

Webinar: Trafficking Victims in Criminal Proceedings



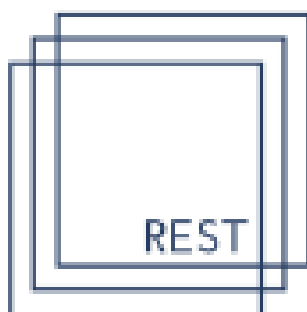
On 25th of November, La Strada International together with the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security and Tilburg University, organised a webinar: ‘Trafficking Victims in Criminal Proceedings’. During this webinar, four experts – [Maria Grazia Giammarinaro](#); [Frédéric Kurz](#); [Conny Rijken](#) and [Evelyn Probst](#) - spoke on issues related to victims’ rights in criminal proceeding, including trauma, the non-punishment principle and access to remedies including compensation. You can listen to audio of the webinar via [this link](#). The results of the European project presented by Conny Rijken during the webinar are published in the book: *Psychological Health Impact of THB for Sexual Exploitation of Female Victims*. This book and related reports of the project are available [online](#).

La Strada International raises concern about EU Migration Pact

In October, La Strada International reacted with concern to the new [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) and [called](#) for more legal pathways to Europe and enhanced rights for asylum seekers and migrants, including better protection of migrant workers to prevent human trafficking.

La Strada International is concerned that the Pact will increase the risk of exploitation and human trafficking, as well as violations of the rights’ of exploited and trafficked persons. These concerns stem from the fact that the main focus of the Pact is on restricting possibilities to access residence status; increasing the use of detention; facilitating immediate return of those denied asylum, and removing essential legal safeguards and support, which conflicts with existing rights of trafficked persons and international human rights obligations. See the Commission’s website for more [information](#) on the Pact.

Focus group meeting on residence status for trafficked persons



On 23 and 24th of November 2020, an online Focus (expert) group meeting was held in the framework of the project Residency Status: STrengthening the protection of trafficked persons (REST project) coordinated by [LEFO IBF](#) in Austria and implemented by 5 other LSI members in Serbia (ASTRA), Moldova (La Strada), the Netherlands (CoMensha), France (CEEM) and Spain (Proyecto Esperanza). The project works on improving access to a long-term protection for third country nationals trafficked in Europe, through a secure residency status, by exploring available long protection opportunities, including the refugee protection scheme.

Currently, huge differences are noted between the number of identified victims and issued residence permits and in general there are only few possibilities to obtain (permanent) residence on personal grounds in the different European countries. At the focus group meeting, experts were asked to verify the REST draft research findings and its recommendations. Recommendations included the need for protection of all trafficked persons regardless their legal procedure, more compatibility between NRMs, Asylum and Residence Permit Systems and the granting of residence on account of Victims’ personal situation. The research and related policy paper will be published beginning of 2021 and used for further advocacy to promote residence for trafficked persons. See also our related International Migrants Day [Statement](#).

KOK publishes report on data collection of human trafficking



A new report by LSI's German member KOK: **'Defining the gap: Data collection on trafficking in human beings and exploitation in Germany – the civil society approach of the KOK'**, written by Dr. Bärbel Heide Uhl is the first report exploring the new NGO data tool on human trafficking. Data protection and the right to privacy of victims of trafficking were the core considerations in creating this tool. It documents the **access to justice of victims of trafficking** and the **work of civil society in Germany**. It is based on data protection, data ownership and control by NGOs, using specially created IT systems and data fields; and the need to monitor data collection systems against human rights violations. For more information on the data tool and its results, click [here](#).

ASI and FLEX raise concerns about changes to UK migration rules

With the transition period set to end at the end of this year, our members in the UK are fighting not to leave EU victims of human trafficking and exploitation worse off due to the removal of EU laws protecting victims. Recently, FLEX and ASI joined a coalition of NGOs, trade unions, lawyers and local authorities calling on the UK authorities to revoke new policy that will make [rough sleeping grounds for removal](#) from the UK. Read the letter in full [here](#). FLEX's priority is now to make the post-Brexit immigration system safer than proposed. Read their [brief](#) on the risks posed by temporary labour migration schemes.

