

NEWSLETTER APRIL 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](mailto:info@lastrada-international.org).

LSI NEWS



Legal Action against Dutch Companies for Allegedly Profiting from Forced Labour of North Koreans in Polish Shipyard Dismissed

On 15 of April 2024, the Hague Court of Appeal decided that two Dutch companies are not to be prosecuted for profiting from human trafficking, money laundering, or fencing. The Court dismissed the complaint and found that there is not enough evidence to establish a direct link between those offences and the accused companies. The appeal was filed by La Strada International with support of Prakken d'Oliveira.

See the [press release](#) and more information on the [North Korean Forced Labour case](#). The dismissal shows again how difficult it is to hold companies accountable for severe forms of labour exploitation.

Joint NGO Statement on Recast EU Anti-Trafficking Directive

In a joint statement, La Strada International and other non-governmental human rights organisations, welcome some progress made in the revised THB Directive. Overall, however, we believe the final legislative text demonstrates a lack of commitment of the European institutions to advance the rights of trafficked persons, as relevant provisions on victims' rights were not meaningfully or effectively strengthened. The NGOs call upon the European Commission and EU Member States to now ensure that the rights of victims are prioritised during the transposition and implementation process. See [joint statement](#).

LSI Representation in April

From 15 – 17 April, LSI attended the 24th (OSCE) Alliance Conference against Trafficking in Persons, Beyond Awareness-Raising, Reshaping Human Trafficking Prevention, and the Alliance Expert Team Meeting (AECT). This month, LSI further participated in the Expert meeting of [Title Rights](#), a new project on posting of third-country nationals in the agricultural and manufacturing sector. See [LSI's website page](#) on posting in the Netherlands, developed in the framework of the earlier Postcare project.

With our member FairWork, we conducted a workshop for representatives of the Dutch Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) on human trafficking, forced labour and labour exploitation.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members' Work in April:

- FairWork** celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. On their [website](#), they look back on the past years and reflect on the good and bad sides of the 25 years anniversary. FairWork also contributed to I-CLAIM, a project examining migrant irregularity in Europe, for the report concerning the Netherlands. Find the report [here](#).
- CCEM** our French member is celebrating its 30th anniversary in the field of protecting and preventing trafficking for labour exploitation. To celebrate this anniversary and to pay attention to France (Paris) hosting the Olympic Games, CCEM and LSI will organise a joint public event on 25 June 2025.
- FIZ** announced that they will take over the project **'Network Respect'**, originally founded in 2013 by a Swiss labour union. The project aims at offering legal advice and psychosocial counseling to migrant workers who provide care work in private households. Many workers who work in the sector live at their place of work and have difficulties accessing advice and support.



WHAT IS HAPPENING?



Update on EU Law

During its last plenary meeting of this mandate (22-25 April), the EU parliament adopted not only the [final text](#) of the recast of the EU anti-trafficking Directive but also the [EU Forced Labour Ban \(FLB\)](#) and the [CSDDD](#). Earlier in April a new [EU Law on Asset Recovery and Confiscation](#) was adopted.

The revised text of the THB Directive includes mandatory sanctions for legal persons held accountable for trafficking offenses, for example excluding them from public benefits or temporarily or permanently closing the establishments, where the trafficking offense occurred.

The FLB enables member states and the European Commission to investigate suspicious goods, supply chains, and manufacturers. It will ban products made from forced labour from the European market in the future. The adoption of the ban is a big step as the EU market will no longer support suppliers who sell products made from forced labour. See [press release](#).

The CSDDD applies to EU and non-EU companies and parent companies with turnover of more than 450 million euro. The companies are required to conduct due diligence and prevent, end or mitigate their adverse impact on human rights and the environment, including in their supply chains. Companies will be liable for damages and can be fined for non-compliance.

Mid-April the EU Council [adopted](#) the EU Law on Asset Recovery and Confiscation that sets out EU-wide minimum rules on the tracing, identification, freezing, confiscation, and management of criminal property in connection with a wide range of crimes. The new Directive includes an important reference to compensation for victims of crime, for example stating that property can also be frozen with a view to its possible subsequent restitution or to safeguard compensation for the damage caused by a criminal offense. EU Member States should further take appropriate measures to ensure that victims' claims for restitution and compensation are considered in asset tracing, freezing, and confiscation proceedings, including in cross-border cases.

Single Work and Stay Permit for Non-EU Nationals

The Council has officially adopted a revision to the Single Permit Directive on 12 April. The new framework enables non-EU nationals to work and stay in the EU. Non-EU workers can apply for a single permit that serves as both a work and residence permit, either from their home country or within the EU, if they already hold a valid residence permit. The process for issuing permits is now required to be completed within three months, with a potential 30-day extension for complex cases. The positive is that the new rules allow permit holders to change employers and provide provisions for a limited period of unemployment. [PICUM sees the revision as a promising step forward](#) in enforcing the rights of migrant workers and improving their working conditions. However, they also highlight the role of national governments in the implementation phase. Countries have two years to apply the new rules and we will see if the revision adds to migrant workers' rights and enables people to leave abusive or exploitative working conditions.

New International Day Against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime

The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution designating 15 November as the International Day for the Prevention of and Fight against all Forms of Transnational Organized Crime.

The date was not chosen by chance. Nearly 24 years ago, on 15 November 2000, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted, alongside the UN Palermo Protocol, by the UN General Assembly. Until today, this is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime, while the Palermo Protocol is the first legally binding instrument with an internationally recognized definition of human trafficking.

While there is already a World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30 July) and an EU Day against human trafficking (18 October), as well as an International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (2 December), which actually marked the adoption of the much older UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317(IV) of 2 December 1949), it is hoped that this additional day helps to enhance the global effort to combat organised crime, including human trafficking.

