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La Strada International ANNUAL REPORT 2007

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La Strada International

European Network against Trafficking in Human Beings

*Belarus, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Macedonia,
Moldova, The Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine*

The work of LSI in 2007 would not have been possible, without the support of our main donors:



The activities of the La Strada members are supported by a variety of national and international donors.

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Amsterdam, 2008
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Acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
ASI	Anti-Slavery International
CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
GAATW	Global Alliance against Traffic in Women
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LSI	La Strada International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN.GIFT	United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking

Summary

La Strada International, a European network of nine NGOs aiming to prevent trafficking in human beings in Europe, celebrated its 3rd anniversary on 26 October 2007. During 2007, the nine member organisations, based in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine, continued to work together on lobby and advocacy, awareness raising, prevention, and information dissemination, as well as providing direct support to trafficked persons. Strategic planning and capacity building, to strengthen the La Strada organisations and other actors in the field, is also key to La Strada's daily work.

In recent years, the above-named La Strada countries, some of which were primarily seen as countries of origin, have all become countries of origin, destination, as well as of transit for trafficking in human beings. Clearly, trafficking in human beings is not a static phenomenon and changes and new trends in trafficking practices are discernible over time. This was again noticed in 2007; persons seem to be trafficked at a younger age, internal trafficking has become more common, and trafficking routes originate from further away. What should be emphasised here is that accession to the EU does not stop trafficking from occurring. Trafficking is still taking place in, to and from countries that recently joined the EU, such as Bulgaria, for example, in 2007.

Another trend of the last few years that continued in 2007 is that an increase can be seen in the number of identified and referred male cases of trafficking, and that more cases are identified involving trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation, such as exploitation in domestic work or the agricultural sector. Although La Strada has always focused primarily on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, several La Strada offices assisted both female and male clients in 2007, who were trafficked into different sectors. In 2007, La Strada offices provided direct assistance to over 1.550 clients, of whom 1.231 contacted La Strada for the first time. Trafficked persons are given support and advice in practical, medical, legal and social matters. Furthermore, six La Strada members are currently operating shelters for trafficked persons. Next to short-term

assistance and safe return, the focus of the social assistance work is on long-term support and the social inclusion of trafficked persons. Vocational training and help in the search for jobs is also offered.

The hotlines and helplines run by all La Strada offices are important tools in prevention as well as in the social assistance campaign. In 2007, almost 9.000 calls regarding prevention were received on the hotlines and over 506 requests sent by email or through website fora. Over 3.250 trafficked persons were counselled through hotlines or by email.

To raise awareness on the issue, La Strada offices organised a wide range of different workshops, lectures and seminars on the provision of information and prevention of human trafficking. In 2007, a total of 1.783 lectures were organised for at risk-groups, reaching 46.191 participants. In total, 55 seminars for professionals were organised in 2007, involving 1.030 participants. In addition, thousands of prevention materials were disseminated among risks groups, including leaflets, stickers, and other information materials.

The media is also an important tool for La Strada's prevention and awareness raising work, and 2007 saw an increase in La Strada's media output. In total, 345 interviews were given to representatives of newspapers, radio and television stations and 275 background articles were written. LSI and its members have certainly contributed to filling the information gap on the issue of trafficking in human beings in 2007, by providing statistics, case studies and background information they gather in the course of their work. At the start of the year, LSI launched a digital documentation centre holding a wide variety of background documents, legislation and opinion pieces on trafficking in human beings and related human rights issues, which increased from holding 300 documents in early 2007, to currently 1.700 documents. LSI and the member offices publish newsletters and run websites on trafficking, which are regularly updated and provide news, contacts, publications, and links to other websites and information. Over 440 recipients are subscribed to the LSI quarterly newsletter alone.

In 2007, La Strada offices collaborated closely with the academic and research community in analysing the issue of trafficking, as well as conducting its own research. A common campaign, for which preparations started in 2007, was the Women's Rights Campaign, which LSI

launched in all nine La Strada countries in March 2008, with a focus on the link between the violation of women's rights and trafficking in women. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the fact that the violation of women's economic, social and political rights is one the main root causes for trafficking, and to point to states' responsibilities to protect these rights.

One cannot deny that trafficking in human beings is currently placed high on the international and national political agenda; over the past few years, many laws, programmes and action plans have been adopted and special representatives and rapporteurs on trafficking in human beings have been appointed. However, effective implementation of all the measures adopted is still lacking, as is the evaluation and monitoring of actions taken, and an assessment of their efficacy in ending human rights violations that are the result and the cause of trafficking in human beings. Sometimes, so-called anti-trafficking measures seriously infringe upon the rights of trafficked persons.

The La Strada members therefore continue to closely follow and critically assess the adoption and implementation of national and international measures at the European level and to advocate for change. In 2007, La Strada International was asked on several occasions by international and national governmental bodies to provide consultation. This proves the wide recognition of La Strada's knowledge on and experience with trafficking in human beings by different national and European bodies. In total, 110 international events and seminars were attended in 2007 by La Strada staff.

All La Strada offices lobby for the adoption of minimum standards regarding assistance for trafficked persons, including residence permits and reflection periods, witness protection programmes, access to labour markets and education, the provision of accommodation, the availability of legal assistance, and voluntary and safe return, including risk assessments and compensation. LSI opposes detention and closed shelters for trafficked persons and calls for the appointment of independent monitoring and registration mechanisms, such as independent National Rapporteurs.

With regard to lobbying, La Strada was involved in discussions on a proposed EU hotline number on trafficking in human beings and on the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as several other European and global initiatives and devel-

opments. Not only La Strada, but also other NGOs and stakeholders in the field have helped to achieve amendments to national legislation and changes in national action plans, leading to an increased awareness among government representatives.

The successes of the work of La Strada would not have been possible without the fruitful cooperation with many stakeholders. At the national and international level, close cooperation exists with governmental and non-governmental bodies and individual NGOs and NGO networks. As trafficking in human beings is not an isolated phenomenon that could be disentangled from other issues, La Strada offices are in the process of strengthening their cooperation with organisations from outside of the anti-trafficking field. In 2007, La Strada extended its cooperation with migrant rights-based groups and networks, for example.

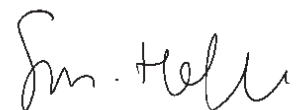
On request, LSI provides training, consultation and cooperation to other NGOs and it offers an annual NGO forum for NGOs on trafficking-related issues. In 2007, the 3rd NGO platform was organised in Skopje, Macedonia, for over 20 partner NGOs. In future, LSI is planning to set up closer cooperation in several European countries and offer La Strada associate membership to some NGOs.

La Strada constantly evaluates and monitors its own work in order to assess the impact of the La Strada programme and promote transparency and accountability internally and externally. Despite the wide experience of La Strada in the anti-trafficking field, there is an ongoing need to deepen and improve the organisation's knowledge and capacity to be able to maintain recognition for the work done, and to be able to offer adequate assistance and support to trafficked persons. LSI is currently investigating gaps in support and the needs of all offices for further staff training; a capacity-building programme will be developed for the coming years, based on the requirements identified.

Moreover, LSI has been conducting more general strategy sessions in 2007, which are to continue in 2008 and beyond, and organised regular board and assembly meetings. In 2007, LSI developed a proposal for the development of an intranet system, to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise between the national offices. The intranet should be piloted and established in the period 2009-2010. In 2007, a discussion also began on

the elaboration of the common registration of facts and figures. Harmonised questionnaires were developed for the collection of facts and figures in each of the nine member offices and countries. These will ensure a better general assessment of La Strada's work and provide more insight into human rights violations and the situation on human trafficking in the nine La Strada countries. LSI also played a role in discussions on sustainability and fundraising, by drafting guidelines on donor cooperation and criteria, and providing continually updated lists of relevant donors and their funding criteria, as well as actively fundraising for its members.

The work of La Strada would not have been possible without all the support of various donors for both the international secretariat and the members, and we hope to continue receiving their support. Last but certainly not least, La Strada's work would not be possible without the active commitment of the 128 dedicated La Strada staff members, whose names are listed on the back cover of this annual report. Many more volunteers and interns have contributed to the work of La Strada who cannot all be named here, but who we would like to thank wholeheartedly for their invaluable contribution. On behalf of all of them, I am happy to present our annual report 2007.



Suzanne Hoff
International Coordinator
La Strada International

La Strada International – Network against trafficking in human beings

The International La Strada Association (commonly named La Strada International, LSI), based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, is a network against trafficking in human beings comprising nine independent human rights NGOs (non-governmental organisations). The member organisations are based in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine.

At the national level, La Strada members implement the so-called three pillar system, also referred to as the La Strada model. Firstly, they are active in advocacy and lobbying and monitor the policy situation with regard to trafficking in human beings, such as the drafting, the implementation and the effect of governmental action plans and legislation. Secondly, they provide consultation and information to raise awareness and organise prevention and education programmes. Thirdly, they provide direct support to victims of trafficking. Under the umbrella of the La Strada network, they cooperate at the international level with common policies and action plans, as well as harmonising lobbying and advocacy programmes.

LSI is responsible for the general coordination of the La Strada programme at the international level in close cooperation with the member organisations. The staff of the international secretariat undertakes activities directed at international networking, lobbying and public relations, as well as monitoring and harmonising national campaigns and capacity building for member organisations.

LSI is responsible for expanding relations with national and international governmental structures and bodies (the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the United Nations (UN)), as well as maintaining contacts with all relevant stakeholders at the international level, among which international organisations, individual NGOs and NGO networks. The international secretariat also monitors and reacts to new trends and developments regarding trafficking at the European level.

Although La Strada project cooperation already dates back to 1995, La Strada International (LSI) was officially founded and registered in October 2004, to further facilitate and harmonise common activities between the nine La Strada member organisations.¹ LSI serves as the international secretariat of the network. All nine members and founders of LSI are registered as independent NGOs and were established between 1987 and 2000.

