



La Strada International De Wittenstraat 25 1052 AK Amsterdam T 00 31 (0)20 6881414 F 00 31 (0)20 6881013

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 comments and contributions for next issues.

The next deadline is **1 June 2008**. If you have news, information about your organisation, a new report or documentary or an outspoken opinion on (inter)national developments, please contact us at info@lastradainternational.org

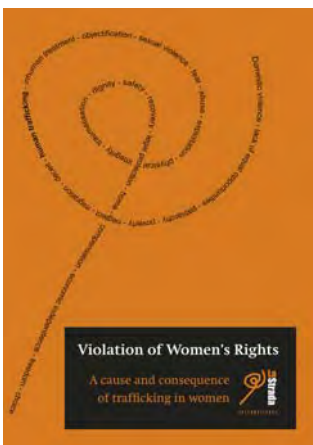
Inside this issue:

<p>La Strada News 1</p> <p>La Strada Report on Women's Rights</p> <p>8 March: Rights and Roses Campaign</p> <p>La Strada visit to Israel</p> <p>La Strada report on girls in care in the Czech Republic</p>	<p>What's going on? 3</p> <p>GAATW Recognise Rights Campaign</p> <p>Report from UN.GIFT Vienna Forum</p> <p>Trafficked persons win compensation</p> <p>Ireland introduces reflection period</p> <p>Theatre as prevention method</p>	<p>What's new? 6</p> <p>5th report Dutch National Rapporteur</p> <p>Bridget Anderson: Reflections on Trafficking Debates</p> <p>Final Report: GAATW International Conference</p> <p>Report: When victims of trafficking decline assistance</p>	<p>Opinion 8</p> <p>Suzanne Hoff, international coordinator La Strada International:</p> <p><i>Do we need a European Hotline on Trafficking in Human Beings?</i></p>
--	--	---	---

La Strada News !

La Strada presents report on women's rights and launches Rights & Roses campaign

On 8 March 2008, International Women's Day, La Strada International (LSI) presented its report "Violation of women's rights: a cause and consequence of trafficking in women" in Amsterdam (see below). LSI took the initiative for this research in an attempt to highlight root causes, and in particular the fact that the violation of women's rights makes women vulnerable to trafficking. The research was funded by [Mama Cash](#), [Global Fund for Women](#) and [CORDAID](#). Helga Konrad, former OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and La Strada International Advisory Council Member says the report



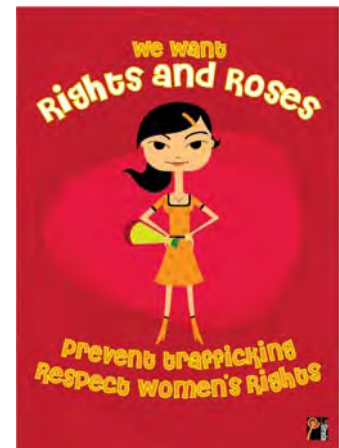
"is an important first step in analysing the link between trafficking in women and the violation of women's rights, which calls for international discussion and further research. Improving and promoting women's rights will not lead to instant successes, but it is the only way to create a sustainable and long-lasting new equilibrium in world society in which women are free from violence, exploitation and abuse and empowered to determine their own futures."

The report shows that as long as women cannot live their lives free from the threat of violence and discrimination and do not have equal opportunities in the labour market, they will choose to take on unregulated work opportunities to support themselves and their families, abroad and at home. However, as legal migration is impossible or severely restricted, migrant workers are forced to take risks and are practically driven into the arms of the criminal networks that control illegal routes into the countries of destination. As long as these countries

are not willing to give trafficked persons as well as (undocumented) migrants the rights they are entitled to by international standards, human rights violations will continue. Amongst others, the report provides practical recommendations for governments to address women's rights to prevent further human rights abuses such as trafficking from occurring. The [summary and recommendations \(PDF\)](#) and the [full report](#) are available online; a hard-copy can be [ordered](#) for €5 (excluding postage).

Besides presenting the report, La Strada launched the campaign “We want Rights and Roses. Prevent Trafficking – Respect Women’s Rights”. The campaign draws attention to gender inequality as an important root cause of trafficking and aims to influence policy to take into account root causes and follow a human rights-based approach rather than a law enforcement approach to anti-trafficking measures. It further aims to highlight and effect the implementation of gender discrimination awareness campaigns, anti-poverty initiatives targeting specifically women in Central and Eastern Europe, and safe migration opportunities for women.

