



Newsletter

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With this quarterly newsletter, La Strada International wishes to inform and update you on developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and the activities of La Strada International and the La Strada member organisations. We welcome your feedback and input. Please [e-mail us](#) by 1 December 2015 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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20 years La Strada network



On 15 September La Strada celebrated its 20th anniversary. The project “La Strada - Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Central and Eastern Europe” officially started on 15 September 1995 as a one-year programme between the Dutch Foundation against Trafficking in Women (now CoMensha) and two women’s rights groups in Poland and the Czech Republic. In the years after, the network expanded and in 2004 was registered as an association - The International La Strada Association (LSI) - with an International Secretariat (IS), based in Amsterdam. La Strada International - IS now also coordinates the La Strada NGO Platform - United against Human Trafficking in Europe, which comprises 28 organisations from 22 European countries.

Over the past twenty years, La Strada has made significant contributions to the understanding of human trafficking and the national and international legislative and policy measures to combat it, produced numerous prevention and awareness-raising materials, received over 230 000 hotline calls and assisted over 24 000 trafficked persons. For a brief overview of our work, you can see a [timeline](#) of some of our achievements, a [slideshow](#) of La Strada prevention materials and an [infographic](#) of the assistance and support services provided to trafficked persons.

We hope to continue working together with different stakeholders in the future, to ensure that the rights of trafficked persons are respected, recognised and realised.

La Strada International nominated Charity of the Year at European Diversity Awards



La Strada International is one of eight nominees in the category 'Charity of the Year' of the [European Diversity Awards](#). The European Diversity Awards recognise and celebrate those organisations and individuals that have shown innovation, creativity and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion during 2014.

La Strada International is honoured to be nominated for this award for our 20-year history of promoting the rights of all trafficked persons, regardless of age, gender, social status, disability, sexual orientation, culture or disability.

Monitoring handbook discussed at Balkan ACT NOW meeting

On 18-19 September 2015, a workshop was held in the framework of the [Balkans ACT NOW \(BAN II\)](#) project, in Podgorica, Montenegro. This workshop focused on adjusting a monitoring handbook, developed to provide anti-trafficking practitioners with a monitoring and evaluation framework which will allow them to gather evidence and analyse the quality of the laws, procedures and practices related to the fight against trafficking in human beings and the protection of its victims. With the handbook, practitioners can take stock of the current situation and provide sufficient evidence to improve anti-trafficking policies and practice at national level and enhance cooperation at transnational level.

At the meeting in Podgorica, the monitoring handbook and the monitoring exercise were discussed. The monitoring will soon start in the current four partner countries involved: Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In May 2016, the outcome of the monitoring will be presented at a final conference in Belgrade, Serbia. Based on the handbook and the piloting, software will be developed to support the monitoring tool.

The project, which will last until the end of 2016, includes also strategic litigation, trainings for judiciary, including a regional training for judges and prosecutors; a feasibility study on state compensation funds and the development of policy proposals (in national working groups) to establish such funds; coalition building and meetings with state institutions and decision-makers, Media campaign and partner meetings.

On 9-10 November a regional expert meeting for judicial institutions will be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim of this meeting is development of the common regional curriculum on the subject of compensation for victims of THB and other serious crimes.

TRACE workshop: The role of technology in human trafficking

On 29 September 2015, the [TRACE consortium](#) organised a workshop on the role of technology in human trafficking and presented the findings of a recently conducted research on the issue. In different workshops, with presentations from law enforcement, NGOs and academics, the participants discussed how technology is used to facilitate human trafficking, but also how it can contribute to preventing and combatting it. Issues around data protection and future trends in technology were also discussed. At the event, it was highlighted that all stakeholders should ensure to make more use of existing new technologies and tools to prevent and combat human trafficking. Further it should be ensured that technology is effectively used and that especially designed tools to prevent human trafficking are better tailored to specific target groups. It was acknowledged that a lot of information might not reach the right groups, including potential victims of trafficking. Concern was also raised about the increasing demand for data about trafficked persons, which seriously conflicts with their right to privacy and data protection.

More information about the workshop, the guest speakers and their presentations, can soon be found on the project [website](#). The research deliverable on technology and human trafficking, is expected to be published at the end of this month.

