

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 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



Happy holidays with LSI's advents calendar

On 1 December, we launched again our annual [conscious advents calendar](#), which counts down to Christmas while highlighting campaigns and actions of our members to protect the rights of trafficked persons and those at risk. Help us to raise awareness and support our work!

LSI wishes everyone happy holidays and a healthy and successful 2024! Our office will be closed from 22 December to 2 January 2024.

LSI representation in December

La Strada International contributed to the [CBSS European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation](#), held on 7-8 December in Stockholm. We also participated on 11 December in the launch event of the UN [Multistakeholder pledge](#) to which we agreed to commit, *see more below*.

EU law revisions

LSI continued monitoring the revisions of EU laws. On 5 December, together with PICUM, we suggested [amendments](#) to the **Victims' Rights Directive** and on 11 December we reached out to

the EU Commission, Council and MEPs with a [statement](#), asking them to ensure that the revision of the **EU Anti-Trafficking Directive** would enhance victims' rights.

Other joint statements

LSI supported a joint [CSO statement](#) calling for an end to the expansion of EURODAC, the EU database for registration of asylum-seekers. We also co-signed a [statement](#) urging the UK Prime Minister to keep his promises for a "Places of Safety scheme" for trafficked persons. We also supported a civil society coalition [call](#) on lawmakers to unequivocally reject attempts to legalise dangerous and discriminatory police use of AI. On 9 December, EU officials [agreed](#) on the new law to regulate AI, one of the world's first comprehensive attempts to limit the use of the technology. See EDRI's first [assessment](#) of the deal. We also joined a [CSO statement](#) calling for adoption of import bans.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI members' work in December:

- **ACCEM, Spain** recently published a report on the impact of technology on trafficking in human beings. It delves into how traffickers utilise technology but also how it can empower victims, providing them with greater access to their rights and protection. The full text (in Spanish) can be found [here](#). An English translation of the Conclusion can be found [here](#).
- **FIZ, Switzerland** hosted one of the Swiss presidents, Elisabeth Baume-Schneider, and discussed possible improvements for the protection of trafficked persons. Among the discussed topics were secure, long-term residence permits, access to protection even when exploitation has occurred abroad, and quality standards for organisations that care for victims of human trafficking.
- **Seven LSI members** spoke at the OSCE helplines event, organised on 6-7 December in Vienna. The event aimed at connecting key anti-trafficking civil society organisations to exchange good practices in their work on identifying, referring, and assisting victims of trafficking amid the mass refugee flows generated by Russia's war against Ukraine.



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Agreement on EU Due Diligence Directive

On 14 December, EU policymakers reached an agreement on the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which requires large companies operating in the EU to conduct human rights and environmental value chain due diligence. Following this agreement, the EU Parliament and Council will still have to formally adopt the directive, after which EU member states will have up to two years to transpose it into national law. See [more](#).

While this is an important long-awaited step, CSOs are concerned about serious gaps in the Directive. See first reactions by our member [Anti-Slavery International](#) as well as [OECD Watch](#), [BHRC](#), [ECCJ](#) and [FOEE](#). See also the EU Council [press conference](#) and [press release](#).

Multi-stakeholder pledge to prevent human trafficking among asylum seekers and refugees

On 14 December, the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on trafficking in persons, Siobhán Mullally, in collaboration with UNHCR, ILO, IOM, UNODC and ICAT formally launched a [Multistakeholder pledge](#), related with the Global Refugee Forum. The Rapporteur called upon states to commit and prevent trafficking among asylum seekers and refugees. This can be done by ensuring effective access to international protection for trafficked persons by expanding resettlement, rights-based family reunification, and safe migration pathways, next to ensuring effective access to asylum and other forms of international protection; protection against refoulement and recognition of risks of re-trafficking. See [more](#).

Negotiations on EU VAW directive continue

No agreement was reached on the VAW Directive during the last triologue session of this year, and it remains unclear whether an agreement can be reached before the European Parliament elections. While the Parliament is holding firm on maintaining the criminalisation of rape with a consent-based definition, several member states oppose this. See [more](#).

Deal reached on EU Migration and Asylum Pact

On 20 December, the EU Parliament and the Council reached an [agreement](#) on the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Pact aims at establishing a common system for managing migration in the EU by streamlining procedures and increasing shared responsibility. While EU officials called the deal "historic", civil society are much less positive and foresee harmful impacts. See reactions by [PICUM](#), [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#).

