

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2023

La Strada International wishes to inform and update you on developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and activities of the Platform and member organisations. We welcome your feedback and input. Please [e-mail us](#).

LSI NEWS



LSI holds annual NGO platform

On 19-20 September, LSI organised its annual NGO Platform/General Assembly meeting in Bucharest, Romania. LSI members discussed challenges, priority actions and strategies for the next year. With hosting member Adpare, we organised a public debate with Romanian anti-trafficking stakeholders on the Romanian and European action to prevent risks of human trafficking among people fleeing the war in Ukraine. See [more](#).

New LSI member in Spain

LSI is pleased to welcome the Spanish NGO ACCEM as its newest associate member. [ACCEM](#) works to improve the living conditions of people in vulnerable situations and provides support to those at risk of social exclusion. The LSI NGO Platform now comprises 33 members, including 6 associate members, in 24 European countries.

EU must close dangerous loophole in AI Act

The EU is entering the final stage of negotiations on its Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act), but Big Tech and other industry players have lobbied to introduce a major loophole to the high-risk classification process, undermining the entire legislation. Together with a large group of civil society actors we [called on EU legislators](#) to remove this loophole and maintain a high level of protection in the AI Act, as data protection is a major concern for migrants and trafficked persons.

"Red Lines" on EU Forced Labour Ban

The EP INTA and IMCO committees will vote in the week of 16 October on their report on the proposed Regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market. LSI and 15 other NGOs welcome the European Commission's proposal and recommend a rapid legislative process in order to adopt the legislation before the European elections in June 2024. However, we call on MEPs to strengthen the draft proposal in order for it to become a decisive contribution by the EU to the global fight against forced labour. See our ["red lines" document](#), which summarises our main concerns and recommendations at this stage of the procedure.

CSOs: Reaffirm commitment to SDG 8.7

During the SDG summit on 18-19 September, advocates observed a worrying lack of global leadership on issues of forced labour, child labour and human trafficking. LSI joined more than 90 other organisations to urge UN Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of SDG 8.7, recognise its interconnectedness with other SDGs, and commit to multistakeholder partnerships in all prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts. See the letter [here](#).

Joint statement on EU VAW Directive

The trilogues for the European Commission's proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (VAW Directive) are underway. La Strada International welcomes the draft proposal, which can make a significant difference in the fight against gender-based violence. We believe it is critical that the negotiators ensure that the Directive does not undermine the rights of women and girls or regresses on hard-won gains in the battle for gender equality. See the [joint civil society position](#) that LSI and 11 other European NGOs published.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS



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Podcast on Southeast Asian domestic workers in the Netherlands

Every year, hundreds of Southeast Asian migrants come to the Netherlands to clean houses and take care of children and the elderly. Some of them are undocumented and this makes them vulnerable to exploitation. To increase social awareness about this issue FairWork launched a three-part podcast in which Southeast Asian domestic workers speak about their experiences. Listen to the podcast (in Dutch) [here](#).

Dialogue forum on country of origin Nigeria

In September, LEFÖ-IBF, Austria, celebrated its 25th anniversary. To mark the occasion, on 22 September, LEFÖ organised a forum to discuss the factors that force some Nigerian women to leave their country and make them vulnerable to human trafficking in Europe. The participants, from NGOs and state institutions in Nigeria and Austria, also discussed trafficked persons' protection needs and integration opportunities in the two countries.

Round table on the rights of foreign workers in Serbia

In July, ASTRA organised a round table with actors responsible for the protection of the rights of foreign workers and the prevention of human trafficking in the country. ASTRA shared its experience of working on cases of labour exploitation of foreign workers and its recent publications on the topic [Desk analysis of facts and trends concerning migrant workers in Serbia](#) and [Challenges in the protection of foreign workers' rights in Serbia](#). See more about ASTRA's activities in the first half of 2023 in [their newsletter](#).

WHAT IS HAPPENING?



