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With this quarterly newsletter, La Strada International wants to inform and update about developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and on the activities of La Strada International and the La Strada member organisations. We welcome reactions to this initiative and contributions for next issues. The next deadline is **1 June 2009**. Please [mail us](#) if you have news, information about your organisation, a new report or documentary or an outspoken opinion on (inter)national developments.

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La Strada News !

La Strada Belarus analyses media coverage on gender-based violence

La Strada Belarus has found a high incidence of domestic violence among trafficked persons, indicating that this violence is one of the root causes of trafficking in women. Prevention of domestic violence and providing assistance to its victims has therefore become new focal point within La Strada Belarus. Because mass media influences public opinion on gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence and human trafficking, La Strada Belarus, with financial support of the German Filia foundation, conducted a media analysis of the representation of GBV in printed media in 2008 at the national, regional and local levels and made a series of recommendations.

Some of the main findings of the survey indicate:

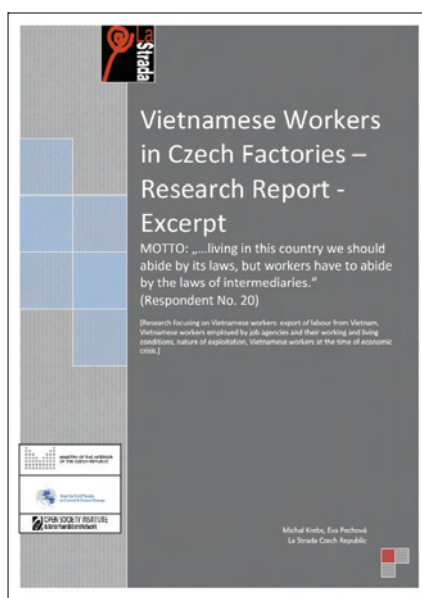
- ◆ The media focuses disproportionally on severe bodily harm, including death, beating and rape. Although violence has severe physical and psycho-social consequences for victims, La Strada believes that only citing GBV cases that result in aggravated health problems narrows the understanding of the phenomenon, creates stereotypes, and neglects psychological, economic and sexual violence within partnerships.
- ◆ Media reports create one-sided images of aggressors and victims. Also, 10% of the reviewed articles depict the victim as the “provocateur”, indicating gender stereotyping and burdening those subjected to violence as ‘guilty’.
- ◆ The majority of articles describes circumstances influencing violence to be alcohol addiction, bad family relations, socio-economic factors, or psychological problems of the aggressor, whilst information on violence in families with high or middle incomes are not mentioned and thereby silenced.

- ◆ Most articles lack information about mechanism providing victims' right to assistance. Only 4,4% of articles mention victims addressing social services or/and NGOs. There is also a complete absence of information about places where aggressors can seek help, for example, if he/she wants to save or upkeep family relations.

In conclusion, La Strada Belarus believes coverage of GBV in the mass media should be more analytical and focus more on prevention. In particular, it should aim to change stereotypes depicting violence as being related only to alcohol addiction and anti-social behaviour, to develop tolerance towards victims of gender-based violence and especially sexual violence, to describe mechanism on how to protect GBV victims' rights, by indicating help-lines and relevant support organisations, and finally, to highlight the diversity of gender-based violence, and thus improve the self-identification of victims. For more information, please contact [La Strada Belarus](#).



La Strada Czech Republic: monitor job agencies employing Vietnamese workers



For a long time La Strada Czech Republic has been providing social services to Vietnamese clients and in 2007, it implemented a project aiming at expanding the identification of trafficked persons and the prevention of human trafficking and exploitation within the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic (hereafter "CR"). One of the final project recommendations called for the monitoring and supervision of job agencies focusing on Vietnamese workers coming to work in Czech factories. Already at the time of the implementation of the 2007 project, job agencies tended to be quite unscrupulous in the treatment of workers. In 2008, La Strada CR carried out another field survey on the practices of job agencies arranging work for Vietnamese migrants. The final report, *Vietnamese Workers in Czech Factories*, finds there is indebtedness and lack of information among persons migrating from Vietnam to the CR, deceptive practices of job agencies applied in the territory of Vietnam, unlawful practices of Czech job agencies with regard to these persons as well as substandard working and living conditions. Further, migrants from Vietnam face discrimination in the CR and exploitation by job agencies and companies. The report makes recommendations to address the weaknesses of employment system by job agencies.

