024 Annual Report provides a powerful snapshot of their work with women affected by violence. Last year, 2,589 women from 116 countries reached out to one of SOLWODI's 21 specialist counseling centers, a 12% increase from 2023. Among them, 120 women faced threats of honor killings, and over 300 were threatened with or forced into marriage.

The report highlights the life-changing impact of SOLWODI's counseling, housing, and reintegration programs. Women have found safe shelter, rebuilt their lives, and, in some cases, returned to their countries of origin with support. The international work of SOLWODI, including efforts in Hungary to assist victims of domestic violence and trafficking, is also featured.



Shelters and assisted living programs provide tailored support for women and children, particularly for those unable to access traditional safe housing. Social workers remain a vital connection, helping women regain independence and stability.

Read the full report here: <u>SOLWODI 2024 Annual</u> <u>Report</u>

VATRA'S CREATIVE VOICES ON WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, ALBANIA

On 30th July 2025, Vatra Psycho-Social Center in Albania marked the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons by transforming the voices of 22 survivors into art. Through painting, they expressed their experiences, emotions, and messages of awareness, justice, and hope, creating a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight against exploitation.

As one of Albania's leading organizations combating trafficking, Vatra provides safe accommodation, psychosocial support, legal aid, and reintegration programs. Between January and July 2025, Vatra identified and supported 58 new victims and potential victims, including 48 women and 10 men, ranging from children to adults, from Albania and countries such as Colombia, China, Ukraine, Brazil, Spain, Vietnam, Russia, and Myanmar.

The types of exploitation varied: sexual exploitation, forced labor, forced begging, and forced criminal activity, highlighting the complex and transnational nature of human trafficking.

Vatra continues to stand in solidarity with survivors, calling on institutions, communities, and individuals to work together toward a world free from exploitation.



TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

"HUMAN TRAFFICKING: LIFE IS FRAGILE, BUT WE ARE HERE FOR YOU" – CARITAS UKRAINE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Caritas Ukraine, together with the Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, hosted a national inter-sectoral dialogue on human trafficking, attended by over 500 participants from across Ukraine and beyond.

The event focused on the theme: "Life is fragile, but we are here" — emphasizing that survivors should never face their struggles alone and that united action by the state, civil society, and international partners is essential.

During the dialogue, Caritas Ukraine screened the semi-documentary "Fragile Life" and presented the book of the same name, featuring real-life stories of trafficking survivors affected during the war. These testimonies highlight resilience in the face of violence, exploitation, and abuse, offering hope and raising awareness about the realities of human trafficking.

As Natalia Holynska, Caritas Ukraine counter-trafficking expert, explained: "Life is fragile... but we, people of goodwill and Caritas workers, are here to help restore dignity, strength, and the will to live."

Read the book here: Fragile Life - Caritas Ukraine









A STORY WE CARRY WITH US, CARITAS SLOVAKIA

Some stories are painful to tell, but they remind us why our work matters. Mr. Štefan reached out to Caritas Slovakia in July 2025. At 70 years old, divorced, and without family or a home, he was in a very vulnerable situation. This made it easier for exploiters to take advantage of him. They promised acceptance and friendship, offering him alcohol and cigarettes, but in reality, they only used him.

When he finally came to us, he was in a very poor condition, extremely thin, exhausted, and with a serious leg injury. Doctors did everything they could, but they had no choice but to amputate his leg. Even after surgery, he continued to face many health challenges. Our team supported him closely, attending appointments with specialists and standing by his side as he tried to recover.

Despite his will to live, Mr. Štefan passed away at the end of August. We share his story with deep respect, as a reminder of how vulnerable older people without support can be. His journey remains with us, urging us to protect those who are most at risk and to stand against every form of exploitation.



RAISING AWARENESS AND INSPIRING HOPE – SR. IMELDA POOLE (IBVM) IN THE UK

During the first month of September, Sr. Imelda Poole (IBVM) delivered a series of awareness-raising presentations across the North East of England, speaking on the realities of human trafficking and the importance of compassion, vigilance, and support for vulnerable individuals.

