

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

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 Representation

This month, LSI was represented by board member Mona Chamass, at the regional UNODC Expert Group Meeting on Countering Labour Exploitation in Trafficking in Persons, including trafficking caused by migration from armed conflicts, in South Eastern Europe on 5-6 March in Chisinau, Moldova. She presented LSI members actions against labour trafficking, including of refugees from Ukraine.

LSI board member Eefje de Volder and James Fookes of our member Anti-Slavery International spoke on 22 March, at the [CoE event celebrating 15 years of anti-trafficking monitoring work](#) on advocacy around GRETA's recommendations at national and European level.

LSI holds Webinar at CSW Event

On the margins of the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), a virtual parallel event was organised on 15 March 2024 by La Strada International, La Strada Ukraine, the Office of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine and the Anti-Trafficking Division of the Council of Europe.

The webinar reflected on exploitative practices and risks of human trafficking and related forms of labour and sexual exploitation faced by Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons. Watch the recording [here](#).

The topic also links to our 8th of March Statement "[Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress by Empowering against abuse and exploitation](#)", addressing the need to promote women's rights to create a world free from violence, exploitation and abuse against women.

Info Rights – Posting of Workers in Agriculture and Manufacturing

This month the EU funded project [Info Rights](#) was launched, aiming to enhance information and awareness on the rules and procedures regarding intra-EU posting of workers. It further foresees to build capacities of involved stakeholders, such as workers, employers and social partners so that posting procedures can be carried out in compliance with EU law. The focus lies on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors and within the framework of posting through temporary work agencies. EU posting is one of the schemes that is misused to recruit and employ third country national workers for cheap and exploitative labour.

See [LSI's website page](#) on posting in the Netherlands, developed in the framework of the earlier Postcare project.

Monitoring Work

Jointly with other NGOs, LSI called for [adequate solutions for displaced persons in Europe](#), now the Temporary Protection Directive is scheduled to expire in one year time. Further, with other NGOs, LSI monitored the developments around the CSDDD, the Forced Labour Ban and with PICUM we monitored the development of the European Parliament report on the recast Victim Rights Directive, advocating for more access to rights for undocumented persons. See [joint press release](#). With the Coalition on sex workers' rights, LSI also [reacted](#) to the Comment of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the Protection of the human rights of sex workers.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI members' Work in March:

- **MRCI** released a new podcast “Can You See Me Now: Legal Status for Ireland's Undocumented Immigrants” on the national regulation programme and MRCI's campaign Justice for Undocumented. You can listen to the full podcast [here](#).
- **CoMensha** launched a new campaign video to their series «Your doubt, someone's chance», this time on trafficking for criminal exploitation. Because signs of exploitation are not always clear, the campaign urges people to act even when there are doubts. The full video with English subtitles can be found [here](#) (for subtitles go to “Subtitles” and choose “English”).
- **FLEX** published a [new report](#) on the implementation of the UKs Ukraine schemes. Among other findings a key learning was that, while imperfect, the Ukraine Schemes did provide Ukrainian nationals with immigration status which gave access to the right to work and recourse to public funds, and that these options did much to protect against exploitation. Important things for other groups of people seeking safety in the UK can be made from this.
- **Astra** monitors allegations of severe labour exploitation against the China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction (CEEG). The company is accused of serious labour rights abuses and the trafficking of 11 Indian workers, including the withholding of passports, excessive working hours and inadequate living conditions for the workers. The complainants also reportedly faced assaults from management at the **Linglong** company, a tire company associated with **CEEG**. Read more about it on [our website](#) or in the [Astra Report](#).



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Update on EU Law

On 15 March, the EU council finally endorsed the earlier political deal, that was reached in December 2023 between the EU institutions on the [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive \(CSDDD\)](#). Until the last moment, there was opposition from several EU Member States, who have further watered down the political agreement that already did no longer meet the high expectations. According to the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ), the CSDDD will disappointingly [only now apply to roughly 0.05% of EU companies](#) and business activities that typically bear risks for the environment and human rights. The EU parliament is expected to vote on the CSDDD on 24 of April.