Common aims and objectives

Trafficking in human beings reflects the poor social and legal position of individuals in many countries. It encourages deceit, abuse, violence, debt-bondage, blackmail and deprivation of human rights. LSI and its member organisations aim to prevent trafficking in human beings, in particular the trafficking of women in Central and Eastern Europe, and to protect and support trafficked persons. In order to achieve this aim, La Strada International has set the following common objectives:

- To raise awareness and influence public opinion on the issue of trafficking in human beings, and to advise and stimulate governments and other key bodies to take action on a human rights basis.
- To fill the information gap on the situation of trafficking in human beings by providing statistics and case studies and analysing and conducting research on the issue.
- To promote the work of La Strada and to support other NGOs and key agencies in their efforts, encouraging cooperation between national campaigns.
- To further strengthen the La Strada organisations in their capacity as expert centres and service providers, particularly in relation to their main objectives.
- To educate and inform potential victims (risk groups) about the risks of trafficking and to educate professional groups in this respect, e.g. on the identification and treatment of trafficked persons.
- To facilitate and improve the safe return and social inclusion of trafficked persons and provide direct and indirect support to victims.

¹ For more background information, see: La Strada, *European Network against Trafficking in Women. Facts and Practices* (Amsterdam, 2005). This publication can be downloaded at www.lastradainternational.org.

Human rights-based approach

Trafficking in persons is a complex problem and is determined by a diverse yet interrelated set of issues, such as migration, organised crime, sex work, human rights, violence against women, the feminisation of poverty, and unequal economic relationships, amongst others. Any analysis and appropriate solution relating to these issues should therefore be carefully questioned in terms of their effects. La Strada believes that anti-trafficking measures should not adversely affect or infringe upon the human rights of certain groups. LSI lobbies for a human rights-based approach to the phenomenon of trafficking and promotes universal rights such as the freedom to emigrate and work abroad and be protected from violence and abuse. LSI strives to prevent discrimination, marginalisation and stigmatisation and combat prejudice. La Strada believes the rights of all human beings should be protected, which includes (irregular) migrant workers, domestic workers and sex workers.

Since the establishment of the first La Strada programme in 1995, La Strada has focused on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Yet with the broadening of the definition of trafficking in human beings according to the UN Palermo Protocol enacted in 2003, La Strada also addresses other forms of trafficking in further sectors and has broadened its target group to include men, where necessary and possible.²

Organisational structure & bodies

All nine La Strada member offices are founders of and equal partners in the La Strada International network. All members have committed themselves to implement the La Strada programme and subscribe to LSI's Mission

² La Strada uses the definition of trafficking in human beings of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which was signed in Palermo in 2000 and came into force in December 2003 (commonly known as the Palermo Protocol). Article 3a of the Palermo Protocol defines trafficking in human beings as: *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*

Statement, which lays down La Strada's philosophy and basic principles, and the Code of Conduct, which governs internal cooperation.

All members have one representative, often their national coordinator, in the General Assembly, which meets twice a year and which functions as the governing body of the organisation. The General Assembly elects the members of the board from among the assembly members, which has the responsibility to supervise the work of the international secretariat and its staff. Board members are elected for a maximum term of three years, and can be re-elected once.

In April 2007, board elections took place at the Assembly meeting in Minsk, Belarus. The national coordinator of La Strada Czech Republic was elected chairperson, while the national coordinator of La Strada Bulgaria was elected the new treasurer, filling the two vacant board positions. The national coordinator of La Strada Netherlands remained secretary. During 2007, two separate board meetings took place to define strategies and prepare assembly meetings, as well as to define a further clear division of tasks and responsibilities between the board and LSI.

In daily practice, a major part of the coordination of the network is mandated by the board to the international coordinator and the other staff members of LSI. At the beginning of 2007, the LSI team consisted of four staff employees (one full-time international coordinator and three part-time staff, an advisor public affairs and two project officers) and one external bookkeeper. During the year, a part-time researcher was additionally contracted, as well as a volunteer for the documentation centre.

Furthermore, LSI receives invaluable advice from its Advisory Council. In 2007, this Council comprised seven persons, who were asked to advise the organisation on international developments and strategies and assist La Strada in establishing international contacts and carry out lobbying work. Among the members are the former Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and the former OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings. A meeting with the Council's members took place in October 2007 in Skopje, Macedonia, where their mandate was discussed. Council members further provided advice on proposed LSI (strategic) plans on advocacy and sustainability relating to new developments at the European level.

Monitoring, registration & reporting

La Strada constantly evaluates and monitors its work in order to assess the impact of the La Strada programme and promote transparency and accountability internally among its members, externally among the general public, and more specifically to donors, governments, and national and international (partner) organisations. Monitoring and reporting has so far mainly been concentrated on the activities of the member organisations and the overall implementation of the La Strada programme. On a regular basis the national teams have submitted reports on the progress of their activities, which are distributed to all La Strada members. Apart from the activity reports, the annual financial reports, plans and budgets of each member organisation are public.

Besides keeping track of the activities implemented, all offices also undertake the digital registration of trafficking practices, developments and client data. In 2007, a discussion began on the elaboration of the common registration of facts and figures. Various reporting questionnaires were developed for the collection of facts and figures in each of the nine member offices and countries. These reporting formats will replace the former country reports as of mid-2008 and are expected to ensure a better general assessment of La Strada's work, providing more insight into human rights violations and the situation on human trafficking in the nine La Strada countries.

Progress evaluation & strategic planning

At the various annual international and bilateral meetings, the progress of the overall La Strada programme and (common) activities and the internal and external cooperation are evaluated and where necessary optimised.

Along with the joint evaluation of the national programmes, each member organisation carries out its own internal evaluation with the support of external trainers or evaluators. This permits transparency for all partners while at the same time providing space for re-adjustments, the identification of best practices and the development of new strategies. Since 2006, La Strada has tried to develop clear quantity and quality indicators to guide and

assess the work of all offices, and to judge the efficiency of the La Strada approach, as well as the quality and impact of its work.

In the immediate future La Strada aims to develop further quantity and quality indicators that will allow more insight into the effects of its work. This is an ongoing and time-consuming process, due to the different national situations and work programmes. At the same time, numerous factors are contributing to changes in the field of human behaviour, politics and trends in trafficking, making it difficult to establish a direct causality between La Strada's work and those changes.

In 2007, LSI started to work on a common strategic plan for 2009-2011. During several meetings, in April in Belarus and in October in Macedonia, members discussed the main strategic issues for the future. Strategies have been defined for the core work on public affairs (lobbying and advocacy), prevention and social assistance, the work on monitoring and registration, networking and capacity building of LSI, as well as the further (financial) stability and (internal and external) development of the network and its members.

Trafficking in human beings in the La Strada countries

Trafficking in human beings is a widespread, serious human rights violation in the world today. Despite the fact that there is little reliable data on trafficking in human beings, and although existing estimates differ, it is evident that thousands of persons are being trafficked within, to and from Europe every year.³ Men, women and children continue to be confronted with exploitation, abuse, violence and slave-like conditions.

Trafficking in human beings is the exploitation of trafficked persons' labour. They work under pressure and for extremely long hours, receiving little or no pay. They are forced to work and to live in deplorable conditions with limited freedom – sometimes even without the possibility of leaving, when for instance their passports are taken away, and they are often deeply indebted. Sometimes trafficked persons are even sold on.

Trafficking in human beings currently flourishes in sex work, the domestic labour market and the commercial marriage market, as well as in the more regulated labour sectors such as construction and agriculture. People can also be forced into begging in the streets or forced to donate their organs. Trafficking in human beings is not only a cause of human rights violations but often also a consequence thereof; a lack of protection for persons who have been trafficked might even lead to further human rights breaches.⁴

Political, economic & social root causes

Although social, economic and political conditions differ, the majority of the La Strada countries are characterised by an unstable political, social and economic environment. This is an important root cause of trafficking in

³ As it is impossible to determine precisely how many persons are trafficked and as estimates differ widely, La Strada does not state whether trafficking in human beings has decreased or increased in Europe and what the exact scope of the phenomenon is.

⁴ See also La Strada International, *Violation of Women's Rights: a Cause and Consequence of Trafficking in Human Beings* (Amsterdam, 2008) for more information on the link between trafficking in human beings and the violation of human rights.

human beings, as the existing situation in a country might impel people to migrate, which can lead to human rights violations and exploitation.

On the other hand, 'pull' factors such as the developed industries in other areas, and the need for cheap immigrant labour, facilitate the demand for migration and also lead to exploitation of migrant workers. With the globalisation of production and consumption and the facilitation of travel opportunities over the last few decades, migration flows have increased and labour has become internationally mobile.

Some La Strada countries face high levels of unemployment.

In Macedonia the employment rate was 35,8% in the first quarter of 2007. In the transition from a planned economy to a market economy by way of wage liberalisation and privatisation, unemployment and poverty have increased dramatically in the countries of Central and (South) Eastern Europe.

High unemployment figures (especially among women), as well as the lack of adequate social welfare systems, impel people willing to move or migrate to start new lives (temporarily) elsewhere. But not all La Strada countries are characterised by high unemployment rates. Yet, trafficking still occurs in those countries.

In Poland, for example, unemployment has significantly decreased since accession to the EU in May 2004. This has various reasons, the main one being the impact of labour migration. It is estimated that over two millions Poles have migrated during the last few years seeking employment in Western Europe. This means there are more job opportunities in Poland and these are mainly attractive for migrant workers. There are already noticeable shortages in some trades, such as plumbers, construction workers or some categories of medical personnel.

Unemployment is evidently not the only factor that induces people to leave their country, as the decision to migrate is influenced by a variety of external and internal factors. For instance, the lack of adequate payment for one's work can be a reason to leave a country, but it can also be a decision taken from a sense of adventure. The desire for a better life abroad may come from the wish to escape from gender-constrained family situations, or

from corruption, discrimination and human rights violations as a result of political and social instability.

Bureaucracy and corruption within state structures negatively affect the societies of the La Strada countries in general, as any changes towards democracy and openness are only in their infancy.

In Bulgaria synchronisation with EU laws and policies was a necessary precondition for entering the EU in January 2007. However, as there has been little practice with the applications of these laws, reforms have been slow, and the national government has been seriously criticised for that. A similar situation is the case for non-EU member Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there is also pressure from the international community for reforms, but little effect was discerned in 2007.

Furthermore, frequent changes of government in some countries have had a negative impact on the adoption and implementation of anti-trafficking measures.

In 2007, elections were held in the Czech Republic, Poland and Ukraine. These countries, as well as Macedonia, where elections took place in 2006, faced various changes in personnel at certain key positions in government.