Her talks not only informed audiences but also touched hearts. At the end of one session, a participant approached her and said:





"You have redeemed my faith in a God who is Love." Sr. Imelda was deeply moved by this response, a powerful reminder of how sharing knowledge, empathy, and hope can transform lives and restore belief in human goodness.

Through her presentations, Sr. Imelda continues to inspire action, reflection, and solidarity, showing how awareness and education are vital tools in the fight against exploitation.

TRAINERS OF CHANGE: CARITAS UKRAINE PREPARES 800 SPECIALISTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Caritas Ukraine recently held a five-day intensive course for trainers, "From Identification to Reintegration," attended by representatives from seven local anti-trafficking centres. The goal: to train a team of national trainers who will equip at least 800 specialists across social services, medical fields, education, and public authorities to identify potential victims, provide assistance, and support reintegration.

The course was led by Colin Carswell and Bernie Gravett from the UK's Counter Trafficking Network, bringing decades of experience working with law enforcement, prosecutors, and international organisations across more than 30 countries. Participants applied the techniques in practical sessions based on real cases, demonstrating high levels of skill, professionalism, and engagement.

Ihor Trydub, Caritas Ukraine's anti-trafficking project manager, explained: "The trainers we have prepared will extend their knowledge to others, creating a first line of defence against human trafficking.







Amid ongoing challenges from the war, these measures strengthen Ukraine's capacity to protect vulnerable people and fight human trafficking at every level.

LEAD BISHOP MEETS WITH MODERN SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS, MEDAILLE TRUST

Survivors of trafficking and modern slavery supported by Medaille Trust have been meeting with Bishop Paul McAleenan, the lead bishop for migrants and refugees.

Bishop Paul met with survivors and heard firsthand of the difficulties facing them in the UK to be recognised and supported to rebuild their lives. There are more than 120,000 estimated victims living in the UK today. Last year a record 19,125 potential victims were identified and referred into the official National Referral Mechanism.

For many survivors identification is only the start of a long process, with major challenges including finding access to safe and secure employment, safe housing, access to high quality healthcare to address their trauma, and integration and welcome into society.

Medaille Trust, one of the leading Catholic charities in the fight against modern slavery, supports more than 500 survivors a year across a network of safehouses and community projects.

Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, Medaille works to restore dignity, empowerment, and the first steps toward a new life.

Justice and human dignity have been central to the themes in this Jubilee year. Catholics are encouraged to engage in their local communities to provide support and welcome for those who have been exploited.

Reflecting on the visit Bishop Paul said:

"I am grateful to the Medaille Trust for the invitation to meet with survivors of human trafficking. Witnessing the care and compassion shown in providing not only safety and practical support, but also a sense of community, was deeply heartening."

"It was evident that the resilience of survivors is a powerful reminder that hope cannot be silenced."

Bishop Paul added: "I was pleased to hear that the Home Office has recently made some encouraging improvements in the way it processes applications. This is a welcome change. Yet it also reminds us that the evils of human trafficking and modern slavery, sadly, remain present today in many forms. We must stay vigilant, continue to broaden our knowledge to ensure that efforts to combat the issue do not cease.



LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD: 10 YEARS OF THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT, MEDAILLE TRUST

This year marks a decade since the launch of the Modern Slavery Act, a landmark moment in the fight against exploitation. Over the past 10 years, significant progress has been made, but modern slavery remains a hidden crime, affecting thousands of lives across the UK and beyond.

This milestone offered an important opportunity to reflect on achievements, ongoing challenges, and the lives impacted. Under this year's theme, "We all have a role to play," the event highlighted that ending modern slavery is a shared responsibility.

Attendees heard from leading voices in the fight against modern slavery, including:

- Medaille Trust
- Saint John of God Hospitaller Services
- Caritas Social Action Network

The event reminded us that together, communities, organisations, and individuals, we can stand against exploitation and work towards a future where every person is free.

SR. VIKTORIJA ŠIMIĆ, SCSC, ARCHDIOCESAN COMMISSIONER FOR COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING, ĐAKOVO-OSIJEK DIOCESE, CROATIA,



A very special honour has been bestowed upon RENATE member Sr. Viktorija Šimić SCSC, who has been invited and appointed by Archbishop Đuro Hranić of Đakovo-Osijek Diocese, Croatia, as the Archdiocesan Commissioner for Combating Human Trafficking.

