

NEWSLETTER JUNE 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 <u>e-mail us</u>.

LSI NEWS

New Member: Helen Bamber Foundation

We are happy to announce that the <u>Helen Bamber Foundation</u> has become an associate member of La Strada International. The platform now comprises 33 NGO members in 24 European countries.

LSI Advocacy and Representation Highlights

This month, LSI contributed to several anti-trafficking events across Europe. On 5 June, LSI was at the launch of the <u>EU Anti-Trafficking Hub</u>, and on 11 June, LSI travelled to Malta for the Council of Europe conference on ICT and human trafficking, themed '*Empowering Change'*. We also joined a closed online consultation on surrogacy, held on 17 June by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (SR VAWG), following our submission in response to her upcoming thematic report. Later in the month, we presented <u>LSI's Non-Punishment Case</u> <u>Assessment Report</u> at the <u>UNODC</u> Regional Conference held on 18-19 June. Finally, on 20 June, LSI contributed to a <u>Workshop</u> on Human Rights and Displacement organised by Napier University in Edinburgh.

Kick Off: Mobile Project

24 June marked the online kick off meeting of the project <u>Mobile - Facilitating Intra EU Labour</u> <u>Mobility of Third Country Nationals</u>. This 24-month project, funded through the EU Support for Social Dialogue programme, uses social dialogue to improve conditions for intra-EU mobility.

Launch: It's a Penalty Campaign

LSI is partnering in the It's a Penalty Campaign, launched on 25 June, uniting high-profile female football players, leading travel and hospitality brands, and NGOs to raise awareness and drive action against human trafficking. See the <u>campaign video</u>.



LSI MEMBERS NEWS

Highlights from LSI Members

- FLEX, on the occasion of the International Domestic Workers Day, released a commentary highlighting the risks of exploitation and lack of protection in domestic work, particularly for migrant workers. Drawing from their ongoing work and experience, FLEX calls for stronger safeguards and improved conditions for domestic workers. Read also the opinion of Marissa Begoni, former domestic worker and founder of Voice of Domestic Workers. Later this month, FLEX released a new report on how to build better visa structures and migrations systems.
- FairWork celebrated its <u>25th anniversary</u> and organised a festival for the future on 5 June, with representatives from government, politics, partner organisations, volunteers, and others involved in combating labour exploitation among migrant workers in the Netherlands.
- Several LSI Members, including LS Moldova, Open Gate, Hope Now, KOK, & LEFO IBF participated in the <u>Voices of Resilience - UNODC Global Forum for Human Trafficking</u> <u>Survivors</u>, held in Vienna on 24–25 June, contributing to discussions on survivor-led approaches in anti-trafficking policies. See the recording of the opening <u>here</u>.
- Accem, on the occasion of World Refugee Day (20 June) organised an event in Madrid and released a <u>video</u> sharing victim stories, next to launching the Spanish chapter of the AIDA 2025 Report. Accem is further organising sessions "<u>Focusing on International</u> <u>Protection</u>" towards building a more welcoming society committed to human rights, in the Spanish cities of Cáceres, Gijón, Vitoria-Gasteiz, and Zaragoza.
- Anti-Slavery International, as part of the Corporate Justice Coalition, is calling on the UK Government to introduce a <u>Business</u>, <u>Human Rights and Environment Act</u> to protect families, workers, and our planet from human rights abuses and environmental destruction caused by UK companies, banks, and the public sector. A similar <u>responsible Business</u> <u>Initiative in Switzerland</u> submitted 287,164 signatures for a new proposal of corporate accountability law to the Federal Chancellary. Meanwhile the French Senate adopted a bill to regulate the fast fashion industry. <u>Read more here</u>.
- CCEM is supporting victims of human trafficking in a <u>trial</u> concerning the 2023 French Champagne industry grape harvest. Around 50 seasonal migrant workers, primarily from Mali, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal, were reportedly exploited under degrading conditions by a wine service company.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?



EU Anti-Trafficking Hub Launched

On 5 June, LSI took part in the launch of the EU Anti-Trafficking Hub at the EU Network of

National Coordinators and Rapporteurs on trafficking in human beings, held in Brussels. The EU Anti-Trafficking Hub is a new platform that brings together expertise to strengthen efforts in combating and preventing trafficking in human beings. La Strada International looks forward to actively contributing to the (research) work of the new Hub. Read more on our <u>website</u>.

