



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Federal Public Service

Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Trade and
Development Cooperation

THE ELKES
FOUNDATION

**FREEDOM
FROM
SLAVERY** FORUM

2025 EUROPE REGIONAL FORUM

CONCEPT NOTE

*Harmonizing Efforts to
Eliminate Forced Labor
and Child Labor: Sharing
Progress and Best
Practices in Europe and
Globally*



5-7 MAY, 2025



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM





INTRODUCTION

The 2nd edition of the Europe Freedom from Slavery Forum is a collaboration between the Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Free the Slaves. This is a strategic collaboration that reflects the need for stakeholders to come together to discuss promising approaches to combat key issues around modern slavery in Europe that are also relevant to this agenda globally.



While the Europe Regional Forum is meant to focus on the European region, we also recognize that the issues of forced labor and child labor cannot be adequately addressed without a global lens, given the influence of Europe around the world. For example, there are many European companies doing business in supply chains around the world. The laws enacted by the EU will implicate European businesses and their value chains which in most cases are operating in the Global South.

Harmonizing these efforts will require governments, EU agencies, institutions, businesses, persons with lived experience, civil society organizations, employer organizations, academics, etc. to come together, share, identify gaps, and commit to achieving greater progress in addressing forced labor and child labor through mobilization, engagement, partnership, and synergies.



CONTEXT

The issues of modern slavery, comprising forced labor, human trafficking, child labor, and servitude are global phenomena that occur across local communities around the world. These issues affect millions of people. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to match the complexity of their root causes and enabling circumstances.

Globally, there are 27.6 million women, men, and children in forced labor (ILO Global Estimates 2022), 63% of them in the private economy (ILO Global Business Network). Forced labor generates about US \$236 billion in illegal profits annually (ILO Profits & Poverty 2024).

In Europe, there are 4.1 million people in forced labor (ILO Global Estimates 2022).



Europe is confronted with the issues of forced labor, human trafficking, child labor, and modern slavery throughout the global supply chains of many sectors that are vital to its social, economic, and environmental future.

SDG 8.7 (“take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery, and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms”) provides a framework of commitments to address these issues such as through the Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country Roadmaps for European Pathfinder Countries, national action plans and strategies, and policies such as the EU legislations on Forced Labor—the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Forced Labor Regulation (2024/3015).





At the same time, civil society organizations (CSOs), persons with lived experience, and worker organizations have been providing critical support for victims and have helped shape policies and programs to prevent and address these abuses. It is important to reflect on these strategies, especially as their implementation is critical and the deadline for UN SDG 2030 is looming. While there has been progress, there's still a lot that needs to be done to effectively eradicate these issues.

The three-day Europe Freedom from Slavery Forum is organized in response to these challenges and opportunities as well as the growing movement toward a regional and global commitment to address modern slavery and trafficking. Actions to eradicate modern slavery and trafficking have gained momentum in many regions but still require a coordinated response involving the Global North and the Global South.





OBJECTIVE

The 2025 Europe Forum will bring together key stakeholders from Europe to discuss promising approaches to combating forced labor, and child labor in Europe and globally, and to identify some priorities for effective coordination and collaboration.

The Theme of the 2025 Europe Forum: “Harmonizing Efforts to Eliminate Forced Labor and Child Labor: Sharing Progress and Best Practices in Europe and Globally.”



In recent years, there has been growing progress at the policy and program level in addressing modern slavery issues in Europe and across the world. Several countries have become Pathfinder Countries under Alliance 8.7; the regulatory landscape has been shifting with the EU’s Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Forced Labor Regulation, recently adopted by the EU to tackle forced labor in and outside Europe. Many countries are also making strides in addressing forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor in their own countries with key national strategies being developed and implemented.

The efforts made in policies and programs should be shared to help advance the progress, gaps, and the best way forward. 2025 is a unique year where we will discuss the progress made with regard to SDG 8.7 on the eradication of child labor; the Europe Forum will offer a glimpse of the progress at the European level.

One challenge is how to engage stakeholders to achieve greater progress to create a sustainable impact.



STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

To ensure a rich discussion on these important topics, the Europe Regional Forum will bring together over 100 participants from Europe and a small, select number of participants from outside Europe to share their experiences and enhance learning. We will have speakers and attendees from governments, including Pathfinder and non-Pathfinder countries, business representatives, persons with lived experience, civil society organizations, employer organizations, United Nations agencies, EU representatives, EU agencies, and academics.

The agenda will be structured in a way that reflects the depth of the discussions, learnings, and key takeaways. It includes keynote speeches, panel discussions, and group discussions.

DAY ONE:

Monday 5 May 2025 from 9:00 to 16:30 Brussels time. This day will focus on:

01.

The event will be launched by the Belgian authority, as the host, and a certificate of distinction will be awarded to Madame Anousheh Karvar of the government of France.

02.

A keynote speech to launch the subjects of the day.

03.

This full day will have three panels (the current landscape on forced labor, child labor and the Pathfinder framework in Europe, survivor engagement, and the EUFLR) and the two concurrent workshops to further learn on specific subjects.

04.

There will be an evening reception starting at 17:00 to 19:30. The reception will be an additional opportunity to network and create connections among participants.



DAY TWO:

Tuesday 6 May 2025 from 9:00 to 16:00 Brussels time.
This day will focus on:

01.

A keynote address to launch the subjects of the day.

02.

Three panel sessions (textile and fashion industry, the Europe Pathfinder Country Framework: Meeting the SDG 8.7, and Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence, MHRDD), and two concurrent workshops on community based grievance mechanisms and engaging survivors in pathfinder country process.



DAY THREE:

Wednesday 7 May 2025 from 9:00 to 16:00 Brussels time. This day will focus on:

01.

Keynote speech on reframing modern slavery in Europe

02.

Two panels (Addressing forced labor and child labor in Agriculture, and the strategies for coordinating efforts on forced labor and child labor in global supply chains).

03.

The closing ceremony and next steps.

The discussions will be under the "Chatham House Rule" and privacy and confidentiality will be implemented. FTS is always keen to ensure the forum is held in a professional manner, and that every participant is comfortable.



VENUE

The Europe Regional Forum will be held from **5th - 7th May 2025** at the **Egmont Palace** located at Place du Petit Sablon 8; 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

SPECIAL THANKS

We are grateful to the Kingdom of Belgium for this collaboration and their support. We are also grateful to the members of the Forum Committee for their thought leadership, and the forum donors for their incredible support.



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