Majority of MEPs vote against or abstain on Prostitution Report

On 14 September, the European Parliament adopted the report “Regulation of prostitution in the EU: its cross-border implications and impact on gender equality and women’s rights”. LSI, together with other members of the European Coalition on Sex Workers’ Rights and Inclusion, [had called](#) on MEPs to vote against the report. While the report passed as a (non-binding) resolution, significantly more MEPs voted against or abstained than voted in favour. Also, the paragraph calling for an EU-wide introduction of the “Nordic prostitution model”, was voted out. See [more](#).

EU extends the Temporary Protection Directive by another year

In order to provide certainty for the more than 4 million refugees from Ukraine currently living in the EU, the EU Council agreed to extend the temporary protection for people fleeing from Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine from 4 March 2024 to 4 March 2025. See [more](#).

EU Council adopts position on ILO Violence and Harassment Convention C190

On 18 September, the EU Council adopted its position on a draft decision inviting Member States to ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention C190. The Convention sets out minimum standards on tackling work-related harassment and violence, promotes decent work for all, health and safety at work and gender equality. The Council decision will be formally adopted once the European Parliament has given its consent. See [more](#).

New Coalition Against Forced Labour in Trade

The Freedom Fund and Human Trafficking Legal Center launched the Coalition Against Forced Labour in Trade – a global network of CSOs working to introduce and enforce import bans against goods made with forced labour. Coalition members will conduct international advocacy, cross-sectoral learning and strategic engagement with policymakers and corporate actors. See [more](#).

New UN Special Rapporteur on migrant rights

The UN Human Rights Council, at its 54th session in September/October, will appoint Mr Gehad Madi (Egypt) as the new UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. La Strada International looks forward to fruitful cooperation with Mr Madi’s mandate.

However, we regret that the Council did not appoint Prof Anna Triandafyllidou (Greece), who was recommended to be appointed by the President of HRC and the Consultative Group in June, as we announced in our June newsletter. LSI has worked with Prof Triandafyllidou and values highly her experience in the field of migration and her commitment to the human rights of migrants.

The outgoing Special Rapporteur, Mr Felipe González Morales, presented his final [thematic report](#) to the UN General Assembly. It outlines the main issues of concern with respect to migrant workers' human and labour rights, such as abusive recruitment practices and working conditions, barriers to freedom of assembly, safe housing, and access to justice, and lack of access to social protections and healthcare. It then provides examples of rights-based approaches to migrants' rights implemented by states and CSOs and concludes with recommendations.

UN working group recommends decriminalisation of sex work

The UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls published a position paper that calls for the full decriminalisation of adult sex work as the only way to protect and promote the rights of sex workers. It highlights how criminalisation of either clients or the workers themselves is particularly harmful for migrant sex workers who are at an increased risk of deportations and harassment by the police as a result. See the position paper [here](#).

WHAT IS NEW



New issue of *Anti-Trafficking Review* on COVID-19

The [new issue of *Anti-Trafficking Review*](#) examines the impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of low-wage, migrant, and informal workers. Articles from Australia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Europe, Nigeria, Brazil, and the United States describe the experiences of temporary migrants, victims of trafficking, sex workers, internally displaced persons, and LGBTQ asylum seekers with violence, exploitation, discrimination, racism, and (lack of) access to healthcare and social protections. Importantly, they draw lessons from the pandemic and make policy recommendations to ensure that future disasters do not have the same negative impact on human rights.

PICUM report on EU Single Permit Directive

[New research](#) published by PICUM, and carried out by the Free University Brussels, shows how the EU Single Permit Directive facilitates the exploitation of migrant workers working in the EU. Workers interviewed in Belgium, Czechia, and Spain reported wage theft, illicit wage deductions,

long working hours, and discrimination at the workplace and in accessing private housing. Where it's not possible to change employer on the same permit, some workers endured exploitation and abuse for fear of losing their right to work in the EU. The report concludes with recommendations on how to amend the Directive, which is currently under revision.

