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La Strada International first reaction

to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016

La Strada International, the European NGO Network against trafficking in human beings, welcomes the *EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016*, which demonstrates the Commission's commitment to the fight against this gross violation of human rights. The EU Strategy acknowledges the extreme complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and its roots causes, that requires a multi-disciplinary approach by a large variety of partners.

The Strategy is comprehensive and initiates a variety of actions, research, cooperation mechanisms and practical tools on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and the protection of the rights of trafficked persons. In the coming months La Strada International will share its opinion and detailed feedback on the several different aspects of the Strategy.

For now, La Strada International is pleased that the Strategy focuses on concrete measures that will support the transposition and implementation of *Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims*. La Strada International recommends that also effective processes are established ensuring that action in other EU policy areas reinforces the protection and assistance of trafficked persons as required by the Directive rather than undercutting it because priority is afforded to other policy concerns, such as migration control or labour laws.

Acknowledging that the non-identification of trafficked persons is the main bottleneck in the fight against human trafficking, the development of criteria, guidelines and mechanisms for identification is a distinct priority, which should go hand-in-hand with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This is also essential for tackling another identified bottleneck, which is the States' obligation to provide effective remedies to trafficked persons; failure to do so often causes secondary victimisation. Also in this respect, LSI recommends the multi-disciplinary approach.

In order to turn trafficking in human beings from a low-risk high-profit crime, into a low-profit and high-risk crime, the attention for financial investigations is welcomed, which should be linked to asset recovery and compensation for trafficked persons.

Access to rights and remedies for trafficked persons is vital and La Strada International is pleased that the Commission commits to provide clear, user-friendly information on the labour, social, victim and migrant rights that victims of trafficking in human beings have under EU law. It is important that not only trafficked persons, but all partners in the fight against human trafficking that are mentioned in the Strategy are fully aware of these rights and have the knowledge and skills to support trafficked persons in exercising these rights.

The Strategy recognises the important role of civil society and the need for cooperation and intends to establish an EU Platform of civil society organisations and service providers working on victim protection and assistance in Member States and selected third countries. La Strada International would however encourage the Commission not to aim at one umbrella structure, but to give support to the activities of NGOs and the networking between different civil society actors and between different sectors (including unions and migrant rights organisations).

La Strada International acknowledges the need for structured data collection in order to understand the changing trends, patterns and working methods of traffickers in all different forms of trafficking in human beings. In order to protect the safety, integrity and privacy of trafficked persons it is of utmost importance that before the data collection tools and procedures that are proposed in the Strategy are put into practice, they are harmonised with European data protection provisions.

La Strada International and its member organisations will closely monitor all the actions that are developed according to the Strategy on their impact on the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons and will use and promote the tools and mechanisms to implement the Directive.