Ukraine develops standards in social prevention of trafficking in persons

La Strada Ukraine has joined a national expert group to improve standards in social prevention of trafficking in persons. The main task of the expert group - comprising representatives of the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Interior, as well as international organisations, NGOs and invited experts - is to elaborate a methodology for standards development, analyse international and national practices, and develop a project on standards in social prevention of trafficking in persons in Ukraine.

A first meeting of the expert group was held in March, where methodology and a plan for standards development as well as criteria for the list of services were discussed. Pending issues include the need for multiagency or one-ministry standards for services in social prevention of trafficking in persons, equal possibilities to regional NGOs to meet the standards and a mechanism for licensing NGOs as social service providers, given their expertise in the area. The group further recommended for the standards to take account of the complex law on trafficking in persons currently being drafted. The possibility of developing social order mechanisms, i.e. state delegation of services provision to NGOs, was also discussed, with the number of social contracts suggested as one of the possible indicators.

What's going on ?

Revised EU Framework decision on combating trafficking

The European Commission has adopted a revision of the 2002 Framework Decision on combating trafficking in human beings, still to be approved by the Council. The revised [Framework Decision \(FD\) on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, and protecting victims](#), takes on a broader approach than its predecessor and includes prevention and protection and is not exclusively focused on criminal justice. In the revised FD many provisions laid down in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings are incorporated, such as the notion of internal trafficking or the non-procurement clause - which stipulates that trafficked persons cannot be prosecuted for their involvement in unlawful activities as a direct consequence of being trafficked - as well as the right to compensation. Next to these additions, the revised FD also has new provisions envisaging specific treatments for vulnerable trafficked persons in criminal procedures, such as avoiding giving evidence in open court, avoiding visual contact between trafficked persons and the offender, and non-disclosure of the identity, amongst others.



La Strada International welcomes the new Framework Decision as it broadens the scope of [EU anti-trafficking policies](#) by including prevention and protection, and for the protective measures mentioned above. The paragraph on prevention, however, is very much focussed on discouraging demand and possibility to criminalise the use of services which are object of exploitation. Although not mentioned, this will generally be explained as the criminalisation of clients of women trafficked into the sex industry. The FD also does not mention the prevention of trafficking in a more holistic way, by linking it to root causes or migration policies, for example.

La Strada International supports the call for the establishment of national rapporteurs, but regrets that there is no explicit mention of the necessary independence of monitoring mechanisms. As the EU member states themselves have decided in 1999 at the ministerial conference in The Hague, all member states should appoint independent national rapporteurs. The European Council will start discussion on the proposal this year.

Memoranda of Understanding to improve anti-trafficking cooperation

On 30 March 2009 the International Organisation on Migration (IOM) launched the [“Guiding Principles on Memoranda of Understanding between Key Stakeholders and Law Enforcement Agencies on Counter-Trafficking Cooperation”](#) in the framework of the UN.GIFT Expert Group Initiative on “Stakeholder Cooperation with Law Enforcement” at a [concluding conference](#) in Vienna. The Guiding Principles intend to serve as a practical tool that will help stakeholders when developing counter-trafficking agreements.

La Strada International provided written input for the Guiding Principles and Irena Konečná, the coordinator of La Strada Czech Republic attended the first [expert meeting in January](#). In her presentation at the conference in Vienna, Marieke van Doorninck LSI’s advisor public affairs, welcomed the Guiding Principles. La Strada offices have long-term experience with more or less formalised cooperation structures with law enforcement and state institutions. Next to positive elements, such as more recognition for the position of service-providing NGOs, problems have also occurred because of lack of clarity amongst the partners on the content of the cooperation agreements or the different roles of the actors as well as a lack of implementation. The Guiding Principles can be of assistance in dealing with these problems.