Parallel to an international campaign, a number of La Strada offices will launch national campaigns, stressing the link between women's rights and trafficking. On and around 8 March, various La Strada offices, such as in Belarus, Bulgaria and Ukraine, [organised press conferences](#) and roundtable discussions to highlight the importance of respecting women’s rights. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, La Strada distributed roses and broadcasted a television spot to promote the campaign. In Macedonia, La Strada distributed leaflets - in the form of flowers - in two daily newspapers, to raise public awareness on the issue of women’s rights. In the framework of the campaign, both La Strada Belarus and La Strada Ukraine conducted pilot research projects on the economic costs of domestic violence, the results of which were also presented on 8 March.



La Strada discusses trafficking at 8 March event in Amsterdam



La Strada, together with the Amsterdam-based women’s fund [Mama Cash](#) and the women’s platform [Women Inc.](#), co-organised a public event on 8 March at which the organisations’ activities were presented. LSI presented its report on the violation of women’s right (see above), accompanied by a panel discussion with representatives from La Strada member organisations. After the presentation of the main findings of the La Strada research, the report was presented to Prof. Dr. Cees Flinterman, Honorary Professor of Human Rights and member of the UN CEDAW Committee. He accepted the report cordially, stressing its importance for the promotion of women’s rights and as a tool to pressurise States to take responsibility in enforcing and protecting these rights.

Cees Flinterman, Hanka Mongard of TAMPEP International (HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers) and advisor of Mama Cash, Maria Tchomarova of La Strada Bulgaria and Mariana Yevsyukova of La Strada Ukraine then participated in a panel discussion. Maria Tchomarova stressed the importance of the report in highlighting the interrelatedness of factors leading to vulnerability in trafficking, which are currently inadequately addressed in policy implementation. Mariana Yevsyukova provided a bleak picture of the situation of women’s rights in the Ukraine, pointing to disadvantaged positions ranging from a significant underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions within businesses, parliament and academia, to the high prevalence of domestic violence. Hanka Mongard reminded us that labour migration is a necessary step for women in insecure economic positions and that the policy of countries of origin should open up channels to enable women to work in decent conditions.

At the event, Women Inc also presented various initiatives to fight poverty among women. Mama Cash [presented the Economic Justice Fund](#) and closed the 88-days campaign for women’s rights with a *She changes the World* award ceremony.

La Strada representatives visit Israel

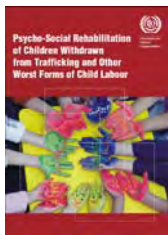
Representatives of La Strada Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus visited Israel from 23 March to 2 April 2008 for a study tour on trafficking in women. Israel is one of the main countries of destination for trafficked women from former Soviet Union countries. A well-functioning network and reliable information exchange about the situation are therefore essential for the relevant La Strada offices. Several organisations active on trafficking in human beings will be visited, including shelters, psychologists and specialists providing legal

advice to trafficked persons and migrant workers, as well as a deportation centre. Meetings with representatives of the national police and Europol will take place, as well as with embassies and representatives of emigration services. Meetings with politicians and policy makers are also planned. For more information on the programme and results of the visit, please [contact La Strada Belarus](#).

La Strada report finds girls in Czech institutional care may experience prostitution early

According to a study by La Strada Czech Republic conducted on 269 girls from all over the Czech Republic and published in March, about one-fifth of girls older than 15 who spent some time in the Prague diagnostic facility for problem youth last year had some experience with prostitution. Girls born in Roma families with many children living in socially excluded localities belong to the most threatened group, the study found. For an English news report on the study see the Roma news website www.romea.cz. For the report in Czech see the website of [La Strada Czech Republic](#). An English version will be available online in April this year.

La Strada contributes to ILO manual on child rehabilitation



La Strada Bulgaria and Moldova have contributed to the recently-published ILO study *Psycho-Social Rehabilitation of Children Withdrawn from Trafficking and Other Worst Forms of Child Labour* ([download PDF](#)). The manual is the result of an [Action Programme supported by the ILO](#) and entitled 'Prevention of Children at Risk to Enter Trafficking and Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Children Victims of Trafficking'. The Manual was based on the experience of organisations in Central and Eastern Europe and will be integrated into the practice of various child protection agencies and crisis centres for children victims of sexual exploitation and street work.