On 20 November 2015 the next TRACE workshop will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria, organised by Animus Association/La Strada Bulgaria and hosted by the Bulgarian National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The TRACE consortium and invited experts will then discuss

human trafficking in relation to other criminal industries and socio-economic factors, in view of forecasting future trends. For more information about the workshop, a draft agenda and a registration form, please visit the [project website](#) or contact Ms. [Radostina Pavlova](#).

La Strada Moldova open letter to the Scelles Foundation

In July La Strada Moldova and IOM Moldova sent an [open letter](#) to the director of the Scelles Foundation to express their disagreement with the Fourth Edition of the 'Global Report on Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution' currently being prepared by the organisation. According both La Strada and IOM, the report consistently conflates human trafficking and sexual exploitation with prostitution, ignoring the complexities of both issues and failing to understand the economic, political and social root causes of human trafficking. The two organisations reaffirm that they remain committed to building a genuine international anti-trafficking community but refuse to participate in research that disregards international standards and agreed common language.

Ukrainian National Toll-Free Hotline reports 217 calls human trafficking during January-July

An important tool for monitoring the human trafficking situation in Ukraine, for preventing risks and providing counselling to trafficked persons is the work of Ukrainian National toll-free hotlines: National Toll-Free Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination and National Child Toll-Free Hotline. Both lines are operated by La Strada Ukraine. The Hotline on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Gender Discrimination received 5717 calls during the first six months of 2015. 50.1% of the calls related to problems of internally displaced persons (this is a new category of registration of calls, after more such calls appeared in 2014 in connection with the conflict in Eastern Ukraine), 45.2% of the calls related to domestic violence and 3.8% to human trafficking. Consultations on (the prevention of) human trafficking, related to employment (43%) or study abroad (14.1%), marriages with foreigners (14.1%) and travel abroad (7.8%).

What's going on ?

Amnesty International adopts a policy on decriminalising sex work

At its International Council Meeting in August, in Dublin, Ireland, Amnesty International adopted a [decision](#) to develop a policy for the decriminalisation of sex work. The decision comes after two years of consultations



**TELL AMNESTY TO LISTEN
TO SEX WORKERS**



with sex workers' rights organisations, feminist and other women's rights representatives, LGBTI activists, anti-trafficking agencies and HIV/AIDS organisations. Amnesty also conducted research of the sex industry and the rights of sex workers in four countries and consulted with its national chapters. In practice, the decision means that Amnesty's International Board will develop a policy on the decriminalisation of sex work and the protection of sex workers' rights, for which it will then lobby via its national offices.

LSI welcomes the decision of Amnesty, which is seen as a support for La Strada's long standing commitment to advocate for sex workers' rights. Ahead of the vote on 11 August, La Strada International co-signed a [letter](#) initiated by the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe and signed by over 200 organisations and 800 individuals, to support Amnesty in voting in favour of the draft policy. La Strada International acknowledges that the sex industry is one of the sectors vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking, but as with other vulnerable sectors, it is important for workers to be able to organise and have their labour rights acknowledged and protected.

US Trafficking in Persons report

At the end of July the US Department of State published its annual [Trafficking in Persons](#) report, which reviews states' efforts to address human trafficking and places each country onto one of [three tiers](#), based on the extent of their governments' compliance with the 'minimum standards for

the elimination of trafficking'. The report is used as a diplomatic tool in US foreign relations to put pressure on countries to do more to combat human trafficking and support the victims.

Most of the La Strada countries have maintained their rankings from the previous year, except for Belarus and Bulgaria, which have been downgraded. After two years on Tier 2 Watch List (the longest period that a country can stay on the 'watch list') Belarus was moved to Tier 3 for its continued use of state-sponsored forced labour, lack of convictions for human trafficking and a decline in the number of prosecutions. La Strada Belarus regrets that the report does not mention Belarus' accession to the Council of Europe convention and hopes that this, together with the new by-laws introduced in June 2015, will help lift the country from Tier 3 next year. Bulgaria was placed on Tier 2 Watch List, largely because of the political crisis that dominated the country in 2014, which resulted in reduced attention to human trafficking, the closing of two state-funded shelters and prolonged lack of leadership at the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB). La Strada Bulgaria understands this assessment and hopes that the new government, elected in October 2014 and the new secretary of NCCTHB, appointed in 2015, will lead to increased attention to and coordination of anti-trafficking efforts in the country.