On 13 March, the EU council also confirmed their support for the **EU Forced Labour regulation**, after earlier this month, on 4 March a [provisional agreement](#) to ban the entry of products made

with forced labour into the European single market was reached. This regulation now only awaits a final full European Parliament approval which is foreseen for 22 April (evening). The new regulation focuses on products and does not add additional due diligence requirements to companies that do not use forced labour in their supply chains. Regrettably CSOs have been excluded as sources of information on forced labour risks and state-imposed forced labour is not fully addressed. Moreover, remediation is voluntary and will not be required for a ban to be lifted. While we lobbied with other NGOs for stronger texts, La Strada International is happy with the approvals of the EU law and the regulation to hold companies more accountable and to reduce the profiting of forced labour in Europe and beyond.

On 22 April the EU Parliament should also give its formal approval for the recast of the Anti-Trafficking Directive and on 23 April the final Plenary Parliament vote on the VAW Directive is foreseen. The recast of the Victim Rights Directive is still ongoing. While the FEMM and LIBE reached an agreement, the Council still has not published its position on the Victim Rights Directive, neither on the VAW Directive, which is still expected before the end of the Belgian presidency.

EU Introduces Legislation About the Use of AI

On the 13 of March the EP adopted the final text of the [EU Artificial Intelligence Act \(AI Act\)](#). The act is praised by many, as it is the first of its kind worldwide. The legislation outlines prohibitions for “unacceptable” uses of AI, and sets out a framework of technical, oversight and accountability requirements for “high-risk” AI when deployed or placed on the EU market. However, it fails to ban or regulate harmful AI use in migration, such as discriminatory risk assessment and predictive analytics for pushbacks.

Critical systems like biometric identification are not listed as high-risk, exempting them from strict oversight. Additionally, the Act does not restrict the export of surveillance technology that could facilitate human rights violations outside the EU, and it delays compliance for major migration databases until 2030. While it is good to see that the EU prepares for AI use in our work and everyday life, it is essential that the area of migration is included and well-protected.

CBSS tackles Financial and Benefit Fraud

The CBSS and partners have unveiled the FRAUD (“Tackling Financial and Benefit Fraud in the Baltic Sea Region”) project to combat the escalating issues of financial and benefit fraud linked to human trafficking. Human trafficking for financial benefit and fraud have become a more significant challenge over time in the region. Read more about the FRAUD project, including its key objectives, [here](#).

WHAT IS NEW



ILO Reports on Living Wage and Profits from Forced Labour

ILO has reached an agreement on the issue of living wages. ILO’s Governing Body endorsed experts’ conclusions that decent wages are central to economic and social development and to advance social justice. They also play an essential role in reducing poverty and inequality and ensuring a decent and dignified life. It was decided that living wages should be decided through ILO-approved principles. Read the full report and conclusions [here](#).

Further, the [International Labour Organization](#) new report, ‘Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour’, unveils alarming figures: \$236 billion in annual illegal profits from forced labour, marking a 37% rise since 2014. Important to note is that in Europe the highest profits from forced labour are made (\$84 billion). This underscores the urgent need for action to protect vulnerable workers and dismantle the systems that perpetuate their exploitation. [See](#) more.

Global Initiative Updates on Current Issues

Global Initiative has highlighted the increasing migration flow on the English Channel since 2018. As of January 2024 over 100.000 people have crossed the English Channel using small boats. The boats get launched from the northern French coast. Although the flow of migrants is small compared to migration flows across the Mediterranean, the current figures are the highest since records of English Channel crossings started in 2018. Global Initiative mainly sees this as a result of the "industrialization" of a system of smuggling migrants by boat. Read the full report [here](#).

Further Global Initiative also announced to publish an interactive toolkit on illicit financial flows in the Western Balkans which provides valuable information in an accessible and user-friendly format to empower civil society, media and academia in the fight against IFFs.

GRETA Publishes Impact report on 15 Years of Monitoring Compliance THB Convention

On 22 March, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#)) published a new report "[The practical impact of GRETA's work](#)" which takes stock of its 15 years of monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention. It highlights measures taken by States Parties to strengthen their legislations and policies to combat human trafficking but also reflects on remaining challenges. The report gives a short overview per country and highlights changes to the criminalisation of human trafficking and adoption of provisions on the recovery and reflection period; residence permits or on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking and more.