What's going on ?

European Commission and ILO survey on trafficking indicators

The European Commission and the International Labour Office (ILO) are undertaking an expert consultation on human trafficking, aimed at establishing agreed indicators on trafficking in human beings for statistical purposes. This consultation is carried out in the framework of the mandate of the EU Experts Group on trafficking on policy needs for data on crime and criminal justice, established by the European Commission. Following the first meeting in April 2007, it was decided to establish an Expert sub-group to examine the policy needs of data on human trafficking. The recommendations of the group's discussions have led to the plan to consult a large number of experts. The aim of the consultation is to build a European consensus on indicators of human trafficking for the purpose of data collection in EU Member States. The consultation will be conducted by electronic means. Several organisations and experts, among which La Strada International, have been asked to contribute to this consultation.

GAATW Recognise Rights Campaign

In response to the major recommendations from GAATW's latest report [Collateral Damage](#), which emphasises the critical need for a re-assessment of anti-trafficking initiatives around the globe, GAATW instigated a global campaign entitled "Recognise Rights" to call on governments to make human rights a priority in dealing with trafficking and to do more to create long-term solutions for trafficked persons. Priority issues highlighted in the campaign, which was launched on the eve of the UN [Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking](#) (see below), include the need to provide trafficked persons with access to justice and compensation, and to create opportunities for work in destination countries. In the framework of this campaign, LSI, the La Strada member organisations, and other GAATW members in Europe will be collecting and monitoring examples of collateral damage caused in Europe. The campaign will run until 2010 with activities taking place at the regional and global level. For further information, contact [Eleanor Taylor-Nicholson](#), Advocacy Coordinator of GAATW, or [Marieke van Doorninck](#), LSI policy advisor.

Norway introduces new au pair regulation

Norway has introduced new au pair regulations, laying down that applications submitted after 28 January 2008 must include a standard employment contract and the form 'Important information on rights and obligations for au pairs and their host families'. Amongst others, the host family now has to pay for Norwegian language tuition with up to NOK 6.000 per year and the minimum amount of pocket money has been increased from NOK 3.000 to NOK 4.000 per month. The standard work contract, important information on rights and obligations for au pairs and their host families, as well as instructions from the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID) can be downloaded from the [Norwegian Directorate of Immigration](#).

Compensation granted to trafficked persons



In December 2007, four trafficked women in the UK received compensation for the material and immaterial damages they had suffered. This groundbreaking decision is the result of a 'pilot project' for compensation for trafficked persons. The UK-based [Poppy Project](#), a service provider for trafficked persons, had been given a grant by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#) to conduct test cases for compensation for trafficking. Authority officials told the London law firm Lovells, which is acting for a number of the victims, that it would 'officially recognise' the trauma experienced by thousands of women and children.

In Germany, an Indonesian domestic worker of a Yemeni Diplomat in Berlin received her unpaid wages from the Yemen Embassy. For years, she had been maltreated by her employer and not paid her salary. It was only due to a very serious illness that she was able to escape the situation. Although the Yemen Embassy maintains that this is a private issue of one diplomat, the embassy has – in the interest of her country – agreed to pay Ms Hasniati her due salary. For more information contact [Ban Ying](#), who supported this case.

UN.GIFT Vienna Forum

From 13 to 15 February, the [UN Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking \(UN.GIFT\)](#) held the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking at the Austria Centre, Vienna. UN.GIFT was established in March 2007 as a temporary initiative to coordinate global anti-trafficking efforts. It is led by a steering committee comprising various UN agencies and intergovernmental organisations. Unfortunately, NGOs have not been invited to take part in the steering group.



The Forum hosted over 1600 participants, including government delegations, NGOs, the private sector, academics and UN representatives who met in both plenary and thematic workshops. Almost all La Strada offices were represented, and Maria Tchomarova ([La Strada Bulgaria](#)), Ana Revenco ([La Strada Moldova](#)) and Katya Levchenko ([La Strada Ukraine](#)) contributed to three thematic workshops, on health and human trafficking, repatriation and re-integration of victims of human trafficking, and national and regional responses to trafficking, and national monitoring mechanisms (*Presentations are available on request*).

