



CODE OF CONDUCT of the International La Strada Association

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I. Foreword

The rights of clients are paramount to the International La Strada Association (La Strada International/LSI). Acting as a regional 'watch dog' LSI monitors the implementation of laws and regulations by governmental institutions to ensure the utmost protection and assistance is available to trafficked persons and vulnerable groups. In order for La Strada International to play a critical role, it is equally important that the organisation remains critical to its own decisions, monitors the actions it implements and members are accountable to each other.

LSI's Code of Conduct comprises a set of rules of behaviour and ethics that guide member organisations in fulfilling its vision, mission, long and short term goals, as well as maintaining adequate management, and ideological and practical tools to ensure that LSI's philosophy is reflected and followed in everyday practice. This is to ensure accountability towards clients, other stakeholders and LSI member organisations.

LSI's Code of Conduct refers to and complies with the following documents that outline specific areas of LSI work, measures and responsibilities: LSI's Mission Statement, Articles, Standards, Principles, Fundraising Policies and Criteria and Staff Management Paper. These documents provide further and more detailed guidance for the understanding and implementation of this Code of Conduct.

*Board of LSI, 2011
Nadia Kozhouharova
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II. Definitions

The International La Strada Association and its members acknowledge the definition of trafficking in persons given in the Palermo Protocol as:

“All acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion (including the use or threat of force or the abuse of authority) or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive), in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original deception, coercion or debt bondage.”

La Strada International also follows the definition of human trafficking of the Council of Europe Convention:

“Trafficking in human beings” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

Aiming at the effective address of human trafficking, members of the La Strada International network implement the following main activities:

- Advocacy and Lobbying for policies that prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and protect the rights of trafficked persons, based on a Human Rights approach;
- Providing people and especially women with information and tools to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking, as well as awareness raising of the general public;
- Direct short and long-term assistance to trafficked persons, especially women.

LSI believes that:

1. Trafficking in persons is a severe violation of human rights for which states are accountable.
2. The respect of the right of all persons to make decisions about all aspects of their lives is essential.
3. It is crucial to offer all possible adequate, effective and efficient support to all trafficked persons.

III. VISION and MISSION of LSI

Vision of LSI

LSI is a value-driven network consisting of sustainable independent national member organisations to ensure a world without trafficking in human beings and where human rights are respected.

Mission of LSI

What does LSI provide?

LSI empowers people to have access to human rights and exercise their rights.

Who does LSI work for?

LSI develops the capacity of the member organisations to provide better services to trafficked persons and at-risk groups thereby empowering them to improve the quality of their own lives.

Perception/image of LSI

LSI is a leading European NGO network that addresses trafficking in human beings. It operates independently and from a grass-root level.

IV. Fundamental values and principles

Values provide the common framework for decisions, actions, and behaviour. Living our values requires us to meet the highest standards of behaviour in all aspects of LSI work.

LSI's services are based on the overall human rights principle defining trafficking in human beings as a severe violation of human rights; it does this by taking a trafficked persons' centred approach.¹

The following human rights based principles are of particular relevance for the work of La Strada network:

- ◆ Equality and non-discrimination
- ◆ Participation and empowerment
- ◆ Universality and indivisibility
- ◆ Accountability and transparency

La Strada integrates the human rights based approach into all aspects of the work:

Lobbying and advocacy

La Strada International integrates a human rights approach into its vision on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, based on the recognition that human trafficking is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations. A human rights-based approach recognises the root causes of human trafficking, such as poverty, inequality, gender based violence, discrimination, armed conflicts and social, political and economic instability in general, next to restrictive immigration policies and a demand for cheap, exploitative labour. The human rights-based approach requires human rights to exist at the core of any anti-trafficking strategy. It integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into legislation, policies, programs and processes.

Support and assistance

For La Strada International, protection should be defined in a holistic way: Protection entails a range of legal, psychological, social, medical and financial measures - that are needed for an individual to regain the control over his or her life.

This involves an active and participatory role of trafficked persons in defining and developing their own recovery and reintegration process, with assistance of specialised NGOs. The rights, interests and needs of trafficked persons are central to La Strada's services. La Strada International recognises trafficked persons as active actors in changing their own situation, rather than as passive recipients of services or victims in need of rescue. The work is based on respect for individual decisions, on confidentiality, safety, non-victimisation and non-discrimination. The support and assistance work is based on the recognition of person's own agency and self-determination for the pursuit of empowerment.

Prevention

Applying the human rights approach into prevention work means the respect for individual's choices. Prevention entails the provision of tools that can be utilised by those vulnerable to protect themselves against exploitation. La Strada International members inform people who want to migrate about the possibilities and the possible dangers and provide them with information on how to protect themselves in difficult situations. La Strada members do not provide opinionated statements regarding the migration or employment of individuals and in no circumstance will restrict the movement of individuals against their own decisions. La Strada helplines are free of charge and can be called anonymously.

