

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2025

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 [contact us](#).

LSI NEWS

La Strada International Joins Three New EU Funded Projects; Promoting Rights of TCNs

La Strada International will be cooperating in three new international research and awareness raising projects, all funded by the European Commission. All 3 projects: Mobile - Facilitating Intra EU Labour Mobility of Third Country; HOST - Tackling Human Trafficking in the Hospitality sector and Trafficked en route – early identification and support to victims of human trafficking for labour exploitation along migration routes; Address the vulnerability of Third Country National (TCN) workers in the EU. The Mobile project will likely start in May, the other two projects are expected to kick off in July 2025.

Research and Campaign on (Trafficking for the exploitation of) Forced Marriage

Currently, LSI is conducting research with our members on the issue of forced marriage in relation to human trafficking. Open Gate, our member in North Macedonia, is separately also conducting research on forced marriage and child marriage. Jointly with them we will launch a campaign to highlight our research findings, including remaining gaps, challenges, and recommendations. See our [Statement](#) on (Trafficking for the exploitation of) Forced Marriage that we launched on Women's Rights Day!

La Strada International Representation in March

In March, La Strada International joined several international events including the [online webinar](#) by the [CoE THB Associated Lawyers and NGO Network](#) (13 March), a meeting by ELA on Posted Workers (20 March), the UN/COD Regional Conference "Addressing Trafficking in Persons for Sexual and Labour Exploitation in South-Eastern Europe: Challenges, Promising Practices, and the Role of Modern Technology" (26 and 27 March) and the [25th OSCE Alliance Conference on Child Trafficking](#) (31 March and 1 April).

Statements on Long-Term Residence for Ukrainians; the Situation in Serbia & Omnibus Proposal

To mark the 3 years since the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians, La Strada International signed a [joint statement](#) calling upon the EU to offer a more durable status and pathway to long-term residence for Ukrainian refugees. LSI also joined over 130 civil society organisations in co-signing a [statement](#) expressing solidarity with the people of Serbia following alarming attacks on civil society, including [public calls](#) on five prominent NGOs in Serbia. Further we co-signed with 361 CSOs a [statement](#) opposing the European Commission's Omnibus proposal, which seeks to scale back key sustainability laws and reduce obligations for businesses. The statement strongly condemns the Commission's move as a serious setback for human rights and environmental protections in Europe and globally. See more on the Omnibus proposal and its impact at the websites of [SOMO](#) and the [European Coalition for Corporate Justice - ECCJ](#).