New GRETA Elections Coming Up This Year

This year new GRETA members will be appointed; elections are foreseen for the end of this year. The mandate of 8 GRETA members will finish, but 6 of them can stand again. LSI members are already in contact with their governments regarding the nomination of potential candidates.

We are hoping to see CSO representatives well-represented in the expert group. La Strada International will monitor the election process and hopes to support several candidates, among them some who will stand again such as the Dutch Rapporteur Conny Rijken and Peter Van Hauwermeiren, but hopefully also some other new experts. The deadline for nomination of GRETA candidates for State Parties is 29 September 2024.

12 Members Resign from Advisory Council ISTAC

Last year, for the second time, the OSCE (ODIHR) launched an 'International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC)', reflecting the importance of including the voices and thoughts of people who have 'lived experiences' of human trafficking. The Council is tasked with providing advice, guidance, and recommendations for the OSCE participating states, for example on anti-trafficking legislation, policies, practices and training.

On March 27th, 12 members resigned from the group. They criticized the OSCE for the lack of a working contract and unclear conditions, next to not having been consulted for advice over the last months. See the resignation letter [here](#). Currently, there are still 7 ISTAC members remaining on the board.

Georgia Proposes 'Foreign-Agent' Law Affecting CSOs

The Georgian parliament is registering a new 'foreign-agent' law that calls for media and non-commercial organisations to disclose as being under the foreign influence if more than 20% of their funding comes from abroad. This led to massive protests, as many citizens see the law as Russian influence and a big risk towards their integration into the EU. Russia applies a similar law to silence independent media and opponents of the Kremlin. Many CSOs are affected by such laws as they receive funding from foreign entities. Several protestors have been arrested and protests continue.

Not only in Georgia but in several EU countries we see concerning (shrinking space) developments, according to the [FRA report of 2023](#). At EU level, the European Commission proposed a problematic foreign funding directive in 2023, despite widespread concerns of more than a hundred civil society organisations. The Directive foresees the creation of a register of entities that carry out "interest representation services" on behalf of third countries, resulting in the stigmatisation of CSOs who receive foreign funding. Read more [here](#).

NGOs Sue Dutch State over Turkey Deal

Amnesty International, Boat Refugee Foundation and Defence for Children have sued the Dutch state over the EU-Turkey refugee deal of 2016. The controversial deal was adopted despite clear evidence that it would violate human rights. The organisations argue that the deal aimed to outsource refugee protection to Turkey, making EU member states not complying with their responsibility under international law to offer international protection. Refugees arriving irregularly on the Greek Aegean islands were returned to Turkey under the deal, despite clear evidence of large safety risks for the people involved. The Netherlands, holding the EU Presidency in 2016, played an important part in the adoption and implementation of the deal. Read the full article on the case [here](#).

WHAT IS NEW

PICUM Reports on Criminalisation of Migrant Solidarity

A new [PICUM publication](#) raises concern about the criminalisation of solidarity with migrants and the act of migration under counter-smuggling legislation.

The report shows that in 2023 at least 117 individuals faced criminal or administrative proceedings for acting in solidarity with migrants in the EU. Under the current legal system, charges of facilitation and smuggling can be used to criminalise migrants and people without regular residency as well as people acting in solidarity with them. Read the full report [here](#).

New Guidebook on Victims' Rights

The [Human Rights Institute](#) in Germany has published a guidebook featuring minimal standards for the cooperation between governmental branches and civil society when supporting victims of human trafficking. The guidebook addresses all relevant parties involved in the implementation of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM). It defines minimum standards that derive from the CoE convention and the EU directive, giving a common ground for formalized cooperation. Actors who want to draft or update cooperation agreements are recommended to consider implementing the proposed standards. The full publication (only in German) can be found [here](#).

UN Report Reviews Intersection of Modern Slavery and Lack of Official Documentation

The new [report](#) by the United Nations University Center for Policy Research and the Freedom Fund examines global evidence from the intersection between modern slavery and access to official documentation. Over 150 consulted sources show that an estimated 850 million people globally lack official documentation, impeding their access to governmental services and legal protections. The report argues that by providing documentation the vulnerability to human trafficking of undocumented people could be reduced by improving their socio-economic position.

New Report Addresses Issue of Data Gaps in Forced Labour Data

In a [recent report](#), Tech Against Trafficking urges businesses, civil society, and policymakers to address fragmentation in the data ecosystem combating forced labour in global supply chains. Even though data is collected, big data gaps exist between and within the corporate sector, civil society, and the public sector. This leads to the collected data and its potential not being fully realized. The report features seven recommendations to enable an effective supply chain.

Anti Trafficking Review Examines Link between Armed Conflict and Trafficking

In a [special issue](#) anti-trafficking review highlights the relationship between armed conflict and human trafficking, and other professions working on the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. The course also applies tips and sources from CSOs and international organisations. The updated course introduces new content, such as the impact of technology on human trafficking and features the latest case law of the European Court of Human Rights and examples of national courts case law.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 8-9 May** - UNODC regional event on sexual exploitation in SEE, Dubrovnik Croatia.
- 9 May** - Webinar on Forced Marriage: Supporting the Vulnerable, Engaging with Key Communities and Enforcing the Law. Public Policy Exchange. More information and registration [here](#).
- 17-19 June** - Conference 'Making Rights a Reality: The Human Rights of Undocumented and Precarious Migrant Workers' organised by the Amsterdam Centre for Migration and Refugee Law (ACMRL). More info [here](#).
- 20-21 June** - In-person Human Trafficking Research Network (HTRN) Conference 'Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Human Trafficking from Research and Practice'.
- 24-26 June** - LSI General Assembly/annual NGO Platform Meeting in Paris, France.

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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