CoMensha and Terre des Hommes launch Dutch Hotline for exploited minors



Last month, [CoMensha](#) and Terre des Hommes launched a national reporting line for the exploitation of minors in the Netherlands. This independent national 'Reporting Point Exploitation Minors' will support a more efficient approach to ending the exploitation and trafficking of minors in the Netherlands. It will strengthen other regional

reporting lines and will focus on all forms of exploitation of minors including sexual exploitation; drug-related exploitation, forced begging and labour exploitation. Incidents reported through the hotline will be investigated - with the consent of the reporter and with an anonymous option - shared with the police or other parties who can provide assistance. The Hotline/reporting point can be reached by [phone](#) or via the [website](#) by the general public, including victims, their families and anyone who suspects exploitation, as well as youth care professionals, teachers, civil servants and social workers

ASTRA publishes new guidelines for judges and public prosecutors

LSI's member ASTRA has launched a new publication: *Practicum for Judges and Public Prosecutors – Justice for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings*. This publication - available in [Serbian](#) and soon in English - contributes to additional education and sensitization of judges and public prosecutors who are a part of the decision-making process in human trafficking cases.



This publication builds on ASTRA’s work with human trafficking victims, work that has shown the importance of a strong judicial system that respects victims’ rights. For this reason, ASTRA focuses on the education and sensitization of professionals who come into contact with victims, so that they can better understand the trauma the victims have been exposed to as well as the consequences. The handbook was published with the support of the American Embassy in Belgrade.

What’s going on ?

Committee of the Parties elects 8 new GRETA members

On Friday 4th December, the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings elected 8 new members of GRETA, the Group of Experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention. LSI observed the elections and the nominations of candidates sending in a [recommendation letter](#) supporting several candidates.

LSI is happy with the results; many qualified persons were nominated and the members elected have generally a long record of promoting human rights. The newly elected members are [Ms Helga GAYER](#); [Ms Conny RIJKEN](#); [Mr Thomas AHLSTRAND](#); [Mr Georgios VANIKIOTIS](#); [Mr Sergey GHAZINYAN](#); [Mr Peter VAN HAUWERMEIREN](#); [Ms Dorothea WINKLER](#) and [Mr Aurelijus GUTAUSKAS](#).



The mandates of the new 8 members are 1 January 2021 - 31 December 2024. The remaining 7 GRETA members will stay until the end of 2022. The new GRETA composition shows a good balance in gender, geographical representation as well as in expertise and professional backgrounds, with five members now representing civil society.

At the meeting, the Committee adopted recommendations concerning [Albania](#), [Croatia](#) and the [Republic of Moldova](#), based on GRETA’s third round evaluation reports and considered the reports of [Andorra](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [Germany](#), [Hungary](#), [Lithuania](#) and [Switzerland](#) concerning the actual implementation of previous recommendations issued to these countries.

Former Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking elected for CEDAW



On 9 November, the former Dutch Rapporteur on human trafficking and sexual violence against children, Professor Corrinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen was elected to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with 145 votes. This body of independent experts monitors implementation of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#). LSI [supported](#) her candidacy, due to her profound knowledge and expertise in the field of human trafficking and legal rights. To support her candidacy, ECPAT International launched a [podcast](#) in cooperation with La Strada International and

others, where Jana Todorovska of Open Gate/La Strada North-Macedonia asked several questions to Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen. Next to Corinne Dettmeijer, 10 other candidates were elected out of [18 nominees](#).

CEDAW publishes General Recommendation on Trafficking

The CEDAW Committee has adopted its new [General Recommendation N 38 on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration](#). This General Recommendation is the outcome of a two-year process of deliberations and consultations, that La Strada International, GAATW and many others participated in through the provision of written feedback and attendance of various consultations. Concerns were raised about some aspects of the draft, including paragraphs calling on states to address demand for human trafficking for sexual exploitation in a way which often leads to measures which violate sex workers' rights.