Selection of a new UN Human Rights Special Rapporteurs

In March 2008, the President of the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) is expected to appoint up to 16 human rights experts to serve as Special Procedure mandate holders. The Special Rapporteurs will deal with the right to adequate housing, the right to food, human rights defenders, indigenous people, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and extreme poverty. In February, a consultative group reviewed applications and based on their recommendations the president selected the [candidates](#). The final approval of candidates by the Human Rights Council is expected at the 7th regular session in March 2008.



Three mandate holders are of particular interest for the anti-trafficking field, namely, the new mandate for a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences. The candidate selected by the president, Ms Gulnara Shahinian from Albania, was put forward by Anti Slavery International. The selected candidate for Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and

child pornography is Ms Najat M'jid Maala from Morocco. The new Special Rapporteur on trafficking will be appointed in June 2008. The deadline for nominations for candidates is 11 April. A group of NGOs, amongst which LSI, sent a list of recommended experts for the trafficking mandate to the Human Rights Council. More information on the nomination, selection and appointment of mandate holders is available on the [OHCHR website](#).

Irish Immigration Bill introduces 45 day reflection period for trafficked persons

Ireland has passed a new [Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill](#), giving victims of trafficking 45 days legal stay for recovery and reflection, and the further possibility of getting a temporary residence permit for 6 months (Section 124). In its [comments on the Bill](#), the UNHCR welcomed this inclusion but called for additional safeguards for the victims of trafficking, such as a provision to ensure that individuals who have been trafficked and who fear being subjected to persecution upon a return to their country of origin, or individuals who fear being trafficked, are informed of the possibility to make a protection application and to this effect are afforded access to legal advice. The Immigrant Council of Ireland and the [Migrant Rights Centre Ireland](#) criticised the Bill, in particular its failure to introduce a substantive right to family reunification, but also the unchecked powers and discretion the Bill gives the Minister and the Gardaí (police) as well as the Bill's failure to deal with the "delays in decision-making, inconsistent decisions [and] lack of clarity". The political party Sinn Féin also [raised concerns](#) regarding the broad ministerial discretion within the Bill, family reunification and lack of regard to victims of trafficking. For a full overview of this civil society critique as well as the Bill's reception by political parties, see the [Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights](#) of University College Cork, Ireland.

RESPECT network launches new initiatives

RESPECT, a European network initiated in 1998 comprising Migrant Domestic Workers (MDW) organisations, migrant rights groups and trade unions working for the rights of MDWs in Europe, has successfully campaigned over the past years for changes in legislation on MDWs in the UK, Greece, Spain and Italy and built alliances with trade unions, such as the Dutch ABVAKABO FNV. International initiatives have included Policy Dialogues with the UN Special Rapporteur on Migration (Geneva 2004) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (Amsterdam 2006) and a campaign to include MDW rights in the CEDAW General Recommendation 27 (2007). Marking its ten-year anniversary, RESPECT is entering a new phase of campaigning, addressing the current trends in EU immigration policy and building new international alliances with the launching of the RESPECT newsletter and a Europe-wide process to prepare an MDW agenda for the [Global Community Forum on Migration, Development and Human Rights](#), to be held in Manila in October 2008. The RESPECT coordination is located in Amsterdam, at the offices of one of the founding member organisations, the [Commission of Filipino Migrant Workers](#). Further members include the Amsterdam-based self-organisation TRUSTED Migrants, the [Transnational Institute](#), the [RESPECT network Germany](#), the UK-based [Kalayaan](#) campaign network and other members from Greece, Italy and France. For more information, e-mail admin@cfmw.org.



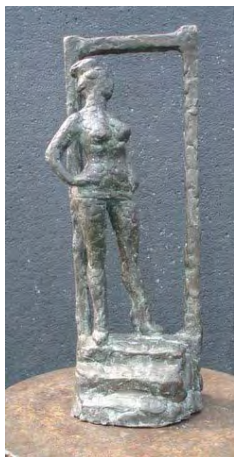
MEPs and Terre des Hommes organise conference against child sex tourism

On 13 February this year, a conference entitled "Stop child sex tourism and the sexual exploitation of children" was organised by the political group ALDE in European Parliament and Terre des Hommes. Members of European Parliament (MEPs) and NGOs demanded more European cooperation on the issue and the conference heard experts, tourism industry representatives and NGOs, including Amihan Abueva from ECPAT International and Seila Samleang, country director of APLE Cambodia. Samleang highlighted the main root causes in Cambodia, such as poverty, limited access to education and other public goods, inefficient implementation of the laws, and the growing number of tourists. Mirela Shuteriqi, a legal expert of Terre des Hommes in South East Europe, raised the question of vulnerability with regard to family or community status, discrimination, social exclusion, lack of access to economic resources, and domestic violence. For a more detailed report of the conference, mail [Human Rights Without Frontiers International](#).