The TIP report is often criticised, as the ranking seems seriously influenced by the US relationship with states and other political issues not directly related to human trafficking. This was even more obvious this year, when anti-trafficking organisations protested against the upgrade of several countries, including Cuba, Malaysia and Uzbekistan, on the basis of what they regard as purely political and economic motives. Activists speculate that the upgrade of Cuba comes only because of [the renewed diplomatic relationships](#) and the lifting of the 50-year embargo on Cuba; the [upgrade of Malaysia](#) relates to the attempts to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal and [of Uzbekistan](#) - because of its geostrategic position in Central Asia. "The State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report is only an effective diplomatic tool in the fight against modern slavery if countries are ranked honestly. We are disappointed to see countries like Malaysia upgraded in the report's rankings in order to expand trade relations. In particular, Malaysia was downgraded just last year to the lowest Tier 3 ranking for its failure to protect millions of migrant workers from forced labor, debt bondage, and sexual exploitation, and the country has not taken concrete steps to merit a higher ranking. Upgrades like this seriously weaken the U.S. government's credibility as it works to combat human trafficking around the world", said Bradley Myles, CEO of the US-based NGO Polaris in a [statement](#) on the day of the report's release.

Writing for [OpenDemocracy](#), leading anti-trafficking expert Anne Gallagher criticised the report for being not only too politicised, but also for looking at trafficking in a shallow way: "TIP Report weaves a simple - and ultimately comforting - tale of trafficking being about bad people doing bad things to good people. It fails to seriously interrogate the deep economy of human exploitation - to ask what would happen to global wealth and productivity if such exploitation were suddenly removed."

EU Response to Migration: Turn Political Crisis into Opportunity

On the occasion of the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting that took place in Brussels on 14 September, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and its member organisations, including La Strada International, issued a [statement](#) urging EU leaders to establish safe and regular channels for migrants and refugees to come to Europe.

This past year has seen a record number of migrants trying to reach Europe, often fleeing war and persecution in their home countries, and often risking their lives to take precarious journeys. Yet PICUM underlines that the subsequent humanitarian crisis unfolding in many countries of Europe is the result of policies aiming to deter migrants and refugees over the past 15 years. The new EU Migration Agenda presents no significant shift in this discourse - the security agenda prevails and human mobility continues to be seen as a threat rather than an opportunity.

PICUM and its members will aim to hold EU governments accountable to establish a new approach, moving away from securisation and criminalising migrants towards a human rights based, social and economic perspective, including more regular channels for refugees and migrants to reach Europe safely. See further PICUM's opinion piece in the newsletter.

15th OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons conference

The 15th *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* conference "People at risk: combating human trafficking along migration routes" provided a forum for inclusive dialogue among countries of

origin, transit and destination for trafficked persons, smuggled migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. It also promoted goal oriented partnerships among relevant stakeholders in the OSCE region.

During the two days, experts exchanged views on the security challenges posed by mixed migration flows and jointly explored ways to more effectively address trafficking in human beings and prioritise the protection of vulnerable people on the move. The participants included numerous high-level speakers, as well as representatives and experts from the 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Partners for cooperation, from major international organisations and NGOs, as well as from academia, think-tanks and the media. Kateryna Levchenko, Chair of the La Strada International Board, gave a [presentation](#) on the human trafficking risk assessment for internally displaced person in Ukraine.

Videos, presentations and documents from the event are available on the [OSCE website](#).

Migration and human trafficking included in the Sustainable Development Goals



The new [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September, build on the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which helped more than 700 million people to escape poverty in the past 15 years. The broader sustainable development agenda goes much further, addressing the root causes of poverty and universal need for development that works for people. The 17 sustainable goals and 169 targets aim to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, reduce inequality within and between states, achieve equality, improve water management and energy, and take urgent action to combat climate

change.

LSI is pleased that the contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development has been recognised and that states have committed to cooperating “internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons”. The SDGs include various targets within the goals that directly relate to migration: reducing the costs associated with migration by reducing the costs of transferring remittances, promoting the protection of migrant workers, countering human trafficking, and promoting better migration governance.

What's new ?

