

## NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 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.org).

### In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we learnt about the sudden passing of Dr. Helga Konrad, earlier this month. As former minister for women's issues and federal parliamentarian in Austria, former Chair of the EU Stability Pact Task Force on Anti-Trafficking for Southeastern Europe and the first OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, she was a longstanding valued expert in the anti-trafficking field and an inspiration, an ally and friend of La Strada International and our members. In this [in memoriam](#) we pay homage to her.

### LSI NEWS

#### LSI Representation in October

On 4 October, LSI participated in the international expert round table of the [THB Regional Implementation Initiative](#), on 14-16 in the meeting of the CoE conference of [INGO](#) and on 17-18 in the [annual meeting](#) of the Council of Europe [Network of specialised lawyers and NGOs](#).

#### LSI Calls Upon Governments to Bear Responsibility for Identification of Victims

On EU Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October), LSI [called upon European governments](#) to enhance the early identification and support of victims of trafficking and change the narrative that places the onus of self-identification on victims. Not only does this perspective endanger their well-being, it also undermines the responsibility of states and relevant actors in identifying victims.

#### Victim Assistance by LSI Members in 2023

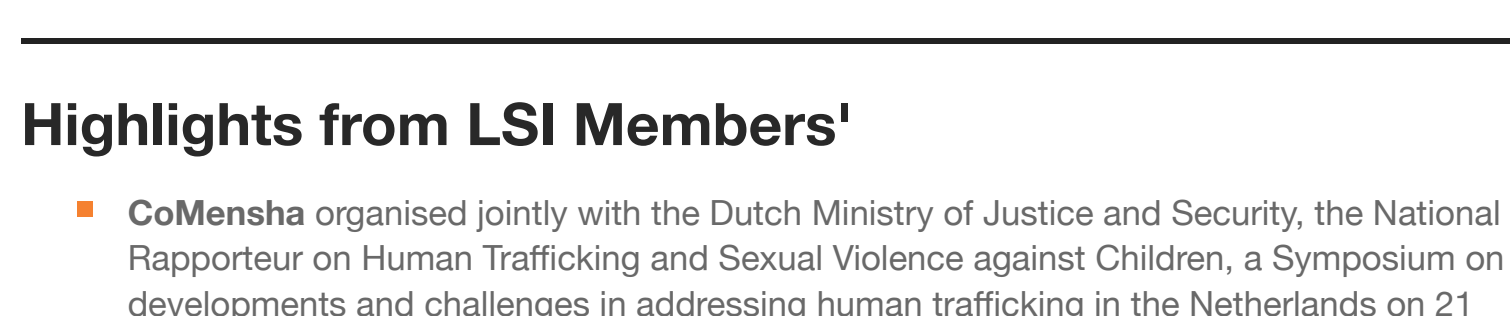
LSI has published a brief [assessment](#) of data shared by our members related to victims' assistance in 2023. In total 5103 (presumed) victims of trafficking were assisted. This number includes 187 (potential) victims from Ukraine.

#### LSI Co-Organises UNTOC Side Event on Access to Justice and Support Services

On 14 October LSI, together with Victim Support Europe (VSE) and Victim Support Asia (VSA) hosted a UNTOC side event on [Empowering trafficking victims across borders: Access to Justice and Support Services](#). LSI was represented by LEFO-IBF.

Challenges faced by [victims trafficked across borders by organised crime networks](#) were addressed and an emphasis was put on their need for safe justice and robust support systems, including compensation and non-punishment.

