

GOOD BUSINESS – ENSURING BIG BUSINESSES ARE FREE FROM EXPLOITATION

There are over 50 million people in modern slavery today. It is estimated that 21 million people are caught in situations of forced labour or exploitation. They may be mining precious metals for our phones in Africa, packing our tomatoes in southern Europe or making our clothes in our own city. Forced labour and human rights abuses of workers are endemic across several sectors of the global economy, including textiles, new technologies, construction work and mineral extraction. The collapse of the [Rana Plaza](#) building in 2013 gave us a glimpse into this dark world but there have been several other tragedies in the last decade. Sadly, it is a fact that vulnerable workers are likely to have been exploited to produce some of the goods and services we enjoy. Exploitation may mean dangerous working conditions, excessive hours, poverty or no wages and no freedom to leave. The consequences can be malnutrition, sickness, lack of education, and sometimes even death.

The [Fairtrade movement](#) has done a fantastic job in improving the working conditions of millions of vulnerable workers and their families by ensuring really good employment practices and paying a premium for products. EFN loves Fairtrade!

But what about the workers supplying all the companies that have not signed up to Fairtrade standards and are never going to do so?

Something exciting is happening which has the potential to get rid of all exploitation linked to big business! It has a technical term - “**Due diligence requirements**”. A few nations in Europe have begun to introduce legislation and now the European Union is about to introduce its own due diligence standards.

What is due diligence?

Due diligence is an obligation on businesses to check their supply chains for any exploitation. The supermarket, hotel chain or clothing brand we know may look after

their workers. But what about the workers of their suppliers and their suppliers and their suppliers? It has always been a moral obligation to investigate in order to ensure there's no unacceptable practice. But, for big business based in or trading in the European Union, it will soon become a legal duty to do so. The lives of millions of workers and their families could be hugely improved.

How Can We All Help?

Right now, there's something very specific you can do.

The European Union's new due diligence law (directive)¹ is at the last stage in the legislative process. But EU governments need to hear that their citizens think that this law is important. It should be workable for businesses but it should also make a real difference to those who are exploited.

EFN has launched a new campaign on its [Don't Shut Your Eyes website](#). This is designed so that those with any or no faith can easily join in.

There's a Don't Shut Your Eyes [film for social media](#). **Please share it widely!**

And EFN has produced [this petition](#). Please consider signing and encouraging others to do the same.

Once the EU due diligence legislation is passed at European level, there will be opportunities to write to national governments, asking them to make sure that the implementation is swift and effective. And we will be able to write to businesses,

¹ The proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937.



The European Freedom Network (EFN) is a Christian community of nearly 500 partners that exists to fight human trafficking and commercial exploitation in Europe and to seek the restoration of victims in collaboration with strategic stakeholders. It is delighted to be part of EEA because the Church has a key role to play through prayer, campaigning, support and being a welcoming, restoring community for those who have been exploited. Go to <https://www.europeanfreedomnetwork.org/> to find out more, including many resources.

letting them know that their customers want them to do a good job. If you would like to receive updates and guidance regarding how you can help, please [subscribe to receive our newsletter](#).

But there's something else we can always do. We are all consumers. And we can try to open our eyes to who may be helping to make the products we use. Churches and Christian organisations can seek to do their own due diligence, contacting the companies and brands that make stuff for us and asking them how carefully they check their supply chains.

And finally, we invite all Christians to pray.

Every human being is made in the image of God and infinitely precious. Let's pray that the introduction of due diligence requirements for big business across Europe might be the beginning of an ethical revolution, dramatically changing business practice and enabling millions of people to escape from exploitation.



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