Irena Konečná, coordinator La Strada Czech Republic (Photo: UN.GIFT/IOM)

However, not all issues around cooperation are sufficiently dealt with in the Guiding Principles. The independence of service-providing NGOs can be affected by the cooperation with state institutions, for example, if there is only funding for the services provided to trafficked persons who are willing to cooperate with the authorities. Therefore, the guiding principles should also give guidelines on how to assure independence of NGOs throughout the cooperation. Although the importance of data protection is mentioned in the handbook, the preconditions for disclosure are still rather vague and need further elaboration. La Strada International also stressed the need for agreements on individual risks analyses for people who want or are forced to return to their country of origin. Van Doorninck concluded her presentation by defining the word stakeholder. Not only service-providing NGOs need to be involved but also sex workers’ rights organisations, migrant workers’ rights organisations and preferably (organisations of) trafficked persons themselves. They are the main stakeholders, as it is their interests and their future that is at stake.

UN launches Blue Heart campaign



At the Women's World Awards, which took place on 5 March in Vienna, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa launched the [Blue Heart Campaign](#). The Blue Heart aims for the same impact as the Red Ribbon, a symbol that demonstrates compassion for people living with AIDS, or the Pink Ribbon, which stands for the fight against breast cancer. The campaign website says that the Blue Heart “represents the sadness of those who are trafficked while reminding us of the cold-heartedness of those who buy and sell fellow human beings. The use of the blue UN colour also demonstrates the commitment of the United Nations to combating this crime against human dignity.”

The campaign encourages members of the public to change their Facebook profile picture to a blue heart, upload the Blue Heart to their web page, spread the word through Twitter and watch videos about human trafficking on YouTube. The heart is the second blue symbol against trafficking after the UK [Blue Blindfold campaign](#), which the EU is currently considering becoming the European Symbol against trafficking. All these symbols once again demonstrate the interest of intergovernmental organisations to fight human trafficking and their eagerness to be associated with this fight. LSI welcomes initiatives that raise public awareness about the human rights violation that trafficking is. However, LSI also believes this should not be limited to raising awareness about the horrific aspects of trafficking, but be extended to awareness about the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, war, restrictive migration policies and the demand for cheap products and services. For example, next to wearing the blue heart one could also indicate a commitment to end trafficking by buying fair trade products or paying fair prices for services.

First GRETA meeting

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) met for the first time from 24 to 27 February 2009 at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. GRETA adopted its internal rules of procedure and elected Ms. Hanne Sophie Greve as its President, Mr. Nicolas Le Coz as its first Vice-President and Ms. Gulnara Shahinian (the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Slavery) as its second Vice-President. In preparation for the first monitoring cycle of the Convention, GRETA held an exchange of views on the evaluation procedure for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the parties. GRETA decided to meet again on 16-19 June in order to continue the preparations for the first monitoring cycle of the Convention.

La Strada International, Anti-Slavery International and Amnesty International sent a letter to the GRETA members, congratulating them with their first meeting and asking for open and transparent procedures as well as the involvement of civil society in the monitoring process. The three organisations will address these issues when communicating with GRETA and attending meetings of the Committee of the Parties as observers.

New Special Rapporteur focuses on human rights



Joy Ngozi Ezeilo

At the 10th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the [Special Rapporteur on trafficking](#) Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo presented her [first report](#). Last year, [on the initiative of GAATW](#), La Strada International, together with numerous NGOs, academics and experts in the field of anti-trafficking, had strongly supported her candidacy. This first report traditionally lays out the ‘work plan’ for the Special Rapporteur, who states that during her mandate she will undertake work in the areas that have not yet, or only scarcely, been examined, such as trafficking in men and boys, addressing root causes such as gender inequalities, poverty and lack of human security, restrictive immigration laws and policies as well as the demand for “cheap labour” as a root cause. The Special Rapporteur will also work to promote a human rights-centred approach aimed at providing redress for trafficking victims, including the promotion of a focus on compensation for victims as part of the judicial process surrounding access to justice.

