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 its member organisations. We welcome your feedback and input. Please e-mail us by 1 December 2020, if you have news, information about your organisation, a new report or documentary or an outspoken opinion on (inter) national developments.

La Strada celebrates its 25th anniversary

25 years ago - on 15th September 1995 - three organisations launched the first La Strada project: ‘Prevention of Trafficking of Women in Central and Eastern Europe’. The name of the project was inspired by Federico Fellini’s film La Strada. This film follows the story of Gelsomina, an Italian girl who is sold by her mother to the owner of a small travelling circus.

Since then, the La Strada project has developed into a European NGO platform which now comprises 26 member organisations in 23 European countries.

To mark this occasion, La Strada International launched a year-long social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Website to reflect back and highlight the work achieved over the last 25 years. La Strada Poland and La Strada Czech Republic will also celebrate their 25th anniversaries this year, while Open Gate in North Macedonia will celebrate its 20th anniversary.

LSI submits input for new EU Strategy on Eradication of Human Trafficking

The European Commission has announced the elaboration of a new EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings. It is expected to be adopted in 2021 during the Portuguese EU Presidency. LSI and its members sent in a submission to the Commission underlining several gaps in the implementation of the current EU legislation on human trafficking; the insufficient attention paid to trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation, forced criminality and begging as well as a lack of focus on the vulnerability and victimhood of men and young boys. LSI calls for a better implementation
of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and other relevant EU legislation (Seasonal Worker's Directive, Victim's Rights Directive, Non-Financial Reporting Directive and others) and the need for ratification of other international instruments. Furthermore, LSI calls for more coordinated action to ensure that adequate information is structurally provided to victims of trafficking on their rights. Victims should receive better access to safe and effective complaint mechanisms to obtain justice ensuring improved access to compensation and residence permits and not be punished for their involvement in unlawful activities, in case they have been compelled to do so.

LSI speaks out against human rights violations in Belarus

Together with its member, Gender Perspectives/Social Changes, La Strada International has been monitoring the situation in Belarus. We joined civil society from across Europe to call on the UN Human Rights Council to convene a Special Session to address the human rights violations committed in the lead up to the 2020 Presidential elections in Belarus and afterwards. Read the letter.

LSI joins VSE campaign promotes victims’ rights across Europe

La Strada International joined Victim Support Europe (VSE) #ONEVOICEONECAUSE campaign.

The campaign aims to bolster support for the first EU Victims’ Rights Strategy and explain how to make the proposed Strategy measures work in practice. In June, the European Commission presented its first Victims’ Rights Strategy.

LSI welcomed the new Strategy's inclusion of an explicit reference to undocumented victims of crime, including the need for safe reporting, access to justice and complaint mechanisms. Furthermore, the Commission promises to assess legal and practical tools at EU level to improve the reporting of crime and access to support services for migrant victims, independently of their residence status. Also, whilst the focus on compensation is positive, La Strada International regrets that the related recommendations are quite general as they only state the need for the Commission to monitor compliance with existing legislation and to consider the revision of legislation, but do not go much beyond that.
MRCl pushes for commitment on rights for undocumented people in Ireland

With a new Irish Government in place, our Member Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) pushed for better rights for undocumented people in Ireland as part of its campaign 'Justice for the Undocumented'.

This campaign calls for a broad and inclusive regularisation scheme to be introduced for Ireland’s undocumented people. The new Government has committed to introducing this scheme within 18 months of taking office.

CCEM comments on 2nd French action plan against Human Trafficking

LSI’s French member, Comité Contre l’esclavage (CCEM) reacted to the French Government’s new National Action Plan against Human Trafficking. CCEM’s report (in French only) makes the following observations:

- the lack of budget to accompany the announced measures;
- the hashing and rebranding of old measures as 'innovative';
- the minimal reference to the role of civil society;
- the inadequate emphasis on the need to train the judiciary; and
- the need to balance measures dedicated to the fight against sexual exploitation, and other forms of exploitation less visible and less taken into account at present.

Awareness for domestic and gender-based violence of Ukrainian migrants

As part of the campaign, #SafeAnywhereILive, our Member, La Strada Ukraine is asking Ukrainian citizens affected by domestic or gender-based violence whilst living outside of Ukraine to share their stories of receiving help whilst abroad. These stories and experiences will be used to prepare recommendations for Ukrainian authorities in order to better protect Ukrainian citizens in other countries.