This honour has been richly deserved by Sr. Viktorija, having dedicated her time to youths in parishes, schools and local communities in Croatia,





raising awareness about human trafficking and exploitation and thereby advancing prevention and protection in the process.

We salute you, Sr. Viktorija, the honour bestowed upon you also brings great honour to the RENATE network and is an inspiration to what is possible with the support of church.

The Archdiocese of Đakovo-Osijek has appointed Sr. Viktorija Šimić, of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, as archdiocesan commissioner for combating human trafficking for a five-year term starting 1 September 2025.

The archdiocese lies in a frequent transit area, making it a potential source of trafficking victims. In her new role, Sr. Viktorija will lead lectures, workshops, and prayer meetings for young people, adults, and schoolchildren, strengthening the Church's involvement in combating this modern form of slavery.

Sr. Viktorija has been actively engaged in anti-trafficking work since 2007. She is a member of RENATE, the European network of religious organisations fighting human trafficking, and has been deeply involved in raising awareness and promoting prevention across the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese.

SOLWODI: SUPPORTING RECOVERY AND RAISING AWARENESS IN HUNGARY

Over the summer months, SOLWODI continued to provide financial and personal support to our mentored persons, helping them stay on the path of recovery.

As October marks EU Anti-Trafficking Awareness Month, they hd a full schedule of activities planned:

- 15 October: Participation in the National Anti-Trafficking NGO Round Table at the Hungarian Ministry of Interior
- 16 October: Online round table with head teachers and child protection representatives to exchange information and good practices

- 17 October: Mass for victims of trafficking
- 20 October: Meeting with fellow faith-based NGOs to discuss daily activities and share know-how and best practices
- 22 October: Anti-trafficking event at the Catholic School of Patrona Hungariea in Budapest

These activities reflect SOLWODI's ongoing commitment to support survivors and raise awareness of human trafficking in Hungary.

FIGHTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE AGE OF AI: RENATE ONLINE TRAINING

From 3–5 November 2025, RENATE will host an online training on "Opportunities & Challenges in Combating Human Trafficking in the Context of Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)".

Human trafficking is increasingly technology-enabled, with perpetrators exploiting social media, encrypted messaging, deepfakes, virtual currencies, and other digital tools. At the same time, Al offers opportunities to detect patterns, disrupt trafficking networks, and rescue victims.

This training will explore:

- The evolution of technology and AI in today's work context
- Ethical and theological considerations in the use and misuse of technology
- The dual nature of Al—its potential for abuse by traffickers and as a tool for prevention and cross-border collaboration
- Risk awareness, cyber-safety, and safeguarding measures for victims of technology-facilitated exploitation

The course will equip participants with the knowledge and strategies to navigate the complex intersection of technology, AI, and human trafficking, ensuring that digital advances are used for protection rather than harm.

To register for this training, please follow the link **here.**

2025 CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING – VIENNA, AUSTRIA

In October 2025, the "2025 Constructive Dialogue on Human Trafficking" took place in Vienna, bringing together approximately 60 NGOs and embassy representatives from around the world. Imelda Poole IBVM represented the UNCJIBVM office in New York.

The dialogue focused on improving the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its protocols. Key outcomes included:

- Victim-centered, trauma-sensitive approaches: Emphasis on interdisciplinary strategies that prioritize the needs and dignity of survivors.
- Enhanced survivor support: Calls for holistic, long-term care including housing, healthcare, legal aid, and rehabilitation. Questions were raised about the allocation of traffickers' assets and the lack of sufficient resources for survivors.
- Addressing evolving forms of trafficking: Recognition of rapidly changing methods, including the use of technology, deepfakes, and Al, requiring updated laws and strategies.
- Strengthening international cooperation: Highlighting the importance of cross-border collaboration, law enforcement coordination, and robust justice systems.

The dialogue reinforced the need for survivor-led approaches, long-term support, and global collaboration to combat human trafficking in an increasingly complex and digital world.



