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Through this quarterly newsletter La Strada International wants to inform and update on the developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and on the activities of La Strada International and the La Strada offices. We welcome reactions to this initiative and contributions for the next issues. The next deadline is January 8th, 2006. So 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

LA STRADA NEWS

10 YEARS LA STRADA

On the 15th of September 1995 the first La Strada prevention of trafficking in Central and Eastern Europe program started in Poland, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands as a trilateral cooperation project. In the following ten years, the la Strada network has expanded and now includes, next to the initial partners, NGOs in Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine, all active in the fight against trafficking. The primary goal is to improve the position of women and to promote their universal rights, including the right to choose to emigrate and to work abroad and to protect them from violence and abuse. The three pillars of the La Strada programme are; Assistance & Support, Information & Lobbying, Prevention & Education. All la Strada members offer a common basic programme, although the exact services which are offered can vary, depending on the local situation. The main element of all activities is the contact with trafficked persons, their concerns, needs and views act as a continuum throughout all La Strada work and are decisive for any future action.

La Strada integrates a human rights approach into its work, based on the recognition that trafficking in persons is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations. This approach allows the root causes of trafficking, such as gender and ethnic discrimination to be addressed by empowering potential victims. It requires that human rights are at the core of any anti trafficking strategy.

NGO platform

This year, combined with the celebration of the 10th Anniversary, La Strada organised for the first time an annual NGO Platform on 15th and 16th September in Warsaw, Poland. La Strada aims to be an open network with strong connections and partnerships with other NGO's in the field of trafficking, migration and human rights. The NGO platform is set up as an opportunity for NGO's to get together, to exchange and discuss ideas, information and methodology, create networks and develop strategies for closer cooperation and partnerships.

At this first NGO platform representatives from different NGO's in Europe including Lefö (Austria), Ban Ying, Phoenix/KOBRA and ONA (Germany), Reaching Out (Romania), VATRA (Albania), Alliance of Women (Slovakia), Anti-Slavery (UK), Living for tomorrow (Estonia), ASTRA (Serbia) and FIZ (Switzerland) and the European Network TAMPEP were present. One of the main issues that were discussed at the meeting was the consequence of the broadening of the definition of trafficking. Do we want to include other forms of labour exploitation in our activities; prevention, social assistance and lobby and information? All participants of the meeting agreed that NGOs that work with and for trafficked persons should expand their work and adjust their campaigns and assistance to a broader group of people whose rights have been violated by all forms of labour exploitation and abuse, as a major step and challenge for the future. More information on the platform is available on request. The next La Strada NGO platform will be held in Kiev, Ukraine in September 2006.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE LA STRADA OFFICES

La Strada International celebrates its first anniversary

On 26th of October 2005 La Strada International celebrated its first anniversary. When La Strada started in 1995, the foundation against trafficking in Women in the Netherlands (STV) functioned as the general coordination office, main applicant for subsidies and held the overall financial responsibility for the programme. However, as the network and its member organisations developed, this structure didn't fit the changed reality. Therefore the International La Strada Association was established, uniting the nine national La Strada organisations. Under the new structure, 'La Strada International' is responsible for the organisation and coordination of the network and the common La Strada programme, as well as for strategy development, advocacy and lobbying at European and international level and fundraising for the international work, whereas the individual member organisations are responsible for their national fundraising and the implementation of their national programmes. Since October the international office is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Suzanne Hoff is the International Coordinator; Marieke van Doorninck is International Advisor Public Affairs. *La Strada International, De Wittenstraat 25, 1052 AK Amsterdam. The Netherlands, telephone: +31206881414, fax: +31206881013; email: info@lastradainternational.org*

La Strada Hotlines

Within the Social Assistance Campaigns, the SOS hotline for (possible) victims remains to be an important tool to get in touch with women who have been trafficked. All La Strada offices do have a hotline, in some countries even operational 24 hours a day. Consultants provide information on destination countries, including information about the national situation and legislation of these countries, useful telephone numbers, safety tips, possibilities of help in case of emergencies. The same information is also provided via e-mail upon telephone or e-mail request. See address list. La Strada Moldova, La Strada Ukraine and La Strada Belarus have - in cooperation with others - established a national toll free hotline, that people can call for free from anywhere in the country.

Study visits of La Strada to other countries

To see and learn how other countries support trafficked persons, La Strada is regularly in cooperation with other NGOs and occasionally organises study visits. Strada Macedonia organised a study visits for its staff to Serbia and Montenegro in January 2005, with the aim to get introduced with the organisational structure and activities undertaken against trafficking in human beings by different parties from Serbia and Montenegro including the Ministry of labour, employment and social policy of Serbia, the Agency for coordination and protection of victims of trafficking. A second study visit to Romania took place in April 2005 in order to exchange best practises and information with several Romania NGOs that are running shelter facilities for trafficked persons in Romania. In June 2005 La Strada Belarus organised a study visit for three La Strada staff members to their German partner NGO "Kobra" in Hanover. The main aim was to discuss best practices and difficulties in cooperation with the law enforcement and explore the ways of possible cooperation. The visit was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

More information on these study visits is available on request at the mentioned offices.

