

PRESS RELEASE LA STRADA INTERNATIONAL

Amsterdam, 10 December 2013: Human Rights Day.

In Europe, the Human Rights of people that fall victim to human trafficking are violated on a large scale. Not only by those who exploit and abuse them, but ironically, also by governments that are supposed to protect them.

The gap between theory and reality

People that have been trafficked, once identified as such, have important rights for protection and support. These include free legal aid, shelter and compensation for unpaid wages. But there is a large gap between the rights that victims of human trafficking are entitled to on paper, and the rights granted in practice. According to the *La Strada International NGO Platform – United against human trafficking in Europe* this neglect of rights has serious consequences and leads to a further violation of people's rights. In response to this, the *La Strada International NGO Platform* has launched a campaign urging governments to fully implement anti-trafficking legislation and monitor its impact on the ground.

Remaining vulnerable to human trafficking

Those that have been subjected to human trafficking have invariably suffered abuse and intimidation from their traffickers. Not uncommonly, they are put under pressure to testify against their traffickers right away. This tends to adversely affect the quality of the testimony, undermining efforts to clamp down on human trafficking crimes. Trafficked people also often incur debts as a result of being trafficked. "By sending them back to their country of origin without any support or financial compensation for their unpaid wages the issue is far from solved" explains Marieke van Doorninck, Advisor Public Affairs at La Strada International, "it just makes people vulnerable to being trafficked again".

Anna's story: the consequences of rights violations

To bring the problem of rights violations under the attention of politicians and other important stakeholders the *LSI NGO Platform* started the campaign "One Story, Two Outcomes". The campaign presents the story of Anna, based on a real life case. Anna is offered employment abroad and finds herself ruthlessly exploited on a mushroom farm. One day the police raid the place where she is being held. What happens next all depends on whether Anna is given access to her rights. "By telling the story of Anna and sharing other stories similar to hers, we want to show what happens when the rights of trafficked people are not respected, but also how a difference can be made. Given the right tools they can turn a corner and rebuild their own lives", says Suzanne Hoff, International Coordinator at La Strada International.

Better monitoring needed

"We work at a grassroots level and provide direct support to trafficked persons. In our work we see that the rights of trafficked persons are regularly denied, despite the good legislation in place", says Hoff. In the last few years, European governments have made progress in the fight against human trafficking. They have ratified extensive international legislation to protect victims of human trafficking. Hoff: "governments must also ensure however, that the rights granted on paper are also granted in practice. Regular monitoring on the ground is pivotal to this".

Actions during the campaign

Although rights violations are seen throughout Europe, the situations in different countries are never quite the same. Starting today, partners of the *LSI NGO Platform* will convey their message to their respective governments and other important stakeholders with an e-mail campaign and other media, providing facts specific to their national situation.



Notes for the press

Read Anna's story on www.lastradainternational.org/realstories

Interested in more real stories?

In case you are interested to know more about the experiences, including the rights violations in the country of one of our partners, please phone or e-mail us (details below) and we will try to help you get the right contacts and/or information.

Background information on anti-trafficking legislation in Europe

People that fall victim to human trafficking are deprived of their fundamental human rights, such as the right to be free from slavery, servitude and forced labour. In response to this, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No 197) was ratified by all European countries except for Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Russia and Turkey. In 2011 the EU countries adopted the Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (Directive 2011/36 EU). The most important rights under the abovementioned legal frameworks are access to shelter and basic support, free legal aid, time to reflect before testifying, financial compensation for unpaid wages, not to be punished for laws broken as a result of being trafficked and temporary residence.

About the La Strada International NGO Platform

The La Strada International NGO Platform - United against human trafficking is active since 2005. Its aim is to strengthen the cooperation in Europe (EU and Non-EU) among civil society organisations that combine practical work with trafficked persons and affected groups with political advocacy for human rights based policies to eradicate trafficking in human beings. They also aim to encourage the anti-trafficking debate among civil society and the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt.

The *LSI NGO Platform* consists of: Gender Perspectives (Belarus), Animus Association (Bulgaria), La Strada Czech Republic, Open Gate (Macedonia), La Strada Moldova, CoMensha (The Netherlands), La Strada Poland, La Strada Ukraine, Association of Young Azerbaijani Friends of Europe, Anti-Slavery International (UK), ASTRA - Anti-Trafficking Action (Serbia), HopeNow (Denmark), KOK (Germany), LEFÖ (Austria), Living for Tomorrow (Estonia), Novi Put (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Pag-Asa (Belgium), PICUM (Belgium), Proyecto Esperanza (Spain).

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