Launch of PDH Post at Dundee University

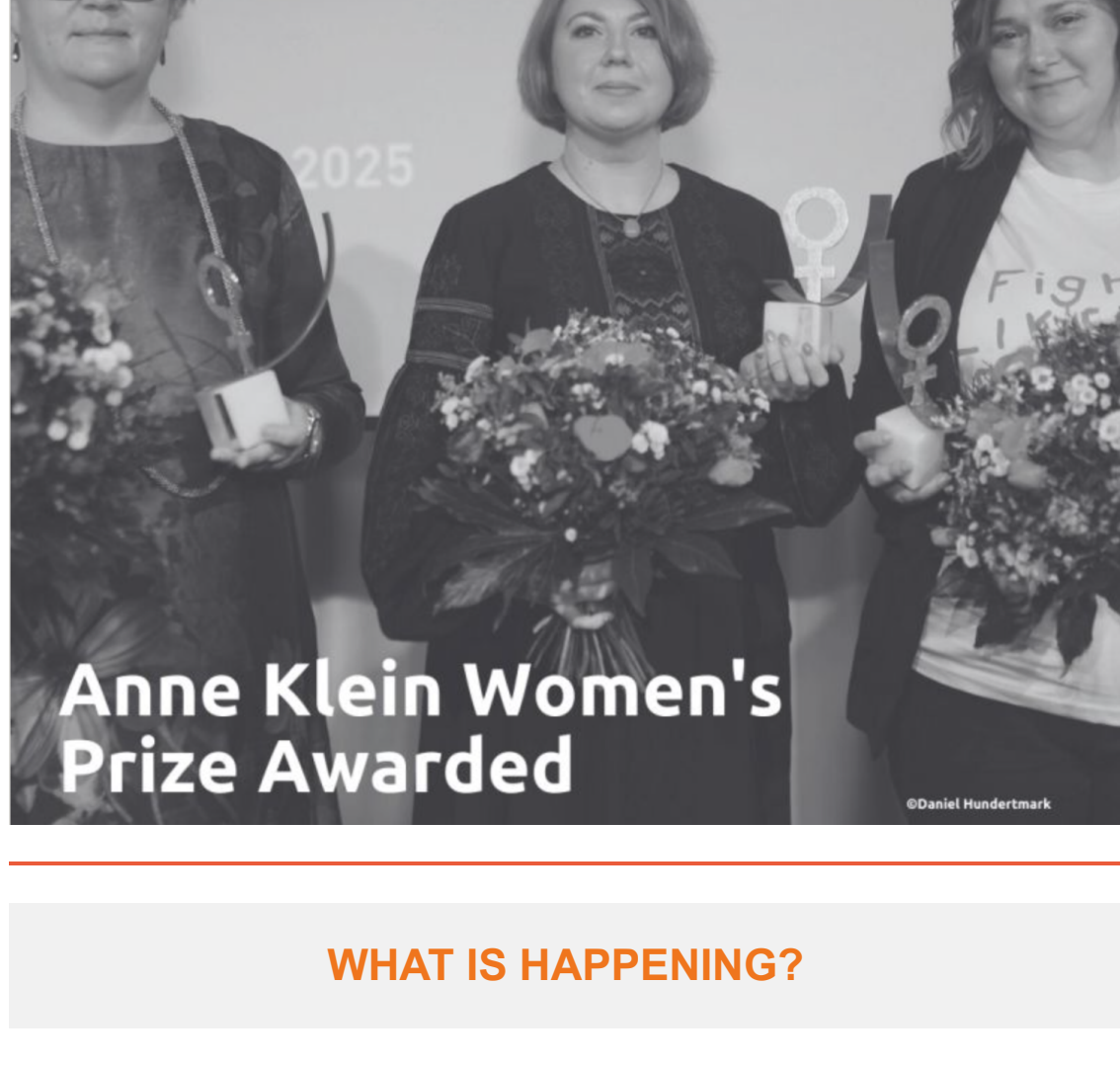
The [University of Dundee](#) and the [Edinburgh Napier University](#), are offering a fully-funded PhD [scholarship](#), supported by the [Scottish Graduate School of Social Science](#) (SGSSS) / ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership. La Strada International will have an advisory role. Apply until 10 April 2025 to the project "Following the Money: Anti-Trafficking Funding, Networks, and Commodity Chains". See also the earlier published [CAATW ATR Following the Money Issue](#).

LSI MEMBERS NEWS



Highlights from LSI Members in March

- On the Road has [inaugurated](#) the Minerva Anti-Violence Centre, a new support hub for women who faced violence.
- FairWork organised an [event](#) on 25 March for women's rights organisations on recognising signs of exploitation related to female domestic workers.
- La Strada Ukraine, opened a powerful photo exhibition titled "Human Trafficking: The Danger is Near" at Kyiv Boris Grinchenko University. The exhibition links to an informative campaign aimed at raising awareness among students about the risks and warning signs of human trafficking.
- Anti-Slavery International is calling for a national UK ban on forced labour, following the recent reports of the EU, Canada, and the USA. A recent poll shows that 82% of the British public supports such a measure. You can [sign the petition](#) to support this cause.
- FIJ, in collaboration with the Swiss Refugee Council, is offering an online course on 30 April 2025 to raise awareness about the situation of trafficking victims in the asylum sector. Register [here](#).
- KOK published a set of [recommendations](#) for Germany's coalition negotiations, addressing key priorities in the fight against trafficking and for the protection of victims.
- PAG-ASA marks its 30th anniversary this year with the launch of a special [report](#). The publication showcases the organisation's history, impact figures, and personal testimonies of resilience from people with lived experience of human trafficking and exploitation.
- The Anne Klein Women's Prize was [awarded](#) to long-standing La Strada colleague and women rights activist Irina Alkhovka, as well as to Darya Afanas'yeva, and Julia Mickiewicz.



WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Much Attention for Growing Backlash and Funding Cuts at (side events of) CSW69 New York

This month the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) took place in New York from 10 to 21 March 2025. Women's rights advocates at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women [have raised urgent concerns](#) about a growing backlash against feminism and women rights and the impact of major funding cuts on programs supporting gender equality. Activists warn that without sustained support, earlier progress in combating human trafficking and advancing reproductive rights, and promoting women's leadership could be severely undermined. Several LSI members were present in New York.

