

## LOOKING BACK

# WHAT HAVE WE DONE IN 2025?

## La Strada International

Despite limited staffing and the absence of core funding, **we shaped EU and international policy debates** on various forms of human trafficking, forced labour and victims' rights and collected further evidence via research and exchange, advancing recognition of emerging and overlooked forms of exploitation.

**We strengthened civil society space and victim-centred approaches**, and bridged grassroots practice with EU and UN policymaking through our advocacy and formal roles in EU platforms. We ensured that migrant, displaced, and third-country nationals had their perspectives represented in EU debates on migration, labour mobility, and returns.

**Our members assisted several thousand persons\***, and we kept victims' rights visible, ensuring that those most affected by trafficking remain visible, protected and heard.

**Your continued support in 2026 is essential to sustain our vital watchdog and service-providers role in the anti-trafficking field.**

Read also: [Overview of La Strada International's work in 2025.](#)

**\*In 2024 LSI members assisted 5,400 presumed victims. The data for 2025 are not yet available.**

## Corporate accountability

We consistently defended **corporate accountability and human rights due diligence**, following developments around the due diligence directive (CSDDD) and strongly opposing rollbacks under the Omnibus proposal, while closely following also the **Forced Labour Product Ban Regulation**, by regularly participating in an NGO consultation group; joining the EU informal expert group on forced labour and supporting the drafting of **Recommendations for the Designation of National Competent Authorities** under the Regulation. All of this to help safeguard human rights standards within emerging EU enforcement frameworks.

## Women's Rights and Gender Equality

We advocated for **women's rights and gender equality**, including clear standards on consent and challenging gender stereotypes. We monitored the transposition of the Directive on Violence against Women (VAW/DV) and the Gender Equality Road Map. In close cooperation with other NGOs, we called for inclusion of meaningful references to women who face multiple and intersecting discrimination, namely related to their racial or ethnic origin, and migrant women, especially those in informal employment or without legal residence.

## Migration and Asylum

We maintained targeted engagement on **migration and asylum** files and closely followed policy developments related to migration, wars and conflicts. We called for fair **migration policies**, opposing the stricter border measures, detention and returns of vulnerable migrants without proper risk assessments. We also continuously paid attention to the situation in **Ukraine**, participating in UN and NGO task forces, issuing statements, and launching a case study report on [\*Trafficking Risks Among Displaced Ukrainians\*](#), marking three years of war to show the continuous risks of exploitation and abuse. We advocated for the prolongation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) and pathways to more permanent residence, while highlighting the need for fair migration pathways and the rising exploitation risks, ensuring that all vulnerable migrants remain visible in EU and UN policy discussions, despite declining political attention and the strong focus on returns and securitisation.

## Shrinking Space

In 2025, we actively responded to **shrinking civic space and funding instability**, including monitoring developments in the United States, organising a [webinar on US funding cuts](#), and maintaining regular exchanges with affected members and partners. We also addressed deteriorating civic space in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Belarus, and monitored restrictive legislation in Hungary, Italy, and Slovakia. We further contributed to **reports and articles on shrinking civic space** and engaged with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) to strengthen collective responses.

We defended global development aid and promoted anti-corruption and rule-of-law standards. Joint collective advocacy across sectors helps strengthen civil society coordination, solidarity and international visibility of risks, reinforcing civil society's role as a credible watchdog within international human rights mechanisms.

## Combating All Forms of Trafficking and Supporting Victims

We spoke out against **all forms of trafficking**, promoting equal access to protection across all labour sectors, such as care work and hospitality, and advancing non-punishment, trauma-informed care and victim assistance to ensure that victim-centred approaches remained central in EU and international anti-trafficking debates.

## Research

To ensure that our advocacy work is evidence-based, we worked on **nine research papers** in 2025 (four published) focusing on different forms of exploitation, such as the **exploitation of [surrogacy](#), of [forced marriage](#) and of [illegal adoption](#)** and their links with human trafficking. On forced marriage and surrogacy, we published comparative legal studies covering 38 countries, including case-law analysis, while also looking into how surrogacy ended as a form of human trafficking in the revised EU anti-trafficking law and contributing to reports of others on the issue. We stressed the need to clearly distinguish between forced marriages, surrogacy and illegal adoption and exploitative practices, emphasising that these practices only fall under anti-trafficking law when coercion, deception, abuse of power, or exploitation are present. We underlined the obligation of governments to combat abuse while fully respecting fundamental rights, notably the right to marry, form a family, and or adopt children. Our baseline evidence will shape further understanding of under-recognised forms of exploitation.

During 2025, we published a [case study paper on non-punishment](#), assessing the practical application of the non-punishment principle based on analysis of a unique collection of 28 cases from 11 countries across Europe.

We also advanced research on **NRMs, victim identification, compensation and asset recovery**, with publications scheduled for 2026. With this research work, a stronger evidence base was built to improve victim protection and access to justice in future reforms.

Next to our own research, we contributed to various other research initiatives, particularly through our involvement in the EU anti-trafficking HUB.

## International Representation & Events

We (co-)organised **nine international events**, including three webinars focusing on forced marriage, exploitation of surrogacy, and funding sustainability, and contributed to **73 international and regional events**. We further co-organised study visits and exchanges with Council of Europe delegations from North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as a visit for a Turkish delegation by ICMPD, next to meetings with the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We facilitated dialogue on victim support, legal aid, and compensation, and strengthened capacity among state authorities and civil society.

## Ongoing Projects

Currently, we are part of **nine international projects consortia** conducting research on patterns of human trafficking with the use of online financial flows data and banking records ([COMCRIM](#)), forced marriage, exploitation of third-country nationals ([Trafficked En Route](#)), the hospitality sector ([HOST](#)), access to trauma care ([Resilia](#)), and research on funding for anti-trafficking work, which included the launch of a PhD post with Dundee University. The [Mobile project](#), focused on the need for enhance social dialogue to improve conditions for intra-EU mobility, was also launched this year. These projects will continue in 2026 and are mostly funded by the EU.

## Social Media, Campaigning and Public Awareness

Through strategic communications and targeted campaigning, LSI helped shift public and institutional narratives on human trafficking and exploitation. We published **five statements** and co-signed **13 joint statements**. We delivered targeted awareness campaigns around EU Anti-Trafficking Day with a **Human Trafficking Awareness Week**, next to joining the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**, and the **No Penalty campaign** with private sector actors.

We also relaunched **our annual Conscious Christmas Calendar** to promote conscious consumerism and awareness for exploitation and abuse among workers providing services and producing consumer goods. These efforts were supported by sustained digital outreach across our **website, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn**, amplifying advocacy messages and calls to action throughout the year to shift public narratives.

### **Internal Governance and Network Strengthening**

LSI strengthened its Platform by expanding membership – we welcomed Helen Bamber Foundation (UK) and SHOP (NL) as new associate members in 2025 - and holding monthly (online) members meetings and celebrating our **30th anniversary** with the Council of Europe and the Polish government, in Warsaw, Poland. Numerous member anniversaries were also marked across 2025.