Prepared by Sr. Imelda Poole IBVM



MOBILISING HUMANITY TO REBUILD HOPE: CARITAS UKRAINE IN PALERMO

Caritas Ukraine recently took part in an international conference organised by Caritas Internationalis in Palermo, Italy, marking the Jubilee of Migrants, the Missionary World, and the 25th anniversary of the Palermo Protocols.

The gathering brought together global experts, religious orders, and human rights defenders to address emerging trends in trafficking, protection of migrants, and stronger international cooperation.

Iryna Maievska, Head of Caritas Ukraine's Safe Migration and Anti-Trafficking Programme, presented the docu-drama Fragile Life, sharing real stories of Ukrainians trafficked during the war. She stressed that in times of conflict, the mission of Caritas is to build trust, prevent risks, and advocate for sustainable solutions.

Natalia Holynska, counter-trafficking expert and RENATE Working Board Member for Ukraine shared best practices in victim support and distributed the Fragile Life book of survivor testimonies. The event concluded with an ecumenical prayer for migrants who lost their lives along migration routes, a powerful reminder of the need for solidarity and international cooperation.





BAKHITA NETWORK POLAND AND THE PASSIONIST SISTERS OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS CREATE SHORT FILM FOR AWARENESS RAISING, POLAND

To mark 18th October, European Day Against Trafficking in Persons, the Bakhita Network Poland and the Passionist Sisters of St. Paul of the Cross created a short awareness-raising video, reminding us of the ongoing reality of human trafficking and the urgent need for collective action and compassion.

As members of the RENATE Network, we stand united in hope and commitment, working together for a world free from human trafficking and exploitation.

We invite you to watch and share their short film **here.**

RENATE LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE AND HONOURS 18TH OCTOBER, EUROPEAN DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

On 15 October 2025, just days ahead of the European Day Against Trafficking in Persons (18th October), members of the RENATE network gathered online for a special occasion, the launch of our new website.

The event, guided by the House of Prayer Task Group, opened with a beautiful prayer service that set a reflective and hopeful tone. Together, members prayed for all those affected by human trafficking and for continued courage in our collective mission to end exploitation. Following this, the new RENATE website was officially unveiled and shared with participants.

Visit the new RENATE website here.

The launch marks the culmination of nearly a year of dedicated work. It was a truly collaborative effort, with valuable input from the Communications Team, the Core Group, the Co-Presidents, and our graphic designer based in Ireland.

The result is a sleek, professional, and user-friendly platform that not only strengthens our online presence but also amplifies our collective voice. The new site makes it easier than ever to access resources, read news updates, and engage with RENATE's mission to end human trafficking and exploitation across Europe and beyond.

CONNECTING SILENT VOICES, DAR HOSEA IN PARNERSHIP WITH BILOURA COLLECTIVE AND DANCE BEYOND BORDERS, MALTA

In July, Dar HOSEA partnered with Biloura Collective and Dance Beyond Borders on 'Connecting Silent Voices', a project amplifying women's voices and highlighting the realities of sex trafficking and prostitution. A powerful dance performance was followed by a panel discussion with experts, giving the audience space to learn, reflect, and engage.

Workshops at Dar HOSEA offered women a safe space to express themselves through dance, fostering connection, healing, and empowerment. These moments were deeply moving and inspiring, a true testament to resilience and hope.



Throughout the summer, Dar HOSEA continued offering creative and supportive activities, helping women connect, share stories, and build trust in a welcoming environment. The team also took time to recharge with a team-building activity, strengthening relationships and solidarity among staff and volunteers.

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make these experiences possible.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND RENEWAL: RENATE CORE GROUP RETREAT IN VIENNA, OCTOBER 2025

During the first week of October, the RENATE Core Group gathered in Vienna for a spiritual retreat, travelling from across Europe to be together. Guided by Dr. Judith Thomas, the group embarked on a profound journey through the Psalms, exploring their relevance to our shared mission against human trafficking and exploitation.

The retreat one again, placed prayer and theological reflection at the heart of our time together, grounding our work in faith, unity, and spiritual renewal.







ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND NEWSLETTERS

- SOLWODI Annual Report
- Talitha Kum Annual Report
- 2025 Trafficking in Person's Report
- Caritas Ukraine Annual Report
- Lutte contre la traite des êtres humains; Newsletter May-September 2025

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TATION



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