The final text was adopted on the 6th November following the first draft published in April. The final version substantially differs from the first draft and is fairly comprehensive and progressive, listing many of the protections advocated for by civil society, such as more regular migration pathways, end of tied/sponsorship visas, access to social protections, remedies, legal aid, labour protections and inspections in the informal sectors and an end to forced rehabilitation and conditional assistance. It calls on States to introduce labour legislation to protect all women workers, including those in the informal economy and "condemns ... violent raids and entrapment operations by law enforcement".

This week [IWRRAW](#) organised the webinar 'Feminist Analysis of CEDAW general recommendation No. 38' where different speakers reflected on the new Recommendation. Listen to the [recording](#) here.

FEMM and LIBE evaluate EU Trafficking Directive

The Women's Rights (FEMM) and Civil Rights (LIBE) Committee have been drafting a joint implementation report (2020/2029(INI)) on Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The draft report on the implementation of Directive 2011/36/EU and the related motion will be voted upon in January 2021. LSI and other civil society actors sent in feedback and comments to MEPs. La Strada International raised in particular concerns about the narrow focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation, both in relation to addressing root causes and in addressing demand and highlighted the need for the EU to effectively address all root causes and all forms of human trafficking.

Any gender dimension focus should clearly take into account the fact that also men are trafficked for sexual exploitation and that men, women and children can all be trafficked for different forms of human trafficking. This seems often overlooked; in the last two decades the EC has been mainly prioritising the prevention of sexual exploitation, while using the trafficking debate to promote criminalisation of prostitution. It is time that the European Commission and Parliament take efforts to seriously address all forms, in line with the current EU Directive, which has a broader scope. Rather than a revision of the EU Directive, La Strada International sees an urgent need for its correct implementation. Whether the implementation report and suggested motion by the FEMM and LIBE Committees will effectively contribute to this, is still to be seen.

EC publishes Roadmap for the Evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive

The European Commission has published a [Roadmap](#) for the Evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU) and to gather [feedback](#) from stakeholders on how the specific provisions of the Victim Rights Directive have worked in practice. Input can be given until 30 December 2020. On the basis of the evaluation, the Commission might propose changes to the current Victim Directive. In that case, another consultation will be launched. However, as expressed by different civil society organisations, including La Strada International, the Victim Directive is a good instrument providing rights to all victims of crime, including undocumented persons and simply needs proper implementation. For the implementation of the

adopted [EU Strategy on Victim Rights](#) (2020-2025), the EC has recently launched a Victim Rights Platform, which can be [joined](#) by civil society umbrella networks. As part of the Strategy, the EC plans to launch a European awareness raising campaign on victim rights in 2021.

EU adopts new global human rights sanctions regime

On 7 December, the European Council adopted a decision and a regulation establishing a [global human rights sanctions regime](#). This will provide the EU with a more flexible framework to target individuals, entities and bodies – including state and non-state actors – who commit or are linked to serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide. This framework does not replace existing EU geographic sanctions regimes (some of which already address human rights violations and abuses in for example Syria, Belarus or Venezuela), but will enable the EU to impose asset freezes and travel bans on foreigners that are deemed to have violated fundamental rights: regardless of where they occur or who is responsible. The sanctions regime marks a great improvement for the protection of human rights, as it replaces the EU's current country-by-country system for imposing asset freezes and travel bans on foreigners with a single framework. For more background information, click [here](#). On 17 December, the EU [imposed](#) a third round of sanctions over ongoing repression in Belarus.

European Commission releases new Integration Plan

On 24 November, the European Commission released its new [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#). This Action Plan supports the funding of integration projects activities regardless of the status of beneficiaries, as it does not limit itself to regularly residing third country nationals. The inclusion of undocumented migrants in the integration measures of the Action Plan will depend on the specifications of funds like the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund. The Action Plan follows a [3-month consultation](#) with civil society, international organisations, member states and other stakeholders. This consultation period underlined the high risk of marginalisation, the unequal impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on physical and mental health of undocumented people and the need to consider regularisation schemes.

