

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 Work in September

This month La Strada International contributed to consultations organised by the Dutch government on transposing the amendments of the EU THB Directive in the Netherlands, to a Dutch government conference on sex workers' rights and human trafficking, and participated in GREVIO's meeting with civil society during their evaluation visit to the Netherlands.

With PICUM, and ASI, we organised an event on the new Forced Labour Ban and the CSDD for our members. LSI also participated in the final conference of the [Visa ROC project](#) on safe reporting in Brussels. LSI's staff further attended several webinars and meetings related to our work on human trafficking.

Civil Society Calls for a Vibrant Civic Space in the EU

Recently, Civil Society Europe, together with 415 CSOs, including La Strada International, sent an [open letter](#) to the new EU leadership. The letter calls for urgent measures to foster a vibrant civic space, protect fundamental rights, and strengthen civil dialogue in the face of rising concerns about democratic backsliding within the EU. Key demands include the development of a European Civil Society Strategy, a strong mandate for a Commission Vice President dedicated to democracy, civic space and civil dialogue, and the adoption of a Civil Dialogue Agreement.

LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members' Work in September:

- KOK outlines key changes and areas for improvement** regarding the amended EU Directive on combating human trafficking in their [public consultation](#). They note that while the Directive, which came into effect in July 2024, includes important provisions, it falls short of adopting a human rights-based framework that truly strengthens the position and rights of those affected.
- Open Gate (La Strada)** in North Macedonia recently started a new project that focuses on analyzing the trafficking situation through a gender lens, with a focus on sexual exploitation and/or forced marriage. The project, funded by the French government, will further focus on raising awareness and advocating for the protection of women and girls, against trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced marriages. The project foresees research and case studies assessment, national workshops, a regional conference, and a social media campaign. LSI will contribute to the research and help organising the regional conference, foreseen to be held in June 2025 in North Macedonia.
- Anti Slavery** made use of London Fashion Week to raise awareness among consumers of the unfair working conditions and exploitation in the fashion industry. The industry is one of the most vulnerable to forced labour during the whole production chain, from the cotton fields to production sites. To raise awareness ASI launched the campaign #WhoMadeMyClothes? calling on consumers to ask big brands how their garments were made. You can participate or read more about the campaign [here](#).
- Animus Association** started a new service called 'Women and Girls Safe Space'. It was launched in March 2024 and has already benefited more than 70 women. The service targets girls and women in migration who are in vulnerable situations or have been trafficked. In the safe space, activities such as Bulgarian language courses, mindfulness activities, and seminars on the prevention of trafficking or labour exploitation take place.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?



Essential Workers Have Announced to Protest for Better Procurement Rules

On 1 October 2024, 1,000 essential workers from across Europe will [march in Brussels](#) to demand reforms to EU public procurement rules, which have led to deteriorating working conditions. These rules, which govern public contracts worth €2 trillion, often prioritize the lowest bid, impacting millions of workers in sectors like cleaning and security. The workers are pushing for reforms promised by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to improve job quality, wages, and working conditions across the EU.

New EU Commission Presented

After EU president Ursula von der Leyen earlier presented her [political guidelines](#) for the coming years, she has now also presented her [list of Commissioners](#). The fight against organised crime including human trafficking will fall under the DG Internal Affairs and Migration, while Victim Rights will be dealt with under Just and Women's Rights under DG Preparedness and Crisis Management; Equality, PICUM, WAVE, and ETUC among others have raised concern that the division of the DGs and mandates proposed, show limited EU commitment to the promotion of (undocumented) migrant and labour rights, and women's rights and equality. See more [here](#).

As the [guidelines](#) by von der Leyen set the stage for key policy areas that will impact migration, the rule of law, labour practices, data protection, and broader issues of security and gender equality LSI wrote a [commentary](#) on them. In it we assess her plans for the next political term, focusing on those issues important for civil society supporting THB victims and those vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

GRETA Guidance on the Recovery and Reflection Period

GRETA has published a [guidance note](#) for countries in which they discuss how and when the recovery and reflection period should be used by states. The guidance includes important aspects such as non-conditionality or the application of the non-punishment principle. The guidance covers practical questions such as duration or criteria for the granting of a reflection period. It also features practical steps which can be taken to ensure the consistent application of the recovery and reflection period. LSI members provided input for this guidance during a workshop at LSI's General Assembly back in June this year.