EU Council's Conclusions on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

On 12 June, the EU Council adopted new <u>conclusions on combating trafficking in human beings</u> providing recommendations to EU Member States, the Commission, and EU agencies. The conclusions give some indications for the possible focusses of the upcoming EU Anti-trafficking Strategy, expected to be adopted early next year for the period 2026 – 2029. The conclusions highlight the need for adequate cross-border cooperation, particularly in relation to victim identification and coordinated responses. Moreover, the conclusions stress the urgent need to guarantee access to international protection, next to (human rights-based) services, such as healthcare, housing, and education. Read the full article on our <u>website</u>.

EU Parliament Position on EU Law to Fight Child Sexual Abuse

The European Parliament <u>adopted its position</u> on draft legislation to improve EU's capacity to fight child sexual abuse, calling for equal treatment of online and offline abuse, criminalising grooming and sexual extortion, and introducing a new definition of consent for minors above the age of consent. The proposal is designed to adapt legislation to new technologies, for example, artificial but realistic-looking deepfake child sexual abuse material. The recast directive on sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, child sexual abuse material, and solicitation of children should harmonise EU countries' definitions of and punishments for these crimes.

A separate proposal for <u>a regulation on child sexual abuse material online</u> is also being discussed by EU lawmakers. The EU Parliament <u>adopted its position</u> on this draft regulation in 2023 and is still waiting the Council's common position.

Temporary Protection for Ukrainians: What Comes Next?

As the war in Ukraine continues, LSI <u>welcomes</u> the recent <u>Council's support</u> for the <u>Commission's</u> <u>proposal</u> to extend the Temporary Protection of Ukrainians until 4 March 2027. Nevertheless, the extension is still to be formally adopted. With over 4 million beneficiaries, there is a need to develop a clear exit strategy from this temporary framework and EU governments should ensure that Ukrainians can access other schemes of (temporary or permanent) residence. <u>ICMPD</u> <u>published a policy paper</u> exploring possible scenarios, ranging from a more coordinated EU approach to individual Member State solutions.

As governments begin to assess options, <u>PICUM provides a case study on Czechia</u>, where a new "special long-term residence" status is being introduced. However, of the more than 300,000 people under temporary protection in Czechia, only about 20,000 are expected to be eligible, raising serious concerns about exclusion risks, particularly due to income requirements and procedural barriers. These gaps may leave many in situations of uncertainty and vulnerability.

CJEU Rules Against Criminalising Parents for Smuggling their Children

The European Court of Justice <u>ruled</u> that parents cannot be criminalised for smuggling their children, in a context where the EU has broadened the definition of smuggling.

New EU Migration Figures

The European Commission released the <u>latest migration figures</u> showing that 10% of all EU inhabitants (44.7 million) were born outside the EU, mainly from Switzerland, Australia, and Iceland. Only 15% of third-country nationals arrived seeking asylum – of which 15% are unaccompanied minors, while the majority came for family, work, or other reasons. Migrants make up 6% of the EU workforce, yet they are overrepresented in Iow-paid sectors such as domestic work, construction, and accommodation. The report also shows that although Europe hosts 20% of the world's refugees, they account for just 1.7% of the EU's population. Despite difficulties to assess exact numbers of irregular enteries, the findings reaffirm that irregular migration represent only a small share of migration to the EU.

The Commission also <u>announced</u> an additional €3 billion in funding to support migration and asylum management, with a focus on implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum and supporting refugees from Ukraine. LSI stresses that these funds must be used to expand safe and legal migration pathways, promote regularisation, and strengthen protection systems for vulnerable groups, especially children, trafficked persons, and asylum seekers.

G7 Statement on Migrant Smuggling

G7 Leaders <u>adopted</u> a <u>statement</u> on migrant smuggling, highlighting human trafficking and the need to dismantle transnational organised crime networks. LSI welcomes G7's endorsement of a "follow the money" approach, aimed at tracing and monitoring the financial gains of trafficking networks. This aligns closely with the objectives of the <u>COMCRIM project</u>, a major NWO-funded initiative in which LSI participates.



ILO Commits to Binding Global Standards for Platform Work

On 13 June, the International Labour Organization (ILO) committed to establishing <u>binding_global</u> <u>standards for platform work</u> - a significant milestone in the fight for gig workers' rights. Supported by a majority of member states and worker delegates, the initiative aims to address widespread misclassification, low and unpredictable pay, and exploitative algorithmic management. However, advocates caution that the final standards must close national loopholes to ensure real impact.

ETUC Worries about the Protection of Workers at the EU Level

94 trade unions from across Europe discussed at the interim congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) how to work to strengthen workers' rights. Trade unions warn that, under the pretext of "simplifying regulations," key safeguards for workers and the climate are being rolled back. A major point of concern is the European posting rules, while aiming to ensure that workers receive equal pay and conditions regardless of their nationality, posting is misused for exploitative employment of third-coutry national workers.