The political situation was unclear and characterised by instability and delays; no new laws and/or decrees could be adopted, which meant that no progress was made in the implementation of current legislative measures.

Thirdly, in some countries measures are taken which hamper the work of NGOs. In several former Soviet Union countries, government control of NGOs was further tightened in 2007, for instance, by passing laws that control and constrain the activities of NGOs. Moreover, anti-terrorism campaigns in Western Europe have been used to stifle civil society initiatives critical of government conduct.

Current trends in trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is not a static phenomenon and changes and new trends in trafficking practices are discernible over time; shifts can

be observed in patterns and scale regarding the situation of trafficking in human beings. Persons seem to be trafficked at a younger age, and internal trafficking has become more common, both in Western Europe and the eastern parts of Europe, while trafficking routes originate further away.

In recent years, the La Strada countries in Europe, of which some were primarily seen only as countries of origin, have all become countries of origin, destination, as well as of transit. And trafficking in human beings is, of course, not limited to Europe. For example, the Middle East and Asia have been identified as new destinations for persons originating from Europe, including the La Strada countries. Furthermore, trafficking cases which have emerged in La Strada countries are also coming from 'new' countries of origin.

In 2007, Moldovan citizens were trafficked to countries as far as Japan, China, India, Jordan and even Sudan. Cases of trafficking in Belarusians have been identified in Syria and the United Arab Emirates. For the first time, in 2007, trafficked persons from Africa, such as Mali, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal have been identified in Poland.

Internal trafficking of human beings, that is within borders, was also more frequently reported.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, identified cases of internal trafficking have increased in recent years, possibly due to stricter border controls. According to the statistics of La Strada Macedonia, internal trafficking is significant, as several Macedonians were found to be exploited in Macedonia itself. This is a trend also detected in Western Europe. In the Netherlands, a large part of identified trafficked persons are of Dutch origin.

Another trend of the last few years is that an increase can be seen in the number of identified and referred male cases of trafficking. This increase in reporting does not necessarily reflect an increase in the number of trafficked men, but is also influenced by the fact that most national laws have been amended in the last few years to include male trafficked persons in accordance with the aforementioned Palermo Protocol. In Moldova, increased identification of male trafficked persons is also said to be due to the awareness campaign concerning new trends which has been

carried out by La Strada. Several La Strada offices assisted male clients in 2007.

- La Strada Belarus so far assisted in only one male case of trafficking.
- La Strada Czech Republic assisted two Macedonian men who were trafficked for the purpose of forced labour.
- La Strada Moldova assisted eight under-age boys who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as four male adults.
- In the Netherlands, 49 men were identified as being trafficked, mainly from Nigeria, Romania and China. Of these, 11 were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while five were forced to work in the restaurant industry and three in construction.

The majority of the trafficking cases identified in, to and from the La Strada countries are for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, the latest trend to be discerned is that, increasingly, cases are identified involving other purposes than sexual exploitation. A serious problem is that these cases are often treated by government authorities as labour law violations rather than trafficking cases.

In Moldova the law enforcement authorities are still reluctant to actively respond to such cases, as they are classified rather as illegal migration, violation of labour law or fraud, which is also the case in other countries. In Belarus a trafficker was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for a forced labour exploitation case; however, the Supreme Court returned the file for additional investigation and consideration, upon which the case was qualified as a fraud crime, not as trafficking.

What should lastly be emphasised is that accession to the EU does not stop trafficking from occurring. Trafficking is still taking place in, to and from the countries that recently joined the EU, whether in 2004 or 2007.

In 2007, 50 Bulgarian cases were identified in the Netherlands, as were 14 Polish cases. In December 2007, Poland entered the Schengen group of EU countries, which means in practice that Polish citizens – like citizens from the other new Schengen countries – can move freely within the EU countries practically without control of their documents. On the one hand, this aids the prevention of trafficking, as these persons have become less vulnerable to trafficking practices, having more and easier possibilities to

legally and independently move to and stay in other countries, without having to make use of middlemen. On the other hand, it means that in those cases where these people might still have become victims of trafficking (recruiting) practices, it has become more difficult to identify them at an earlier stage, as the border guards would no longer have the chance to identify or indicate (potential) cases of trafficking among those groups.

The issue of including other bodies (labour police, vice police, civil society organisations, in particular migrant workers' rights groups, trade unions, etc.) for the identification of possible cases of trafficking, has become more urgent and needs to receive more attention.

European and national anti-trafficking policies & actions

One cannot deny that trafficking in human beings is currently placed high on the international political agenda; many conferences and hearings on the subject are organised, and at a daily level recommendations are made for proposed actions, in particular by the European Commission of the EU, by the CoE and the OSCE. The UN has also taken the issue more seriously. Over the last few years, many laws, programmes and action plans have been adopted and special representatives and rapporteurs on trafficking in human beings have been appointed.

The European Commission developed and implemented a special action plan on trafficking in human beings for the years 2006–2007, for which an evaluation is foreseen in 2008. Furthermore, the mandate of the EU expert group was extended until the end of 2007, and the Commission initiated a special EU anti-trafficking day, to be organised every year on 18 October, to raise awareness on the issue. Further documents and plans on identification and referral of trafficked persons were launched, while members of the European Parliament proposed and discussed the idea of a common European hotline number on the issue of trafficking in human beings.

The OSCE appointed a new special representative on Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms Eva Biaudet, in October 2006, who started her mandate in January 2007.

A key part of Ms Biaudet's work is to promote cooperation with governments, civil society and international organisations in the struggle against trafficking and to raise the public and political profile of the fight against trafficking in human beings. The OSCE also organised several round tables and conferences in Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Austria, on state policies, on prevention, on assistance, and on monitoring and report mechanisms and the role of national rapporteurs.

The CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197), a legally binding instrument which goes beyond recommendations or specific actions, was signed and ratified by more member states in 2007. On 24 October 2007, it received the 10th ratification and thus came into force on 1 February 2008. The Convention is a comprehensive treaty focussing mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguarding of their rights. It also aims to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. In addition, the Convention provides for the establishment of an effective and independent monitoring mechanism capable of overseeing the implementation of the obligations contained in the Convention.

In March 2007, the United Nations launched the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) to consolidate and coordinate global action against human trafficking, on the basis of international agreements reached at the UN. It is managed in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Organization for Migration (IOM); the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF); the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR); and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Throughout the year, La Strada International closely followed and monitored European developments and specific measures taken by national and international governmental bodies around the issue of trafficking in human beings, while providing consultation and recommendations, as well as raising concern and making critiques, in particular on strict migration policies and other measures taken that might have a negative impact on the protection of human rights.

Trafficking in human beings is not only placed high on the international political agenda, but also most governments in Central and (South) Eastern Europe have acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and have taken

measures to address the problem, including the establishment of national action plans and appointment of national coordinators, as well as national working groups and commissions to coordinate anti-trafficking policies.

In Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, new state action programmes on combating trafficking in human beings were elaborated and adopted. Furthermore, in the Ukraine, the Council on Demographic and Family Policy, Gender Equality, Children, Prevention of THB and domestic violence issues has replaced the Intergovernmental Coordination Council on Counteracting Trafficking. In Bulgaria, a new secretary of the national commission was appointed, while in Moldova the National Committee to combat THB will get a permanent secretariat and a National Coordinator has been appointed. In Poland, a larger budget has been allocated to the National Action Programme to Combat and Prevent THB in 2006-2008.

The La Strada members closely follow the adoption and implementation of such measures. In most countries, La Strada is actively involved in the consultation and implementation of the National Action Plan and/or has been given a special status regarding the development and implementation of anti-trafficking activities. Nevertheless, there have been cases that La Strada or civil society in general was not consulted by the government on new measures and legislation. La Strada also criticised some national action plans and measures taken.

The new National Action Plan of Ukraine, which was elaborated by NGOs, related ministries and departments, was passed by the Government in March 2007. During the process of agreement within the Ministry, several very important measures where consensus was reached during the preparation of the draft disappeared from the programme, in particular those concerning the state obligation to provide support for trafficked persons, to the disappointment of La Strada Ukraine.

Yet, positive aspects can also be mentioned regarding the development of national anti-trafficking plans and programmes.

La Strada Czech Republic evaluated the Operational Programme to Support and Protect Trafficked Persons positively, as the government had implemented several measures aimed at improving the position of trafficked persons. Another positive aspect mentioned was that the Polish govern-

ment has allocated a larger budget to the National Action Programme to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in 2007.

Intensive lobbying activities, not only by La Strada but also by other bodies in the field, have helped to achieve amendments to national legislation and changes in national action plans, leading to increased awareness among government representatives. However, a wide gap still exists between the protection of human rights of trafficked persons on paper and their protection in practice. LSI and its members feel that regardless of all actions taken, the human rights of trafficked persons remain insufficiently protected. Legislation, policies and strategies have so far proven inadequate to prevent or suppress trafficking and to protect the human rights of trafficked persons at national and international level.

What is currently lacking is effective implementation of all the measures adopted, the evaluation and monitoring of actions taken, and an assessment of their efficacy in ending human rights violations that are the result and the cause of trafficking in human beings. Sometimes, so-called anti-trafficking measures seriously infringe upon the rights of trafficked persons. In practice, trafficking is often regarded as a problem of illegal migration or prostitution (to be solved by way of strict migration and border regulations and the criminalisation of prostitution) and therefore trafficked persons are often treated as criminals, rather than persons whose human rights have been seriously violated. In several countries, there is no adequate infrastructure yet to provide minimum support to trafficked persons by referring them to relevant service providers.

La Strada therefore believes it is 'Time for Action', a call which LSI pronounced at the first EU anti-trafficking day organised by the European Commission on 18 October 2007. LSI contributed by presenting a common NGO statement, as well as taking part in various panel discussions.⁵

⁵ The common NGO statement *Time for Action* can be found at www.lastradainternational.org.

Addressing the problem: highlights of La Strada activities

La Strada believes that efforts to prevent and combat trafficking have to be based on respect for the human rights of the persons concerned. Although governments bear the main responsibility for suppressing and punishing trafficking in persons, NGOs, at the national and international level, can play an important role as well. Due to their independent status and their direct assistance programmes they can gain the confidence of trafficked persons in need of support. This supports the punishment of traffickers as well, because victims who have been provided with support tend to be more willing to press charges and/or to act as a witness in court.