### LSI MEMBERS NEWS

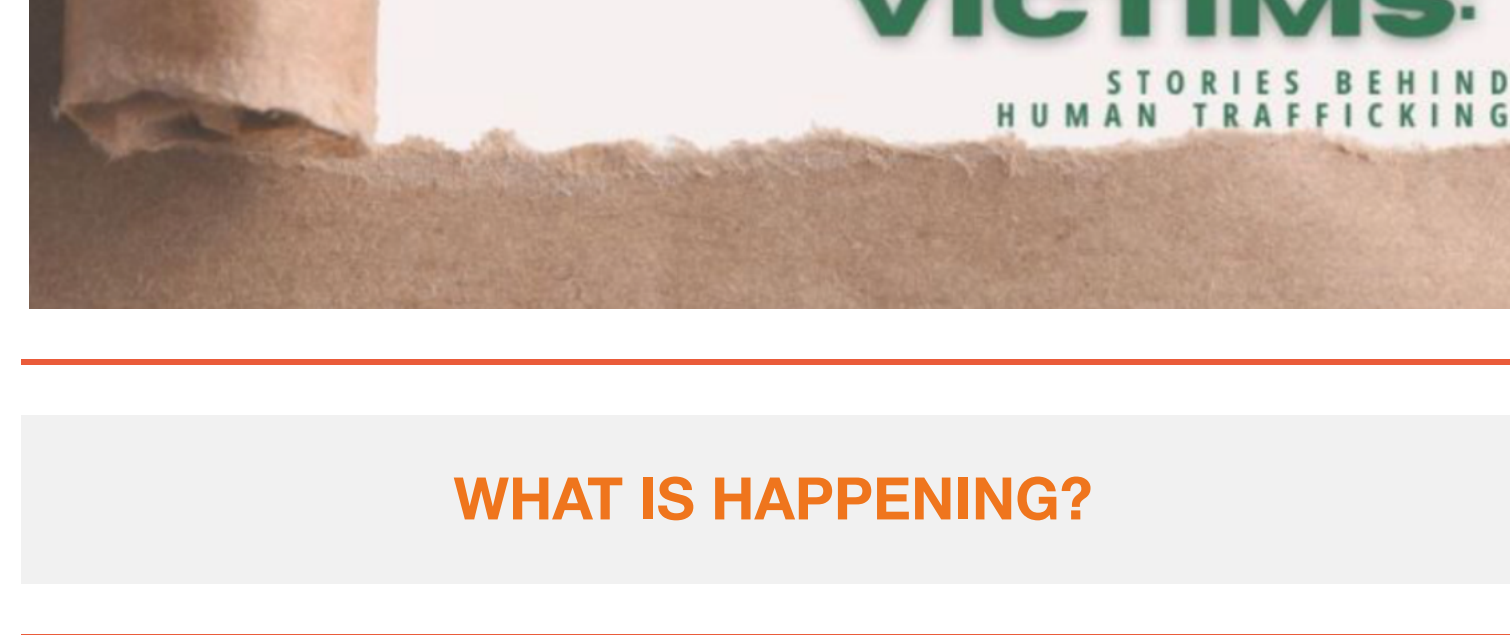


Mensenhandel in Nederland

Het beeld van 2023 [comensha](#)

#### Highlights from LSI Members'

- CoMensha** organised jointly with the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence against Children, a Symposium on developments and challenges in addressing human trafficking in the Netherlands on 21 October. Furthermore, CoMensha's annual [data report](#) on human trafficking was presented during the Symposium. Other LSI members also took action across Europe around EU Anti-Trafficking Day, for example our Belgium member PAG-Asa organised a [week against human trafficking](#) in Brussels. Furthermore, our German member KOK [highlighted](#) data trends on human trafficking in Germany.
- La Strada Ukraine** continues their [photo exhibition](#) and awareness campaign on human trafficking. The exhibition is shown at different railway stations across Ukraine. On 18 October it was in Dnipor and will next be in Kharkiv.
- LEFO-IBF** was visited by the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, Diane Schmitt, on 14 October. During this visit, the Austrian victim protection system and the role of LEFO-IBF were discussed, next to challenges around the lack of a residency permit on personal grounds, the Dublin Regulation, and deportation of potential victims. Furthermore, the support of women with children or disabilities, and the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive in Austria were discussed. LEFO was also involved in the Austrian THB Task Force Conference on 17 October focussing on THB in the private sphere.
- HopeNow** launched a new articles series called "Unseen Victims: Stories Behind Human Trafficking". Their first article tells the story of Thomas, whose story of human trafficking began in Nigeria, where he was vulnerable due to poverty and gang violence. Read the full story [here](#).



### WHAT IS HAPPENING?

#### ECHR Judgement

The European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) [found that the state of Spain has violated Article 4](#) (prohibition of slavery and forced labour) of the European Convention on Human Rights. This judgment relates to a woman trafficked from Nigeria to Spain as a minor for sexual exploitation. After escaping her traffickers, she filed a criminal complaint in 2011 with the support of LSI's member [Fundación de Solidaridad Amaranta](#) (at that time named [Sicar Cat](#)). She alleged the Spanish authorities that the investigation of her case between 2003 and 2007 had been inadequate, but in 2017 her case was dismissed.