See further [OPED for ECRE's weekly bulletin](#) by Giacomo Manca, Policy Officer for ECRE & PICUM.

New EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy

The EU has renewed its policy framework on promoting human rights and democracy in its relations with other countries for 2020-2024. The new [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) sets out the EU's ambitions in three key areas: promoting free and fair elections, strengthening media freedom and pluralism and countering disinformation. It acknowledges that while there have been leaps forward, there has also been a pushback against the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The pandemic and its socio-economic consequences have had an increasingly negative impact on all human rights, democracy and rule of law, deepening pre-existing inequalities and increasing pressure on persons in vulnerable situations. In May, the Human Rights Democracy Network ([HRDN](#)), of which LSI is a member, sent in a [statement](#) on the new EU Action Plan. In September LSI joined another [statement](#) with 5 demands.

The Commission has also published recently the [EU Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter](#). It focuses on the application of human rights within the EU, and like the above strategy acknowledges the impact of the pandemic on human rights. It focuses on four pillars of action: effective application by Member States; empowering civil society, guidance for EU institutions and strengthen people's awareness. Civil society and other stakeholders were invited by the EFA to provide feedback during the consultation period – read an analysis of their consultation [here](#).

FRA asks civil society to provide input on challenges in 2020

The [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(FRA\)](#) is looking for input on the challenges faced by civil society in their day-to-day work during 2020. They have launched an [online questionnaire](#) for civil society organisations working in the EU, Serbia or North Macedonia, or at EU level. Questions refer to organisations' experiences related to regulatory (legal) environment; threats and attacks; access to finance and resources; access to and participation in the decision-making process, next to a few general back questions. This is the third annual FRA consultation on civic space (for reports from previous consultations, see [here](#)). The questionnaire is open until 20 January 2021 and all responses are fully anonymised and untraceable. The results of this consultation will be published and shared with policy makers, stakeholders and the media across the EU, with the aim to promote actions that improve the working conditions for CSOs.

In December, the European Civic Forum launched its [Civic Space Watch](#) report for 2020, which showcases the challenges civil society faced throughout the year 2020.

IOM launches Global Policy Network to promote ethical recruitment

This month, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a Global Policy Network to promote ethical recruitment and the protection of migrant workers. This network will address shortcomings in regulation and enforcement that can exacerbate vulnerabilities and lead to gaps in the protection of migrant workers. It will bring together policy makers, regulators, and practitioners to collectively identify solutions, highlight promising practices and address complex challenges. The network membership should help States implement their commitment to safe migration and strengthen their migration governance by facilitating dialogue, knowledge transfer and sharing of good practices. It comes as a result of the 2019 [Global Conference on the Regulation of International Recruitment](#), and the [Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment: A Road Map towards Better Regulation](#). The Network will build on these foundations and be anchored in the framework established by IOM's [IRIS: Ethical Recruitment](#) initiative.

What's new ?

UNSR on Trafficking calls for input on non-punishment clause

The UN Special Rapporteur (SR) on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Mrs. Siobhan Mullally, is accepting [input](#) for her forthcoming report on the implementation of the non-punishment principle in the context of trafficking in persons. The purpose of this report is to identify the core human rights obligations of States, and to examine how forms of punishment such as deprivation of citizenship, detention, forced returns, as well as administrative and criminal sanctions, impact upon the human rights of victims/survivors of trafficking. This thematic report will build upon the preparatory work undertaken by her predecessor in the 2020 position [paper](#) on the non-punishment principle.

The report will highlight emerging trends as well as good practices in the implementation of the non-punishment principle. The deadline for submissions is 14 February 2021 and the report will be delivered to the Human Rights Council in June 2021.