Moreover, being able to collect information at the source, NGOs can supply government institutions and the media with accurate information on the situation of trafficking in persons in their countries. They contribute to awareness-raising through media campaigns and provide information by publishing reports, articles and newsletters, prevention materials, statistics and research.

NGOs also play an important role in monitoring governmental actions and policies, and fulfil a watchdog function. As a result, they significantly contribute to putting the issue on the political agenda. As human trafficking is often an international crime, the strengthening of NGOs at the national and international level is crucial, so as to strengthen prevention and awareness actions and to provide better support across borders to trafficked persons.

LSI was established to multiply the actions of its members by coordinating and facilitating joint activities and cooperation undertaken by its members – by way of organising informative, awareness-raising, and representational and advocacy activities, as well as capacity building and fundraising.

The existence of La Strada organisations and the common network make it easier for women to return safely and reintegrate into society. Next to offering shelter, La Strada offers medical, legal, psycho-social and some

financial support, and guides women in rebuilding their lives. By working together in an international setting, La Strada is also able to reach international governmental structures, including the EU, the CoE and the UN. All nine La Strada member organisations implement three ongoing campaigns, which touch the core elements of the trafficking issue. These are:

- the Information and Lobbying Campaign
- the Prevention and Education Campaign; and
- the Social Assistance (Safe Return and Social Inclusion) Campaign.

Below some activities of the La Strada organisations are highlighted.
Detailed annual country reports 2007 are available upon request.

Information & Lobbying Campaign

Advocacy, lobbying and public relations are undertaken both by LSI and its members under the name of the Information & Lobbying Campaign. Activities are directed at information dissemination and advocacy to raise awareness and to stimulate action at the national level. Although the emphasis of the lobbying campaigns differs from one country to another, there is a common focus on advocating a human rights approach regarding anti-trafficking measures, instead of focussing mainly on crime control or the prevention of migration.

When calling upon national and international governments in Europe to address the issue of trafficking from a human rights perspective, La Strada requires bodies involved in policy- and decision-making on measures against trafficking in human beings:

- To fully recognise the problem and to focus on all forms of trafficking and all target groups while developing policies, measures and action plans, but to pay special attention to the position of migrants, especially women and children migrants.
- To address the root causes as the most just and effective way to prevent human trafficking and to enable safe migration.
- To focus on prevention, besides suppressing and punishing trafficking in persons. This responsibility includes support, financial and otherwise, for NGOs working on the issue. States are also asked to recognise the special role of civil society and involve NGOs in their policy making.
- To follow a human rights-based approach to the phenomenon of trafficking in all activities implemented, and to prevent discrimination, marginalisation and stigmatisation of trafficked persons, combating stereotypes and prejudices.
- To ensure that policies and activities are monitored and evaluated, in particular the human rights impacts of any measures taken, and to ensure that any proposed anti-trafficking measure does not infringe upon the human rights of trafficked persons or other affected groups.
- To take into account existing international and regional standards dealing with trafficking with a view to developing these standards, so as to improve the protection and support offered to trafficked persons. LSI in particular calls for the need for a period of reflection and recovery and

for renewable temporary and permanent residence permits, as well as for the need for risk assessment and voluntary and safe return.

- To set up comprehensive national action plans and to sign, ratify and implement international treaties, ensuring that current and future international and national agreements are binding and are implemented in practice. LSI especially calls for implementation of the UN Convention for Combating Transnational Organized Crime and the additional Protocol for the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) and for the signing and ratifying of the UN Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Moreover, all La Strada offices advocate the adoption of minimum standards regarding assistance for trafficked persons, including residence permits and reflection periods, witness protection programmes, access to labour markets and education, the provision of accommodation, the availability of legal assistance, and voluntary and safe return, including risk assessments and compensation.

LSI opposes detention and closed shelters for trafficked persons and calls for the appointment of independent monitoring and registration mechanisms, such as independent National Rapporteurs on trafficking in human beings.

Advocacy towards and cooperation with intergovernmental bodies

As stated earlier, LSI closely followed the main European developments related to the issue of trafficking in human beings.

European Union

As for the *European Union*, LSI monitored the EU Action Plan developments, in particular regarding the launch of the EU anti-trafficking day and the possible launch of a common number for European hotlines on trafficking in human beings. In September 2007, LSI, with the support of its

members and other anti-trafficking NGOs in Europe, submitted a letter to the EU in which it outlined its concerns and possible bottlenecks concerning the creation of a common EU hotline number and called for a needs assessment and feasibility study. Indeed, in December 2007, the European Commission decided to launch such a study and the issue will receive more attention in 2008.

LSI has been in contact with members of the EU expert group in 2007 and representatives of the expert group were contacted for updates on various occasions. Contacts with members of the EU parliament were also made.

LSI contributed to the launch of the first EU anti-trafficking day on 18 October 2007 and assisted in drafting the 'Recommendations on identification and referral to services of victims of trafficking in human beings', which call for early and proper identification of trafficked persons, national referral mechanisms and adequate unconditional support and assistance. LSI also contributed to the publication 'Measuring Responses to Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union: an Assessment Manual', which offers governments a tool to assess their own anti-trafficking policies and to measure the outcomes and impact on trafficked persons, but also on immigration, employment and labour rights. At the conference, LSI presented the NGO Statement 'Time for Action', which was drafted together with leading international NGOs.

The statement called upon the EU and its Member States to start implementing measures to end the human rights violations that are the result as well as the cause of trafficking in human beings, and to protect trafficked persons at the national, European and international level. In order to really make progress in preventing and combating human trafficking, the signatories proposed a series of specific actions. LSI supported national activities around 18 October, also in the Netherlands, where a media campaign was launched together with other NGOs.

Council of Europe

As for the *Council of Europe*, the signing and ratification of the CoE Convention on Trafficking in Human Beings has been an important focus of the LSI lobbying campaign. Around 150 NGOs that promote the

human rights of trafficked persons in ten European countries took part in a common campaign initiated by the Global Alliance against Traffic in Women (GAATW) and sent a letter to their governments and parliaments, demanding ratification of the Convention without delay.

LSI joined this initiative as a member of GAATW and coordinated the campaign in the La Strada countries. All La Strada members participated in the campaign and urged their governments to ratify the Convention.

LSI also initiated an action with other international (umbrella) organisations such as Anti-Slavery International, Plan, Terre des Hommes, Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and PICUM. These organisations addressed the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, asking for his support to catalyse the rapid enactment of the Convention by its member states and urging him to take the necessary steps towards the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention by ensuring that also the European Commission would become party to this very important human rights instrument.

LSI also cooperated with representatives of the Council of Europe and acted as a keynote speaker at various events of the Council of Europe, such as a high-level conference on the Monitoring Mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) in November 2007.

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

All La Strada offices maintained close contacts with different OSCE missions and institutions. LSI is a member of the OSCE Anti-Trafficking Alliance Expert Group and the international coordinator attends the quarterly expert group meetings in Vienna, which took place three times in 2007 (February, September and December). The Expert Group meetings are attended by the main international organisations working in the anti-trafficking field, including different UN, OSCE and EU bodies, IOM, international NGOs, etc. Apart from facilitating positive cooperation, the meeting also led to effective common lobbying activities, such as a common reaction to the draft EU action plan. LSI further cooperated with the OSCE

and ODIHR on their study of compensation systems for trafficked persons in a number of countries.

On 10 December, the Advisor Public Affairs attended a workshop organised by ODIHR in Barcelona on compensation, as a result of which a common project on compensation will start in 2008. Furthermore, LSI supported La Strada Ukraine in its action to get support for a statement on trafficking in human beings, to be endorsed by all OSCE member states.

At the national level, several offices (La Strada Bosnia and Herzegovina, La Strada Macedonia and La Strada Moldova) attended meetings on anti-trafficking measures coordinated by OSCE missions.

United Nations (UN)

As for the *United Nations*, LSI also followed UN developments, in particular the reports and position of the Special Rapporteur Sigma Huda, and the actions of the UNODC global initiative.

LSI provided feedback to draft recommendations and tools of the NGOs to the steering group. LSI also held a presentation at an ancillary event of the 6th Human Rights Council Session in September 2007, co-organised by Anti-Slavery International and La Strada International, on the need for a UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

In 2007, La Strada cooperated with several UN bodies, both at the national and international levels, in particular with UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNODC. The LSI national coordinator meets representatives of these organisations at the quarterly OSCE Alliance Expert Group meetings.

Women's Rights Campaign

A common campaign, for which preparations started in 2007, was the Women's Rights Campaign, which LSI launched in all nine La Strada countries in March 2008. The campaign's focus is the connection between the violation of women's rights and trafficking. LSI contracted a researcher for the campaign in October 2007 to conduct a literature research on

women's rights in the nine La Strada countries. All La Strada members participated in the research by providing their input and feedback. The campaign is based on the results of this research and aims to raise awareness about the fact that the violation of women's economic, social and political rights is one of the main root causes for trafficking, and to point to states' responsibilities to protect these rights.

Accreditation of La Strada International

For following European and worldwide political developments, LSI has tried over the last few years to obtain accreditation to the main European bodies, European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the UN. An application for accreditation to the EU parliament was made in 2007 and the answer is expected by mid-2008. At the end of the year, on 28 December 2007, LSI received a confirmation that it was accredited by the Council of Europe, by receiving the INGO participatory status. Via membership of GAATW, LSI can make use of their UN accreditation (ECOSOC) status until LSI receives its own accreditation, an application for which was made in 2007.

Representation at the international level

Frequently, seminars, conferences and workshops are attended by LSI staff and staff of the other members of the network. In total, 110 international events and seminars were attended in 2007. The LSI secretariat sends monthly updates within the network on upcoming events and representation at events and coordinates the international representation, contributes to presentations and provides background documents and fact sheets. All staff representing the network internationally report back to LSI, where all the reports and in particular recommendations of the different events are collected. *An overview of all events attended in 2007 is available upon request.*

There are many seminars and events organised on trafficking in human beings, which makes it impossible to attend all of them. La Strada International and its members were invited to the majority of the national and international events and on many occasions were requested to provide specific presentations on its work or specific topics related to the theme of

trafficking in human beings. This has enabled La Strada to further promote its work, raise awareness and highlight its main recommendations to governments and other bodies involved.