The case was then brought to the ECHR with the support of a UK legal team led by barrister Parosha Chandran. The ECHR concluded that there were shortcomings, showing a disregard and a lack of effort to investigate the serious human trafficking allegations. Read more on our [website](#) and see the [press release](#) of Fundación Amaranta.

#### GRETA Elections – Civil Society Support for Candidates

On 29 November, eight members of [GRETA](#), the monitoring body of the CoE Trafficking Convention will be elected. 18 countries have nominated [22 candidates](#). LSI and its members have observed the nomination process and [jointly support](#) 9 candidates, all of which have been active for a long time in the anti-trafficking field and worked closely with civil society, either at the national or international level. LSI will monitor the upcoming elections and wishes all candidates success.

#### French Newspaper Shares Stories of People Exploited in Diplomatic Households

From the 9th to the 12th of October, the French newspaper "Libération" published 6 [articles](#) on human trafficking for the purpose of domestic exploitation perpetrated by diplomats, as well as a 1-hour live-stream on Twitch. In the articles, the women, who have all been and are still assisted by LSI member CCEM, testified about the degrading treatments they suffered in the luxurious apartments of their employers. While almost all of them filed complaints to the French authorities, the CCEM denounces how the accused diplomats and their families benefit from their immunity, despite human trafficking being recognized as a grave violation of fundamental rights. See more on our [website](#).

#### Resolution on the Human Rights of Sex Workers Delayed by Six Months

On 3 October the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) debated a [resolution](#) on protecting the human rights of sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation. While no specific policy model was endorsed, the resolution would have strongly supported sex workers' rights. La Strada International, ESWIA, Medecins du Monde and others welcomed the proposed resolution and prior to the debate published a [letter of support](#).

The UN Special Rapporteur on VAW and others known for their 'end-prostitution' approach, however, criticised and opposed the resolution. While several harmful amendments were introduced, these were mostly voted down. Unfortunately, PACE ultimately voted to send the resolution back to the Committee for further review, delaying the process with six months. ESWA published a [comment](#) on the debate and will continue to monitor the process closely.

#### Upcoming and Ongoing Negotiations on EU Legislative Proposals

Several EU legislative proposals are expected still to be adopted this year, during the Hungarian presidency. See here the [state of play](#) of ongoing legislative files in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, including the [Directive on Combating Child Sexual Abuse Online](#), that would require internet companies to detect and report child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on their platforms. The objective is to reach a general approach by the end of the Hungarian Presidency.

Negotiations are still to continue for the EU [Long-Term Residents Directive](#), while negotiations on the recast of the revision of the [Victim Rights Directive](#), still have to start, the same goes for, the Recast of the [Return Directive](#) and the [EU Talent Pool](#), for which the EU Parliament has not yet adopted its negotiating mandate. The EU Council also hopes to reach its general approach this year on the Directive on minimum rules to prevent migrant smuggling.

#### New EU Directive on Working Conditions in Platform Work

The European Council has adopted a new [Directive](#) aimed at improving the working conditions of more than 28 million people employed by digital labour platforms across the EU. The new rules introduce greater transparency in how algorithms manage workers and ensure that workers can contest automated decisions. Additionally, the directive will help clarify the employment status of platform workers, enabling them to benefit from labour rights they may be entitled to.

The directive is expected to be soon signed by both the Council and European Parliament and to enter into force. EU Member states will have two years to implement the changes. For more details, visit our [website](#).

#### Doros Polykarpou Receives Award Honouring Years of Relentless Work in the Trafficking Field

Each year, *Front Line Defenders* awards the [Human Rights Defenders at Risk Award](#) to honour individuals making outstanding contributions to human rights. Among this year's awardees is Doros Polykarpou, a founding member of KISA (Cyprus), a PICUM member organisation which LSI cooperates with for many years. Polykarpou has spent 27 years defending the rights of migrants and fighting discrimination. Despite facing harassment, legal challenges, and even a [bomb attack](#), Doros Polykarpou and his team continue their work. We congratulate Doros on this well-deserved recognition!