A new [survey](#) carried out by the EU System for an Enabling Environment (EU SEE) exposes the impact of US funding cuts on civil society organisations (CSOs) in over 50 countries. Findings reveal that this becomes an opportunity to further limit civic space, with 67% of surveyed CSOs having been directly affected, and 40% of them losing 25-50% of their budgets, forcing them to reduce programs, cut staff or close operations. The study also provides recommendations to the international community. UNHCR and the FRA have also launched surveys on the impact of funding cuts for NGOs.

European Commission Launches Road Map on Women's Rights

On 7 March the European Commission presented its [Roadmap for Women's Rights](#) and the [2025 Report on Gender Equality](#). The Roadmap sets out key principles and long-term policy objectives that will guide future EU strategies and actions beyond 2025, including freedom from gender-based violence, equal employment opportunities and adequate working conditions. LSI contributed to the consultations and while it shows a true commitment to advancing gender equality, we regret that no reference was made to intersectionality and the protection of specific vulnerable and marginalized groups, as we asked for. Read the full article on our [website](#).

Additionally, on 13 March, the UN launched its [Gender Equality Acceleration Plan](#), which calls for urgent and transformative action for gender equality worldwide.

CoE Webinar on ECHR judgements for Network of Specialised THB Lawyers and NGOs

During a closed webinar, on 13 March 2025, members of the Council of Europe Network of specialised lawyers and NGOs providing legal assistance to victims of trafficking, were briefed on recent relevant judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Three key cases were presented: [B.B. v. Slovakia](#), [I.C. v. the Republic of Moldova](#), and [F.M. and Others v. Russia](#).

Since its establishment in 2016, the network has served as a platform for exchanging good practices, facilitating cross-border co-operation among lawyers, and supporting strategic litigation initiatives. LSI and several of its members are members of this Network.

Human Rights Due Diligence Competence Centre to be Opened

On 20 March 2025, global trade unions and representatives of the German Competence Centre, set to open later this year.

10th Anniversary of the UK Modern Slavery Act

Despite a decade of the Modern Slavery Act, exploitation [remains a persistent issue](#) in the UK construction industry, with vulnerable workers slipping through the cracks of complex supply chains. Experts warn that merely complying with legal requirements is insufficient and urge companies to take proactive measures, from worker identity checks to clear escalation routes, to adequately address forced labour on job sites.

This week, the UK government has released an [updated statutory guidance on modern slavery in supply chains](#), outlining stronger expectations for businesses to prevent, identify, and respond to exploitation. See also [what is changing under the new guidance](#).

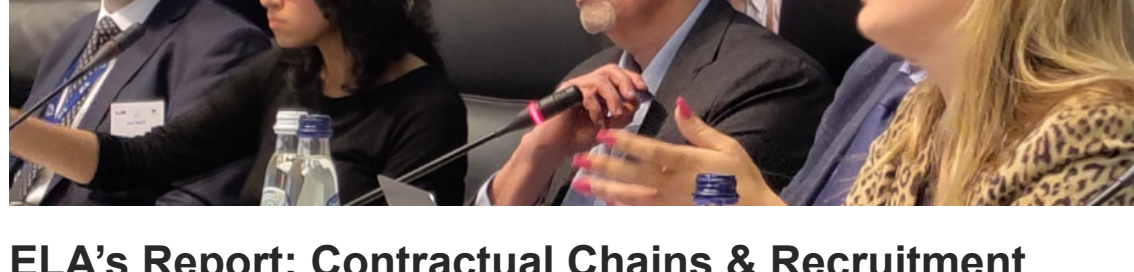
ILO Paper on Key Research Findings on THB over 12 Years

On 21 March, ILO published a [paper](#) "Factors, counter-trafficking programmes, and geographical variations in human trafficking literature (2010–2022)". This paper provides an overview of key findings from human trafficking studies published between 2010 and 2022. It presents recent research trends and interventions on human trafficking.