Dutch NGOs critical of Amsterdam city plans to curb prostitution

At the end of 2007, the mayor of Amsterdam proposed urban renewal plans for the red light district with the aim to reduce window prostitution and restrict the remaining windows to one zone in the district. Additional laws are proposed to fight pimping practices. The plans, it is argued, will restore the 'monumental' character of the historical city centre, tackle crime and in particular fight human trafficking into the sex industry.



Sex worker statue in the Wallen district in Amsterdam. Photo: PIC

La Strada Netherlands ([CoMensHa](#)), BLinN ([Bonded Labour in the Netherlands](#)) and LSI published a statement criticising the plans to restrict prostitution with the argument to counter trafficking. The organisations believe that the city's plans will not tackle the problem of human trafficking, nor will they address exploitation or improve the rights position of sex workers. Attempts to restrict prostitution can lead to pushing sex workers into unregulated city districts and work settings. This in turn will increase the risk of exploitation and rights violations, and therefore increase the risk of trafficking. In the Netherlands, the sex industry is regulated by a licences system under municipal law, which provides a range of instruments to prevent and end exploitative situations, to improve the working conditions and rights situation of sex workers and to fight trafficking. The signatories, which have extensive working knowledge of the anti-trafficking and forced labour field, urge the city of Amsterdam to implement existing anti-trafficking and prostitution policies rather than devising new restrictive legislation and closing down legal places of work.

See the [LSI website](#) for the full statement.

Theatre as human trafficking prevention and awareness-raising method

Theatre plays are increasingly and innovatively used as an awareness-raising and prevention method. In the Netherlands, a [plethora of theatre plays](#) and workshops has been developed on the issue of loverboys, i.e. men who make young vulnerable women fall in love with them with the purpose of exploiting them at a later stage by forcing them to provide sexual services. Theatre companies perform the plays in schools with the aim of helping young women to detect loverboy practices and protect themselves. The plays use music, rap and text and are often followed by open discussions. In other countries, theatre plays are used for awareness-raising.

"The Seventh Kafana", a theatre play, which already toured **Moldova** in 2001 and was performed in the **Ukraine, Belarus and Russia**, and featured at various cultural events in **France and Germany**, is now used for awareness-raising in **Switzerland**. The play, an IOM initiative, describes the plight of victims of trafficking and was performed in February this year in four Swiss cities. Roundtable discussions bringing together experts working in the field of counter-trafficking and members of the theatre group took place after each performance. In **Ireland**, the [Amnesty International Irish Section](#), Cork City Group, has been working with Gaiety School of Acting to explore the issue of sex trafficking with a play entitled 'Flesh', which sold out at three performances in January this year.



Dutch theatre group PlayBack with the play 'Love for Sale'. Photo: Lotte van Iersel

What's new ?

Fifth report of the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

The fifth report of the [Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings](#) is now available in [English](#). The report outlines in detail the legal anti-trafficking framework in the Netherlands and provides statistics on trafficking and related issues. Furthermore, this report pays special attention to financial investigations, human trafficking with a view to organ removal and labour exploitation outside of the sex industry.

Contemporary Slavery in the UK

The report [Contemporary Slavery in the UK - Overview and Key Issues](#), published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is the first comprehensive review of the current extent of slavery in the UK and the different forms it takes, such as trafficking for sexual or domestic labour, forced labour or debt bondage. It draws on published material and websites, reports from agencies developing policy or delivering services to those affected by slavery, and interviews with key personnel in a range of agencies. The review looks at defining the nature and scope of modern slavery, the international context, slavery in the UK and the current situation there, and sexual trafficking. It concludes with recommendations for action and further research.

GAATW Conference Report



This [Final Report: GAATW International Conference and International Members Congress](#) provides an overview of the conference working sessions which focused on the Impact of Anti Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World and Access to Justice for Trafficked Persons and Migrant Workers. Workshops also produced a list of recommendations available for download [here](#). Further, the International Members Congress is outlined with a useful address list and a final outcome and recommendations from three consultations of anti-trafficking groups on the issues of providing social assistance, promoting access to justice and preventing trafficking.