Launch of: 'Forced Labour and Human Trafficking' - Anti-Trafficking Review

The new issue of GAATW's journal the [Anti-Trafficking Review](#) entitled 'Forced Labour and Human Trafficking' was launched on 29 September in Bangkok, Thailand. Authors in this issue - both academics and practitioners - review how the global community is addressing forced labour and trafficking. In 2014, governments across the globe committed to combat forced labour through a new international agreement, the ILO Forced Labour Protocol. But are recent efforts enough? With case studies from diverse regions and countries including Southeast Asia, Brazil, India, Italy, the United Kingdom and United States of America, this issue features a mix of academic articles, a new 'policy and practice' section, as well as short debate pieces which respond to the question: Should we distinguish between forced labour, trafficking and slavery? The Review and all articles are freely available [online](#).



Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery

A new [study](#) by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, presented at the 30th session of the Human Rights Council, focuses on enforcing the accountability of States and businesses for preventing, mitigating and redressing contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains. It reviews the international legal framework on slavery, the causes and prevalence of

contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains and initiatives of states and businesses to address them. It also reviews the corporate legal liability and the access to remedies in cases of contemporary slavery in supply chains and some of the challenges and gaps to ensuring the accountability of states and businesses for contemporary forms of slavery in supply chains.

DemandAT working paper on terminology

This first DemandAT [working paper](#) seeks to clarify the concept of demand in the context of trafficking in human beings. It approaches this task by historically analysing the emergence of the concept of demand within legal frameworks related to trafficking. The paper also discusses the understanding of demand as a concept in economics and whether and how this can be applied to trafficking in human beings.

The paper makes recommendations on terminology for the project, including, to use a definition of demand as 'the willingness and ability to buy a particular commodity' and the definition of demand-side policies and measures as reserved for activities that seek to influence the demand for final commodities (such as consumer goods and services).

Compensation for victims of human trafficking: inconsistencies, impediments & improvements

Regardless of the internationally acknowledged right to compensation, the number of trafficked persons in Europe who have actually received any reimbursement is very low. [The study](#), conducted by Jeltsje Cusveller - a criminology student at the University of Amsterdam - for La Strada International, aims to contribute to an increase in the frequency compensation is received by trafficked persons by analysing the obstacles to compensation. It has done so by conducting a literature review (covering the years 2010-2012), interviews and a case file analysis (covering 2013 and 2014), answering the question which obstacles exist that prevent victims of human trafficking from receiving compensation, both at the European level and the national level of the Netherlands.

The study looks at the main routes to compensation - civil court, criminal court and state fund - and the main obstacles faced by trafficked persons when using each route. It finds that they concern both the legislation itself, as well as the practice of law enforcement and the judiciary. Lastly, an important issue at the international level is that offenders who have been sentenced to pay compensation often have no traceable assets, resulting in non-payment.

This study recommends that guidelines be set up for judges, to increase the number of claims that are awarded, and the amounts that can be claimed and awarded. Furthermore, victims of trafficking should always be correctly and fully informed of the possibility to claim compensation. By continuing research and improving different aspects in practice, it is hoped that more and more victims of human trafficking will receive the compensation to which they have a legal and moral right.

Guidelines on rehabilitation and (re)integration of trafficked persons

The ARIADNE Network and the Human Rights Defense Centre (KEPAD) in Greece released a new [thematic publication](#) "Guidelines on Rehabilitation and (re)integration of Trafficked Persons" (A Manual for the Western Balkan Region), written by Tatiana Fomina from La Strada Moldova. The subject-matter of these Guidelines is closely connected with the [previous publication](#) of the ARIADNE Network - "Regional Guidelines on the Identification of Trafficked Persons" and further develops it.

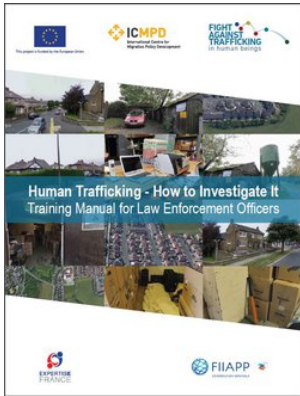
In order to provide a basis for the development of the Guidelines, a thematic research was conducted in 4 countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece), aimed at the identification of different issues related to the rehabilitation and (re)integration process of trafficked persons in each country. The Guidelines account not only for the theoretical aspects of rehabilitation and (re)integration but also for the good practices gained in this field by NGOs from these countries. The Guidelines also include recommendations on the main aspects of the system-based development of rehabilitation and (re)integration of trafficked persons concerning:

- conceptualisation of the terms "rehabilitation" and "reintegration";
- legislative and regulatory framework, institutional basis and capacity building;
- guiding approaches and principles of rendering rehabilitation and (re)integration assistance;

- individual plan of (re)integration and role of the case manager;
- monitoring and evaluation, as well as factors underlining success of (re)integration;
- other related issues.