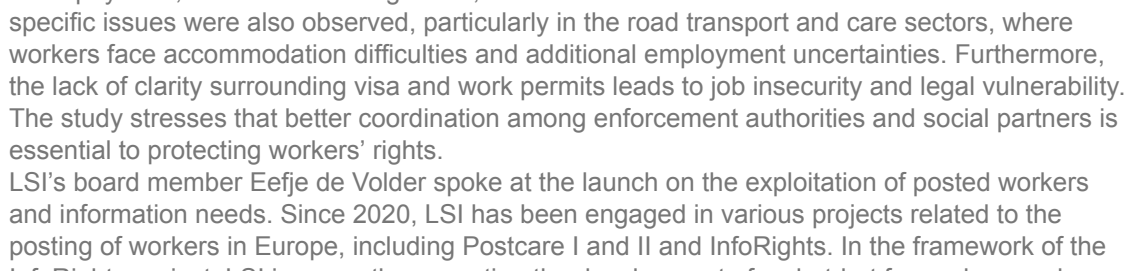
Revision EU Return Directive, Anti-Smuggling plans and Facilitation Directive

On 11 March, the European Commission proposed a new Regulation to establish a [Common European System for Returns](#). LSI, alongside organisations such as [PICUM](#) and [Eurodes Droits](#) raised concerns about the human rights implications. The proposal adds to the punitive measures embedded in the EU [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) as well as the [EU Facilitation Directive](#) [proposed](#), for which the Council still insists on criminalising the act of intentionally assisting third-country nationals in entering, transiting, or residing in the EU for financial or material gain. Over 100 organisations signed an [open letter](#) urging the EU to amend the Facilitation Directive to better protect migrants.

As PICUM's [analysis](#) points out, by assuming, without substantial evidence, that smuggling is one of the primary causes of irregular migration, the EU fails to recognise the impact of the lack of regular pathways. This may increase migrants' vulnerabilities and, in turn, the risks of human trafficking. Read the [full article](#) on our website.



WHAT IS NEW?



ELA's Report: Contractual Chains & Recruitment Patterns of Posted TCNs

On 20 March, the [European Labour Authority](#) (ELA) released a new [study](#) analysing the experiences of third-country nationals (TCNs) posted in the EU, focusing on Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia. The research maps contracting chains, recruitment patterns, and enforcement challenges. Findings reveal common challenges across labour sectors, including issues of underpayment, excessive working hours, and limited access to annual leave. Some sector-specific issues were also observed, particularly in the road transport and care sectors, where workers face accommodation difficulties and additional employment uncertainties. Furthermore, the lack of clarity surrounding visa and work permits leads to job insecurity and legal vulnerability. The study stresses that better coordination among enforcement authorities and social partners is essential to protecting workers' rights.

LSI's board member Fatje de Volder spoke at the launch on the exploitation of posted workers and information needs. Since 2020, LSI has been engaged in various projects related to the posting of workers in Europe, including Postcare II and II and InfoRights. In the framework of the InfoRights project, LSI is currently supporting the development of a chat-bot for workers and employers.

Child trafficking in Romania

Justice and Care's [page publication](#), "Hidden Chains and Missing Links – Child Trafficking in Romania: A Comprehensive Study", provides a detailed investigation of the hidden scale of child trafficking in Romania, exposing alarming gaps in prevention, awareness, and resources. The report highlights how vulnerable children can face significant risks due to poverty, family instability, unchecked social media access, and the normalisation of sexual violence. The research shows the need for urgent, community-driven solutions and targeted interventions to protect Romania's children from trafficking.

New Global Synthetic Dataset on Human Trafficking

IOIM has released the [Global Synthetic Dataset](#), "the largest publicly available individual-level data on human trafficking". This dataset, developed in partnership with Microsoft Research, is available on the [Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative \(CTDC\)](#) platform. It includes 22 years of data on over 22,000 trafficked persons from 197 countries, aimed at supporting evidence-based policies in the fight against human trafficking.

New UN Framework to Improve THB Data Sharing and Collection

The UN Statistical Commission has [approved a new framework](#) to improve how trafficking data is collected and shared worldwide. This means clearer insights, stronger policies and better prevention.

Using AI technologies to Fight Human Trafficking

The [Euflex Project](#) recently explored how advances in AI technologies are transforming the fight against human trafficking, enabling businesses, non-profits, and law enforcement to flag risks more effectively. AI-driven tools are being used across Europe and the Americas to accelerate case investigations, reducing the time needed to build human trafficking cases from years to months, but they also pose ethical concerns and risks of misuse.