OSCE Regional Conference on Southern Europe Addresses Supply Chains

A [regional conference](#) by the OSCE brought together 40 participants from 9 countries to tackle human trafficking in global supply chains, with a strong focus on South-Eastern Europe. The event emphasized integrating human rights due diligence into legal frameworks and highlighted best practices from countries like Germany and Norway. Stakeholders stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation between governments, businesses, and civil society in the region. OSCE's Special THB Representative, Dr. Karl Johnston underscored the opportunity for non-EU countries in South-Eastern Europe to gain trade advantages by adopting ethical supply chain practices.

New EU Network of Specialist Prosecutors and Judges Established

On 25 September the European Judicial Organised Crime Network (EJOON) was [launched](#), aimed at strengthening coordination among specialist prosecutors and judges throughout the EU and reinforcing the EU's commitment to justice and security for all citizens. The EJOON, which will be hosted at Eurojust, will also look strategically at human trafficking.

UNHCR Speaks Out Against Penalisation and Detention of Asylum Seekers for Irregular Entry

In September, the UNHCR published its [latest guidance](#) against penalization of asylum-seekers for irregular entry (available in English and Spanish). The same month the UN body also issued a [statement](#) reminding States of their legal obligations to end arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers.

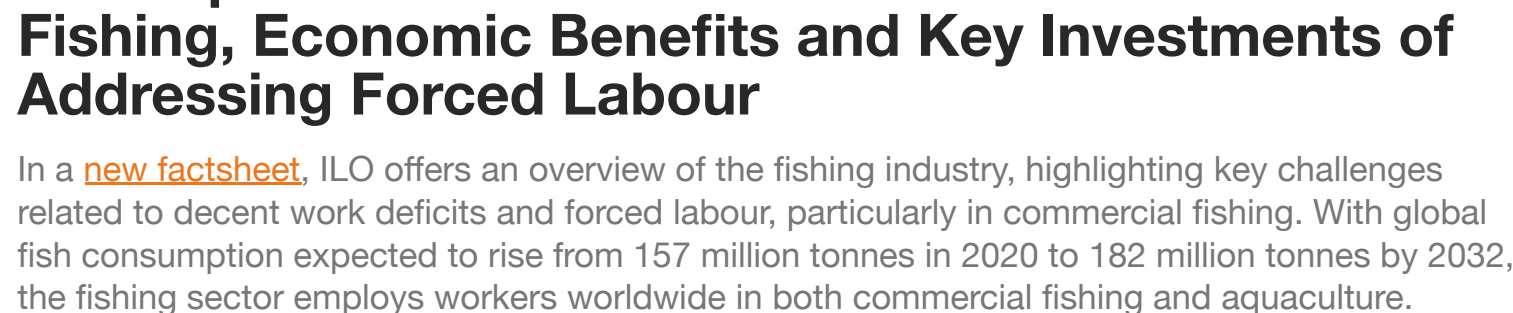
Austria Ratifies ILO Conventions C190, While Spain Ensures Adequate Application of C189

Spain has advanced domestic workers' rights by approving a Royal Decree regulating their occupational safety, health, and training, following the ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), see more [here](#). Spain joins other European countries in enforcing the Convention. Meanwhile, more European nations are adopting the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190), with Austria recently becoming the 45th country to ratify it. However, many countries still have yet to ratify and enforce these important Conventions. See more on our [website](#).

Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Will Discuss Resolution on Sex Workers Rights

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, a Council of Europe [resolution](#) titled Protecting the human rights and improving the lives of sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation will be debated and voted on by the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE). The resolution does not recommend any policy model but strongly supports sex workers' rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on VAW - known for her 'end-prostitution' approach, has [raised her disapproval](#) of the report and resolution, with complaints about the 'sex-work terminology' being used and a 'biased methodology and partial understanding of international human rights law and standards', next to a 'disconnection from the realities of the prostitution system and the impact of its legislation'. La Strada International and other Human Rights organisations, however, strongly welcome the resolution. Jointly with ESVA, Médicos du Monde and other human rights organisations, La Strada International signed a [support letter for the resolution](#).

WHAT IS NEW?