Her strong focus on the human rights-based approach is present through the entire report. The conclusion states: “As far as the mandate of the Special Rapporteur is concerned, the real challenge is not just in adopting strategies that will effectively lead to catching the perpetrators and punishing them. Rather, it is preferable to put in place strategies that will focus equally on the victim by recognizing and redressing the violations suffered, empowering

the victim to speak out without being doubly victimized, jeopardized or stigmatized, while at the same time targeting the root causes of human trafficking. The strategies must be people-centred, bearing in mind that human trafficking is about persons whose basic right to live free particularly from fear and want is under constant threat. We must recognize the dignity of the victims and their right to survival and development. Thus, restorative justice is central to combating human trafficking.” One of the report's recommendations reflects a demand that has been made by LSI and many of our partners for many years now, namely, the unconditional assistance (i.e. independent from cooperation with the authorities) and support (including residence permits) for trafficked persons.

La Strada International supports the report, in particular, its focus on human rights, root causes, restrictive immigration policies and the references to all important international treaties especially those on human and civil rights. LSI is also pleased that the Special Rapporteur avoids using unverifiable figures. “In the absence of systematic, reliable statistics, it is hard to know with any degree of precision if the number of trafficking cases is increasing or decreasing and why this might be so.” LSI fully agrees with the Special Rapporteur about the need for reliable facts and figures. However, success in this endeavour relies particularly upon the capacity of States to collect data at a national level, and it is of utmost importance that they ensure that data protection and consultation with service providing institutions and NGOs is central to such data collection.

The Special Rapporteur has announced her first two country visits this spring, to Belarus and Poland. Of course, the La Strada offices in these countries are looking forward to welcoming Ms. Ezeilo and discuss with her the national situation and the position of trafficked persons.

“RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

IS CENTRAL TO
COMBATING HUMAN
TRAFFICKING.”

Appointment of US trafficking ambassador: shift towards rights-based approach?

On 24 March 2009, US President Barack Obama [announced his intent](#) to nominate Luis C. de Baca as Director of the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Whilst the former trafficking ambassadors, John Miller and Mark Lagon, favoured an abolitionist approach in their annual Trafficking in Persons Reports, de Baca's track record indicates a more rights-based approach to the fight against trafficking. De Baca, whose portfolio as Counsel to the US House Committee on the Judiciary (on detail from the Civil Rights Division of the US Department of Justice) included national security, intelligence, immigration, civil rights, and modern slavery issues, served as Chief Counsel of the Civil Rights Division's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit at the Justice Department. During the Clinton Administration, he was the Department's Involuntary Servitude and Slavery Coordinator and was instrumental in developing the United States' victim-centred approach to combating modern slavery.



De Baca has investigated and prosecuted human trafficking cases in which victims were held for prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, farm labour, domestic service, and factory work. He received the [Freedom Network's Paul & Sheila Wellstone Award](#) for his efforts to combat trafficking and protect victims. La Strada is pleased de Baca will head the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, as is the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), who earlier this year joined the Freedom Network in their support of his nomination.

Trade unions to cooperate with anti-trafficking networks in Romania

Following a European conference on trafficking and forced labour, the Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons ([ANITP](#)), the National Trade Union Confederation ([Cartel Alfa](#)) and the Employers' Confederation of Industry of Romania ([CONPIROM](#)) signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#). The conference workshop "[Christian action against trafficking – going beyond](#)" was co-organised by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe ([CCME](#)) and the Romanian ecumenical association of churches ([AIDRom](#)) and is the first of a series of CCME activities aimed at mapping and sharing best practice against trafficking for forced labour. Doris Peschke, General Secretary of CCME, underlined the importance of this cooperation: “It is becoming clear that trafficking for forced labour is as worrying as trafficking for sexual exploitation. Trade Unions are a natural partner in combating trafficking for forced labour. This workshop and the emerging cooperation is therefore an encouraging step forward”

