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Concerns mount over slavery in EU supply chains

The ongoing migrant crisis has meant the EU has shown the greatest increase in risk of slavery in supply chains, report finds



Agriculture is a high-risk sector for labour exploitation

The risk of slavery and labour exploitation in supply chains across the EU during the last year as a result of the growing migrant crisis, a new study has found.

Though countries elsewhere, such as North Korea and South Sudan, are deemed at greatest risk of slavery, analysts from global risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft highlighted that the EU has shown the largest increase in risk of any region over the past year.

Romania, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria are particularly vulnerable locations for slavery and forced labour, thanks to their position as key entry points for migrants seeking passage into Europe, the report found.

Romania and Italy were highlighted as having the worst reported violations in the EU, including cases of servitude and trafficking.

"It is no longer just the traditional sourcing hotspots in the emerging economies that businesses should pay attention to when risk assessing their suppliers and the commodities they source," said senior analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, Sam Haynes.

The research is carried out annually using the Modern Slavery Index, which assesses the likelihood of labour exploitation as a result of a number of different factors including the strength of a country's laws, the effectiveness of their enforcement and the severity of violations.

Modern slavery risks have risen across the EU as a result of the influx of vulnerable migrant populations. The International Organization for Migrations has estimated that over 100,000 migrants entered Europe in 2017 by sea, and that 85 per cent of these were into Italy.

Sectors that are particularly likely to see increases in slavery include agriculture, construction and services, and Verisk Maplecroft expects the risk of slavery to increase particularly in Italian agriculture in the next year.

Even Germany and the UK, though, have seen a transition from being at 'low risk' to 'medium risk' of slavery.

The researchers warned businesses, governments and consumers to stay vigilant about the possibility of slavery within supply chains in the EU.