

15 Years of Monitoring Human Trafficking: GRETA's 2024 General Report

Anna Pinggen

In June 2025, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has published its [latest general report](#). This report covers developments in 2024 and marks 15 years of sustained efforts to combat human trafficking in Europe and beyond.

GRETA was established pursuant to Art. 36 of the Council of Europe [Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) ("the Convention") to monitor its implementation by the States Parties. Composed of 15 independent and impartial members serving in their individual capacities, GRETA took up operation in February 2009 after the Convention's entry into force on 1 February 2008. It remains the only independent expert body monitoring binding international legal provisions on combating human trafficking.

GRETA's annual report includes information on GRETA's organisation, internal workings, and substantive activities. During the reporting period, no new ratifications of the Convention took place, leaving the total number of Parties at 48 (46 Council of Europe member states plus Israel and Belarus as non-member states). GRETA reiterated that the Convention remains open to non-CoE member states and expressed hope that more countries will show interest in acceding the Convention. The following summarises the main findings of the 2024 report:

Plenary meetings and country reports

In 2024, GRETA held three five-day plenary meetings in Strasbourg, during which it considered 12 draft evaluation reports and adopted 12 final reports. On the occasion of its 50th plenary meeting (18 to 22 March 2024), GRETA held an anniversary event in Strasbourg. This gathering reflected on 15 years of GRETA's monitoring work, assessed achievements, and discussed future priorities.

Evaluation visits and field engagement

GRETA carried out 13 country evaluation visits in 2024. In May 2024, the group was finally able to conduct the long-postponed third round evaluation visit to Ukraine, initially planned for 2022 but delayed due to Russia's full-scale invasion. The visit provided an opportunity to assess Ukraine's ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking despite the immense challenges of war. The first evaluation visit to Israel, however, could not take place due to the continuing Israel-Hamas war.

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As in previous years, GRETA's visits involved wide-ranging consultations. Meetings were held with national anti-trafficking coordinators, ministry officials, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, labour inspectors, social workers, and local authorities. Separate meetings took place with ombudsman institutions or independent human rights bodies acting as national rapporteurs. In most countries, GRETA also met with parliamentarians. Civil society organisations, survivors of human trafficking, trade unions, lawyers, employer associations, and academic researchers were consulted. GRETA also engaged with international organisations relevant to its mandate.

Particular attention was paid to child victims of trafficking and unaccompanied or separated children, who are especially vulnerable. GRETA also visited asylum centres and detention facilities for irregular migrants, where victims of trafficking might be placed.

Membership and elections

The terms of office of eight of GRETA's 15 members expired on 31 December 2024. Elections were held on 29 November 2024 at the 35th meeting of the Committee of the Parties and resulted in four members being re-elected for a second term and four new members joining GRETA. Their mandates are set to run from 1 January 2025 until 31 December 2028.

Developments in state practice

GRETA's 2024 report highlights several positive measures by States Parties in response to previous recommendations:

- Andorra adopted its first national action plan against trafficking in March 2021, implementing GRETA's advice and marking a major step forward.
- Germany expanded the mandate of its Financial Control of Undeclared Work Unit to cover trafficking and introduced mandatory corporate human rights due diligence through its 2021 Supply Chains Act.
- Hungary adopted a National Anti-Trafficking Strategy for 2020–2023 with a dedicated budget, filling a gap previously noted by GRETA.
- Italy adopted its second National Action Plan against trafficking (2022–2025) and additional strategies addressing labour exploitation and child protection.
- Switzerland established new cantonal roundtables and enhanced training for labour inspectors to improve anti-trafficking efforts.

Reflections on fifteen years of work

Since its first meeting in February 2009, GRETA has consistently assessed the impact of its monitoring. GRETA observes that its evaluations have stimulated important reforms, including the adoption of comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies, improved victim identification procedures, and the appointment of independent national rapporteurs.

However, progress has been uneven. Some States have yet to adopt national action plans, establish independent rapporteurs, or create specialised shelters and referral mechanisms. GRETA notes that repeated recommendations often remain only partially implemented due to resource constraints, lack of prioritisation, or insufficient political will.

Ongoing and emerging challenges

The 2024 report emphasises that, despite progress, human trafficking remains fuelled by contemporary crises. Armed conflicts, climate change, restrictive migration policies, and limited legal pathways for

migration all increase the risks of trafficking and exploitation. GRETA stresses that anti-trafficking efforts should not be overshadowed by the focus on migrant smuggling.

Children remain particularly vulnerable, with one in three identified victims globally being underage. GRETA points to gaps in child victim protection, including cases where children have been treated as offenders. Stronger measures are called for to counter online recruitment and to forge closer cooperation with internet service providers.

GRETA's broader human rights role

GRETA's monitoring contributes to the prevention of violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly Art. 4, which prohibits slavery and forced labour and covers human trafficking. The European Court of Human Rights increasingly refers to GRETA's reports in its judgments, including *T.V. v. Spain* (10 October 2024) and *B.B. v. Slovakia* (24 October 2024).

Conclusion

Fifteen years after its establishment, GRETA remains central to monitoring States' compliance with the Anti-Trafficking Convention. While significant advances have been made – particularly in policy adoption, victim protection, and inter-agency cooperation – persistent challenges underscore the need for stronger political will and resource allocation. The Committee of the Parties, as the political pillar of the monitoring mechanism, is encouraged to further promote the implementation of GRETA's conclusions.

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