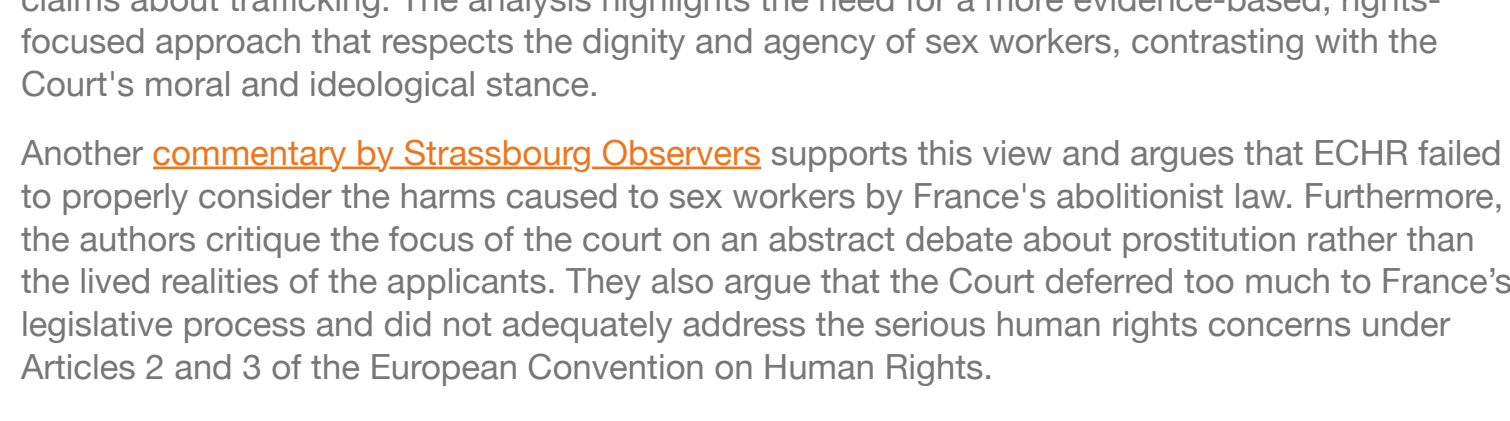
#### Polish Migration Policy for 2025 Foresees Integration Centers for Immigrants

Poland is [planning on setting up 49 new "integration centers for foreigners"](#) across the country, as part of their migration policy for 2025-2030. These EU-funded centers will provide comprehensive support services for newly arrived migrants, including Polish language courses, adaptation programmes, legal assistance, psychological care, and advisory services. The centers are aimed to support migrants until they apply for long-term EU residence permits.

#### B-Ready Index Promotes Race to the Bottom in Labour Rights, Says ITUC

[ITUC has criticised](#) the B-Ready Index, an index that supposedly measures the business and investment climates in 180 economies worldwide annually. ITUC argues that it promotes a race to the bottom in labour rights and weakens social protections and encourages harmful competition among countries to lower labour standards, disregarding the importance of collective bargaining and fair policies. ITUC also highlighted issues with the Index's methodology, which ranks countries based on formal laws rather than real working conditions, risking misleading reports and undermining workers' rights.

### WHAT IS NEW?



#### Assessments on ECHR Judgement Sex Workers versus France

On 25 July the ECHR [ruled](#) against the 261 sex workers who challenged the French state to oppose a law that puts their safety and health at risk in the case sex workers vs. France.

A [commentary published by the Oxford Human Rights Hub](#) critiques the ruling and states that it effects France's criminalisation of purchasing sex. It argues that the Court ignored the harmful effects of the law on sex workers' safety and autonomy, while uncritically accepting France's claims about trafficking. The analysis highlights the need for a more evidence-based, rights-focused approach that respects the dignity and agency of sex workers, contrasting with the Court's moral and ideological stance.

Another [commentary by Strassburg Observers](#) supports this view and argues that ECHR failed to properly consider the harms caused to sex workers by France's abolitionist law. Furthermore, the authors critique the focus of the court on an abstract debate about prostitution rather than the lived realities of the applicants. They also argue that the Court deferred too much to France's legislative process and did not adequately address the serious human rights concerns under Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

#### UNTOC Reviewed by GI-TOC

The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), adopted in 2000, was a key step in global efforts against crimes like human trafficking and firearms smuggling. However, the [latest report](#) by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) identifies challenges, including inconsistent national laws, limited data, and delays in the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), which weaken its impact. GI-TOC recommends enhanced data collection, transparency, and an independent center to monitor crime trends, alongside more resources and political commitment to accelerate the IRM.