The Memorandum commits the partners to prevent trafficking in persons, paying special attention to persons involved in activities for profit, to protect and assist victims of trafficking, fully respecting their fundamental rights

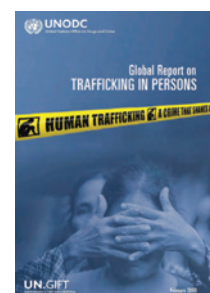
and, in order to achieve these goals, promote cooperation between the parties at the national and international level. All partners agreed to appoint special representatives on the issue and carry out public information campaigns concerning the risks of work without legal documents. Specifically, the National Trade Union Confederation commits to ensure the adoption of measures necessary to identify cases of trafficking in persons and the adoption of measures necessary to monitor working conditions. The Employers' Confederation promises to ensure the adoption of measures necessary to mitigate the effects of work without legal documents, through the development of specific policies and the organisation of courses and training programmes for trafficked victims in order to reintegrate them.

"TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED LABOUR IS AS WORRYING AS TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION. TRADE UNIONS ARE A NATURAL PARTNER IN COMBATING TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED LABOUR"

What's new ?

UN.GIFT Report provides new global data on trafficking

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#) provides an overview of trafficking patterns and legal steps taken in response as well as comprehensive country-specific information on reported cases of trafficking in persons, victims, and prosecutions. It posits sexual exploitation of predominantly women and girls as the most common form of human trafficking (79%). The report also highlights that in 30% of the countries examined, women make up the largest proportion of traffickers. In some parts of the world, women trafficking women is the norm.



Legal frameworks and anti-trafficking practices in Germany

This report by the *Koordinierungskreis gegen Frauenhandel und Gewalt an Frauen im Migration-sprozess* (KOK) is an updated reprint of its 2001 brochure "Trafficking in Women in Germany". Bearing in mind the socio-political changes affecting trafficking in women that have occurred since 2001 both at the national and international level, this book highlights the current legal framework of various forms of trafficking as well as the experiences and expertise of specialised counselling centres. It emphasises that due to enhanced cooperation between various German stakeholders, in particular specialised counselling centres and the police, networks have now been established in almost all German federal states. To receive a copy, mail info@kok-buero.de.



Raids not an effective tool against human trafficking

The report [Kicking down the door. The use of raids to fight trafficking in persons](#) by the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center summarises findings from interviews with 46 people with experience of raids, including service providers who have worked with trafficked persons, law enforcement personnel, and 15 migrant women who have been trafficked. The authors conclude that "anti-trafficking efforts should be community-based, led by people familiar with sex work and other sectors where there is vulnerability to trafficking, such as domestic work, agricultural labour and service sectors, people who have experienced trafficking, social service providers, and immigrants rights advocates. This kind of approach would not only be more effective, but would build community and empower people who have been trafficked rather than subjecting them to the additional trauma of raids, arrests, and detention."



Funding priorities in Eastern European countries

This [ECRE paper on EU funding priorities in four Eastern European countries](#) portrays funding priorities of the European Union in four Eastern European countries neighbouring the EU (Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) for refugee protection, migration management and border reinforcement. The paper concludes that funding for border control far outweighs funding for refugee protection and that migration management is better funded than refugee protection. It highlights, among others, that countries in the Eastern European region need to be better supported not only in controlling their borders, but also in identifying people in need of protection, providing protection, assisting the voluntary return and supporting the integration of recognised refugees.