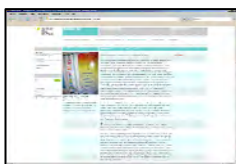
Youth Involvement in Errant Mobility and Sex Work within the EU

This research report by Dr Nick Mai from the [Institute for the Study of European Transformations](#) entitled [Minors and Young Migrants' Involvement in Errant Mobility and Sex Work within the EU](#), focuses on minor and young migrants' involvement in male sex work. It explores the relation between intra-psychological and physical mobility and tries to understand the specific way in which sex work responds to the complexity of the needs of minor and young migrants. 'Errant mobility' is characterised by the constant displacement between EU cities in different national contexts and the recourse to predominantly illegal and dangerous strategies of survival (sex work, drug smuggling, theft, and exploitation in the unskilled and unregulated sector of the labour market).

Reflections on Trafficking Debates

Trafficking in human beings is the object of considerable concern for a wide range of actors, including states, rights activists and feminists. It seems that it offers a rare opportunity for dialogue on questions related to the exploitation and abuse of migrant labour. [Motherhood, Apple Pie and Slavery: Reflections on Trafficking Debates](#) by Bridget Anderson, RESPECT member and Professor at COMPAS, urges caution and argues that a loose definition of terms conceals both practical and philosophical problems with framing trafficking as an immigration issue. Using a UK case study, it demonstrates how in practice, states and migrants' rights activists have very different understandings of the relation between trafficking and immigration controls.

Web-dossier on undocumented migration



A web-dossier on undocumented migration by the Heinrich Böll Foundation has recently been published and includes an [interview](#) with TRUSTED Migrants, the [article](#) 'Between Organising and Exclusion: Trade Union Strategies and Undocumented Migrant Workers', by three trade unionist activists from Germany and Turkey and a summary of a [book](#) on migrant domestic workers in Germany by Helma Lutz.

Civil Society Day of the Global Forum on Migration and Development

This [End report - The Civil Society Day of the Global Forum on Migration and Development](#) brings together the results of the discussions during the Civil Society Day at the Global Forum on Migration and Development from 9 July 2007, which was hosted by the Belgian government. The aim of the Civil Society Day was to bring non-governmental parties together to exchange ideas and experiences, and to prepare civil society's contribution to the Forum in the form of a set of conclusions and recommendations.



When Victims of Trafficking Decline Assistance

In the report [Leaving the Past Behind? When Victims of Trafficking Decline Assistance](#), published by the Fafo Institute in Norway and NEXUS Institute in Vienna, Anette Brunovskis and Rebecca Surtees consider the reasons for trafficking victims declining assistance and examine the circumstances under which they do so. Understanding the reasons, experiences and perceptions of persons who do not participate in assistance programmes can play an important role in developing and tailoring anti-trafficking services to meet the needs and desires of as many trafficking victims as possible. The report benefits from the experiences of trafficked persons who have both accepted and declined assistance as well service providers and other anti-trafficking actors.

European Journal of Women's Studies: special issue on domestic work

The "European Journal of Women Studies" devoted an entire issue (August 2007, Volume 14, No. 3) to domestic labour. Prof. Helma Lutz (University of Münster) edited the issue, which comprises seven articles covering, amongst others, on eldercare work in Italy, migrant domestic workers in Turkey, migrant nurses in Greece and au pairing. Articles are available for download against payment on the [SAGE website](#).

What's happening where ?

- **4-5 April Brussels Belgium** [PICUM](#) Workshop on Protecting Undocumented Children
- **12-16 May Prague, Czech Republic** 7th La Strada International assembly meeting
- **19-22 May Rome, Italy** 3rd Regional ICMPD Seminar in the framework of the [Programme to Support the Development of Transnational Referral Mechanisms \(TRM\) for Trafficked Persons in South-Eastern Europe](#)
- **26-27 May Vienna, Austria** OSCE conference on child trafficking, for more information contact the [Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](#).
- **29 -30 May Vladivostok, Russia** International Forum "Labour Migration in Eurasian Region: Trends, Problems and Ways of Cooperation" Primorsky Regional Administration & Federal Migration Service of Russia.

What's on your mind ?



Suzanne Hoff is the international coordinator of La Strada International.