La Strada trainings

Next to study visits the la Strada offices also conduct trainings in their own countries and abroad for various professional groups and NGOs. In May 2005 La Strada Moldova delivered a training program on Hot-Line services in Turkey. La Strada Bulgaria (Animus) provided the organisation Kluj in Slovenia with a training. *For more information on 'la Strada' trainings, please contact [La Strada international](http://www.lastradainternational.org).*

Pilot employment project La Strada Poland

La Strada Poland is currently implementing the "IRIS - Social and Vocational Reintegration of Women - Victims of Trafficking in Persons". In cooperation with the Polish Center of Empowerment of Women employment and study courses are organised to help trafficked persons to reintegrate and find employment. *For more information please contact [La Strada Poland](http://www.lastradapoland.org)*

What's going on ?

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Council of Europe; the aftermath of the convention

When the Council of Europe, the international body that seeks to promote the protection of human rights and democracy, was to draft a [Convention on Action against trafficking in Human Beings](#) everybody in the field of anti trafficking had high expectations. This treaty had the potential to move beyond current international standards, which have concentrated on the criminal aspect of trafficking, and to focus on the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons. During the process La Strada, together with Amnesty International and Anti Slavery have at several occasions urged the Council of Europe to make sure that the convention 'improves and strengthens measures for the protection of the rights of trafficked persons, and ensures a strong and coordinated criminal justice response to the crime of trafficking'. In May 2005, when the Convention was adopted La Strada and other NGO's had to admit that expectations had been too high. PACE (the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council) was very clear in their disappointment: "... far from guaranteeing effective and sufficient protection of victims, contrary to the objective pursued. The measures for the protection of victims, which should be at the heart of the convention, have become weaker in the course of the negotiations." The silver lining of the Convention is the establishment of a monitoring mechanism, GRETA, a group of independent experts which monitors the implementation of the Convention by EU and non-EU member states alike. GRETA will be established no later than one year after the entry into force of the Convention. As only two of the La Strada countries, Poland and Moldova, have signed so far, La Strada will try to persuade governments to sign and ratify the Convention. Next to that La Strada hopes to work together with other NGO's to come up with concrete recommendations to make GRETA a powerful instrument.

European Union: Communication and European Action Plan

In 2005, the European Commission will issue a communication and a European Action Plan on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings. The report of the experts' group on trafficking in human beings, the Brussels Declaration of 2002 as well as the ongoing evaluation of relevant EU legislation will be taken into account in order to develop a plan for best practices, standards and mechanisms to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings as required by the Hague Programme of November 2004 on freedom, security and justice. Under the UK presidency of the European Union the European Action Plan is drafted. Although the draft was not widely spread for consultation, several organisations have sent in their comments. The OSCE Alliance against Trafficking sent out a common letter to Mr. Frattini, Vice President EU Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security with critical comments and recommendations. Also the Expert Group on trafficking in Human Beings has given its opinion. Both plead for the integration of human rights norms in anti trafficking policies and measures and the need for a multi disciplinary and multi agency approach. The plan is currently under discussion within the European Commission and the final draft is so far expected to be adopted in December.

UN: Migrant convention

The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families will hold a Day of General Discussion focusing on "protecting the rights of all migrant workers as a tool to enhance development". This will take place on 15 December during the third session of the Committee at the United Nations Office in Geneva and will inform input into the High Level Dialogue of the General Assembly in 2006 on the relationship between international migration and development. NGO participation in the meeting is welcome. For more information and to register: [click here](#)

OSI sues the US

Two years ago, the United States have committed itself to the fight against AIDS with huge funding through USAID. In order to get USAID funding, grantees have to sign a pledge opposing prostitution. Failure to endorse this loyalty oath means health workers across the world striving to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS could lose funding and be forced to abandon life-saving programs. The Open Society Institute and the,

Alliance for open Societies International (AOSI) have filed a [lawsuit](#) against USAID, charging that the pledge requirement is unconstitutional, under well established Supreme Court case law, because it requires private organizations to adopt the government's point of view in order to receive funding. The suit also alleges that the pledge requirement is unconstitutionally vague and therefore allows the law to be applied arbitrarily. It is unclear how organizations are supposed to "oppose prostitution," and the uncertainty created by this provision creates a chilling effect on efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Both organisations fear the effects of the funding requirement to the work of AOSI in Russia and Central Asia in the fight against AIDS. The outcome of this lawsuit is also of interest of anti-trafficking projects and the USAID also funds many projects, especially in Eastern Europe. The same opposing prostitution pledge is required.