AECT Statement on support to anti-trafficking CSOs during pandemic

The Alliance Expert Coordination team (AECT) calls for support to anti-trafficking civil society organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic and issued a statement, co-signed by twenty AECT partners, including La Strada International. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are particularly well placed to complement governments' activities in combating trafficking in human beings and the range of civil society engagement is wide and diverse. However, CSOs often continue to face both legal and practical challenges affecting their daily work that range from changes in the legal environment, to challenges in finding and accessing resources, to obstacles in accessing policymaking, and even the criminalisation of human rights defenders. The AECT is convinced that national strategies and actions to combat human trafficking would vastly benefit from the inclusion of and support provided to CSOs working to prevent human trafficking and assist victims or those at risk of trafficking and severe forms of exploitation. See [statement](#) with recommendations.

New OSCE OSR publication on prevention of trafficking in supply chains

Recently the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings published 3 new publications for participating States to fulfil their commitments related to combating human trafficking for labour exploitation. This includes [model guidelines](#); an updated [compendium](#) of existing initiatives and a [report](#) of a pilot risk assessment of OCSE's own supply chains. The OSR office is further finalizing OSCE's procurement guidelines and a training curriculum on how to manage and mitigate human trafficking risks in internal procurement across all OSCE executive structures.

FRA and ECHR issue third edition handbook on European migration and asylum law

THE FRA and Council of Europe launched a [Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration](#). It is a comprehensive guide to European migration and asylum law and looks at the situation of foreigners referred to by the EU as third-country nationals.

Since the 2014 edition, EU law covering asylum, border management and immigration has changed significantly. This includes laws covering new large-scale EU IT systems to manage migration. This new version also contains developments in case law. The handbook assists legal practitioners who are not specialists in asylum law to introduce them to the key issues. It will be useful for lawyers, judges, prosecutors, border guards, immigration officials, people who work with national authorities, non-governmental organisations and others who may deal with legal questions related to asylum. The handbook was launched on 17 December during a webinar organised by the FRA and Council of Europe.

ILO: Global Guidelines on Economic Reintegration of Victims of Forced Labour

In November 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published [Global guidelines on the economic reintegration of victims of forced labour through lifelong learning and skills development approaches](#). These guidelines are designed to assist governments, workers' and employers' organizations, NGOs and development practitioners in supporting the economic reintegration of victims of forced labour through formal and non-formal skills development services, skills recognition services and post-training support. Based on extensive research, they draw from a wide range of case studies and good practices identified at local and national levels to offer evidence-based recommendations on how to design and implement effective skills-based interventions for the long-term rehabilitation and protection of victims of forced labour. LSI's member Anti-Slavery International was consulted for the publication and the collection of case studies.

UN Secretary General takes stock of Global Compact for Migration

The UN Secretary General has published the biannual [report on the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration](#). In the present report, issued two years after the adoption of the Global Compact, the Secretary-General looks first at what the implementation of the Global Compact means to the international community and the mechanisms created by Member States to realize its 10 guiding principles and 23 objectives. This is followed by an assessment of the COVID-19' impact on migrants, as well as specific actions taken by governments in accordance with the Global Compact. Finally, the Secretary-General looks at the activities of the United Nations system, paying particular attention to the United Nations Network on Migration and the functioning of the institutional arrangements. In the report, the Secretary-General highlights a wide range of policies and initiatives designed to improve migration for the benefit of all.

Dutch Action team calls for more control of employment agencies

A recent (Dutch) [report](#) by a Dutch governmental action team calls for less dependency of labour migrants on employment agencies in the Netherlands. In 1998 there were 4,000 employment agencies in the Netherlands and now in 2020, there are 14,000 of such agencies. A relaxing of the rules meant that employment agencies no longer had to have permits to function leading to a mushrooming of them. Given that about 60% of labour migrants work through an employment agency who arrange not only the work, but also the housing and health insurance, puts them at risk of exploitation and abuse. It is a great step that these issues have been recognised by the Dutch government, but now it is important that the recommendations, to which our members [CoMensha](#) and [FairWork](#) contributed, are acted upon.