FairWork reports two-thirds of Dutch companies sometimes guilty of exploitation

According to a new report (in Dutch) from LSI’ member FairWork, conducted by research agency Team Vier, two-thirds of Dutch companies surveyed are 'sometimes guilty of labour exploitation or human trafficking', taking into account that they share responsibility for flexible workers. One in twenty Dutch companies believe that labour exploitation often occurs within their own sector.

The abuses are expected to mostly occur in the transport and construction sector with the tourism and catering sectors also scoring high. The report talks of various instances of labour exploitation
(underpayment, poor housing and extensive working hours, imposing unattainable targets on employees against their will, not allowing toilet visits and other inhumane coercion.

The report also reveals that ‘more than one in five hirers do not carry out checks when selecting an employment agency or working with temporary workers. Supply of staff, price and flexibility are the most important criteria when selecting an employment agency. In January 2020, half of the companies in the Netherlands said they were using flexible staff. The larger the organization, the more often temporary workers were used. Two in five hirers made permanent use of flexible staff (43%). A slightly smaller share uses temporary workers for seasonal work (37%). About six in seven hirers mainly hire personnel from the Netherlands. About one in twenty mainly hires staff from abroad.

**FIZ and other NGOs will launch Swiss Platform against Human Trafficking**

Four Swiss organizations (LSI member FIZ, ASTRÉE, Centre Social Protestant (CSP) Genève and Antenna Mayday Ticino) are launching a new nationwide network to combat human trafficking: Plateforme Traite – Swiss platform against Human Trafficking.

To launch this new network, an event will be held at which Petya Nestorova, Secretary General of the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) will speak on the importance of human rights-based and victim-centred approach in the fight against trafficking in human beings and the role of NGOs in this field. Following this, the four counselling centres will discuss the experiences and difficulties faced by victims of human trafficking in Switzerland, and will present the Platforms’ main lines of work as well as the demands addressed to political decision-makers. Click for more information.

**KOK reflects on Rights and protection of trafficked persons**

LSI’s member KOK in Germany published its second volume of the book: Trafficking in Human Beings in Germany - Reflections on Rights and Protection. There have been many developments since 2015 when KOK published its first edition, including both legislative developments and practical changes. This new edition is based on insights from 26 ‘human trafficking and labour exploitation’ experts and puts forward political and practical recommendations for the adequate support of trafficked persons.

**SERBIAN LABOUR RIGHTS – NOW! Campaign**

In July this year, LSI’s member Astra launched a campaign in Serbia to raise awareness on human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. This campaign informs people at risk on how to protect themselves and recognise the traps used by traffickers for the purpose of labour exploitation. The campaign also informs existing victims on their rights and the types of assistance available.

Based on dialogues with experts and the results from their My WaY project and the publication Labor Exploitation is Real, Astra aims to identify gaps in the national legal framework governing labour rights and make new proposals for its improvement to the government.
Webinars by Open Gate in partnership with La Strada International

As part of the project ‘Recognize, Respect and Realize RIGHTS’, Open Gate and La Strada International organised three webinar sessions for civil society representatives in North Macedonia. This project aims to contribute to the democratisation and EU integration processes in North Macedonia through improving civil activism’s environment, capacity, commitment and the influence of civil society networks on promoting human rights and the rule of law.

Local and national grassroots CSOs, working in the country on human rights issues (women, children, labour and social rights, migration and combatting organised crime especially human trafficking and exploitation) have been uniting their forces to work towards addressing the root causes and eliminate the consequences of human rights’ violations. The webinar series focused on the position of (undocumented) migrants and workers' rights; exploitation of children; and access to justice for victims of crime and helped to connect civil society organisations in North Macedonia with European and international networks to strengthen their capacities and opportunities for advocacy, monitoring and networking. Speakers included representatives of Clean Clothes Campaign, PICUM, CoMensha, Terre des Hommes, Victim Support Europe, ICRSE and ASTRA.

What’s going on?

New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 23rd September, the European Commission released the highly anticipated EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. LSI monitored, together with the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), of which LSI is a member, the developments of this EU Pact.

As expressed by PICUM, the ‘new European Pact on Migration is all about increasing returns, without any serious consideration for welcoming and inclusion.’ This increase in returns is done using three strategies: fostering readmission agreements with third countries; introducing very rapid screening procedures at the EU border (which risks refoulement); and introducing the possibility for EU Member States to contribute financially to returning instead of welcoming newcomers to their territory. LSI joins PICUM’s
view that the only European solidarity promoted is rejecting, rather than welcoming, people. However, LSI welcomes the reference to human trafficking and the acknowledgement that migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Earlier LSI called for concrete action in this matter including identification mechanisms. Read more here.