Europol publishes its new OSCTA report

On 18 March Europol published its [EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment \(EU OSCTA\) 2025](#) report, which outlines the most pressing security threats facing the EU and shape law enforcement priorities for years to come. The chapter on human trafficking mainly elaborates on the online dimension and technological developments related to crime, including the use of the internet and social media to recruit individuals, exchange criminal earnings (including via the use of cryptocurrencies), and document and identity fraud. A particular concern raised in the report is the increasing involvement of young perpetrators in violent crimes, including human trafficking. Cyber-attacks is not mentioned among the priorities, instead the OSCTA report profiles cyber-attacks, online fraud schemes, (online) child sexual exploitation, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, and waste crime.

New publication: Manifesto DignityFIRM

DignityFIRM has released its latest [manifesto](#) calling on the EU to develop a holistic approach to situations of irregularity and to step up its efforts to combat the exploitation of irregular migrant workers.

Council of Europe Updates: Financial Measures and Country Reports

The Council of Europe published a [study](#) on the implementation of Article 23(3) of CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, focusing on financial measures to combat human trafficking. The report takes stock of national efforts, highlights the ongoing challenges in confiscating criminal assets, and issues recommendations to strengthen international cooperation in disrupting financial flows linked to trafficking.

The CoE's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) also released country reports on [Austria](#) and [Slovakia](#), recognising progress while identifying persistent gaps.

During its [53rd plenary meeting](#), Professor Conny Rijken, the Dutch National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence against Children, was elected as [President of GRETA](#). At the same meeting, GRETA adopted final reports on Albania, Croatia, and the Republic of Moldova under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention, and a final report on Ukraine under the third evaluation round.

How the Alliance 8.7's Supply Chain Action Group is Driving Change

A report from the Alliance 8.7 Supply Chain Action Group [found](#) that child labour and forced labour are most prevalent in domestic supply chains, while [global](#) child and child labour also account for a significant share of these exploitative practices. Depending on the region, between 9 to 26 percent of child labour and 4 to 17% of trafficking for forced labour are linked to global enterprises. Watch the [video](#) to learn more about ongoing efforts to eliminate child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking in supply chains, and how collective action can drive real impact.

FRA Survey on Civic Space

The FRA has carried out an online survey to identify the daily challenges faced by CSOs related to civic space in 2024. This survey is open to CSOs working in an EU Member State, at EU level, as well as in Serbia, Albania, and North Macedonia. The results will be published and disseminated to promote actions improving the conditions for CSOs in the EU and beyond. The [link](#) will remain active until 7 April. For further questions, contact [civicspace@fra.europa.eu](#).

UN Forum on Business and Human Rights Calls for Session Proposals

The UN Forum on Business and Human Rights issued a [call for session proposals](#) under the theme "Accelerating action on business and human rights amidst crises and transformations". Interested parties are invited to [submit](#) their proposals by 11 April 2025.

Call for Input: A Child-Centered Response to Sexual Exploitation of Children in Street Situations

The UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children has launched a [call for input](#) for her next report on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. Submissions are accepted until 25 April 2025.

UPCOMING EVENTS

You can now register for the [2025 Europe Regional Forum - Freedom From Slavery](#). The Forum will convene in Brussels from 5 to 7 May, and it will be an opportunity to bring together policymakers, CSOs, and rights holders to discuss key issues on forced labour and child labour in Europe. More information on the Europe Forum and the registration details for the Forum can be found here: [2025 Europe Regional Forum - Freedom From Slavery Forum](#).

- 1 April - 09.00 AM CET – side event by Missing Children Europe and ASTRA at OSCE conference.
- 1 April - 10.00-11.30 CEST - Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) webinar on Access to remedy: Ensuring Accessibility of Grievance Mechanisms.
- 8 April - Launch of the Report by the Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking UN Headquarters, New York.

- 8 - 10 April - Collaborating to Counter Corporate Harm OECD Watch Global Gathering - Istanbul, Turkey – to register see: [OECD Watch Global Gathering 2025](#).
- 9 - 10 April - Conference by Polish EU Presidency "Together Against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation: Current Responses and a Way Forward", Warsaw Poland.

- 17 April - La Strada International lunch webinar in cooperation with Napier University on where is the funding for AI Work, elaborating on the impact of the US funding freezes and other funding cuts, earlier ATR research and the PhD post that LSI has launched with Napier and Dundee University for further research on where is the funding for AI work.

- 24 April - ITUC Global [Webinar](#): For Democracy that Delivers for Platform Workers.

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