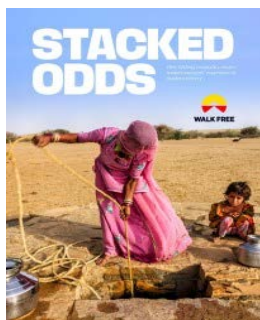
EU Council conclusions call for EU mandatory human rights due diligence

Support is growing for mandatory rules to keep corporations accountable for human rights & environmental rights violations. EU leaders have [called](#) on the Commission for an EU law on mandatory corporate due diligence legislation and the Council asked the Commission to launch an EU Action Plan that is focusing on shaping global supply chains sustainably, promoting human rights, social and environmental due diligence standards and transparency by 2021. This legislation should include provisions for access to remedy for adverse human rights impacts along global supply chains, in order to allow victims of abuse access to justice.

Victims of corporate human rights violations face difficulties seeking justice

The recently published '[Business and human rights – access to remedy](#)' report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) finds that victims have difficulties seeking justice using existing routes through the courts or alternative non-judicial solutions. Business-related human rights abuses may fall under civil, criminal or administrative proceedings. They differ, each with their own specific needs requiring victims to seek justice differently. To address the imbalance and allow victims better access to effective remedies when harm occurs, FRA calls on the EU and Member States to shift the burden of proof; to enhance the use of collective redress or representative action; to financially and legally support CSO's and court alternatives; to review legal aid rules and to clarify legal responsibility in cross border corporate rights abuse cases. Also, it is recommended that companies should be required to assess the human rights impact of their activities to minimise the risks of abuse.

Walk Free publishes Report ‘Stacked Odds’



In October, Walk Free released its report ‘Stacked Odds’ which is a comprehensive evaluation of the female experience of modern slavery. The report reveals that 1 in every 130 women and girls globally lives in modern slavery, accounting for nearly three quarters (71 percent) of all victims. The report looks at promising practices, spotlights survivor and frontline voices and provides recommendations to governments, businesses and other stakeholders. LSI members in the Netherlands (CoMensha) and Belarus (Social Changes) provided input for the [report](#).

ILO: new global wage report



In December, the ILO published its [Global Wage Report 2020/21](#). The central focus is the effect of the pandemic which saw a decrease in wages in two-thirds of the world's countries, with the lowest paid and least educated hit hardest. The report shows that women are harder hit than men. According to estimates based on a sample of 28 European countries, women without wage subsidies would have lost 8.1 percent of their wages in the second quarter of 2020, compared to 5.4 percent for men. The report reveals that 266 million people are denied minimum wages due to restrictive laws and non-compliance, especially agricultural workers and domestic workers, even before the Corona pandemic and the number of people

living below the poverty line is increasing.

Report on ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment – C190

A new [report](#) from Solidarity Center ‘Made for this Moment’ published in November 2020, highlights how ILO Convention 190 addresses sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence in the world of work identifying concrete steps to address it. ILO Convention 190 is the first global, binding treaty that recognizes the fundamental right to a world of work free from violence and harassment. That right is under renewed threat from the inequality, poverty and social instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which leaves workers, particularly women, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized workers at increased risk of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.

Community report by ICRSE on migrants' sex workers victims of crime

In October, the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) launched report ‘[Undeserving victims? A community report on migrant sex workers victims of crime in Europe.](#)’ In cooperation with 12 national sex workers’ organisations from 10 European countries, ICRSE collected and analysed 49 cases of violence and crimes committed against sex workers. This report highlights some of the many key obstacles faced by sex workers in accessing justice and focuses in particular on enabling and disabling factors of reporting crime and on the effects of policing sex work on the ability to report crime. The report was launched by an [online event](#) where migrant sex workers featured testimonies alongside with presentations of European civil society organizations and Members of European Parliament.

What's new on the web ?