The guidelines can be useful for NGOs and other service providers to better understand the issues around reintegration of trafficked persons and the services offered as part of reintegration programmes.

Law Enforcement Training Manual on investigating human trafficking



'Human Trafficking - How to Investigate It', is a training manual for law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officials play a key role when investigating cases of human trafficking. They may be the first authority figure a trafficked person encounters during the referral or identification process. They are responsible for gathering evidence from crime scenes and witness testimony that is integral to effectively prosecute trafficking offences. Frontline law enforcement officers are one of the groups more likely to encounter a potential or actual trafficked person during the course of their duties. In many countries however, the specialised skills required to investigate cases of trafficking in human beings are not taught to frontline law enforcement officials, beyond specialised anti-trafficking branches of law enforcement.

The training manual includes introductory lessons on the difference between irregular migration and human trafficking, and spotting the indicators of trafficking. More advanced subjects are also covered such as how to conduct screening interviews, the use of specialist investigative techniques for human trafficking investigations, supporting the needs of victims during investigative procedures, and conducting evidential interviews.

Labour exploitation in domestic work in Spain

The Spanish organisation, Fundación Surt has launched a new [report](#) (in Spanish) entitled "Fronteras difusas, víctimas invisibles. El tráfico de personas para la explotación laboral en el sector doméstico en España" ("Blurred boundaries, invisible victims: Towards an understanding of trafficking of human beings for labour exploitation in domestic work in Spain"), part of a wider European project entitled "Combating Trafficking in Women for Labour Exploitation in Domestic Work" in Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania and Spain. The report sheds light on the 'invisible' phenomenon of human trafficking for labour exploitation in the domestic work sector in Spain. It highlights that domestic work is an important sector of the Spanish economy as between 14% and 17% of Spanish households employ a domestic worker, that it is mostly carried out in the informal economy and that it is performed mainly by migrant women from specific regions (Latin America, Eastern Europe and North Africa). The report also points out some common trends in trafficking for labour exploitation in domestic work: the recruitment is often done individually by compatriots and family members, but also by Spanish nationals. Job placement agencies may also have a role in the recruitment and transportation of victims and traffickers take advantage of situations of special vulnerability such as the irregular status and language difficulties of the migrant women. More about the project and the reports on the four countries can be found [here](#).



SOMO fact sheet on hidden subcontracting in the garment industry



International clothing brands and retailers have a responsibility to prevent and address human rights violations in their own operations and in their supply chains, including subcontracted units. To fulfil this responsibility first of all brands and retailers should know where their products are being made. Without such knowledge, addressing human rights risks is impossible. Second, brands and retailers should enable - and not inhibit - respect for labour rights at their first and further tier suppliers.

Challenging brands and retailers to clarify the role of buying companies and to have their products made by a series of manufacturers that are progressively further from the brand. This helps to ensure that the brand is aware of the conditions of production, including the use of subcontracting. Brands and retailers should ensure that they are aware of the conditions of production, including the use of subcontracting. Brands and retailers should ensure that they are aware of the conditions of production, including the use of subcontracting.

SOMO's new [fact sheet](#) is the fifth in a series about labour conditions in the textiles and garments industry and is made for the WellMade project. WellMade is a collaboration between the Fair Wear Foundation, Dutch trade union CNV, Christian Initiative Romero, Ethical Trading Initiative, and SOMO. Wellmade gives clothing brand buyers and retailers insight into the problems that exist within their production chains and offers concrete advice on how to make improvements. The fact sheet highlights how current business practices in the global garment industry are driving suppliers to subcontract production to other workplaces. See more on [Somo's website](#).

The THB financial business model. Assessing the Current State of Knowledge

The [Strategic document](#), published by Europol, refers to the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of trafficking in human beings (2012-2016) which lay a basis for it. It emphasises the fact that organised crime groups involved in human trafficking have successfully combined illicit practices with strong business and technical skills. Their evolution into a professionalised and flexible service represents a growing challenge for EU law enforcement agencies (LEAs). In addition to the robust business model established by human trafficking organised crime groups, there is a significant intelligence gap amongst LEAs regarding the financial aspects of THB. It is often unclear how much profit traffickers make, how proceeds are laundered and where they are invested.