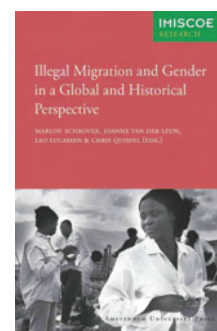
The politics of anti-trafficking

In the article "Sex, Slaves and Citizens: the Politics of Anti-Trafficking", Bridget Anderson and Rutvica Andrijasevic argue that a focus on the "evils of trafficking" is a way of depoliticising the debate on migration. The authors argue that for exploitation and abuse to be ended, solutions must be sought that move beyond identifying victims and imprisoning traffickers. In particular, ever harsher immigration controls presented as being in the interests of migrants, in reality produce groups of people that are 'deportable' and hence particularly vulnerable to abuse. The authors point out that the state is responsible for labour sectors existing outside of labour protection rules are thereby complicit in permitting third parties to profit from migrants' labour. The article can be purchased [here](#).



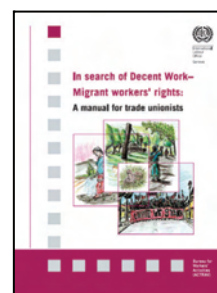
Irregular migration and gender

"Illegal Migration and Gender in a Global and Historical Perspective" by Marlou Schrover (et al.) combines irregular migration and the role of gender in irregular migration and views migration scholarship through the lens of a gender perspective, investigating definitions of citizenship and the differences in mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion for men and women, producing a comprehensive account of irregular migration in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, Mexico, Malaysia, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East over the nineteenth- and the twentieth centuries. The book can be ordered [here](#).



Trade union manual on trafficking for forced labour

The manual [In search of Decent Work – Migrant workers' rights: A manual for trade unionists](#), was developed in the recognition that abuses of migrant workers' rights also affect the rights and conditions of national workers and that legal avenues offered to potential migrant workers would contribute to reducing irregular migration and trafficking. This handbook discusses human trafficking issues and clarifies its links between migration, labour, gender and trade union work, violations of national and international labour standards and identification of trafficked persons. It is aimed at practitioners such as trade union activists, educators, lawyers and all those interested in defending migrant workers' rights.



Abolitionist fallacies

This [Sex trafficking: an abolitionist fallacy](#) by Ann Jordan criticises and deconstructs the abolitionist argument that criminalising prostitution and clients is the means to abolish prostitution and stop human trafficking into the sex sector. Jordan criticises in particular a recent book by Siddharth Kara, a former investment banker and business executive who calls for attacking what he believes is the economic base for trafficking into the sex industry, namely, demand for sexual services. Jordan argues that Kara's economic model equates trafficked persons and sex workers with commodities and treats them as passive objects, thereby ignoring the poverty, discrimination, and violence that compel women to make risky decisions. She argues that "effective change comes from the bottom up, within the affected community where the persons who are the most knowledgeable and motivated live and work".

Anti-trafficking co-ordination and reporting in the OSCE area

The report [Efforts to combat trafficking in human beings in the OSCE area: co-ordination and reporting mechanisms](#) by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings covers the work of the Special Representative between January and October 2007. It is based on responses by the participating States to a survey questionnaire and covers 1) National Co-ordination Mechanisms; 2) National Action Plans; and 3) National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. The scope of the report does not include evaluation of the quality of individual participating States' implementation of these mechanisms.





Employers' sanctions punish migrant workers

Two recent reports have highlighted that measures to sanction employers of irregular third country nationals (will) have detrimental affects on migrant workers and ethnic minorities, as they foster discrimination. The article "[An analysis of the employers' sanctions directive](#)," by Sabine Craenen (OR.KA) and Michelle LeVoy (PICUM) argues that whilst the European Commission's directive providing for sanctions against employers of irregular third country nationals contains important provisions to respect the rights of undocumented migrants, these and other rights will most likely be undermined by the potential negative impact this directive will have in the areas of social inclusion, anti-discrimination, and labour relations.

The report [Papers Please](#) by Migrants' Rights Network (MRN) addresses the impact of the Civil Penalty Regime of the UK, introduced in 2006, on the employment rights of migrants in the UK. It finds the policy results in dismissals, withholding of back-pay and incidents in which employers appeared to have colluded with UKBA to 'ambush' workers on the work premises in return for reduced fines. Nationals of Bulgaria and Romania also emerged as having been affected by the civil penalty regime. Discrimination during document checks had clearly been a problem in some workplaces, and "the new measures around document checks in the workplace appeared to have advantaged some exploitative employers. Checks on the immigration status of workers had also apparently been used by some employers to dismiss workers involved in trade disputes or who had joined trade unions, with a wider impact on the workforce campaign".