**New Victim rights Coordinator appointed**

On 22 September, the EU Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders inaugurated the new Victims’ Rights Platform. This new platform, which will meet annually and on an ad-hoc basis when necessary, will serve as an important forum for discussions on victims’ rights with all relevant actors. This follows the adoption of the EU Strategy on Victims’ Rights in June this year and the appointment of the new Coordinator for Victims’ Rights – Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska. LSI welcomes her appointment and hopes she will indeed ensure consistency and effectiveness of different actions in relation to the victims’ rights policy.

**European Parliament passes Resolution on Migrant Seasonal Workers Rights**

On 19th of June, the European Parliament adopted by 593 votes a resolution on European protection of cross-border and seasonal workers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. This Resolution calls for better protection of migrant workers including measures to ensure the health and safety of workers, application of the principle of equal treatment of migrant seasonal workers with EU nationals and support for social partners and CSOs actively working in this area. It also emphasised the need to ensure the proper implementation and enforcement of applicable EU legislation with respect to the rights of cross-border and seasonal workers.

The dire situation for migrant and undocumented workers has been recorded in the documentary 'Invisible Workers'. It investigates stories of migrants working on European farms from Italy to Spain to Greece. The pandemic labelled them as ‘essential workers’, however, the situation on the ground is one often equated with slave labour. Following this, the Commission released guidelines for EU Member States to protect the health and social rights of seasonal workers.
European Parliament draft recommendations on corporate accountability

Following the Commission's announcement to introduce new rules on corporate accountability, the European Parliament has released its [draft opinion](#) on this subject. LSI welcomes this commitment to securing new EU rules, however, emphasises the need for enforcement mechanisms (i.e. civil liability) and access to justice and remedy for victims, including judicial remedy in front of EU courts.

Linked to this, a [new report](#) by ECCJ and our member, Anti-Slavery International, looks at case studies of alleged human rights and environmental abuse issues linked to EU companies and calls for mandatory due diligence legislation.

28 candidates nominated by 17 countries for upcoming GRETA elections

On 11 September, the Council of Europe published the list of candidates nominated for the next GRETA elections, planned for the 27th meeting of the Committee of the Parties on 4 December 2020. There are 28 candidates for the 8 vacant places nominated by 17 countries, including countries with thus far no national representation in GRETA. LSI members have been reaching out to their governments to learn more about the selection and nomination process of GRETA candidates. However, in several countries NGOs were not able to receive any information from their governments.

From the countries, where LSI is represented through its members, the platform strongly expressed its support for [Ms Conny RIJEN](#) - Professor of Human Trafficking and Globalisation in the Netherlands and member of the Advisory Board of LSI's member CoMensha; [Ms Dorothea WINKLER](#), member of the management of LSI's member FIZ and [Ms Ivana RADOVIĆ](#), who worked for 11 years for LSI’s Serbian Member, ASTRA.

As stipulated by the Convention, La Strada International would like to stress the importance of having a good balance in the composition of the GRETA committee. This means a gender and geographical balance, as well as multidisciplinary expertise representing all actors involved in the fight against trafficking and providing support to victims. LSI and its members therefore also strongly support the other Serbian candidates [Mr Djordje ALEMPIJEVIĆ](#) and [Ms Radmila DRAGIČEVIĆ DIČIĆ](#), the Belgian candidates [Ms. Patricia LE COCQ](#) and [Mr Peter VAN HAUWERMEIREN](#) and German candidate, [Ms Helga GAYER](#) who have been close cooperation partners.

UN Working Group (WG) on Trafficking in Persons

On 10 - 11 September, the 10th session of UN Working Group on Trafficking in Persons took place. This meeting further discussed the mechanism for the review of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocols.

Part of the meeting focused on ways to properly apply the principle of non-punishment of human trafficking victims when acts are committed as a direct consequence of their situation as trafficked persons. This was accompanied by a [Guidance on the Principle of Non-Punishment](#) which provides an overview of the
The background of the principle, implementation at the national level and trends in implementation. The new Special Rapporteur (SR) on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally made a statement emphasising the need for the non-punishment provision to be practically applied throughout the entire investigation using a mechanism. The SR also underlined that the provision also stands in cases of detention.