Dutch Parliament Approves Revision Article on Human Trafficking

On 10 June, the Dutch House of Representatives <u>approved</u> the bill 'Modernization and Expansion of the Criminalization of Human Trafficking'. The bill amends the Human Trafficking Article (Article 273f of the Dutch Criminal Code) providing a stronger legal basis to combat human trafficking and severe labour exploitation, which can help to better protect victims.

The bill not only clarifies and simplifies the existing complex legislative text, but also adds a new criminal offence, which criminalises the severe exploitation of the so called 'severely disadvantaged' persons. The Dutch trade union FNV and our members FairWork and CoMensha have lobbied for years, to ensure that the act of severe labour exploitation would also be criminalised, next to human trafficking, especially as they noted that many severe exploitation cases did not meet the high legal threshold of the human trafficking crime. Read more on our



WHAT IS NEW?



CoE Committee of the Parties Adopts Recommendations of 8 GRETA Monitoring Reports

The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings <u>adopted recommendations</u> concerning 8 GRETA reports earlier published. These include reports on <u>Liechtenstein</u> and <u>Ukraine</u> - third evaluation round -, and <u>Albania</u>, <u>Austria</u>, <u>Croatia</u>, <u>Cyprus</u>, the <u>Republic of Moldova</u>, and the <u>Slovak Republic</u> - fourth evaluation round. The Committee also considered the reports submitted by the authorities of <u>Azerbaijan</u>, <u>North Macedonia</u> and <u>Poland</u> on measures taken to comply with the Committee's recommendations issued as part of the third evaluation round of the Convention. Read the full opinion of <u>La Strada Moldova</u> and <u>La Strada Ukraine</u> of the GRETA's reports on their countries.

Ukraine and the Council of Europe <u>signed an agreement</u> on the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine this week. The special tribunal aims to prosecute senior Russian leaders over alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

2024 Global and Regional Estimates on Child Labour

On 11 June, ILO and UNICEF launched the <u>2024 Global and Regional Estimates on Child Labour</u> revealing that 138 million children were in child labour in 2024. While the global goal to end child labour by 2025 remains unmet, the last four years saw a reduction of over 20 million cases. Despite progress, 54 million children continue to have hazardous work. Most child labour is in agriculture (61%), followed by services (27%). You can still watch the launch webinar.

EU Interim Report on the Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 11 June, the European Commission published a <u>report on the implementation of the Pact on</u> <u>Migration and Asylum</u>, halfway through its transition period. On new safeguards and monitoring of fundamental rights, the report mentions that "Work should continue to operationalise the independent fundamental rights monitoring mechanism and free counselling." Migration policies across the EU must uphold the Union's values of human rights and solidarity, as increasing restrictions and criminalisation may heighten vulnerabilities and, consequently, the risk of exploitation and trafficking. The next implementation report is expected in October 2025.

In addition, the latest <u>Asylum Report 2025</u> published by the European Union Agency for Asylum (<u>EUAA</u>) provides an overview of Member States' responses to the 2024 and early 2025 evolving migratory shifts. The report analyses preparations undertaken by EU+ countries to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place by 2026 for the full implementation of <u>the Pact on Migration</u> and <u>Asylum</u>. For the first time, the EUAA also published national factsheets, outlining the asylum situation in each EU+ country.

EU Directive Leads to Higher Minimum Wages

The European Directive on adequate minimum wages has contributed to <u>higher minimum wages</u>, concludes Eurofound. The gap in minimum wage levels (and wage levels) across the EU has narrowed considerably over the past decades, largely due to the strong growth in central and eastern Europe. In Bulgaria and Croatia, the minimum wage has increased by 16% over the past year, and even by 23% in Romania. Nevertheless, <u>Eurostat figures</u> show that low pay is trapping young people in poverty, with 19.2% of people aged 15 and 29 at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024.

Workers Absent from Fashion Companies' Climate Plans

The <u>Business & Human Rights Resource Centre</u> has released "<u>The Missing Thread</u>", revealing that 65 top fashion brands are failing to integrate workers' rights and representation into their climate strategies. The report shows that workers remain largely invisible in the decision-making processes, which risks amplifying existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. It also offers actionable recommendations to ensure a just transition that protects workers' rights. See also video explaining <u>more</u>.