Video - 'Migration is not a crime'

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) published a [video](#), entitled 'Migration is not a Crime' in August 2015 which advocates for a human rights based approach towards migrant arrivals and for regular channels for migrants to come to Europe. The video animation was produced by the animation designer Roald Seeliger.

Young Paperless and Powerful

The Migrants Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) and the Young, Paperless and Powerful campaign group have released a [video](#) as part of the Justice for Undocumented campaign. The video features undocumented children and young people, sharing how Ireland is their home; how they might not be able to go to university, get a work contract or travel and other daily challenges they face because they are undocumented; the impacts this has on their relationships with friends, mental health and well-being; and their hopes and dreams, including getting secure residence status.



Information film addressed to Polish citizens undertaking work in the Netherlands

The Dutch Embassy in Poland has prepared a short film for Polish citizens considering to move to the Netherlands for work. The main message of the film is "Prepare yourself before you go". It presents the advice of experienced Polish people who are working in the Netherlands and of professionals who support migrants. The Dutch organisation FairWork and the Dutch labour Union (FNV) have contributed to the film. The film is available in two versions - a [trailer](#) and a [full version](#) (15 minutes) - in Polish and English.

What's new on the web ?

Feminist donor list: Who can fund my women's rights organisation?



Feminist and women's rights organisations, including organisations working on the issue of human trafficking, face many challenges conducting the necessary and often urgent work fighting for women's rights in their communities, while simultaneously searching for funding to sustain themselves. Responding to a key demand of our constituencies, AWID offers a [searchable donor list](#),

making it easier for feminist and women's rights organisations to connect with the right funders. AWID is requesting feedback from members, women's organisations and donors if the list suits their needs and to fill any existing gaps. Interested organisations can contact AWID at fundher@awid.org.

#OurHands campaign informs domestic workers of their rights

A new social media [campaign](#), entitled #OurHands, aims to inform domestic workers of their rights as enshrined in ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, a landmark reinforcing the equal status of domestic workers with other workers. The campaign's name #OurHands means that empowering and protecting the rights of domestic workers is a collective responsibility. A toolkit providing posts that can be shared to raise awareness of domestic workers' rights is available [here](#).

What's happening where ?

- 6-7 October - Fifth International Conference of Roma Women, Skopje, Macedonia
- 13 October - Round table "The Role of civil society organisations in combating trafficking in human beings: experience exchange" Minsk, Belarus.
- 15-16 October - KOK Symposium on human trafficking, Berlin, Germany
- 18 October - EU Anti-Trafficking Day
- 20-21 October - EU Civil Society Platform meeting and Anti-Trafficking Day Event, Brussels, Belgium
- 3-6 November 2015 - 3rd World Conference of Women's Shelters, The Hague, The Netherlands.
- 9-10 November - BAN II regional expert meeting for judicial institutions, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 11-13 November - PILNET 2015 European Pro Bono Forum, Rome, Italy
- 11-13 November - DemandAT meeting, Florence, Italy
- 20 November - TRACE workshop "Current and Future Trends of Human Trafficking in Europe", Sofia, Bulgaria
- 3 December - Round table GRETA evaluation on Belgium, Brussels, Belgium
- 17-18 December - Feminist Conference "Alliances in Sex Work", Barcelona, Spain

What's on your mind ?

Why we need to talk about 'migrants'



*Elisabeth Schmidt-Hieber,
Communications Officer and Lilana
Keith, Interim Programmes
Director, Platform for International
Cooperation on Undocumented
Migrants (PICUM)*

'Refugees Welcome' is not a new slogan, but before this summer, it stayed mainly within refugee and migrants' rights supporter groups. The increase in migrants arriving at the EU borders coupled with repeated statements by heads of state expressing unwillingness to accept people in need in their countries, has led to a new public movement urging more solidarity and openness. The image of the dead body of the toddler Aylan, who washed ashore near a Turkish tourist resort in early September, has been etched in the public's mind as a symbol of this 'refugee crisis'.