On 22 November, La Strada BELARUS/YWCA was awarded the German UNIFEM prize 2007 in Bonn, Germany, for its anti-trafficking work in Belarus. The UNIFEM prize supports organisations working towards ending violence against women and preventing trafficking. La Strada Belarus was put forward for nomination by the German migrant women's rights organisation 'Ban Ying'. The award ceremony included a thematic panel discussion with representatives of the European Parliament, the Federal Crime Police Authority and the Federal Ministry of Family and Women's Affairs. Irina Alkhovka, national coordinator of La Strada Belarus, emphasised that 'the prize is a sign of recognition for the work of La Strada Belarus, as well as of La Strada International as a whole and its efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings'.

Regardless of the fact that international events are an ideal tool to promote the work of La Strada and to develop common strategies and policies, it should be noted that LSI is concerned about the fact that so many conferences are organised and that the organisers of all these seminars and events do not always take into account available recommendations. La Strada believes that more focus should be put on the preparation of the content of the events, and that a further increase in the overlapping and duplication of events should be avoided. LSI would like to discuss this issue further with other organisations in the international field in order to increase the effectiveness of the time and money available.

Monitoring & lobbying national governments

In order to fulfil their role as 'watchdogs' regarding the implementation, evaluation and drafting of legislation, the La Strada offices maintain close contact with government authorities and other stakeholders, while safeguarding their independent position. Cooperation includes structural collaboration, sometimes formalised in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, or official participation of the La Strada offices in national working groups or commissions, national referral mechanisms or models, as well as cooperation on specific programmes and projects.

In 2007, La Strada Macedonia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of the Interior. Other examples of cooperation, by no means exhaustive for all La Strada members, are those of Strada Moldova and Bulgaria, which are both closely involved in development of the National Referral Mechanisms. La Strada Belarus in its turn cooperated closely with the Ministry of the Interior, which resulted in a joint booklet with information about the services of the La Strada hotline and the government hotline, which was printed at the end of 2007.

As stated earlier, La Strada members intensively lobbied for changes in legislation and actions at the national level. Those lobbying activities, not only by La Strada but also other bodies in the field, have helped to achieve amendments to national legislations and changes in national action plans and have led to increased awareness among government representatives. The fact that advocacy by La Strada offices has an effect regarding the improvement of the rights of trafficked persons is shown by the fact that most La Strada countries have now incorporated the Palermo Protocol definition of trafficking in human beings into their national legislation.

In Poland, there was progress in the work of incorporating a trafficking definition into a Polish Penal Code, after an active lobbying campaign by La Strada for at least two years, while currently one proposal supported by La Strada is going through legal proceedings in the Parliamentary commission on legal reforms. La Strada participated in several preparatory meetings and discussions on the shape of the definition, its practical implementation and its impact on the situation of trafficked persons.

Another method of monitoring the implementation of legislation and its effects for the rights of trafficked persons is through the monitoring of trials, which all La Strada offices are involved in.

In 2007, La Strada Poland started a project entitled 'Monitoring of the observance of human rights with regards to victims of human trafficking', where a selection of cases that had been concluded with a final verdict between 1995 and 2006 were analysed.⁶

⁶ The results of this project were published in: La Strada Poland, *Monitoring of the Observance of Human Rights with regard to Victims of Human Trafficking* (Warsaw 2008).

Media attention & policies

Another main activity in the Information and Lobbying campaign is to increase awareness by having an active media policy. The La Strada offices regularly sent out press releases to draw attention to specific activities of the media, such as statements on developments in the anti-trafficking field, but also to raise awareness of new campaigns or the publication of reports. In total, over **345 interviews** were given during 2007 to representatives of newspapers, radio and television stations. LSI noted that journalists represented a broad range of media.

Besides local and national newspapers in the nine La Strada countries, La Strada offices and the LSI secretariat were regularly contacted by well-known international and national newspapers and television and broadcasting companies, including the New York Times and the Danish newspaper *Kriteligt*, both for a background article on the trafficking situation in Bulgaria and the debate on legislation concerning prostitution in this country. The BBC approached La Strada for information for an article on Moldova, and the French TV channel ARTE for a special television show on the issue.

The LSI international coordinator was among others interviewed for the world radio services on the cooperation between NGOs and the police on the issue of trafficking in human beings around September 2007. Later, in December 2007, she took part in a radio discussion, together with, amongst others, the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings.

Furthermore, the Japanese Nippon Television Network Corporation, based in Vienna, visited the LSI office for an interview with the international coordinator. Interviews were also held with the national coordinator of La Strada Czech Republic and La Strada Bulgaria in 2007.

On 19 October 2007, extensive media attention was given to the EU anti-trafficking day in the Netherlands. A coalition of Dutch organisations, among which La Strada Netherlands and LSI, disseminated a press release, placed several advertisements in Dutch national newspapers and organised a press conference on the day in The Hague, where both the Dutch National Rapporteur and the Dutch Secretary of Justice presented statements on the occasion of the European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings. Articles appeared in over 10 national and regional newspapers, several political and

social magazines, while several live radio interviews took place. Information was also provided at different websites; a special website was launched for the campaign by the NGO coalition (www.mensenzijingenhandelswaar.nl).

In general, the media is interested in facts and figures on the scope of trafficking and the reasons why it occurs. In several cases the media reported on the work of La Strada and the work of other organisations in the field. Furthermore, many articles referred to national specific issues such as new legislation or measures taken and asked La Strada to comment. Debates on (the legalisation of) prostitution also received much attention from the media.

Normally most journalists are interested in human interest stories; often they ask LSI to make contact with trafficked persons they would like to portray. It is important to note that La Strada generally does not arrange for journalists to have interviews with trafficked persons; only if the trafficked person specifically requests to talk to the media will this wish be granted.

Part of the active media policy is the training of journalists to improve the way trafficking in human beings is reported in the media. Besides training, specific materials are published for them. La Strada Bulgaria, for instance, organised two such training sessions for journalists in 2007.

La Strada offices have also regularly contributed to documentaries or feature films on the issue. Often, film makers and broadcasting companies contact La Strada for information. Others also contact La Strada for available films and documentaries to be used for prevention and awareness work. La Strada members also organise film festivals to raise awareness.

At the end of 2007, LSI supported a Dutch media bureau in collecting films on trafficking in human beings, for a film festival to be organised during the UN.GIFT seminar in February 2008.

In 2007, La Strada Moldova held the Anti-Trafficking Awareness Campaign 'Media Campaign on Trafficking Trends', which consisted of video trailers as well as promotional activities, the publication of materials and increased media coverage. The overall impact of the campaign was that 100.000 people were informed about new trends in human trafficking. Further, four

video spots were prepared and distributed, as were 72.652 copies of materials, and 364 awareness seminars were carried out.

Information sharing & research

To provide an adequate picture of the situation of trafficking and to fill the information gap, LSI and the member offices address other organisations besides the media in the anti trafficking field. The international secretariat as well as member organisations publish newsletters regularly in order to provide partners and the general public with relevant and up-to-date information. Furthermore, all La Strada members and the LSI secretariat run websites on trafficking which are regularly updated, providing background information, news, contacts, publications, and links to other websites and information. The LSI website provides access to all nine La Strada members' websites and to the online database, offering a hard-copy and digital library, as well as news and background information on the issue of trafficking in human beings. News on the LSI website is updated every three weeks.

Most offices also keep a library which interested people can use. In 2007 these libraries were been extended with new publications – studies and reports – available in digital or hard-copy formats.

The LSI international secretariat continued to purchase or receive free of charge hardcopies of selected reports and trafficking-related information. In 2007 a start was made to register these publications and include them in the library and online documentation centre. Special attention was given to the collection of La Strada publications (see below).

In the past years, including 2007, the La Strada offices continued to provide important contributions to research projects, either by making available La Strada data and information on trafficking to other projects or related governmental policy initiatives, or by carrying out its own research activities. In 2007, La Strada offices collaborated closely with the academic and research community in analysing the issue of trafficking. Research is carried out for national partners, such as governmental institutions, but also for key international partners. Additional national research is regularly carried out on request, often with other organisations.

La Strada Ukraine contributed to two chapters of the report 'Human Rights in Ukraine – 2006, a report of human rights organisations' prepared by the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union and Kharkiv human rights group. The report is in Ukrainian and English and available at: <http://www.khpg.org.ua>

As for general queries to La Strada, in 2007 LSI received requests for contacts in the La Strada countries, European contacts in general and contacts outside Europe.

IOM Azerbaijan asked for more information on the introduction of a hotline, the Dutch police sought information on NGO and police cooperation in and with Bulgaria, the Mubarak organisation needed information on the La Strada databases, the Israeli national coordinator on trafficking asked for more information on trafficking for forced marriages, the Polish embassy in the Netherlands requested information on trafficking practices related to Poland, while an organisation in the Middle East approached La Strada to help them to train shelter workers.

Documentation centre

In July 2006 LSI launched a documentation centre with a searchable database holding a wide variety of background documents, legislation and opinion pieces on trafficking in human beings and related human rights issues. The online searchable database is modelled on modern library systems and currently provides access to over 600 downloadable PDF files, to be regularly updated. Via the LSI website, interested persons can access an easy-to-use interface to search the LSI library system through a search engine. The search system has been developed with the aim of helping to organise, document and share information on trafficking by linking record entries to each other according to their relevance. The type of information provided ranges from manuals for practitioners providing social and legal support, to legal texts (international conventions and protocols) and analyses (NGO statements, academic research articles).

LSI's aim is to keep the documentation centre up-to-date on a monthly basis with press releases, NGO statements, campaigns, current research and new legislation. Furthermore, the database will provide, for the first

time, comprehensive access to all La Strada publications. Documents are further classified into the following categories: international and national law, study and research, articles and analyses, guidelines and handbooks, annual reports and multi-media. LSI decided to provide summaries of each record shown to the user with each successful search hit. Summaries enable a quick grasp of the content of the document, as well as its background and relevance to the issue of trafficking.