New online ILO social protection data dashboard

A new [tool](#) by ILO provides in-depth country-level statistics on various dimensions of social protection systems, including key indicators for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Website to support mandatory human rights due diligence for business

To support people in participating in the EU's consultation on mandatory due diligence, Friends of the Earth, ETUC, Arbeiterkammer Europa (AK Europa), Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (OGB) and the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) have launched a [website](#) to raise voices to hold businesses accountable.

Campaign: clampdown on trade unions in Kyrgyzstan

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Union of Food Workers (IUF), IndustriALL global union and Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) launched a campaign to stop the Kyrgyzstani government from [clamping down on workers' rights](#).

Anti-Trafficking Review (ATR) wants to review 'who traffickers are'

For a Special Issue themed 'Traffickers', the *Anti-Trafficking Review* calls for papers and invites scholars, activists, criminologists, practitioners, survivors of trafficking, and people who have been charged with human trafficking offences, to share their insights on who traffickers are, the factors that lead them to become criminal actors, their experiences in criminal justice processes and systems, the sentences imposed on them, their rehabilitation or recidivism, and more. Read [more](#).

What's on your mind ?



2020 has been overshadowed by the impact of the current COVID-19 virus and related restrictions and lock downs, which has been affecting all, but has had a particularly negative impact on marginalized communities, including thousands of migrants that work in Europe in low paid and exploitative jobs. During 2020, La Strada International and members have [called](#) continuously for more attention to the challenging situation of these groups and for targeted measures to ensure protection and support for both trafficked persons and those at risks. See our [statement](#) launched on International

Migrants Day, raising concern about the lack of adequate protection and residence for victims of human trafficking and other severe forms of labour exploitation.

This advocacy has not been an easy job, especially when struggling to continue support services. Our members reported coronavirus infections among their staff and the persons they support and had to be very flexible in finding solutions in organising adequate referral and support services with limited staff capacity, limited financial and other resources and limitations in facilitations of others. While lower referrals were received by labour inspectorates and law enforcement, direct calls for support through helplines and other means increased. Many persons in irregular work or situations, or who lost their jobs, called our members for information and support.

Fortunately some support programmes were set up by governments and others to help the most marginalized groups, although these were often limited in scope and support civil society. See the joint [AECT statement](#) calling for States to support civil society.

The pandemic seemed to have helped to increase the awareness about the vulnerability of so many migrants in Europe. It is hoped that this will pave way for new opportunities to rethink the way we treat migrant workers and prevent non-compliance with labour laws. Some positive policy measures to address human trafficking, violence and abuse have been noted in 2020. Among others, a new Victim Rights Strategy was adopted and a new EU Victim Rights Coordinator has been appointed, next to new UN Special Rapporteurs, including for Trafficking in Persons and for Slavery. Also new GRETA members have been elected and there are ongoing evaluations of the EU Directive and Victim Directive. As mentioned in this newsletter, there is a new Human Rights Action Plan and the European Commission seems committed to go for binding regulation on Business and Human Rights. While this is all positive, we see a dire need for the implementation of legislation and actions in practice and the need for more consistency in legislation; e.g. EU law on migration often conflicts and contradicts with legislation on trafficking and victim rights.

In 2020, La Strada International celebrated its 25th anniversary. While we could not meet in person, together with our members we issued [statements](#), organised [online events](#), continued projects, applied for funding and developed new strategies, while assisting victims of trafficking and those at risk. In June 2021, La Strada International will adopt its next 5 years strategy. We will continue to raise concern about the lack of access to justice, including the limited access to the reflection period, residence, safe reporting, legal aid and compensation for victims of trafficking. We will also continue to call for fair migration policies and fair labour rights, the non-punishment principle and decriminalisation of those in vulnerable situations and subject to trafficking. We look forward to be working with all of you on these ambitious goals.

We hope that regardless of the expected longer economic impact of the COVID-19 measures, we can continue our work. In case you want to [financially support](#) the work of La Strada International or cooperate with us, please let us [know](#).

La Strada International wishes everyone a happy 2021