ILO Reports on Conditions in Commercial Fishing, Economic Benefits and Key Investments of Addressing Forced Labour

In a [new factsheet](#), ILO offers an overview of the fishing industry, highlighting key challenges related to decent work deficits and forced labour, particularly in commercial fishing. With global fish consumption expected to rise from 157 million tonnes in 2020 to 182 million tonnes by 2032, the fishing sector employs workers worldwide in both commercial fishing and aquaculture. Forced labour remains a significant issue, as documented by ILO studies. To address these challenges, specific labour standards, like the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, have been adopted, and technical cooperation projects are being implemented globally. The factsheet is part of a broader set of resources, including materials for journalists and educators focused on improving working conditions in the fishing industry.

Furthermore, ILO recently published two other papers. The first [paper](#) states that Global efforts to end forced labour could increase global GDP by US\$ 611 billion. A second [discussion paper](#) explores some of the key investment requirements for ending forced labour and the economic returns to that investment for society. The paper is part of a broader program of ILO research on the economics of forced labour designed to improve understanding of the economic underpinnings of the phenomenon and help inform action against it.

Task Force Report Reveals Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Romania and Poland

A [recently published report](#) by the UN Taskforce on Ukraine evaluates the vulnerability to human trafficking in the context of the war in Ukraine. The report features a case study of Romania and Poland, as both countries were among the top 10 countries in the European Union to grant temporary protection to people who fled Ukraine as data from November 2023 shows. To assess the situation in the two countries, IOM has consulted different actors in the field, including LSI members Adpare (Romania) and La Strada Poland. For more information visit our [website](#).

TRM Guidance to Identify and Assist Trafficked Children

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Child Circle published a new guidance ['Creating a Cycle of Protection'](#). The guidance includes principles and key considerations for developing comprehensive, child-centered cooperation to identify, support, and assist trafficked children. It should serve as a support to States when reviewing how to fulfil the obligations towards trafficked children. The publication was launched during a webinar, which can still be watched [online](#).

New ATR Special Issue on Following the Money

The Anti-Trafficking Review published a new special issue ["Following the Money II"](#) for which LSI's International Coordinator, Suzanne Hoff, was one of the co-editors. The issue contains nine articles including 5 bigger pieces articles. Many of them share a common conclusion, being that despite the large amounts spent by governments on the fight against human trafficking, not all of the actions are helpful. Even though governments do show the effort, many people affected by human trafficking do not receive the support that they need to recover and achieve safety.

GREVIO Publishes First Report for Three Countries

This month the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) has published its first reports on [Albania](#), [Monaco](#), and [Austria](#). Grevio rights laudable steps of Austria to end violence against women (VAW), even though challenges remain, particularly in the area of family law. However, the reports for Albania and Monaco are a bit more critical. While Albania was found to have made progress in its efforts to end VAW, GREVIO finds that significant gaps remain which need to be addressed. While the Committee acknowledged the efforts made by Monaco, they highlighted the need for a long-term comprehensive strategy and called on the government to improve prevention and support for victims.

Dutch Migration Council Publishes Report on Balanced Labour Migration

This month the Dutch Advisory Council on Migration published an advisory report: 'Balanced labour migration. Targeted labour migration policy for broad prosperity'. With the report, the Advisory Council on Migration advocates a labour migration policy that is not only based on economic interests but also takes into account social and ecological consequences. In other words: broad prosperity. The report is written in Dutch, but an English summary is available [here](#).

How the Lack of Identity Accelerates Risk of Human Trafficking

The United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR) and the Freedom Foundation have analysed the links between the lack of official documentation and modern slavery in their new publication ['No Identity, No Protection'](#). The report delves into how living without official documentation leads to social stigma, economic marginalisation, legal exclusion and political invisibility and how this links to the risk of becoming a human trafficking victim. The report concludes by highlighting five strategic areas for effective policy interventions aimed at addressing the connection between limited access to official documentation and increased vulnerability to modern slavery, including enhancing support services, strengthening collaboration and integration and promoting community engagement.

OSCE Publishes Report About Human Trafficking in Minorities

On 11 September, the OSCE launched ["Out of the Shadows"](#), a publication exploring the link between minority status and vulnerability to human trafficking. The report highlights factors like poverty, violence, and lack of access to education and housing that traffickers exploit, as well as how racial and ethnic discrimination can hinder effective responses. Speakers, including Tihomir Habitu from LEFO (BF), emphasized the need for tailored and holistic approaches to protect minorities. The report also addresses systemic racism and the lack of political representation that increases susceptibility to trafficking. Read more [here](#).

