

Human trafficking awareness training for Ireland's security industry

The Private Security Authority (PSA) is the first statutory body to introduce mandated anti-child trafficking training for all security personnel licensed in Ireland, and it's the first time that such training has been provided by the PSA outside of the core skills required by those operating in the security industry.

The new human trafficking awareness training programme, launched by Ireland's Private Security Authority, will become mandatory for all those in the security industry who are seeking a PSA licence to work in the event security and security guarding sectors.

According to PSA Chief Executive Paul Scallan, the training programme focuses on "the hideous crime of child trafficking, and the security industry is uniquely placed to play an important role in the fight against these horrible crimes".

Following the launch of the training module, which was developed for the PSA by *Mecpaths – the non-profit organisation which focuses specifically on the issue of child trafficking in Ireland – Scallan said that the nature of their



Pictured at the launch of the human trafficking awareness training module (l-r): MECPATHS Networks and Communications Manager JP O'Sullivan, and Training Manager Ann Mara, Paul Scallan, PSA Chief Executive, and Marina Botija Olmeda, IHREC.



According to statistics released during EU Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October 2023, on average, 7,000 victims of human trafficking are registered in the EU every year, while many more remain undetected. More than 50% are EU citizens, who fall victims to different forms of trafficking, such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced begging. Almost every fourth victim of trafficking in the EU is a child.

work means that security personnel have access to public and restricted areas across the country, particularly at access points such as ports and airports.

"They are trained to identify people acting out of the ordinary or things that look out of the normal. These skills, which have been successfully used to combat criminality in other spheres, will now be used to assist in the battle against human trafficking."

PSA PLEDGE TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN

Mecpaths Training Manager Ann Mara said: "With the changes to the Anti-Human Trafficking legislation, the preparations and resource investments made by the PSA have reflected great leadership and foresight."

She added that by virtue of this commitment, they have demonstrated a unique pledge to safeguarding children they may encounter through the course of their work from potential harm and exploitation.

The Head of Anti-Human Trafficking at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) said that the prevention of human trafficking must go hand in hand with prosecution and victim protection. According to Dr Nusha Yonkova, the PSA initiative is an important prevention measure in the national fight against human trafficking. "We expect that mandatory training will deliver an important and far-reaching awareness dimension, in assisting workers in the private security sector to identify this clandestine crime, and possibly save human lives."

*MECPATHS advocates for child safeguarding from trafficking through collaborative action, awareness raising and education, and facilitates workshops for frontline and emerging professionals across many disciplines including social work, healthcare, education and hospitality. For further information visit <https://mecpaths.com>