



## **Transnational Policy Learning of Civil Society in International Human Rights Monitoring**

A case study of the NGO network La Strada International and its advocacy in  
the monitoring of the 2005 Council of Europe Trafficking Convention

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## **Abstract**

International civil society plays an important role in monitoring human rights. Together with the governance of human trafficking – as a transnational issue – they provide an interesting nexus to study transnational advocacy and policy-learning processes. This thesis provides insights into this nexus through a case study of the European NGO network La Strada International (LSI) and more specifically their advocacy in the monitoring of the 2008 Council of Europe Trafficking Convention. To understand how the network's advocacy influences policy change, interviews with staff from the NGO network and members of the Council of Europe monitoring body GRETA were conducted. This was supplemented by an analysis of relevant content on the monitoring body and LSI advocacy. This thesis conceptualises an approach that integrates Keck and Sikkink's transnational advocacy network (TAN) theories (1998) with Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (1987). The study found that the advocacy of La Strada International influences the GRETA monitoring mechanism through transnational policy-learning processes. This occurs along the following lines according to the main findings: The advocacy of the network takes place within a policy subsystem that values and incentivises policy learning. The advocacy strategies and policy change ultimately are not directed at the GRETA monitoring mechanism itself but indirectly used as a tool to reach national governments and achieve change on the national or local level. These processes of transnational policy learning within the network are intertwined with policy learning processes on other regional or national scales.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. LA STRADA INTERNATIONAL AND THE 2008 COUNCIL OF EUROPE TRAFFICKING CONVENTION.....	5
1.2. ACADEMIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE.....	6
1.3. THESIS OUTLINE .....	8
<b>2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1. THE ‘HUMAN’ IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING LITERATURE .....	9
2.2. TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS (TANs) .....	10
2.2.1. <i>TAN as a Theoretical Framework</i> .....	10
2.2.2. <i>The Transnational Advocacy of Non-Governmental Actors</i> .....	12
2.3. THE ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK (ACF) ON A TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL .....	13
2.3.1. <i>Transnational Advocacy and the Advocacy Coalition Framework</i> .....	13
2.3.2. <i>Conceptualising the ACF Framework</i> .....	14
2.4. (TRANSNATIONAL) POLICY LEARNING .....	16
2.4.1. <i>Classic theories of policy learning</i> .....	16
2.4.2. <i>Policy-learning on a transnational scale</i> .....	17
2.5. GAPS IN LITERATURE .....	20
<b>3. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1. CASE SELECTION.....	21
3.2. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	22
3.2.1. <i>Data Collection</i> .....	22
3.2.2. <i>Data Analysis</i> .....	23
3.3. OPERATIONALISATION .....	23
3.4. EXPECTATIONS.....	26
3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	28
<b>4. IDENTIFYING THE POLICY CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1. THE 2005 CONVENTION AND ITS MONITORING BODY GRETA .....	29
4.2. COMMITTING TO CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT – NGOs IN THE 2005 CONVENTION .....	30
4.3. CRITICISM FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ABOUT THE EARLY WORK OF GRETA.....	31
<b>5. FINDINGS &amp; ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1. THE POLICY SUBSYSTEM: FOSTERING TRANSNATIONAL POLICY LEARNING.....	33
5.1.1. <i>International Collaboration in the Council of Europe and Beyond</i> .....	33
5.1.2. <i>GRETA and International Civil Society as Subcomponents of the Policy Subsystem</i> .....	34
5.1.3. <i>La Strada International as an Advocacy Coalition</i> .....	36
5.2. GRETA – ADVOCACY TARGET OR ADVOCACY STRATEGY IN ITSELF? .....	37
5.2.1. <i>Process versus Effects of Advocacy on Policy Change</i> .....	37
5.2.2. <i>Transnational Advocacy for National-Level Change: GRETA as an Instrument for Civil Society to Reach National Governments</i> .....	38
5.3. POLICY-LEARNING ON DIFFERENT SCALES.....	40
5.3.1. <i>Learning Transnationally in Interaction with Other INGOs</i> .....	40
5.3.2. <i>The Dialogue of National and Transnational Policy-Learning Processes</i> .....	42
5.4. TRANSNATIONAL POLICY LEARNING IN A EUROPEAN NGO NETWORK.....	44
5.4.1. <i>LSI Processes of Transnational Policy Learning Throughout GRETA Monitoring</i> .....	45
5.4.2. <i>Relational Dynamics within the NGO Network</i> .....	46
5.4.3. <i>Learning as a Network through an Exchange of Resources</i> .....	47

<b>6. DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1. REVIEWING THE INTEGRATED TAN/ACF-APPROACH .....	51
6.2. EXPLORING POWER-STRUCTURES IN A LEARNING-CONDUCTIVE POLICY SUBSYSTEM .....	52
6.3. INSTRUMENTAL ADVOCACY – DISCURSIVE LEARNING: THE GOALS OF TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY 53	
6.4. SHARED VALUES AS THE CURRENCY OF TRANSNATIONAL POLICY-LEARNING .....	54
<b>7. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>65</b>