The Story of 300 Ukrainian Children Who Were Forcibly Displaced by Russia

A [new public report](#) by the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) details the unlawful deportation of 300 Ukrainian children to the Russian camp in Krasnodar Krai. The report highlights how parents of these children were forced to send the kids on what was labelled a 3-week 'short break'. However, Russia later unilaterally extended the children's stay for an indefinite period. The research by the IPHR shows that the plan seems to be to deport as many Ukrainian children as possible to Russia to sever their national and cultural ties to Ukraine. It is further highlighted that this is not the only case of forced displacement. The authors state that the conduct presented in the report amounts to crimes against humanity, war crimes of deportation, and others.

Tech Sector Among the Worst Response Rate to Human Rights Risk Concerns

The Business & Human Rights Resource Center (BHRRC) contacted over 300 tech companies to respond to human rights-related allegations and their actions to address them. They did this in light of a [new report](#) on the rapid development of technology and its significant human rights risks, especially in artificial intelligence, women, and children. The report investigates how the tech sector has responded to requests regarding human rights over the past decade and finds that the sector shows a significantly lower response rate compared to other sectors such as textile, agriculture, or gastronomy.

FRA Guides EU Countries on How to Set Up Independent Monitoring Mechanisms

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a [guidance](#) for EU countries on how to set up independent monitoring mechanisms, ensuring that fundamental rights are respected during screening and asylum border procedures. It is important to have monitoring mechanisms in place to prevent rights violations, protect victims, and have a tool to investigate potential allegations of wrongdoing by public authorities.

BLOG

Limiting Schengen for Security?

This commentary by Hanne Beiers, Susan Fratke and Camille Le Coz from the Migration Policy Institute discusses Germany's recent decision to reinstate border controls with its nine neighbors, a move aimed at improving the apprehension and return of unauthorized migrants. The action comes as a response to public pressure and security concerns after attacks in the country, allegedly carried out by asylum seekers.

The blog highlights the challenges coming with the reintroduction of border checks in the Schengen area, the political pressure faced by Germany ahead of national elections, and the country's struggle with managing asylum seekers. The article also explores broader issues, including systemic challenges in the EU's migration and asylum policies, Germany's role in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), and the potential consequences of these border measures. The blog ultimately emphasizes the need for European solidarity, pragmatic solutions, and the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum to effectively manage migration and avoid further strain on the Schengen Area.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2 & 3 October** - 4-5 PM CET, 2 October, BHRRC webinar on 'Access to Justice' which discusses the obstacles to ombuds institutions, digitization and barriers to lodging cases before the ECtHR. Register [here](#). The webinar on 3 October will be led by Silvia Carta, Advocacy Officer at PICUM. Find more information about WAVE Training Institute events [here](#).
- 4 October** - [International Expert Round Table](#) - Countering the toxic interface of migration, human trafficking & related labour exploitation 2.0. Vienna, Austria 9:00-16:00 (CET) - live streamed.
- 9 October** - side event Human Dimension Meeting by ODIHR - Addressing Roma Human Rights Concerns in Ukraine Through Dialogue Between Government, Civil Society and International Community, Warsaw Poland.
- 14-18 October** - UNTOC Conference of the Parties, Vienna, Austria. LSI and VSE host a side event on 14 October, see [here](#) for more information and other side events.
- 16 October** - 11.00-12.30 CET, Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Training Institute and PICUM organise webinar on the impact of the EU Migration Pact on undocumented migrant women, highlighting key changes in border and screening procedures. The discussion will also cover protective EU instruments like the Victims' Rights Directive and the Violence Against Women Directive. The session will be led by Silvia Carta, Advocacy Officer at PICUM. Find more information about WAVE Training Institute events [here](#).
- 23 October** - 14.00-15.30 CET. The WAVE Training Institute and PICUM will host a webinar focusing on hope-based communication strategies for advancing gender equality and combating gender-based violence. Participants will learn to shift from fear-based narratives to hopeful, solution-oriented messaging through five key communication shifts. Led by Gianluca Cesaro, Communications Officer at PICUM, this session will equip advocates with tools to create more positive, effective campaigns. More info about WAVE Training Institute events [here](#).

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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