European Commission adopts new strategy to combat human trafficking

The European Commission has adopted a new strategy on combating trafficking in human beings.

More than 20,000 registered victims in the EU during 2023-2024, representing a 16.1% increase compared to 2021-2022. The strategy responds to evolving trafficking patterns, including the growing use of digital technologies and online platforms by criminal networks.

One of the pillars of the strategy focuses on preventing exploitation linked to migration and asylum. The Commission notes that 64% of registered victims were non-EU nationals and highlights the need for stronger safeguards throughout migration and asylum procedures. The Pact on Migration and Asylum is identified as an important tool for addressing trafficking risks through screening, border procedures and reception safeguards. The strategy also foresees strengthened border management capacities, a reinforced role for Frontex in identifying victims and trafficking networks, and continued negotiations on the proposed Anti-Smuggling Directive and revised Europol Regulation.

The strategy further aims to improve the use of technology in investigations, strengthen cooperation with the private sector, disrupt organised crime networks, improve preparedness during crises and displacement situations, and improve protection and support for victims. Building on experience from the response to displacement caused by the war in Ukraine, the Commission will develop operational guidance to identify and address trafficking risks during emergencies.

The strategy will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council. It complements the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive, which entered into force in 2024, as well as the proposed sanctions regime targeting migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and other forms of organised crime.

Source(s)

- European Commission (16 October, 2026), [Commission sets out new strategy on combating trafficking in human beings], https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_2177

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