# 1. Introduction

The interaction of regional and non-governmental actors is becoming more important with globalisation and increasingly global modes of governance (Sperling et al., 2001; Hudson, 2001; Mundy & Murphy, 2001). This is accompanied by a growing attention away from national and governmental to international non-governmental actors (Collins, 2008; Alston & Gillespie, 2012). The role of internationally operating NGOs is increasingly valued particularly in the field surrounding the monitoring of human rights. Policy change in relation to human rights is considered dependent on the strength of transnational human rights pressures, policies and transnational advocacy networks (Risse-Kappen et al., 1999; Neumayer, 2005). Human trafficking and thus also counter-trafficking efforts often entail a cross-border element which makes the issue of transnational nature. Thus, the intersection of monitoring processes on the one hand and counter-trafficking on the other is an interesting nexus to study transnational advocacy and policy-learning processes within international networks. The advocacy of the NGO platform La Strada International vis-à-vis the Council of Europe monitoring body GRETA offers valuable insights into this nexus.

## 1.1. La Strada International and the 2008 Council of Europe Trafficking Convention

This thesis examines the role of the European NGO platform La Strada International in the monitoring of the Council of Europe Trafficking Convention. Next to Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International (ASI), La Strada International (LSI) was one of the civil society organisations that was continuously involved since the development of the Convention (Planitzer, 2012). La Strada International is a European NGO platform that focuses on human trafficking. Its emphasis lies on ‘monitoring and advocacy for change to ensure accountability for the effective implementation of European Anti-Trafficking policies and regulations’ (LSI, 2021a). The network consists of 26 member organisations as well as four associate members in 23 countries and thus, classifies as a transnational advocacy coalition (LSI, 2021b; Stone, 2008, see Appendix 4). The goal of this thesis is to get a better understanding of *how the advocacy of La Strada International as a transnational advocacy coalition influences the monitoring mechanism of the 2005 Convention.*

A unique feature of the Convention compared to other international legal instruments on counter-trafficking is its own monitoring body, GRETA, which assesses member states' compliance with the Convention's provisions (Kicker & Möstl, 2012). Both the Convention and GRETA are committed to civil society engagement and the input of NGOs throughout the monitoring process is considered crucial (GRETA, 2012, p. 21). GRETA evaluates the THB situation of each of the states that are party to the Convention over a four-year period. In GRETA's first evaluation cycle, the group of experts was criticised among others by La Strada International for not sufficiently following the Convention's human-rights and victim-centred approach as well as the commitment to civil society involvement (Planitzer, 2012; Rijken, 2014; LSI, 2014). The NGO platform, in particular, circulated a survey among its members about their experiences and developed recommendations to GRETA on how to better engage civil society and commit to the victim- and human-rights-based approach (LSI, 2014). La Strada International does not only provide insights into transnational advocacy but also into transnational network learning processes. Unlike multilateral network projects or EU advocacy, this study focuses specifically on the advocacy of LSI in the monitoring of the Council of Europe thereby ensuring that the issue itself is of transnational nature and that all LSI members are affected.

## **1.2. Academic and Societal Relevance**

This study aims to contribute to the literature in the field by merging concepts from public administration and international relations. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's Advocacy Coalition Framework provides insights into the structure of the policy subsystem surrounding the Council of Europe monitoring and builds the foundation to analyse the advocacy of LSI and its effects on policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The concept of 'transnational advocacy networks' (TANs) that was coined by Keck and Sikkink (1998) complements the focus on coalitions that learn collectively through the exchange of information and resources. Moreover, it adds a transnational dimension to its public administration counterpart that is to date largely applied in national or local contexts (Farquharson, 2003; Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Jang et al., 2016; Flores-Crespo & Mendoza Cazarez, 2019). The causal relationship between advocacy strategies and their influence on policy change is approached through the scholarly work on policy learning. Here, classical theories of for instance Sabatier (1987), Hall (1988) or Heclo (1974) are brought into a dialogue with more recent interpretations of similar

processes on a transnational scale. Together, the theories establish a theoretical framework that is unique to this study. The merging of the two theories of transnational advocacy networks and the Advocacy Coalition Framework is one aspect that speaks to the academic relevance of this thesis. The concepts are rarely brought into connection. Initial research into the concepts suggest that they are highly complementary because they have a similar foundation in network/coalition research and policy change. TAN theories provide the ACF with a transnational outlook and a specific emphasis on non-governmental actors (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The ACF has a longer tradition and elaboration which is useful to structure data collection and data analysis clearly. A combination of the two conceptualisations of advocacy strategies and their impact can be fruitful for future engagement both for research in public administration or international relations. Furthermore, I critically reflect on the concepts of methodological nationalism which is of particular importance in the field of counter-trafficking because scholarly attention focuses primarily on advocacy on the local or national level (Piper & Uhlin, 2002). Further, this thesis provides insights into transnational governance processes to the study of migration and human trafficking. Rather than looking into THB itself as is common in migration studies (Tyldum, 2010; Chibba, 2014; Cho, 2015, Yousaf, 2018), this thesis offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of counter-trafficking governance. Moreover, I hope to overcome a criminal justice bias in literature by pursuing a human-rights approach (Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, 2012; Van Dyke, 2017; Davy, 2016). This shifts the focus away from the crime that is committed by traffickers towards the rights of the trafficked person that are violated.