OSCE Alliance against trafficking

On 28 and 29 of September 2005 the second meeting of the OSCE ATAU Alliance Expert Coordination Team met at the Hofburg in Vienna. This expert coordinator team exist of representatives of various international NGOs, UN and OSCE bodies. La Strada International is invited to be member of this Expert Coordination Team as well. The meetings are regularly organised to update the main actors in Europe on programs and activities and to commonly advocate and lobby for better support to trafficked persons.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Anti- trafficking measures in Belarus

In March this year President Lukashenko of Belarus issued a Decree on measures on counteraction of trafficking in persons. The degree focuses mainly on the aspect of strengthening of the control measures for practicing human trafficking such as increasing the rate of sentences increasing the responsibilities of legal entities who offer job employment abroad, but there are also measures proposed for prevention activities and social assistance. Trafficked person who will work with the authorities will not be prosecuted for taking part in an illegal act and be rehabilitated. In order to stop trafficking the government has limited the possibilities for people to move abroad. People who want to go abroad are more or less dependent on licensed job-, modeling- or marriage agencies and have to go through many additional registrations and restrictions. Students who want to study abroad need to get permission from the Ministry of Education. Amongst NGO's there is the fear that by closing down the legal ways to migrate, the illegal ways (mostly controlled by traffickers) will be the only option with all the danger entangled.

Czech changes?

Prostitution falls into a legal grey area in the Czech Republic. Having sex for money is not illegal, but all forms of organisation of prostitution and living of the earnings of prostitutes is. The Czech authorities have long looked at ways to bring the country's rampant sex industry under control, and in July approved a bill which would make prostitution a legal trade. If the bill becomes law, prostitutes will have to pay tax and insurance and undergo regular health checks. Local authorities will have the power to decide whether to allow prostitution in their districts. La Strada Czech Republic welcomes efforts at regulating prostitution and making the industry more transparent and believes that "properly set regulations" could improve the rights and the position of people who offer sexual services voluntarily. They could also help identify people who are forced into prostitution. But La Strada objects the prohibition for people from outside of the EU to work in the Czech sex industry. This restriction will not reduce trafficking as the government claims but in fact will force migrants to work illegally and therefore put them in a situation where they are more vulnerable for exploitation and abuse. La Strada hopes that the legislators will make changes in the bill in sections that "increase the danger to which trafficked persons are exposed," and extend the provisions that will help regulate the conditions of prostitutes. The bill will be discussed at the parliament in October 2005.

ILO in the Ukraine combats illegal migration

The ILO and the Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko from Ukraine have signed an agreement on cooperation in preventing the illegal transport of migrants into Ukraine and human trafficking. The agreement also foresees the voluntary repatriation of illegal migrants from Ukraine and the voluntary repatriation of Ukrainian victims of human trafficking from abroad; the collection, use and distribution of information on migration;

the holding of joint conferences, seminars and other technical cooperation events on migration issues; the holding of training courses on preventing human trafficking and illegal migration for officials and individuals undergoing training in Interior Ministry bodies; the formation and operation of consulting centres for migrants.

What's new ?

New La Strada publications

In September 2005 a facts and practises book on La Strada has been published; *La Strada, European Network against Trafficking in Women*. The book compiled by Marjan Wijers, based on various La Strada documents, describes the work, methods and philosophies of the La Strada network and the individual members. The book can be ordered at [La Strada International](#)

In June 2005 La Strada Macedonia promoted the film "You Are Alive" , the first Macedonian preventive film aimed to raise general awareness regarding human trafficking especially among youth and "at risk" population. The film is going to be used in the preventive activities of La Strada Macedonia and other NGO's and will be broadcasted on the national and local TV Station. Promotions followed with discussion were held in 8 cities in Macedonia. *More information can be received from [La Strada Macedonia](#)*

NGO Guide

Last August, the International NGO Platform on the Migrant Workers' Convention (IPMWC) launched a Guide for NGO's on the Implementation of the Migrant Workers Convention. The International NGO Platform on the Migrant Workers' Convention is a coalition of non-governmental organisations that aims at facilitating the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the UN Migrant Workers' Convention. This Guide can enable national or regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs), coalitions and individual organisations to effectively use the Convention as a tool for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families.

Report on trafficking in SEE

The Regional Clearing Point (RCP), an IOM managed programme, has published the Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe. The report highlights the fact that victims are trafficked from, through and to SEE for a variety of purposes including labour, begging and adoption - and not just for sexual exploitation. The report gives a clear update on the situation in South Eastern Europe, the changes in trafficking and provides a good number of facts and figures.

What's happening where ?

November 7-9 in Vienna, Austria, OVSE – ATAU High-level Conference: Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation - Forced and Bonded Labour Identification – Prevention – Prosecution

November 7-8 Brussels PES Group seminar on human trafficking. This seminar will bring together, in the framework of the Socialist family, Members of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and Committee and Women Committee, Commissioners, or their representatives, and Ministers, Members of national parliaments, representatives of civil society and experts.

November, 22-24 2005 Vienna, Austria ICMPD event

7 – 9 December 2005 Berlin Second Expert Meeting of the ECPAT Europe Multi Stakeholder Training on trafficking in children for Sexual Purposes in Europe

December 15th 2005 OHCHR meeting – committee of migrant workers

What's on your mind ?

In this chapter of the La Strada newsletter we want to share our thoughts on specific issues/topics with you. We welcome you to react on our opinions. The reactions will be discussed in the coming newsletter. We would also welcome your opinions on specific issues.

The floor is yours...

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