EU-wide deportation decision in the works

In November, the Spanish Council Presidency asked the EU to consider legislation for a "European return decision" to ensure harmonised deportation procedures across the bloc and increase the number of third-country nationals removed from the EU. See Statewatch article [here](#).

UNCAC Review of the European Union

The European Union is in the first review cycle of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), examining Preventative Measures and Asset Recovery under UNCAC Chapters II and V. Civil society organisations are encouraged to contribute by sending their assessments of how the EU has implemented UNCAC with a focus on corruption prevention measures and asset recovery. Recommendations on key aspects that the European institutions should reinforce in the coming years are also welcome. You can submit comments before mid-January [by email](#).

WHAT IS NEW



Forced labour in the Chinese seafood industry

The [Outlaw Ocean Project](#) investigates how forced labour is used in the processing of seafood in China and on Chinese ships that supply the seafood industry. [This video](#) highlights the Chishan Group, the largest private player in China's squid industry and a major supplier to countries including the US, Australia, and European nations. The company warrants particular attention due to compelling evidence linking its processing plants to the use of forced labour from China's Xinjiang region, a practice prohibited in exports to the US and EU.

Report "Victims of Corruption: Back for Payback"

Released ahead of the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention against Corruption, [this report](#) opens the debate on important questions regarding corruption, such as what are the avenues for reparations, who are victims, how to define their legal standing and how to establish damages.

Report shows how forced labour apparel moves from Uyghur Region to the EU

A new report "[Tailoring Responsibility: Tracing Apparel Supply Chains from the Uyghur Region to Europe](#)" provides critical insight into the ways forced labour-produced apparel is moving from the Uyghur Region in China into the European Union market without restriction. Throughout the report, 39 well-known brands are identified to be at high risk of sourcing apparel made by Uyghurs compelled to participate in state-imposed labour transfers. This indicates that EU policy is not protecting its consumers from buying products made with forced labour.

Analysis of the application of the non-punishment principle

The British Institute of Comparative Law and the International Bar Association published a new report, "[Human trafficking and the rights of trafficked persons: An exploratory analysis on the application of the non-punishment principle](#)". It aims to provide guidance to understand better the

structural, legal and practical barriers to the implementation of the principle and to contribute to the ongoing conversation among judges, lawyers, legislators and policymakers on the protection of trafficked persons and the application of the non-punishment principle. See [more](#).

The role of women in organised crime

Data by UNODC shows that around one-third of convicted traffickers globally are women, yet women's role in human trafficking and organised crime remains poorly understood. The OSCE's new report "[Understanding the role of women in organized crime](#)" aims to fill this gap. It shows that while women are often victimised by organised crime groups, they can also be important actors. It concludes that states must recognise women's role in organised crime in order to more effectively combat it and support women to leave organised crime groups.

Call for input: Research on Data Practices and Risks in Migrant Support

The Weizenbaum Institute, Université libre de Bruxelles, and the [Migration and Technology Monitor](#) are working on a study, focusing on the data practices of NGOs aiding migrants and refugees. The study aims to analyse the types of personal data recorded and shared, its usage, and associated risks. The primary goal is to develop safer data handling practices, provide critical insights for future legal cases supporting migrants and aid workers, and create tools through a participatory design process involving NGO workers and the people they assist. They are looking for **assistance from NGOs to better understand data practices**. If you are interested, please send an email to: data-practices-wi-ulb@proton.me.

New campaign website "Civil Society for EU"

With the upcoming EU elections, the "Civil Society for EU" campaign has been launched, endorsed by a broad and diverse coalition of civil society and philanthropy organisations at European and national levels, including by La Strada International. The coalition asks (future) EU parliament leaders to address the shrinking space for civil society in Europe, including challenges like restrictive laws and administrative barriers. The campaign manifesto urges the EU to commit to reversing these trends over the next five years and create more opportunities for the involvement of civil society in policymaking, including by developing an EU-wide civil society strategy and more. See campaign website "[Civil Society for EU](#)" and the manifesto [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **16 January, 10 AM CET** - Justice and Care webinar on the publication of their report "Anti-trafficking in humanitarian settings: gaps and priorities for a more systematic response". For more information, [contact Hannah Miller at Justice and Care](#).
 - **25 January, 4 PM CET** - Anti-Slavery International Webinar "Limiting Investment Exposure to Green Technology Linked to Uyghur Forced Labour". Register [here](#).
 - **11 - 22 March** - 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), New York, USA. Register for the CSO Forum [here](#). See more about CSW68 [here](#).
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Support us

We are 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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