



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

UNECE and UIC issue new recommendations to strengthen the fight against human trafficking on railways

(Paris, 30 July 2026) On World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, UNECE and the International Union of Railways (UIC) have released new [recommendations](#) to help governments and railway operators prevent, detect and respond to human trafficking across railway networks.

Human trafficking remains one of the world's most lucrative forms of organised crime, generating an [estimated USD 236 billion in illegal profits in 2024](#). Between 2020 and 2023, [more than 200,000 victims](#) were detected across 156 countries, while an estimated [27.6 million people](#) are living in forced labour, including sexual exploitation.

With railways transporting millions of passengers every day across national and international routes, traffickers can exploit rail networks to recruit, move and control victims. At the same time, railway staff and operators are uniquely positioned to identify indicators of trafficking, report suspicious activity and support law enforcement efforts.

Addressing a critical gap in the railway sector

Despite the railway sector's strategic role in combating human trafficking, there has been limited international guidance specifically tailored to railway operations. The new UNECE-UIC recommendations address this gap by providing practical, evidence-based measures that can be incorporated into railway security, operational and procurement policies.

"The recommendations reflect a shared, sector-wide commitment to strengthening international cooperation, improving awareness and contributing to broader UN efforts to combat trafficking in human beings," said Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of UNECE. "With concrete guidance in key areas, notably data gathering and security measures, they provide a strong basis to transform our commitments into practice, put an end to the scourge of human trafficking, and build railway systems that are more resilient and safe for everyone."

The recommendations were developed by the UNECE-UIC Informal Expert Group on Combatting Human Trafficking on the Railways, which brings together more than 30 organisations from the railway sector, law enforcement agencies, international organisations and civil society.

Four priority areas for action

The recommendations focus on four strategic areas designed to strengthen the railway sector's response to human trafficking:

1. Improved data gathering
2. Deployment of security measures
3. Building a healthy railway procurement environment
4. Enabling lasting impact through collaboration supported by policy

Enhanced data collection and information-sharing are identified as critical tools to help railway operators and public authorities better understand trafficking risks, identify hotspots and develop targeted prevention measures. These include rail-specific training programmes, tailored operating procedures, joint patrols and awareness-raising campaigns.

The recommendations also highlight the importance of security measures that enable frontline staff to recognize potential trafficking situations and respond effectively, while fostering closer cooperation with law enforcement agencies.

Strengthening cross-border cooperation and partnerships

A key feature of the recommendations is the recognition of procurement and supply-chain management as powerful tools in preventing human trafficking. By embedding responsible procurement practices into railway operations, organisations can help reduce demand for exploitative labour, limit opportunities for traffickers to operate within legitimate economic sectors and create fairer conditions for responsible businesses.

" Drawing on the expertise and collaboration fostered through the UIC Security Platform, the recommendations mark an important step in supporting the railway sector's response to human trafficking," said François Davenne, Director General of UIC. "They provide practical guidance for railway stakeholders worldwide and demonstrate how the rail community can play a meaningful role in protecting vulnerable people and supporting wider societal efforts to combat trafficking. By providing practical guidance and encouraging international cooperation, they will help railway organisations worldwide better protect vulnerable people while reinforcing rail's contribution to safer, more secure and more resilient societies."

The recommendations also call for stronger cooperation across borders and sectors, encouraging governments to recognize human trafficking as a policy priority and to

systematically integrate railways into national anti-trafficking frameworks. This includes ensuring the sector's participation in task forces, national action plans and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

By strengthening collaboration between railway operators, governments, law enforcement authorities and civil society, UNECE and UIC aim to support a coordinated response that better protects vulnerable individuals and contributes to safer, more secure and more resilient railway systems worldwide.

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About UIC

UIC is the worldwide organisation for the promotion of rail transport at a global level and for the collaborative development of the railway system. It brings together more than 200 members across all 5 continents, and includes rail operators, infrastructure managers, railway service providers, and more. UIC maintains close links with all stakeholders in the rail transport sector around the world, including manufacturers, railway associations, and public authorities, as well as with other domains and sectors whose experiences may be beneficial to rail development. UIC's main missions include understanding the business needs of the rail community, developing innovative programmes to identify solutions to these needs, and preparing and publishing documents such as reports, specifications, guidelines, and IRSs that facilitate the implementation of innovative railway solutions.

About UNECE

UNECE is one of the five United Nations regional commissions, established in 1947 to promote economic integration and cooperation among its member States.

In the field of transport, UNECE is the United Nations platform for inland transport – covering road, rail and inland waterways - with a role equivalent to that of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for maritime transport or the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for civil aviation. It is the custodian of 61 UN Transport Conventions.