In public awareness raising campaigns, La Strada is aware of the language and the images used to portray its messages. La Strada uses the term **trafficked person** instead of **victim**. La Strada does not produce or cooperate in the production or dissemination of materials that are victimising,

¹ The principles of La Strada International are described in detail in the LSI Principles Paper

degrading, violent or in other ways depict people in inhuman ways. The messages of the La Strada campaigns focus on human rights and empowerment.

V. Relations with stakeholders²

La Strada International continuously discusses and promotes the human rights-based approach with its partners in the field, including NGOs, IGOs and governments and critically follows (the progress and implications of) international legislation, policies and measures.

The human rights-based approach is reflected in the “Partnership and donors policies” of La Strada.

La Strada International has adopted “Partnership and donors policies” that formulate general guidelines on how to deal with donor policies, requirements and restricted access to funding. The criteria also guide member organisations on how to cooperate with other stakeholders (including NGO partners and donors) and how to minimise the risk of dependency.

² A person, group, organisation, or system that affects or can be affected by LSI’s actions

VI. The internal cooperation and organisation of the network

LSI adopts and complies with the following written policies: Mission Statement, Articles, Standards, Principles, Fundraising Policies and Criteria, Staff Management Paper, Partnership and Donors Policies and Membership Criteria.

All member organisations have committed themselves to the La Strada International Membership Criteria, which includes adherence to the La Strada International Mission Statement and Principles. Membership criteria further require that members are active and operational at the national level and are independent from governmental/political/religious-orientated organisations. Furthermore, La Strada member organisations should be financial liable and bear financial responsibility for the common projects and provide insight and transparency regarding their own work.

La Strada members share the following internal principles:

All La Strada members commit to the network's values and principles, actions and decisions.

Each La Strada member works according to the La Strada model based on the "bottom-up" principle of the three fields of work (Advocacy, Prevention and Assistance) while integrating their individual priorities independently.

Partners ensure that trafficked persons have access to all possible reintegration services. The referral of clients is preferably made to La Strada members in the respective country; if this is not possible, partners are informed about this in advance.

La Strada members provide mutual support and advice to each other regarding professional and institutional capacity building, ideas, and shortcomings.

La Strada members are responsible for representing the La Strada International network in strategically important events, while the LSI Secretariat ensures support via resource provision. While representing the network, LSI members do not speak on behalf of individual organisation and avoid actions that can harm LSI values, principles and the reputation.

Priority is granted to La Strada members in all aspects of international cooperation within La Strada member countries, for example:

- Where additional projects, programmes, activities, and contracts are to be signed and implemented by La Strada International members on the matters of common concern;
- Where a contract is planned to be signed, or a project may affect another La Strada member organisation feedback has to be obtained from the particular La Strada partner(s);
- When available international funding opportunities and projects/programmes are to be submitted to international donors;
- Participation in international events on issues related to the areas of concern;
- Where events are to be carried out by one La Strada International member in the country of another La Strada member;
- With regard to activities of the International La Strada Association and its bodies (General Assembly, Board and Advisory Board and Secretariat).

LSI bodies - General Assembly, Board, Advisory Council and Secretariat - ensure conduct and mutual responsibility in accordance with the Mission, Articles and other approved documents. Each LSI body is aware about its mandate and responsibility to the wider LSI network and will ensure its regular monitoring, transparency and accountability. La Strada members, at organisational and personal levels, commit themselves to contribute to the efficiency of the network's structure.

La Strada International Standards

All La Strada International members comply with common standards.

LSI standards are defined as a set of norms with which all La Strada services comply and which can be used to measure and evaluate the quality of the work of La Strada. The LSI standards serve as a

guarantee for the professional quality of the services provided by La Strada, and ensure protection of the rights of its clients.

LSI developed and approved common minimum standards for all its areas of actions: lobby & advocacy, prevention & education, direct social assistance, cooperation with partners, data collection and protection, as well as for its internal organisational structure, including staff capacity, management, monitoring and evaluation.

The standards define the best possible practice in existing realities with existing resources (optimal standards). The standards are jointly developed and agreed upon. They do not restrict the range of services provided nor their quality. The establishment of minimum norms is not an obstacle for providing extra services and/or striving for the maximum or ideal standard.

VII. Complaint procedure on violation of the Code of Conduct, Articles and other written internal agreements

LSI member organisations undertake all necessary steps to peacefully and voluntarily resolve possible Code of Conduct violation.