**Anti-Trafficking Review (ATR) launches call for papers**

The Global Alliance against trafficking in women (GAATW) has launched its latest issue 'Everyday Abuse in the Global Economy'. This new Special Issue of Anti-Trafficking Review examines the driving forces behind the increasing prominence of precarious work, the accelerating role of migrant labour within the global economic systems, and the political relationship between everyday abuses and severe exploitation.

Earlier ATR launched a call for papers focusing on 'Anti-Trafficking Education: Pedagogy, Policy, and Activism' with the aim to learn more about and share pedagogical approaches and practices within the anti-trafficking movement. Those interested in submitting a paper can refer to this link for more information. The deadline is 15th November 2020.

**What’s new?**


The European Parliament has published an evaluation report on the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Directive. The aim of the Report was to gather evidence on the progress and challenges that occur in the implementation of the Directive at the national level, with a focus on migration and gender. Several LSI members were interviewed for this evaluation assessment.

Almost 10 years after its adoption, the Anti-Trafficking Directive remains a valuable tool in combating trafficking in human beings in the EU. Nevertheless, the evaluation points out the need to continue efforts to ensure the application of its provisions in all the Directive’s main aspects. Worryingly, the conclusion of the evaluation report states: ‘the persisting grey areas and obstacles are significant enough to put the full achievement of the directive’s objectives at risk’. In May this year, LSI also highlighted the need for better implementation of the EU Directive in its submission for the EU Progress report.
UN SR reports on COVID-19 and contemporary forms of slavery

The UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on contemporary forms of slavery, Mr. Tomoya Obokata, has published his first thematic report focusing on the pandemic’s effect on contemporary forms of slavery. Particular attention is paid to the risks faced by vulnerable groups including refugees and (informal) migrant workers, children and young people.

In order to reduce the negative impact a list of recommendations is provided in his report, including support to civil society organisations who provide help to victims and survivors, as well as support (income support, debt relief, tax credits and wider social security benefits) to people at risk of exploitation.

The report further calls for the enforcement of labour laws, strengthening of labour inspections, and engagement with businesses to ensure compliance; next to an increase in resources available to less developed countries, including through IMF and the World Bank, and the need to relax economic sanctions imposed on states.

Statewatch Report: more returns & fewer rights in EU migration policies

A new Statewatch report looks at how recent and forthcoming EU reforms aim at increasing the number of returns while reducing or eliminating rights and protections of migrants and refugees. It focuses on the combined effects of the new Return Directive, the interoperability regulations and the expanding role of Frontex.

FAIRCOM publishes e-Book on compensation for victims of sexual violence

The first in a series of e-Books has been released by FAIRCOM. This e-Book investigates the availability of state and offender compensation for victims of sexual violence in Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands and Spain. Funded by the EU, FAIRCOM was established to promote an efficient and effective model for fair and appropriate compensation to victims of sexual crimes in the EU. Click to download the e-Book here.

ICMPD policy brief: impact of the pandemic on Ukrainian labour migrants

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has published a new policy brief looking at the challenges posed by the pandemic to Ukrainian labour migrants, who constitute the largest group of foreign workers in the EU. These challenges include unemployment, loss of income, overstays, and difficulties with return due to travel bans.
Best practices include: online application procedures for work visas; provision of longer-term stay permits to find a new job; provision of adequate information in Ukrainian and delinking work visas from employers or work contracts.

SOMO’s ‘Mind the Gap’ highlights corporation strategies to escape liability

A new project by the Dutch Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) shows how companies use strategies to disengage from their human rights obligations and escape liability. These strategies include:

- **Constructing deniability** through outsourcing, hiding behind complex supply chains and refusing to disclose information;
- **Avoiding liability** through engaging in jurisdiction shopping, settling cases outside court and shielding parent companies;
- **Distracting and obfuscating stakeholders** by sharing distorted information and symbolically engaging with communities;
- **Undermining defenders and communities** by criminalising human right defenders and undermining unions; and
- **Utilising state power** by aligning with suppressive state institutions and avoiding regulations through corporate lobbying.

IOM releases its 2019 Return and Reintegration Report

IOM 2019 Return and Reintegration report highlights the ongoing decrease in voluntary returns from the EEA & Switzerland and the increase in assisted voluntary returns from regions outside the EEA and Switzerland.

Approximately 15,000 migrants received Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) and there is an increased focus on sustainable reintegration efforts with 112 IOM country offices providing 126,442 reintegration-assistance-related services.