Should there be a European 116 hotline number on trafficking in human beings?

Since June last year, when La Strada International was asked for its opinion on whether or not a European 116 number should be reserved for hotlines or helplines on trafficking in human beings, the question has occupied me. I would have never imagined that today, almost one year later, I am still discussing the issue and following the developments almost daily. Back in June 2007, I started to consult my La Strada colleagues, other close NGO partners and independent experts in the field, to read related documents and to check opinions of others. What became evident, *put simply*, is that a group of persons, led by several members of the European Parliament, lobbied for a common EU hotline number and even reserved quite a substantial amount of money for the plans, whilst others - in particular NGOs running anti-trafficking hotlines and La Strada in particular - were sceptical, not to everyone's happiness.

Remembering all the discussions around establishing hotlines in Germany for the World Cup, we felt that above all, we should avoid setting up hotlines and actions that are not based on actual needs and could even be damaging to existing initiatives and possibly trafficked persons themselves. In September 2007, we therefore wrote a [letter to the European Commission](#) in which we stated our concerns. These concerns evolve around the bottlenecks in practice and the (technical) procedure, but above all, the actual need and

feasibility of the hotline as well as criteria for running the service. *Why would trafficked persons call a hotline number on trafficking, if they did not identify themselves as being trafficked? How and by whom would service providers be selected? What should these services offer precisely, and finally, would they be the same for all EU countries?* These are only a few of the questions that come to mind.

In our letter, we recommended that the needs and possible solutions should be researched, involving all current stakeholders, such as NGOs and governmental service providers, but also other target groups. We also recommended that next to assessing if there is an actual need for a common hotline, this need should be clearly defined and existing hotlines and connected services currently offered within the European Union should be mapped. Not only anti-trafficking organisations, but also the more general emergency aid organisations, medical referral hotlines and organisations that run hotlines on (migrant and sex) workers' rights, hotlines providing information on civil and human rights, etc. should be included.

We therefore welcome the European Commission's decision to carry out a feasibility study and needs assessment. If the outcome of this study indeed provides valid arguments for the need of a common European hotline number specifically on trafficking in human beings, we believe it will only be efficient if broadly supported by all actors - who should explicitly agree to cooperate - especially as the various existing hotline services will have to work together more closely. Furthermore, clear procedures should be formulated on how such a European telephone number will work in practice, and answers to technical issues, questions of responsibilities, and so forth, should be made clear.

Participating states should not be obliged to follow similar referral system, but referral should be based on existing practices, structures, and legislation and regulations, among which the established National Referral Mechanism (NRM) on trafficking in human beings, as well as the national welfare and social security infrastructure. More important still is a guarantee that support and referral offered through the hotlines is good and quality-checked. It also has to be ensured that there is sufficient capacity for assistance following the call. So far, there are no common standards concerning support services in Europe. Although there might not be a need for all hotlines in all countries to offer the same services, some standard setting is needed, as is a monitoring mechanism.

La Strada International, of which all member organisations provide hotlines and/or helpline support on the issue of trafficking to trafficked persons and other target groups, is now in the process of establishing an informal network with other NGOs based in Europe to cooperate on the issue of hotline services. In January 2008, we brainstormed with several NGOs about setting up 'Platform 116', to enable information exchange and cooperation also with the currently reserved European 116 hotline number on missing children and the one on child helplines. I hope that NGOs in Europe currently running hotlines on trafficking in human beings or related fields will contact us.

I certainly think that there is a role for the European Member States and the Commission to play in raising awareness on the issue of trafficking in human beings and for supporting and promoting adequate support, among which the existence of hotlines. We fully support the idea to refer trafficked persons better and improve the protection and support offered to them. While waiting for the study to take place and in expectation of its outcome, we call upon all stakeholders to start thinking about how to improve our hotline or helpline services to trafficked women, migrant workers, sex workers and others, and how to link existing services. If you would like to comment on why there should be a common European 116 hotline number on trafficking in human beings, please contact La Strada International at sh@lastradainternational.org.

In 2007 - 2008, La Strada International receives its main structural financial support from the Dutch Foundations DOEN, ICCO and CORDAID and the Sigrid Rausing Trust. La Strada members are supported by various other donors. We greatly appreciate financial support from private donors for our work. For more information on how you can contribute to La Strada's work, [please consult our website](#).