Prevention & Education Campaign

The aim of the Prevention & Education campaign is the prevention of trafficking and the empowerment of (potential) risk groups and trafficked persons. An important asset of the Prevention & Education Campaigns are the telephone hotlines and helplines, where young persons seeking advice on jobs abroad and other questions regarding migration and/or a stay abroad are informed of the risks involved. All prevention and education activities are guided by the empowerment principle and the principles of 1) interactivity, 2) confidentiality and 3) flexibility with regard to changing trends. Prevention and education activities are carried out by means of:

- Lectures/seminars/workshops on the subject of trafficking in human beings, either for the target group or professionals.
- Development of prevention material and its dissemination.
- Dissemination of information via hotlines, websites and emails.

Prevention lectures & workshops

In 2007, La Strada offices organised a wide range of different workshops, lectures and seminars on the provision of information and prevention of trafficking. In general, these types of prevention lectures and workshops can be divided into two specific sectors, one directed at 'at-risk groups' and one at professionals.

Some offices, such as La Strada Ukraine, make use of so-called Lector Groups, which are groups of trained staff who conduct part of the prevention workshops. Others, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus and Moldova, make use of so-called peer-educator groups, students of about the same age as the target group of the lectures, who inform each other on the subject and the risk of trafficking.

In several La Strada countries, NGOs have been trained by La Strada in order to enable them to provide such training in their specific regions.

The aim of lectures/workshops is to strengthen the self-confidence of students and inform them about the risks of job-offers abroad. During

the prevention lectures, participants receive information on the definition of trafficking, the methodology of recruiting and the risks of seeking jobs abroad and possible safe migration opportunities. Film materials and case stories are presented during these lectures. A large number of people can be reached through these lectures, especially when peer groups or lecture groups are used to conduct lectures in local communities.

In 2007, a total of 1.783 lectures were organised for at risk-groups, reaching 46.191 participants. The number of prevention lectures held varies considerably for each country, partly due to the different circumstances they face.

In Moldova, education in anti-trafficking prevention is part of the official school curriculum, but not in Poland, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Ukraine and Bosnia. Most of the NGOs in these countries, however, do have good relations either with the national Ministry of Education or with educational institutes themselves, allowing them to offer anti-trafficking prevention sessions at schools.

Besides prevention lectures at educational institutes, La Strada has experienced course leaders who train a variety of professional groups such as police officers, lawyers, judges, social workers, representatives of shelters and governmental institutions, military personnel and employees of NGOs. Also, new alliances with professionals outside the trafficking field are being sought. For example, La Strada Bulgaria trained various representatives of the tourism industry in the issue of trafficking. Of course, La Strada also trains its own staff, particularly its hotline consultants.

In total, 55 seminars for professionals were organised in 2007, involving 1.030 participants.

Prevention material & dissemination

In 2007, all La Strada offices prepared and distributed educational material for different target groups within the Prevention & Education Campaigns. The prevention (and hotline promotion) materials developed since the start of the La Strada Programme are numerous, including notebooks, calendars, leaflets, postcards, bags, travel guides, advisory booklets, posters, stickers, T-shirts, buttons, billboards, videos, radio jingles, etc. In addition, manuals

and other specific material for professional groups have been published. La Strada Poland for instance finalised the programme 'Human Rights and Trafficking in Women and Young People in Europe; Educational Toolkit for Teachers and Students', which was published in Polish, German and Italian.

Channels of distribution used in 2007 included border stations, labour agencies, embassies, health centres, educational institutes, police stations, airports, brothels, bars, etc. Special focus was given to projects with minority groups, including immigrants and Roma. The development, design, language and message of information materials are as far as possible based on the actual needs of the target groups, learnt directly from them, as they are included in the development of materials. Information and prevention materials are disseminated in those places frequented by the target group.

Strengthening cooperation outside the anti-trafficking domain

As trafficking in human beings is not an isolated phenomenon which can be disentangled from other issues, La Strada offices are in the process of strengthening their cooperation with organisations focusing on other issues than trafficking in persons alone.

In 2007, La Strada Belarus, La Strada Moldova and La Strada Ukraine strengthened their network with other organisations working, for instance, in the field of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Most La Strada offices also work extensively with embassies and consulates, with migrant organisations and with academics. But La Strada offices do not only work with (non) governmental organisations and academics, increasingly cooperation is being established with the commercial sector as well.

La Strada Belarus cooperated with the commercial sector for the event of 'Open Doors La Strada' and La Strada Bulgaria initiated cooperation with the tourism sector. La Strada Poland worked with the cosmetics industry on the development of new prevention materials.

Hotlines & helplines

The hotlines and helplines run by La Strada are important tools in prevention as well as in the social assistance campaign. All La Strada offices have a hotline. Consultants provide information on destination countries, including information about the national situation and legislation of these countries, useful telephone numbers and safety tips, together with possibilities of help in emergencies. The same information is also provided by email.

On 30 May 2007, La Strada Macedonia opened the Informational Educational Centre against Human Trafficking. The goal of the Info-Educational Centre is to offer consultations and assistance, not only via the SOS Line, but also through direct consultations between the clients and La Strada. Anyone in need of information, emotional support, consultation or other types of assistance related to the issue of human trafficking can schedule a meeting on the toll-free number 0800 11111, which is open 24 hours a day, or send an email to: sosline@lastrada.org.mk. As for the Ukraine, the representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy continue to consult on employment agencies and licence issues every Saturday on the national toll-free line which has developed out of the La Strada hotline and is still coordinated by La Strada Ukraine.

Several offices provide specific consultations for migrants, also in foreign languages.

In Poland and the Czech Republic, consultation is offered in Russian and Vietnamese, while La Strada Macedonia offers Albanian consultation and La Strada Moldova offers Romanian consultation.

In 2007, almost 9.000 calls regarding prevention were received on the hotlines and over 506 requests sent by email or through the Internet.

Social Assistance Campaign

The Social Assistance campaign aims to build up an infrastructure of support for trafficked persons in close cooperation with government institutions and other NGOs. Within this campaign, the telephone hotline enables the La Strada teams to get in touch with trafficked persons and provide them with social, legal, medical, practical and emotional support; for emergency calls the lines are usually in operation for 24 hours. Over 3,250 trafficked persons were counselled through the hotline or by email.

Trafficked persons are also given direct support and advice in practical, medical, legal and social matters. Depending on individual circumstances, support is offered with regard to counselling and education, including psychological counselling, emotional support, crisis intervention, sheltering, restoration of personal documents, basic legal aid or referral to other legal services, securing contacts with the family (upon request) and humanitarian aid in the form of food, medicines and basic commodities. In order to provide adequate services, the La Strada offices make use of services provided by others, and refer clients to specialist clinics, legal aid agencies, etc. Moreover, La Strada offices are contacted for general information on emigration and naturalisation, including marriages, divorce, child custody and similar matters.

As for providing shelter to trafficked persons, in the past few years the majority of the La Strada offices have established their own shelters and currently six shelters are operational.

La Strada Czech Republic operates two shelters – one exclusively for female clients in long and short-term care, the other is able to accommodate male clients if necessary. This second shelter is also used for the training of clients in long-term care; here they learn to become self-sufficient and independent. La Strada Ukraine, La Strada Moldova and La Strada Netherlands make use of shelters of others and do not have their own shelters.

As in all La Strada countries, trafficked persons are also referred to state shelters, shelters of the IOM, and religious and humanitarian organisations.

Next to short-term assistance and safe return, the focus of the social assistance work is on long-term support and the social inclusion of trafficked persons. For each client a tailor-made programme is developed, including – if needed – vocational training and help in the search for jobs.

With a view to increasing the chances of its clients to successfully re-enter the labour market, language courses are provided by La Strada Czech Republic to its foreign clientele, as well as re-qualification courses and so-called ‘employment training’. Employment training aims to help clients who have been living for many years in an exploitative environment to become accustomed to the working environment, and to ease their transition into the regular labour market.

In 2007, the La Strada offices assisted over 1,550 clients in person, of whom 1,231 were new clients, meaning they had contacted La Strada for the first time. The types of assistance provided varied widely and as this can not be quantified, no figures can be presented on this matter.

Referral of cases

One important asset of the La Strada network is that all La Strada offices cooperate closely, including on the provision of individual assistance.

Bulgarian trafficked persons who end up in the Netherlands are assisted both by La Strada Netherlands and La Strada Bulgaria, in close consultation.

Most offices are often in contact by email and phone for information exchange and referral of cases and practically all offices referred cases during 2007.

In 2007, two La Strada offices in South Eastern Europe cooperated closely in the relocation of a trafficked person from one country to another. As the individual was an important witness in a court case her safety could not be ensured. The La Strada office therefore chose to relocate her to another La Strada country, where she was admitted to the shelter and started to get her life back on track. She is currently working and attending school, and has received the citizenship of the receiving country, albeit after intensive efforts by the La Strada offices.

LSI does not provide direct social support to trafficked persons, as its member organisations do. However, LSI is sometimes contacted regarding specific cases of trafficked persons, either by NGOs in certain countries that are looking for contacts elsewhere, e.g. to help in getting certain information or contacts needed to support a client. LSI can then facilitate in approaching national and international police authorities, or international networks and political bodies. LSI is also contacted by lawyers or other agents who need specific information, especially on the legal situation in the La Strada countries. With regard to requests by third parties for contacts required for the referral of trafficked persons, a separate database was updated containing details on NGOs and other organisations, including information on services (social map). LSI is planning to set up a more advanced system for the social map in 2008.

Strengthening the network – cooperation and capacity building

One of the main tasks of LSI as the international secretariat is to facilitate internal cooperation within the network. LSI staff receive regular updates and reports from the offices, and closely follow and comment on national activities and developments. At meetings and in its regular communication tasks, LSI played a consultancy role on staff management and provided feedback when problems surfaced, e.g. regarding staff management and fundraising.

In 2007, LSI was consulted on staff replacements by La Strada Netherlands and asked by La Strada Belarus to help receive late funding instalments by donors. LSI further updated national offices that were not able to be present at meetings or in discussions, such as the national coordinators of La Strada Macedonia and La Strada Moldova, who were unable to attend the meeting in Minsk, Belarus.

In general, both the international coordinator and advisor on public affairs have supported La Strada staff members in the preparations of presentations, lobbying work and all kinds of advice and consultancy work. La Strada offices separately support each other as well. Some examples of these in 2007 are: all offices shared new contacts of service providers and possible donors; shared their interim reports and provided updates on staff, the financial situation, attendance at meetings, and representation.