Civic Space Report 2025 - European Civic Forum

The most recent <u>Civic Space Report</u> covering the year 2024 is out – and paints a dark picture. According to the report, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a deliberate strategy to delegitimise civil society, which is facing harassment, smear campaigns, and restrictive legislation, including laws branding NGOs that receive funding from abroad as "foreign agents". Also freedom of assembly is under increasing pressure, with protest rights severely restricted, excessive police force, new restrictive legislation, and outright protest bans.

Another related and interesting report, just published is <u>The Next Wave: How Religious Extremism</u> <u>Is Regaining Power</u>, which is very relevant in light of the shrinking civic space. Also in the antitrafficking field, we see more and more religious organisations gaining power in the field, about which our members have expressed concern. According to the report, " a new alliance of religious extremists, far-right populists, and oligarchic funders is reshaping European politics. Backed by private wealth and legitimised through state funding, this movement is engineering a long-term authoritarian transformation under the guise of tradition and care".

Simplification of EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Anticipating the Commission's <u>new package</u> to <u>simplify rules and reduce bureaucracy across the</u> <u>Single Market</u>, the <u>European Data Protection Board (EDPB) and the European Data Protection</u>

<u>Supervisor (EDPS)</u> adopted a <u>letter</u> on the simplification of record-keeping obligation under the GDPR. They highlight the need for the Commission to balance data protection with the interests of organisations with fewer than 500 employees. Meanwhile, PICUM co-signed an <u>open letter</u> urging the Commission to reject any attempt to reopen the GDPR, warning that this could undermine data minimisation and purpose limitation, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups by increasing data sharing and reporting obligations.

Open Democracy – "Beyond Trafficking and Slavery"

To mark its 10th anniversary, Open Democracy is publishing various articles under the campaign "Beyond Trafficking and Slavery", to deepen public understanding of forced labour and human trafficking.

- <u>Ten years on, have we moved Beyond Trafficking and Slavery?</u> A critical look at BTS's impact since 2014.
- What helps practitioners listen to their critics? An interview with Nick Grono, Freedom Fund's CEO. No point to criticise anti-trafficking as a whole. To be heard, critics must be more precise.
- We know how to identify exploitation. Now we need to stop it. A Call to use the known tools and mechanisms to effectively prevent human trafficking.
- Labour rights won't make criminal gangs go away: 'Decent work' isn't always possible. Advocates should stop shying away from criminal justice in anti-trafficking.
- Twenty years of slow progress: Is anti-trafficking changing? Anti-Trafficking Review's editor says maybe activists still don't understand social change.

Calls for Input

- Anti-Trafficking Review: <u>Care Work, Intimate Labour, Migration, and Exploitation</u>. This special issue will explore the intersections of care work, gendered labour, and violence and existing and emerging aspects of domestic/care work and intimate labour from across the globe. Deadline for submission of articles: 1 December 2025.
- Restorative Justice Council: <u>Call for papers</u> for its 2025 Annual Conference (online) on 17-18 November, inviting contributions on how restorative justice can drive systemic change. This event will bring together a diverse range of participants to explore how restorative justice and practice can support meaningful change across systems and relationships. For more information contact: enquiries@restorativejustice.org.uk. Deadline: 27 June 2025.
- EU: Contribute to the <u>European Commission's Civil Society consultation</u> for the 2025 midterm review of the Strategy to strengthen the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and highlight remaining gaps and challenges, next to suggesting new measures to further strengthen the Charter's application between 2026 and 2030. Deadline: 30 of May.
- Alliance 8.7: Members of the Alliance are invited to <u>complete this form</u> for a mapping exercise by the Alliance's Action Group on Supply Chains to provide an overview of efforts, research, policy and advocacy support, capacity building and tools, and actions to accelerate progress towards ending child labour, forced labour, and THB in supply chains.

PODCASTS

- "How crime is accelerated by AI" is the new episode by Europol discussing how AI is turbocharging organised crime.
- Establishing the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine For the first time in history, a dedicated tribunal is being established to investigate and prosecute the crime of aggression. Listen to this podcast by the Asser Institute on establishing the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2 July A <u>charity concert</u> in Brussels to help support medical and childcare projects in Ukraine (20.00 CET).
- 5 13 July 3rd edition of A Romanian Summer School on Cyber Crime/organised crime and THB organised by the Romanian-American University, Bucharest, Romania. Registration deadline: 15 June.
- 8 10 July <u>Online (paid) course</u> by International Training Center drawing on International Labour Standards to equip participants with the knowledge and practical tools to analyze the working conditions in the agriculture and construction sectors. Register by 29 June 2025 here.
- **14 July -** One year of transposing the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive.
- 21 24 July The Good Lobby <u>Summer Academy</u> 2025, Bilbao, Spain, registration is now open.
- **30 July -** World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

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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