Online resources

Domestic workers' online platform

With the new website www.domesticworkerrights.org, the international federation of trade unions IUF wants to give space to organisations of domestic and household workers to present themselves. They call for domestic workers to send in photos or other media presentations of their actions as well as photos of their work in households - to increase the visibility of domestic workers and their organisations. The site will also be used to mobilise for the planned ILO Convention on 'Decent Work for Domestic Workers'.

European database on irregular migration

Despite the political relevance of undocumented migration, assessments of the size of the irregular migrant population are often vague and of unclear origin. [This website](#) - developed in the framework of the EU-funded Clandestino project - aims at increasing transparency in this field by providing statistics and the main features of the irregular foreign population in selected countries, with regard to gender, age, nationality and sector of economic activity. The site hosts detailed background materials on individual countries, and has an interactive element by allowing users to provide additional information on estimates that they would like to see included.

What's happening where ?

- 14 April Brussels, Belgium** [European Civic Forum](#) meeting of the European associative actors in preparation for a common manifesto in view of the European elections.
- 20 April Vienna, Austria** [Alliance Expert Coordination Team](#) meeting at the OSCE Office of the Special Representative.
- 22-24 April Kiev, Ukraine** [Danish Regional Partner Forum](#) meeting of the [Danish Programme Against Human Trafficking](#).
- 11-15 May Sofia, Bulgaria** La Strada International: 9th LSI Assembly meeting.
- 14 May London, UK** House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee: International seminar on trafficking in human beings in Europe.
- 1-4 June Ohrid, Macedonia** Final Regional Seminar in the framework of the ICMPD [Programme to Support the Development of Transnational Referral Mechanisms \(TRM\) for Trafficked Persons in South-Eastern Europe](#).
- 15-19 June Amsterdam, Netherlands** La Strada International Fundraising Seminar.

Take action to protect migrants from the global recession

Katrin McGauran is the website and newsletter editor of La Strada International and writes on migration law and advocacy developments for the Statewatch Bulletin.



In the wake of the financial crisis, migrant rights groups and international (governmental) organisations such as the UN and ILO have started alerting to the increased vulnerability that migrant workers will suffer as a result of the economic downturn. The ILO forecasts that by the end of 2009 the crisis will have resulted in some 20 million jobs losses and a global unemployment rate of 7.1% - predominantly in low-paid sectors where migrant workers are over-represented. Although there is currently no conclusive evidence to show the precise impact of the crisis on migration patterns, it has been noted that there might be an increase in undocumented migration and informal working relations as opportunities for regular labour migration decrease. Return migration and new labour or refugee movements might occur as a result of the effects of the crisis in countries of destination and origin. Hereby, an increase in trafficking in human beings is a possibility, as root causes, such as poverty and increased dependency on employers, are created. This calls for an adequate and timely response from anti-trafficking organisations.

Migrants hit first

In February this year, the ILO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia indicated that consequences of the financial crisis on labour markets are already visible, with increased unemployment figures and job cuts spreading throughout the manufacturing and service sectors throughout the region. Other reports have indicated that migrants will be particularly hit by job losses, a reduction in wages and a deterioration of working conditions, as companies and employers will try to make savings, whilst governments might cut social service provisions and restrict legal avenues for labour immigration. Migrants will be forced to accept lower wages and bad working conditions just to keep their jobs and support their families, and the fact that they are often not covered by social and economic insurances makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers. Especially undocumented migrants are already denied social and economic rights in Europe; this situation is likely to worsen. The crisis therefore compounds one of the main root causes known to increase vulnerability to trafficking, namely, poverty and social exclusion.