La Strada Bulgaria stood in for and updated LSI on the ICMPD programme, while managers of La Strada Czech Republic and La Strada Ukraine represented LSI at the UNODC meeting. LSI collaborated in an application by La Strada Bulgaria to the Open Society Institute (on the discussion on legalisation of prostitution in Bulgaria). LSI was also consulted on the attendance of La Strada offices at meetings on the minimum criteria for social services and national rapporteurs on trafficking. LSI is also regularly contacted for organisational contacts.

The international secretariat holds the final responsibility to donors for joint projects submitted by the La Strada network and commits itself to fundraising for both the international secretariat and the national La Strada offices. As for the general La Strada capacity-building programme, LSI is currently investigating gaps in support and the needs of all offices for further staff training; a capacity-building programme will be developed for the coming years based on the requirements identified.

Annual meetings

In 2007, the international secretariat organised two General Assembly meetings; the 5th Assembly meeting was held in Minsk, Belarus, in April and the 6th Assembly meeting took place in Skopje, Macedonia, in October. Parallel to the Assembly meeting in Skopje, a thematic managers' meeting was arranged.

The 5th Assembly meeting focussed on a network discussion of La Strada strategies and included an introductory session, a workshop on communication and cooperation, and a brainstorm on new and existing ideas. These were followed by working group sessions that were utilised to work out a capacity-building plan, a common LSI registration system and the contents, policies and principles for a common understanding of La Strada concepts, and a possible follow-up of the strategy discussion. A separate workshop on principles was also part of the network discussion. Other issues on the agenda concerned the board elections, the planning of the next Assembly meeting in Macedonia and NGO platform, as well as finances and fundraising, highlights and reporting 2006, the launch of a common project – 8 March 2008 – updates on international lobby developments and the LSI action and activity plan 2007-2008.

At the 6th Assembly meeting in Skopje, Macedonia, internal discussions on a strategic plan continued and a two-day session, supported by an external training bureau, took place. Other issues further discussed at this La Strada and other meetings were: partnership with other networks – including ARIADNE, GAATW, and individual NGOs; the development of common registration and capacity building needs and the database on trafficking issues; contacts and clients; representation at the international level and on different bodies, for example, accreditation to important political

bodies such as the UN and the CoE, how to react in general to trends (and target groups) and new developments, such as the European Commission proposal to launch a Europe-wide hotline number on trafficking, as well as other lobbying issues. Questions such as how to receive structural funding, how to deal with donors in general and specifically the policies of USAID were also tackled.

NGO Platform 2007

In 2007, La Strada Macedonia organised the 3rd NGO Platform in cooperation with LSI, entitled 'Responding to Root Causes and Creating Equal Opportunities,' which took place between 15 and 16 October. Prior NGO platforms were organised by LSI in Warsaw, Poland and Kiev, Ukraine. The platform offers the possibility to promote and present La Strada and its work. It further creates an opportunity for both La Strada members and other NGOs active in Europe to commonly discuss issues of concern, share experience and best practices and to promote openness and transparency among NGOs.

Plenary sessions, thematic workshops, smaller bilateral sessions and side events were organised for a group of over 60 NGO representatives, among which La Strada member organisations. A first workshop round focussed on tailor-made prevention work with minority groups; access to labour markets and social inclusion of trafficked persons; access to legal aid, trial monitoring, compensation and prevention of trafficking in children. A second round of workshops dealt with prevention work and campaign images and messages; transnational NGO referral mechanisms; internal trafficking, and lastly, monitoring human rights and joint lobbying (specific action targeting European institutions). The third workshop round focussed on networking in Europe and joint action, equal access to asylum for trafficked persons; addressing all forms of trafficking, as well as the issue of domestic violence in relation to trafficking.

Space was provided for bilateral meetings, too, for fostering cooperation among the organisations present, for questions related to national actions and programmes, and allowing for networking for possible membership of LSI and GAATW. At the end of the NGO platform, a closing session highlighted the main findings and recommendations developed in the

workshops, followed by a closing round table, which focused on how the recommendations could be implemented in Europe, and specifically in Macedonia. The drafted statement for the occasion of the launch of the EU anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October was read out and made available for co-signing. *A full report of the NGO platform is available upon request.*

Internal capacity building

Despite the wide experience of La Strada in the anti-trafficking field, there is an ongoing need to deepen and constantly improve the organisation's knowledge and capacity to be able to maintain the recognition for the work done, and to be able to offer adequate assistance and support to trafficked persons. As trafficking in human beings is a changing phenomenon, any responses should be constantly adjusted to circumstances and needs, such as the needs of trafficked persons and other associated groups and individuals. Within the framework of developing a strategy plan, a special working group set up with members of La Strada Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova drafted a common internal and external capacity-building programme. The internal activities aim to improve the experience and information exchange among the members, to train staff, and to increase teambuilding and internal trust and communication.

In 2007, LSI also developed a proposal for the development of an intranet system to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise between the national offices. The intranet should also improve transparency of decision-making processes, which will encourage trust and openness among the staff members of the La Strada network and ensure efficient communication and a qualitative information-flow. The intranet should be piloted and established in the period 2009-2010.

External capacity building & training

While external capacity building is needed to ensure that La Strada actions and results are multiplied, it is also aimed at avoiding overlap and promoting cooperation rather than competition in the anti-trafficking field. The issue of extension of the network and closer cooperation with NGO partners and other networks will gain higher priority in the future. On request, LSI

provides training, consultation and cooperation to other NGOs and it offers a forum for NGOs on trafficking-related issues by organising La Strada NGO platform meetings.

In 2009 and 2011 the next NGO platforms will be organised, to which some 20 anti-trafficking NGOs in Europe will be invited. Also, common projects with NGOs in other CEE and Western European countries are to be implemented both at the bilateral and international levels. In this respect, LSI is planning to set up closer cooperation in several European countries and offer La Strada associate membership to some NGOs. Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Western Europe and the Middle East have been defined as priority regions.

Cooperation with international bodies

All La Strada offices maintain international cooperation within and outside the La Strada network. This includes cooperation and concrete projects with other NGOs, other international networks and international organisations (OSCE, IOM, UN organisations, etc.) which strengthen and complement the work of La Strada.

Project cooperation was maintained with ICMPD during 2007, as several La Strada offices participated actively in projects coordinated by the ICMPD. La Strada Bulgaria, Macedonia and Moldova cooperated in the 'Transnational Referral Mechanism Project,' in which LSI is a member of the advisory board. LSI also cooperates with ICMPD in the Alliance Expert Group meetings organised by the OSCE. La Strada Moldova is also partner in the ICMPD project on data collection.

Most offices also cooperated with the International Labour Organization (ILO), for example, La Strada Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. LSI collaborated with ILO representatives on lobby issues in 2007 as well.

Nearly all La Strada offices cooperate on a daily basis with IOM. This takes place especially on the issue of reintegration and return services for trafficked persons; in Poland, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, special agreements have been signed for this cooperation in previous years. In 2007, La Strada Belarus also signed a cooperation agreement with

IOM, which has generally improved information sharing. Cooperation also exists on prevention work, the hotline services – in some cases hotlines are funded by IOM – and other concrete activities, such as the referral of persons when shelters are full. Contacts between IOM Geneva and LSI concentrated on the exchange of information and updates and discussions, in particular on the UN Special Rapporteur on THB and the IOM publication on performance indicators.

International cooperation with NGOs & NGO networks

La Strada has been working with central human rights networks and groups, among which the Human Rights & Democracy Network (HRDN), of which LSI is a member (of the subgroup on anti-trafficking of the HRDN). In the framework of the HRDN, LSI cooperated and supported several common lobbying actions, in particular targeting the European Union and Council of Europe bodies and commissions. LSI attends the quarterly meetings in Brussels, Belgium. La Strada also collaborates closely with the other members of the HRDN, among which are Amnesty International (AI), ECPAT, ISCOS, Plan, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes. In 2007, this cooperation continued with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Several La Strada offices worked individually with Amnesty offices in 2007. La Strada Belarus for instance participated in an AI campaign on 8 March, International Women's Day, against violence towards women. LSI mainly cooperated on common advocacy issues targeted at EU institutions, such as the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention.

LSI and its members also collaborated intensively with GAATW, of which all La Strada offices, as well as LSI, are members.

The national coordinator of La Strada Poland is a member of the board of GAATW, as well as of the subgroup on GAATW's structure. The public affairs advisor of LSI is a member of the subgroup of the research on Collateral Damage, while the international coordinator of LSI, who is responsible for overall contacts with GAATW, has represented GAATW several times at meetings in Brussels. She has also contributed to the GAATW overall action plan. LSI cooperated with GAATW on a common

lobbying campaign for ratification of the Convention of the CoE. LSI also contributed with a background article to a special magazine on compensation. Further feedback and information was provided by LSI at the request of other members and for GAATW publications and newsletters. Other issues discussed were the U.S. TIP report and the position of the UN Special Rapporteur and her earlier reports.

In 2007, LSI and its members also contributed to the (preparation of) the 3rd GAATW International Members' Congress which took place from 5-8 November 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives of LSI, La Strada Czech Republic, La Strada Macedonia and La Strada Poland participated and contributed to the congress.

All La Strada offices cooperate with various national and foreign NGOs, specifically working on the issues of trafficking in human beings and exploitation and slavery, either with regard to formal projects or by sharing information through informal contacts. In 2007, LSI closely cooperated with Anti-Slavery International (ASI), based in London, UK.

Cooperation between LSI and ASI mostly focused on common lobbying activities for ratification of the Council of Europe Convention and the establishment of the GRETA Committee. Several common side events were organised, and meetings took place in 2007.

La Strada cooperates on a daily basis with over 20 other national NGOs on the issue of trafficking in human beings; examples are the NGOs Pagasa in Belgium, LEFÖ in Austria, and Ban Ying in Germany. With these NGOs La Strada specifically worked on common lobbying issues and voiced its concern on the plans for a common EU hotline number.

For some years now, La Strada has also extended its cooperation with migrant rights-based groups and networks. LSI is a member of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) as are La Strada Bosnia and Herzegovina and La Strada Czech Republic.

A working meeting with PICUM took place in February, and an LSI project officer attended the PICUM 'Workshop on Protection and Gaps in the International Human Rights Framework' in March 2007. The international

coordinator and advisor on public affairs attended the side events organised by PICUM and other organisations at the High Level Dialogue Meeting on Migration in June 2007.