Situation of Children and Young Adults at Risk of Human Trafficking in the UK

ECPAT UK has published a new report in collaboration with the University of Nottingham Rights Lab called "[Prevention and Identification of Children and young adults experiencing, or at Risk of, modern slavery in the UK](#)". The research examines the persistent challenges stemming from gaps in resources and policy, especially in the absence of a UK-wide Child Exploitation Strategy.

Role of AI in Preventing Human Trafficking

With the rise of Artificial Intelligence, experts are thinking about ways to use it in human trafficking prevention. AI has the potential to detect and prevent human trafficking in the supply chain. It can analyse and monitor the supply chain and can flag potential risks for trafficking, which gives the opportunity to intervene and disrupt the operation of traffickers and stop forced labour. [This article](#) elaborates on the potential benefits of AI.

Policy Discussions to Address Socio-Economic Changes faced by Europe

[10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe](#) presents a series of policy discussions designed to address the pressing socio-economic challenges facing Europe. Drawing on extensive consultations with citizens and stakeholders, it presents the areas we must address to build a fairer society and ensure no one is left behind in our rapidly changing world. From fostering sustainable growth and reducing inequality to enhancing EU institutions' coherence, this publication sets a comprehensive agenda for change.

Irish Companies Underperform on Human Rights

The Centre for Social Innovation at Trinity Business School has published a report investigating human rights compliance by large firms operating in Ireland. The Centre found that half of the 50 largest Irish companies underperform on human rights. The report offers recommendations to firms and the Irish Government. The full report can be found [here](#).

Discrimination of Roma Communities in Slovenia and Slovakia

The new Minority Rights Group Publication "[Equality in Accessing Justice: Removing Barriers for Roma in Pursuing their Rights in Discrimination Cases](#)" provides an overview and insights into discrimination faced by members of Roma communities in Slovenia and Slovakia, and outlines the strategies to provide legal remedies. This initiative was part of the "[Promoting Roma Equality in Slovenia and Slovakia](#)" (PRESS) programme, funded by the European Commission and managed by Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva, Slovakia) and EPEKA (Slovenia).

GAATW welcomes Papers for Anti-Trafficking Review

GAATW is inviting submissions for its [upcoming Anti-Trafficking Review](#). This special edition seeks to uncover the crucial roles of families and communities in migration and trafficking scenarios. They welcome papers that dig into the experiences and challenges faced by migrants and trafficking survivors in their immediate social environments.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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- **15-16 April** - OSCE 24th High-Level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference entitled 'Beyond Awareness-Raising: Reshaping Human Trafficking Prevention'. Vienna, Austria. More information and registration [here](#)
 - **16 April** - PILNET Europe Convening 'Exploring the Intersections: Climate Change, Displacement and Civic Space', London and online. More information and registration [here](#).
 - **8-9 May** - UNODC regional event on sexual exploitation in SEE, Dubrovnik Croatia.

BLOGS ON ECTHR JUDGEMENT

Recently, two blogs have been published on the landmark case [Krachunova v. Bulgaria](#), the first judgment where the ECtHR addressed the question of compensation for victims of human trafficking as a positive obligation held by States under Article 4 of the Convention.

The first [blog post](#) by Vladislava Stoyanova delves into the positive obligation that was found by the Court to arise under article 4 ECHR and questions whether lost earnings from (forced) prostitution matter for the purposes of compensation for pecuniary damage. She highlights that the Court distanced itself from the general admittedly controversial question of prostitution and 'narrowed its examination to the question of whether it was permissible under the Convention to not allow victims of human trafficking to claim compensation for pecuniary damages 'on the grounds that the earnings at issue had been obtained immorally.'

The second [blog](#) by Julia Muraszkievicz and Ryszard Piotrowicz highlights that behind this landmark decision, there is the reality that victims are unaware and often not informed that they might be entitled to compensation, neither claim or seek help to claim compensation. The authors recommend 'states to fortify their commitment to the right to compensation and, notably, to amplify ancillary rights within the framework of combating modern slavery and human trafficking'.

We like to highlight that Ms. Krachunova was assisted by our member organisation in Bulgaria, Animus Association, who provided her with support and legal assistance through the specialised lawyer Ms. Natasha Dobreva, She filed the complaint at the ECtHR with Ms. Krachunova.

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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