IOM publishes Guidelines on Migrant Domestic Workers

New guidelines on Migrant Domestic Workers were published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). These guidelines target labour recruiters and focus on ethical hiring practices of migrant domestic workers. This is based on the IRIS Standard, developed by the IOM through an extensive multi-stakeholder consultation process. It is estimated that there are 67 million domestic workers in the world over the age of 15; 80% of whom are women and 1 in 5 a migrant worker. Given the hidden nature of their work (private households), they are at a greater risk of mistreatment.
FIZ Magazine: Migrant stories in Switzerland

FIZ, our Swiss Member, has recently translated their 2019 annual magazine into English. In this edition, they share stories of female migrants in Switzerland, and shares stories of FIZ’ clients, for example: Kanita,* an undocumented sex worker living in Zurich, who sends money home to her sick mother in Thailand and Emely,* a Dominican woman caught up in domestic violence. The magazine also features an editorial looking at how Swiss migration laws are not gender-neutral. You can read their publications in English here.

New Book: Combatting Modern Slavery

A new book by Genevieve LeBaron, looks at the current approach taken by corporations to tackle human trafficking and slavery in the supply chain.

Genevieve LeBaron is Professor of Politics and Co-Director of Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI) at the University of Sheffield and an Editor of Review of International Political Economy. Since 2008, she has been investigating the business of forced labour, and its role and dynamics within domestic and global supply chains.

In her book, she argues that the current approach of anti-slavery networks, NGO partnerships and investment in social auditing is flawed and limited and calls for a new approach that dismantles exploitative business models and regulates the privatisation of monitoring and enforcement of labour standards. She states that it is only through worker-driven initiatives, which uphold fundamental rights, that workers can be protected. Click here to read more.

What’s new on the web?

Fashion Checker puts exploitation in the spotlight

A new tool developed by the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) enables to find out which brands are paying their employees a living wage. This initiative has provided some transparency to the fashion industry, which is plagued by complex and secret supply chains allowing fashion retailers to escape liability. Survey results of CCC show that 93% of surveyed brands have failed to prove that they are paying a living wage to any of their suppliers. This tool is part of the Filling the gap campaign aiming to close the gap between poverty and living wages, male and female pay, and the gap in data at the bottom of supply chains.
Podcast examining the role of financial institutions in ending human trafficking

Themis has released its latest podcast in a series on modern slavery and human trafficking. Talking to a variety of stakeholders including expert witnesses, law enforcement officials and detectives, the podcast examines modern slavery in the financial sector looking at how the financial sector can combat this violent crime through tracking the financial footprint and other methods.

#JusticeForWageTheft Campaign

A global poster competition has been launched to raise awareness and visibility on the issue of wage theft experienced by migrant workers. The situation of migrant workers - who have been forced out of their jobs, made to go on unpaid leave without being given their earned wages, salaries, and benefits, and forced to return home into situations of debt bondage - has gotten worse during the pandemic.

What’s happening where?

- **7 - 8 October 2020:** [22nd WAVE Virtual Conference](#) 'Structural inequality: the root of the global pandemic of violence against women'.
- **9 October 2020:** Dutch Asser Institute webinar 'Migration deals and their damaging effects'.
- **12 - 16 October 2020:** [Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) will be held in Vienna, Austria to discuss the review mechanism.
- **14 October 2020** (15.00 – 17.00): Together against Human Trafficking Event launching Plateforme Traite – Swiss Platform against Human Trafficking.
- **14 - 15 October 2020:** Austrian EU Anti-Trafficking Day webinar 'COVID-19 and human trafficking'.
- **18 October 2020:** Webinar on Trafficking in Adults and Children - [Spotlights on Pressing Issues in Covid19 Times & Solutions with Regard to Agenda 2030](#) by KOK and ECPAT
- **19 - 21 October 2020:** PILNET virtual [2020 Global Forum](#).
- **26 - 30 October 2020:** 6th session of the UN Open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights (OEIGWG), Geneva, Switzerland.
- **16 - 18 November 2020:** [UN Business and Human Rights Forum](#), Geneva Switzerland.
- **20 November 2020:** [Annual Expert Round Table](#) – Regional Implementation Initiative on Preventing & Combating Human Trafficking.
- **4 December 2020** - Elections for [new GRETA members](#).
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La Strada International (LS) is a European NGO Platform against trafficking in human beings.