Just as La Strada needs the cooperation of the main agents in the anti-trafficking field, other bodies see the need for cooperation with La Strada. The La Strada offices offer their expertise where needed, both at the strategic and operational level. Training and exchange of best practices, mutual respect and willingness to learn from each other are a prerequisite. La Strada also works with research institutes.

Together with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, LSI has been implementing a programme on training law enforcement officers in Romania within the framework of the AGIS programme. In February 2007, a meeting for this project took place in Vienna, where LSI held a presentation on compensation for trafficked persons. During the rest of the year, discussions were mainly held by email for updates and preparation of the final seminar, expected to take place in Romania or the Netherlands in June 2008. LSI also engaged a Dutch consultant to provide training in Romanian law enforcement.

La Strada publications 2007

In January 2007, LSI published a new leaflet which was disseminated in the first half of 2007. All La Strada offices published leaflets and various prevention materials.

During 2007, two editions of the LSI newsletter were issued. Contributions to the newsletters were received from several external experts. Additionally, LSI published a report on the Romanian study visit 2006 and reports on the NGO platform 2006.

Besides annual reports and a variety of preventive materials such as booklets and leaflets, the La Strada offices published several reports and researches in 2007:

- La Strada Bulgaria produced the following reports: 'Children speak out. Trafficking risk and resilience in Southeast Europe', 'Psycho-social rehabilitation of children withdrawn from trafficking and other worst forms of child labour', 'Trafficking in Persons: Questions and Answers' (second updated edition).
- La Strada Moldova published the La Strada Express – 'Re-integration of trafficked persons – a process or result?', as well as guidelines on the 'Identification of Trafficked Persons in Moldova'.
- La Strada Poland published 'Human Rights and Trafficking in Women and Young people in Europe. Educational Toolkit for teachers and students'.

LSI Income and expenditure

The start of 2007 was quite difficult, as not all answers to funding applications had been received. Fortunately, LSI managed to gain full funding for 2007, although its budget was slightly revised. In 2007, La Strada International received funding from Foundation DOEN (50.000 EUR) and ICCO (90.000 EUR). ICCO further allowed LSI to use a remaining grant of about 70.000 EUR for 2007. For the 18 October activities, funding was additionally received from ICCO, CORDAID and the Dutch Ministry of Justice, in total 50.500 EUR.

For the 8 March campaign, funding was received from CORDAID (15.000 EUR). Other funding applications were sent to Mama Cash and the Global Fund for Women. Both granted LSI 33.200 EUR and 9.497 EUR (15.000 USD) respectively for 2007 and 2008. In addition, LSI received small donations from private persons for member organisations.

The budget of LSI reflects the expenditure of the LSI secretariat alone, but includes common activities such as meetings, projects and campaigns and the overall capacity-building programme. *A copy of the audit and financial reports is available upon request.*

Fundraising & donors

Next to fundraising efforts and financial management for the LSI secretariat, the staff of the international secretariat assisted several La Strada offices with funding applications, for example, by sending out monthly overviews of new calls and donor options. For several donors of the La Strada members, LSI functions as the main contact person, among them the Dutch donors ICCO (La Strada Moldova), Church in Action (La Strada Belarus), Foundation DOEN (La Strada Ukraine and La Strada Bulgaria) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (La Strada Macedonia and La Strada Bulgaria) as well as the Belgian-based King Baudouin Foundation (La Strada Bulgaria and La Strada Macedonia).

During the year, the La Strada offices were able to obtain sufficient funding for implementation of the programme 2007; unfortunately, La Strada Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently unable to cover all its structural costs. For 2008, LSI intends to apply for EU grants with common applications. In general, it is quite difficult to gain funding from the European Union, and earlier attempts by LSI were unsuccessful. However, some La Strada offices have been able to secure EU grants. Due to limited staff, there is also little time to put more effort into fundraising. In 2007 LSI therefore decided to appoint a fundraiser, a corresponding advertisement having been issued in December 2007.

Financial and narrative reporting is very time-consuming. Within the network, the main financial issues discussed were fundraising and common applications. For the financial administration of La Strada members, LSI supported the audit report preparations, contacts concerning their Dutch bank accounts, and reimbursement for attendance at various meetings (mainly travel costs) – most of these tasks are carried out by one of the project assistants, together with the international coordinator.

Financial strategies & sustainability

Besides fundraising, LSI also played a role in discussions on sustainability. LSI aims to work towards the sustainability of all offices and to encourage the financial independence of its members, while continuing to contribute to their fundraising efforts. LSI and the La Strada members have started discussing the development of common fundraising efforts and policies on the creation of sustainability. LSI further drafted guidelines and criteria on cooperation with donors and organisations.

These documents are part of the strategy discussion. At the NGO platform, a special workshop on donor policies and criteria was organised. Furthermore, in November some research was conducted by a member of the Advisory Council on current LSI and La Strada members' financial situation and sustainability. The report on this research will form part of the strategic discussion to continue in 2008.

Annual accounts as at 31.12.2007

1. Balance	31-12-2006	31-12-2007	
<i>Assets</i>			
Loan	2.000	2.000	
Accounts receivable	59.466	27.319	
Liquid means	50.471	224.589	
Total assets	111.937	253.908	
<i>Liabilities</i>			
Accumulated Surplus	561	561	
Grants to be spent	85.431	232.165	
Short-term Liabilities			
Income taxes payable	13.056	5.821	
Other debts	12.888	15.361	
Total liabilities	111.936	253.908	
2. Profit & Loss			
	2006	2007	Budget 2007
<i>Grants</i>			
DOEN	50.313	49.687	49.687
ICCO	122.025	160.597	160.597
KBF	23.520		
CORDAID	1.500	15.000	7.500
October 18 grants		50.500	
La Strada Macedonia		7.969	7.969
MTV fund		15.147	
Global Fund for Women	1.501		
Mama Cash	390	9.107	
La Strada IV & additional STV	79.679		1.400
Other grants			45.958
Total grants	278.928	308.007	273.111
<i>Other income</i>			
Donations		4.121	
Interest		1.115	
Various income		562	
Total other income		5.798	

<i>Costs</i>	2006	2007	Budget 2007
Salaries	148.113	161.928	148.561
Office costs (rent/service)	13.157	13.641	12.600
Administration costs	25.313	8.738	10.000
Other costs	4.511	3.576	9.400
Board meeting	-	2.794	9.000
Assembly-meeting 1	10.823	9.225	12.000
Assembly-meeting 2	57.876	66.757	66.000
Other international travel costs	1.320	3.222	
Additional project costs	17.815	43.924	5.550
Total costs	278.928	313.805	273.111

General accounting principles

The annual accounts are prepared on the basis of the historical cost price. Unless otherwise recorded, assets and liabilities are recorded at their conversion value. Profits are booked in the period in which they were realised. Losses are booked in the year in which they are foreseeable. As a non-profit association under Dutch law ('Vereniging'), LSI records profits made as project costs still to be paid.

Accounting principles for the balance sheet

Receivables. Receivables are included at face value, less any provision for doubtful accounts. These provisions are determined by individual assessment of the receivables.

Principles for the determination of results

General. The result is determined by the difference between the received project incomes (grants) and the costs and other liabilities of the year, valued against the historical cost prices.

Assessment. The result is determined by the difference between the received project incomes (grants) and the expended grants in the present year, taking account of the accounting principles relating to this matter.

This annual audit declaration below concerns the detailed accounts of La Strada International for the year 2007. Provided above is only a summary of the total Balance and Profit & Loss accounts 2007.



IPA-ACON ACCOUNTANTS B.V.

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E-MAIL info@ipa-acon.nl

To: La Strada International

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Report on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements 2007 of La Strada International, Amsterdam, which comprise the balance sheet as at December 31st, 2007, the profit and loss account for the year then ended and the notes.

Management's responsibility

Management of the company is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements, in accordance with the applicable standards as noted in the financial statements. This responsibility includes: designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Dutch law. This law requires that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of La Strada International as at December 31st, 2007, and of its result for the year then ended in accordance with applicable standards as noted in the financial statements.

Haarlem, 10 april 2008
IPA-ACON ACCOUNTANTS B.V.

Drs. C.M. Dekker-Huige RA

Reg.nr.: 101342/215/2008/1418

Contact details: La Strada offices

La Strada International

www.lastradainternational.org

La Strada member organisations

La Strada Belarus

Young Women's Christian Association of Belarus
www.lastrada.by

La Strada Bosnia & Herzegovina

Foundation 'La Strada BiH'
www.lastrada.ba

La Strada Bulgaria

Animus Association Foundation
www.animusassociation.org

La Strada Czech Republic

www.strada.cz

La Strada Moldova

International Women's Rights Protection and Promotion Center
www.lastrada.md

La Strada Macedonia

Open Gate
www.lastrada.org.mk

La Strada the Netherlands

Coördinatiecentrum Mensenhandel (CoMensha)
www.comensha.nl

La Strada Poland

La Strada Foundation Against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery
www.strada.org.pl

La Strada Ukraine

International Women's Rights Center
www.lastrada.org.ua

La Strada staff in 2007

LSI Staff

Suzanne Hoff, International
Coordinator
Marieke van Doorninck,
Advisor Public Affairs
Jille Belisario, Project Officer
Katrin McGauran, Website &
Newsletter Editor / Financial Project
Officer
Bregje Blokhuis, Project Manager
Anita Kurzydla, Documentation
Centre Assistant

Board (as of April 2007)

Chair – Petra Burcikova (La Strada
Czech Republic)
Treasurer – Nadia Kozhouharova
(La Strada Bulgaria)
Secretary – Maria de Cock (La
Strada Netherlands)

Advisory Council

Annie Hillar
Ann Jordan
Jyothi Kanics
Helga Konrad
Trijntje Kootstra
Anna Korvinus
Bärbel Uhl

National Coordinators

Belarus – Irina Alkhovka
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Fadila
Hadzic
Bulgaria – Nadia Kozhouharova
Czech Republic – Petra Burcikova
Moldova – Ana Revenco
Macedonia – Jasmina D. Rajkowska
The Netherlands – Maria de Cock
Poland – Stana Buchowska
Ukraine – Katya Levchenko