We should also be prepared for another dangerous effect of the crisis, that is an increase in discrimination and racism, as migrants are perceived as taking jobs of local workers. This has already started to show in the UK, where politicians' statements have encouraged native workers demanding "British jobs for British workers". This development has not only increased fears of racist attacks and discrimination against migrants and ethnic minorities, but also of the adoption of even more restrictive immigration policies; indeed, a reduction in legal avenues for labour immigration and even the withdrawal of work permits has already been announced in some EU and Asian countries.

Sector- and gender-specific

The crisis will effect work sectors, but also men and women, differently. At the moment we see that construction and manufacturing - employing many young male migrants - are particularly hit. This will increase their vulnerability and possibly increase internal and cross-border trafficking into those sectors. State responses, most probably a further restriction of immigration and labour laws, will in turn create social exclusion and push migrants into irregular work and migration. Evidence from Spain already shows that during the past year, employment in the construction sector grew mainly by means of undeclared work - predominant among immigrant workers - i.e. outside the social security net, indicating an increase in vulnerability and a worsening of working conditions.

Moreover, women and men will be affected differently not only by economic hardship, which in itself is proven to be a root cause of violence against women, but also by the effect on the crisis on different sectors (female- or male-dominated) as well as by the expected immigration policy changes. It is noteworthy that literature quotes figures for the construction sector, whilst no figures are available for the female-dominated service sectors, which are also said

to suffer disproportionately, but are not regulated and therefore monitored neither for statistical evidence nor quality of labour standards. The effect of the crisis on migrant women is therefore not properly monitored and researched, however, this a precondition for formulating and implementing effective prevention and support strategies.

Create alliances and formulate demands

With view to these developments, now is the time for human rights activists - including anti-trafficking NGOs - to focus their work on protecting the most vulnerable members of society. This could be done in several ways:

Firstly, more research on (the impact of the crisis on) migrants' working conditions - with the aim of formulating improved intervention strategies - is needed. Anti-trafficking organisations could use this evidence to inform their prevention and social assistance work in sectors that are or will be disproportionately affected by the crisis, also with view to the gendered impact of labour market changes.

Secondly, to achieve more impact, anti-trafficking organisations should form strategic alliances with anti-poverty networks, migrant (self-)organisations, and labour organisations and coordinate the positions they take in relevant international and national fora. Cooperation should take place on common areas of concern, such as forced labour and exploitation of migrant labour in general. As anti-trafficking NGOs have continually noted the negative impact of restrictive immigration policy and practice on the rights of trafficked persons, they could consider joining migrant groups in their lobby against, to name but one example, utilitarian approaches to migration control that favour only the highly skilled and do not provide labour protection in low-paid sectors. Anti-trafficking groups should act on the knowledge that a general anti-immigration consensus threatens the identification and adequate protection of potential trafficked persons.

Anti-trafficking NGOs can also encourage migrant and labour organisation to join their lobby efforts, for example, to support the demand to provide all trafficked persons' access to support and assistance regardless of their immigration status, and to grant residency status and access to services independent from participation in criminal proceedings. These mechanisms could be extended to cover all victims of forced labour and exploitation. In turn, anti-trafficking NGOs could join others in their demand for labour and discrimination complaint mechanisms for (undocumented) migrant workers, basic income, welfare provisions and active labour market policies supporting low-skilled migrant and native workers, as they might help to protect potential trafficked persons. The recent report submitted by Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking, is hopeful in this respect. She promises to specifically target the demand for "cheap labour" as a root cause for trafficking, and notes that "trafficking feeds on poverty, despair, war [and] crisis".

Last but not least, a comprehensive response to the crisis requires a new vision for long-term solutions that addresses root causes for trafficking. Dr. Yakin Erturk, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, recently stated that "in the neo-liberal era we have lost our welfare state, which no longer took any interest in providing livelihoods or social security services. My hope is that by calling the state back in, we can reintroduce social policy that will benefit women." This can be said to hold true not only with regard to women, but to all those suffering poverty, exploitation and social exclusion.



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