#### New Publication to Help Civil Society Advocate for Correct Implementation of CSDDD

The EU [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#), effective from 25 July 2024, represents a major step forward in corporate accountability, requiring large companies in the EU to address human rights abuses and environmental harm in their value chains. While the Directive is a landmark achievement, gaps remain, such as limited scope and a continued burden on claimants seeking justice. LSI member Anti-Slavery International (ASI) published an [analysis](#) to help civil society organisations advocate for effective implementation and encourage businesses to follow best practices for the fair treatment of workers.

#### PICUM Briefing Delves into Consequences of Schengen Amendments for Undocumented People

In June 2024, the European institutions adopted [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1717](#), amending the Schengen Borders Code (SBC). These changes are expected to negatively affect undocumented individuals, as civil society groups have warned. The amendments could limit freedom of movement within the EU, increase racial profiling, and violate non-discrimination principles. In a new [briefing](#) PICUM reflects on the provisions of the SBC that will impact undocumented people both in the EU and at its borders.

#### UN Pact on the Future Promises Several Improvements in Human Rights Topics

The UN has published a "[Pact on the Future](#)", in which world leaders pledge to improve in several political areas. It highlights the need to combat organised crime, including human trafficking, and underscores the importance of gender equality and safeguarding human rights. The document also calls for fair labour practices, protection against exploitation, and support for migrants and displaced persons, urging global collaboration to ensure their rights and safety are upheld.

#### 37 New Goods on ILAB Forced Labour Item List

The Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) has updated its [list of goods](#) produced by child labour or forced labour, which now includes 204 goods from 82 countries as of September 2024. The 2024 update of the list added 37 items, including chocolate, jujubes, and polysilicon. China, Asian countries contributed to 33 of these additions, with products like aluminum and polysilicon from China, nickel from Indonesia, and coconut from the Philippines. Congo from the Netherlands was also included due to links to child labour. These updates highlight ongoing concerns about exploitative labour in global supply chains.

#### UN Report on Linkages between Child Trafficking and Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflict

A new UN [report](#) reveals that armed conflicts greatly increase the risk of child trafficking, which often overlaps with violations like recruitment, abduction, and sexual violence. Focusing on areas including Syria, South Sudan, and Ukraine, the report outlines how trafficking is used to control communities and sustain conflict. It calls for greater accountability and protection measures, such as early victim identification, poverty reduction, and universal child registration, to prevent trafficking and ensure long-term support for victims.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- 5 November** - Roundtable "Countering Human Trafficking and Exploitation Related to the War in Ukraine: Lessons Learned from the Regional Crisis Response" – organised by IOM, Warsaw Poland. See [agenda](#).
- 5 & 6 November** - OECD Sustainable Investment Days, Paris, France – also broadcasted live and available for replay. The event will highlight different actors to discuss the evolving landscapes of global investment policies and promotion strategies. Learn more and register [here](#).
- 6 November** - Online Webinar on data protection in immigration and asylum proceedings. Find out more and register [here](#).
- 11 & 12 November** - KOK's 25th anniversary symposium. The event can be followed online. Register [here](#).
- 12-14 November** - PiNet Global Forum, Bangkok Thailand. Three days of engaging workshops, opportunities, and discussions with our partners on how the law can support civil society. Registration [here](#).
- 13-14 November** - Third global Tech against Trafficking Summit. Registration is based on invitation. If you are interested in joining, [reach out](#).
- 15 November** - CCEM anniversary event in Paris, France. More information and registration [here](#).
- 15 November** - [First International Day against Organised Crime](#).
- 21 November** - 10.30-12.00 (CET), [Policy panel](#) on global supply chain reallocation. The event examines how geopolitical tensions disrupt global supply chains and explores strategies for businesses to align with public interests, enhance resilience, and remain competitive.
- 25-27 November** - UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, and online. The forum will examine evolving strategies for UNGP implementation, focusing on integrating access to remedies amid global challenges. Registration and information can be accessed [here](#).
- 28-29 November** - European Migration Forum. Discussing the role of civil society in the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. See [here](#) for more info.
- 29 November** - GRETA elections to fill the 8 vacant seats at the 35th meeting of the Committee of the Parties of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- 20-31 January 2025** - Impact: Center against Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence in Conflict & Childbearing: Honors Program of Tilburg University (the Netherlands) organize a Winter School on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking. For more info see [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.

Donate Now