Study on the non-punishment of trafficked persons

[This new study](#), published by the Council of Europe, considers the operationalisation of the non-punishment principle following the 2021 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of [V.C.L. and A.N v United Kingdom](#). It provides a comprehensive analysis of this decision and considers how the UK Government sought to comply with the ruling by making changes in domestic law and policy. It also considers potential implications of these developments for the interpretation and application of the non-punishment principle in other CoE member States.

Strengthening accountability for human trafficking in conflict situations

The new [report](#) of the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, Prof Siobhán Mullally, to the UN General Assembly analyses the challenges that result in gaps in accountability for human trafficking in conflict situations. It also offers a set of recommendations to States, the UN, and other international organisations on ways to strengthen accountability, combat impunity and ensure effective access to justice for trafficked persons. In March, La Strada International provided input for the report during an exchange meeting in The Netherlands.

NATO's new human trafficking policy

A new blog post by Dr Julia Muraszkievicz discusses NATO's revised Policy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings adopted in July 2023. It highlights several aspects of the policy, such as the responsibility of NATO troops to provide emergency first response to victims and refer them to services; the duty to report cases; the commitment to due diligence in NATO procurement; and the gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed approach to this work. See [more](#).

FRA report on promoting migrant integration

Integration and social inclusion are important aspects of EU migration and asylum policy. [This report](#) by FRA explores the fundamental rights of long-term residents in the EU, focusing on the Long-Term Residence Directive. It examines the reasons behind the low uptake of EU long-term resident permits, despite them giving more rights than national long-term resident permits.

UN guidance note on business and human rights

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a [guidance note](#) on Business and Human Rights in Challenging Contexts "Considerations for Remaining and Exiting". It deals with situations where businesses immediately cut ties with suppliers once abuse in their operations was publicly reported. It outlines the considerations businesses should take to increase leverage, to assess the severity of the abuse in question and the potential adverse impact that would come with exiting. And when the decision is to exit, it stresses disengagement in a way that is responsible and minimises harm for the workers.

Evaluation report of Spotlight Initiative

The European Court of Auditors published [an evaluation](#) of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, which aims to combat sexual and gender-based violence. According to the report, the initiative has shown little impact in terms of improving the situation of those it is intended to help. Despite

positive achievements, it found that the initiative could be managed more efficiently and provide better value for money, as well as increasing the share of funding that reaches final beneficiaries.

Call for input: Transparent, accountable and efficient public service delivery

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [is calling for input](#) for an upcoming report on the role of public service delivery in the promotion and protection of human rights and in the achievement of the SDGs, including in relation to the protection of persons in vulnerable situations. The deadline for input is 1 November 2023.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEB

21st Century Workplace: Exploitation by app

Solidarity Center launched a podcast series “My boss is a robot”. The series will explore the gig economy, the rise of apps, how platform workers are supervised by only a phone, and why all of this is wreaking havoc everywhere, especially in developing economies. See [more](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **2–13 October** – Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, Warsaw. See [more](#).
- **4 October** – UNODC Constructive dialogue on trafficking in persons, Vienna. See [more](#).
- **5 October** – Conference "Joining Forces Against Human Trafficking", Brussels and online. See [more](#).
- **6 October** – Think Tank Event – International Expert Round Table TIME TO GET REAL – Beyond Awareness Raising and Recommendations, Vienna. See [more](#).
- **10–11 October** – Vienna Migration Conference 2023, Vienna and online. See [more](#).
- **16–18 October** – PILnet Global Forum, Brussels. See [more](#).
- **16–18 October** – 25th WAVE conference, Madrid. See [more](#).
- **18 October** – EU Anti-Trafficking Day.
- **19 October** – Vienna Conference on Combating Human Trafficking in Human Beings: "Boundaries and Frontiers in Human Trafficking". See [more](#).
- **26–27 October** – Council of Europe lawyers network meeting, Strasbourg.

Support us

La Strada International is fully dependent on donations and subsidies. By making a [donation](#), you will help us continue our monitoring and advocacy work to ensure accountability for the effective

implementation of European anti-trafficking policies and the support to trafficked persons.



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