If a situation appears where a full member (either an associate member of LSI or an individual staff member) has violated the articles or current Code of Conduct or any other written agreement, and both sides have exhausted other possibilities for solving the issue, the following steps are to be taken:

1. The individual member or LSI member organisation that is aware of the possible violation will contact the LSI International Board in writing. (Phone contact is also possible but the complaint should also be made in writing to the Board).
2. The Board can contact both the complaining party and the accused party and ask to provide background and justification for actions taken regarding the violation. These facts enable the Board to discuss the matter based on all information. Based on the arguments and facts, the Board may propose a solution to the General Assembly, who will ultimately produce the final decision.
3. If in the event that the Board believes that indeed the accusation is grounded, the Board may request actions to reverse or halt the violation (e.g. require official apologies, or withdrawal from a certain statement; membership, stop a certain activity, stop certain cooperation etc).
4. The Board, or one of the LSI members represented in the General Assembly, may request the General Assembly to propose alternative or additional sanctions or terminate the membership (as described in the articles of LSI, see article 5), and declare dismissal of a member. This applies when a member acts contrary to the Articles of Association, regulations or resolutions of the Association or unfairly harms the Association.
5. As further described in the articles, (see article 5.2) the member, in respect of whom cancellation or dismissal has been declared on behalf of the Association, shall at the earliest opportunity be informed of the said decision in writing, stating the reasons. As described in article 5.3 of the LSI articles, the retiring member shall be bound to meet all ongoing commitments undertaken with or via the Association.
6. The General Assembly may also amend the articles or propose changes in the Code of Conduct. As described in article 12.1 of the Articles all resolutions taken by the General Meeting shall be adopted by an absolute majority (more than half) of the valid votes cast, unless a larger majority should be stipulated in these Articles of Association. In the event of an equal division of votes, the motion shall be rejected.

VIII. Conflict of interests and its resolving

In order to protect LSI network interests, La Strada member organisations commit themselves to avoid entering a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the individual interest on the account of the network.

LSI does not represent any political party/movement and corporation/business interest, unless it coincides with the network's mission, values and programmes' focuses.

La Strada members inform network partners about a possible conflict of interest. La Strada members do not engage in relationships with other organisations in which there is a risk of potential harm for the network and/or conflict of interest.

LSI Board members should not participate in decision-making processes regarding matters that directly impact the La Strada member organisation to which they belong.

LSI ensures rights and capacity of its members to resolve situations (potentially) causing conflict of interests.

IX. Transparency and evaluation

The La Strada International network values the principles of transparency and accountability in relations with its clients, stakeholders, member organisations and the general public.

Transparency procedures protect members from being unknowingly implicated in a decision that may contradict La Strada principles as well as cases of mistrust or misunderstanding. The principle of transparency requires that all La Strada members exchange information regarding their work, and that information on decision-making, strategy, or the implementation of La Strada programmes, is freely available to all members of the network.

LSI is accountable for its actions and decisions: not only to its funding agencies and the government, but also to the people it serves, its staff and members, partner organizations, and the general public.

Based on a developed Monitoring and Evaluation System, LSI conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of its performances and expected behaviour. This includes:

- The evaluation of all bodies (General Assembly, Board, Advisory Council, Secretariat);
- The evaluation of LSI's Strategic Plan implementation;
- The monitoring and evaluation of the current Code of Conduct.

The evaluation of LSI and its members includes feedback from the network's beneficiaries, as well as stakeholders.

Partners, donors and other stakeholders can have access to the results of an evaluation.

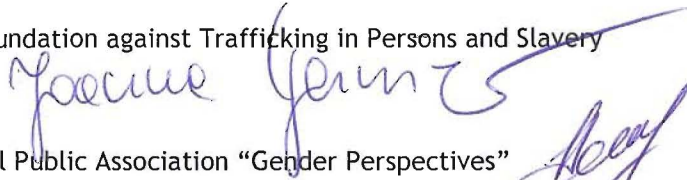
X. Signatures page

LSI members listed below, represented in the General Assembly, agree upon and are committed to comply with this Code of Conduct. Each La Strada International member affirms the core values of partnership while being an independent member of the network.

Mr. Bas de Visser,
La Strada Netherlands/Anti-trafficking Coordination Centre "Comensha"




Ms. Joanna Garnier
La Strada Poland/La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery



Ms. Alena Nestsiaruk,
La Strada Belarus/International Public Association "Gender Perspectives"



Ms. Lucie Otahalova
La Strada Czech Republic, o.p.s.



Ms. Lyudmyla Kovalchuk,
La Strada Ukraine/International Women's Rights Centre "La Strada Ukraine"



Ms. Ana Revenco,
La Strada Moldova/International Women Rights Protection and Promotion Centre "La Strada"



Ms. Nadejda Stoytcheva,
La Strada Bulgaria/"Animus Association" Foundation



Ms. Jasmina Dimishkovska,
La Strada Macedonia/"Open Gate"



Signed at the LSI's Assembly Meeting in Vienna, Austria on 12 June 2012