Not a refugee or migrant crisis

However, while the recent developments are commonly referred to as a 'refugee crisis', what we see is neither a 'refugee crisis' nor a 'migrant crisis'. The situation which is unfolding has not been caused by refugees and migrants over the past months, but a result of years of political measures which have focused on sealing the EU's borders, including through agreements with non-EU countries to prevent migrants and refugees from coming to Europe, and steadfastly avoided taking progressive steps towards a holistic, pragmatic and just policy framework to regulate modern human mobility. The significant humanitarian challenges to accommodate the number of people currently arriving reflect a crisis of political will.

The growing movement of #RefugeesWelcome is indispensable in providing new arrivals with shelter, food and assistance. Individuals have made enormous efforts and have come up with [innovative solutions](#) to coordinate assistance, showing the important difference the public can make in the absence of solutions from governments.

However, the terms 'refugees', 'asylum seekers' and 'migrants' are often used interchangeably creating confusion about the different realities and needs of individuals, families, nationalities or groups of people moving, their rights, and the legal and practical implications of such terms. Since the new emergence of the #RefugeesWelcome movement, some media even went as far to suggest the term '[migrant should be abandoned](#)' and to solely speak about 'refugees'.

Risk of distinguishing between 'legal' and 'deserving', and 'illegal' and 'undeserving' people

Migrants move to another country or region, temporarily or permanently, to search for better living conditions for themselves and their families. This is often erroneously understood as a 'voluntary' move to benefit from job opportunities and living standards in the country of destination - the 'economic migrant'. However, reasons for migration are manifold, multiple and complex. They often include the aim to leave situations of violence, insecurity, discrimination and/or systemic poverty in order to survive. People leaving situations of war are also frequently facing poverty. This complexity is not accounted for in the international protection system. Many of those welcomed as 'refugees' today will likely be tomorrow's undocumented migrants. Many will not meet the legal definition of a 'refugee' as it is strictly applied by many European governments, or manage to be recognised as such.

Generally, all people that move hope to be able to better provide for their families and live in peace and security. They all have rights and lives that matter.

The characterisation of undocumented migrants as 'undeserving' or even '[illegal](#)', leads society to accept that they are arrested, imprisoned and denied the basic necessities for survival and dignity. 'Illegality' implies that a certain group has no right to reside in a country, to access justice and services. A person who resides in Europe without having a recognised status as asylum seeker or refugee, or a valid residence or work permit, frequently has no access to basic services such as healthcare or shelter.

Overlooking immigration detention and deportation

The current enthusiasm for welcoming newly arriving migrants and refugees also risks overlooking the treatment of many migrants already living in our societies.

There is little public awareness about how most governments [systematically detain and deport](#) undocumented migrants. [Detention periods](#) are often prolonged and even children are locked up in immigration detention. Migrants are detained like criminals and few supporter groups are allowed access to detention centres to monitor conditions.

The current positive developments in the reception of asylum seekers are being accompanied by a raft of measures to increase detention and deportations of those who do not meet the strict criteria of 'refugee' and to prevent people from reaching Europe. There are serious concerns around fundamental rights safeguards in this context, given they are already inadequately implemented.

Germany, for example, has been depicted as one of the biggest receiving countries in the media after it was announced that 800,000 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' are expected to arrive in the country this year. Much less attention has been given to the fact that systematic deportations of migrants, mainly from Balkan countries, will be accelerated. [According to the German Federal Authority for Migration and Refugees \(BAMF\)](#), they expect to process about 75,000 pending applications largely from people from Balkan countries by the end of the year, and that most will be rejected. Over 10,000 have already been deported in 2015.

There is also little awareness that many of those who live in Europe undocumented have lost their status due to [reasons other than irregular border crossing](#) such as domestic violence, workplace exploitation, job loss, administrative delays, expired documents or because they have been born 'undocumented', because their parents are undocumented migrants.

The Syrian toddler Aylan should have been saved. So should [thousands of individuals](#) who died the same way before. Why were few people aware about these children? Is it because they were not washed ashore and drowned out of our sight? Was it because many of them were Sub-Saharan migrants who are often perceived to be 'undeserving' or 'illegal'?

It is for these reasons that we have to continue to speak about migrants, about every person's rights, and about the complex social phenomena of migration. We need to push governments to ensure the rights of all people residing in Europe, regardless of status, and to provide regular, safe ways for migrants to come to live and work in Europe and be reunified with their families.



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