



# Joint Statement of commitment to work against human trafficking for labour exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region

## Background

Trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation is prevalent in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2016–2018, more than 800 victims of this form of trafficking were formally identified in our countries.<sup>1</sup>

This serious crime targets vulnerable people and has a harmful impact on our societies. Most cases occur in low-wage sectors, and often where the use of long and complex supply chains is common.<sup>2</sup> High-risk sectors include, meat processing industry, construction, agricultural sector, transport and logistics industry, cleaning sector, hotel and hospitality sector, and care sector.

Recruitment of labour migrants through illegal schemes run by some private employment agencies and intermediaries as well as unscrupulous employers is a factor that facilitates exploitation of migrants in specific industries.<sup>3</sup>

The devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and employment have further increased the risk of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. Children are particularly vulnerable to declining household incomes and may be exposed to an increased risk of trafficking in human beings.

During the last decade, there have been positive developments in our methods and strategies to combat trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. Member States have set up multi-disciplinary working groups or other mechanisms to address this crime. Several countries have developed national strategies or action plans which specifically address trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and opened shelters for male victims.

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<sup>1</sup> Vineta Polatside, Endrit Mujaj, Mathilda Högling, "Human Trafficking 2020 – Baltic Sea Region Round-up," CBSS, 2020, <https://www.cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Round-up-report2020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> HEUNI, "Shady Business—Uncovering the business model of labour exploitation," 2020, p. 10, [https://www.heuni.fi/material/attachments/heuni/reports/fAYydtH9l/Shady\\_business\\_Uncovering\\_the\\_business\\_model\\_of\\_labour\\_exploitation.pdf](https://www.heuni.fi/material/attachments/heuni/reports/fAYydtH9l/Shady_business_Uncovering_the_business_model_of_labour_exploitation.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Natalia Ollus and Anniina Jokinen, "Exploitation of migrant workers and trafficking in human beings. A nexus of the demand by employers, workers, and consumers," in Ryszard Piotrowicz, Conny Rijken, Baerbel Heide Uhl (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking* (London: Routledge, 2017)



We need to do more. For this reason the Council of the Baltic Sea States Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings is implementing a transnational project called CAPE – Competence building, Assistance provision and Prosecution of labour exploitation cases in the Baltic Sea Region.<sup>4</sup> This project targets key state authorities and civil society organisation at the international and local level instrumental in combating, investigating and prosecuting trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation and assisting victims in the Baltic Sea Region.

Building on the achievements made nationally and internationally, **we, the Member States of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)**, declare our strong determination to eradicate human trafficking for labour exploitation and **commit to:**

- Ensure sustained and systematised capacity-building and training for all relevant stakeholders: civil society organisations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, judges, labour inspectors, trade unions, and other actors to raise their awareness of indicators of trafficking in human beings and to provide them with tools to recognise vulnerable people or to identify those who are already victims of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation.
- Reinforce the institutional framework and ensure dialogue, information sharing and mutual assistance among such key actors as law enforcement agencies, financial investigation units, labour inspectors, migration authorities, trade unions and civil society organisations.
- Put in place, where relevant, legislation to ensure criminal responsibility for all situations where workers are exploited by being subjected to unacceptable working conditions. Prevent trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation through the promotion of fair recruitment, responsible public procurement, tackling demand for services and goods obtained from victims of trafficking in human beings.
- Strengthen cooperation with the private sector in developing anti-trafficking responses as businesses and companies play an important role in the fight against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation.
- Promote widespread and systematic inspections of companies as well as contractors and private employment agencies. Set up labour inspectorates or equivalent mechanisms with the mandate to investigate trafficking or establish cross-agency task forces consisting of relevant authorities mandated to conduct joint inspections at work sites.
- Promote labour protection in sectors and industries prone to exploitation and long and complex supply chains and pay special attention to irregular workers to prevent

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<sup>4</sup> Cape is funded by the CBSS Project Support Facility (PSF) and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency.



exploitation and ensure adequate protection and rehabilitation services to both children, female, and male victims.

- Provide victims subjected to trafficking with adequate assistance, compensation, and support regardless of age, gender, and/or nationality.
- Foster awareness on human trafficking for labour exploitation among the public through prevention measures, including awareness raising and public communication.

Signed by,

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**Markus Kärner**, Deputy Secretary General in Criminal Policy of the Ministry of Justice, Estonia

**Anna-Maja Henriksson**, Minister of Justice, Finland

**Björn Böhning**, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany

**Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir**, Minister of Justice, Iceland

**Dimitrijs Trofimovs**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Latvia

**Agnė Bilotaitė**, Minister of the Interior, Lithuania

**Thor Kleppen Sættem**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Norway

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