Transnational advocacy has gained importance and will likely become more relevant in the future which does not only have implications for academia but also makes research in that regard more societally relevant. On one hand, it establishes best-/good-practice examples on how international monitoring can or should involve civil society. The interviews function as a mutual feedback mechanism where through this thesis members of the group of experts and civil society indirectly enter a dialogue about how their interaction works. This in turn is relevant for LSI as well as other internationally operating NGOs as it illustrates how their advocacy is perceived and how it can possibly be improved to increase influence in line with their interests. For GRETA and other external monitoring mechanisms that rely on the involvement of national or international NGOs it also can give an overview of challenges or hurdles that civil society faces and ways in which these can be reduced. Hence, while transnational policy learning in a first instance seems like a very technical concept, it ultimately can give insights on how information, experiences and resources are shared most effectively

on a transnational level to best reach the joint advocacy of the stakeholders that are involved in monitoring processes.

### **1.3. Thesis Outline**

This thesis has been organised in the following way: The first section of this paper will establish the theoretical framework on the topics of transnational advocacy, networks and coalitions and learning processes. It also discusses the gaps in literature that this thesis aims to contribute to. This serves as a foundation for the subsequent chapter which outlines the research question and sub-questions of the study, the operationalisation, expectations as well as the specificities of the case. Furthermore, it discusses the methodological approach to the research in data collection and data analysis and concludes with essential ethical considerations. This study follows a qualitative-deductive approach and collects data through semi-structured interviews with staff and member organisations of La Strada International as well as the group of experts itself. This is complemented by a content analysis of relevant documents from the Council of Europe, La Strada International and its members. The thesis will go on to give a brief overview over the policy context in which La Strada International operates by providing background information on the GRETA monitoring mechanism and the role of civil society within these processes. The remaining part of the thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter Five presents and analyses the findings of the study, focusing on four of the sub-questions. Thereby, the policy subsystem in which the GRETA monitoring and the advocacy of La Strada International will be described. This is followed by a closer look at the advocacy strategies of LSI and their influence on policy change within the Council of Europe monitoring. The chapter concludes with a presentation and analysis of the findings regarding transnational policy-learning within and beyond the network. The sixth chapter discusses the three key themes of the findings and brings them in a dialogue with the theoretical framework. It first debates how the combination of the TAN and ACF framework contributed to the research. Subsequently, I embed the findings in previous research on (transnational) policy-learning with a particular focus on power structures, multi-layered advocacy targets and the prevalence of shared values. This is followed by a conclusion which summarises the results and analysis as well as their position in the existing literature. The chapter, further, outlines possible avenues for further research, acknowledges limitations to this study and develops practical recommendations for the stakeholders in the field.



## 2. Theoretical Framework

This section embeds the case of the NGO network La Strada International (LSI) and its interaction with GRETA within existing literature and establishes the relevant theoretical framework. Beginning with a contextualisation of how human trafficking and counter-trafficking is studied, I will go on to explain the significance of the theories of transnational advocacy networks as well as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The two streams of literature are combined to examine the *who, what, when* and *where* of advocacy strategies and policy change. To be able to analyse the causal relationship of *how* between advocacy and change this chapter subsequently explores the concept of transnational policy learning. Thereby, I will build a theoretical framework that is tailored to this thesis by merging theories from international relations and public administration to better understand the dynamics of LSI within the monitoring processes of the 2005 Convention. This chapter concludes with a summary of gaps in the existing literature.

### 2.1. The ‘Human’ in Human Trafficking Literature

There is a common theme in THB literature to either overly focus on victim’s vulnerabilities or to be preoccupied with structural patterns of trafficking. The former can be seen in that human trafficking is often referred to as necessary to distinguish from illegal migration and human smuggling. This closely links to debates about agency and (criminal) intent as well as a preoccupation with victim’s vulnerabilities. In human smuggling the agency and (criminal) intent is seen to belong to migrants whereas those affected by human trafficking are viewed as passive victims (Väyrynen, 2003; Wheaton et al., 2010). On the other hand, there is tendency in literature to focus primarily on the economic and structural dimension. Human trafficking is viewed as a form of international business (Salt & Stein, 1997), as a consequence of ‘transformations of the world economy’ (Väyrynen; 2003, p. 1) or as the outcome of politics that require open borders for international trade and strict border control for irregular migration (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007).

Furthermore, scholars tend to approach THB from a criminal justice angle that is also common in international counter-trafficking governance (Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, 2012; Van Dyke, 2017; Davy, 2016). This can place victims of trafficking in a position where they are only considered insofar as they contribute to bring perpetrators to justice (Gallagher & Holmes,

2018). In this context, the goal of civil society involvement is to increase the success of law enforcement which is not congruent with the human-rights based monitoring of the 2005 Convention. Altogether, in the field of human trafficking there is little scholarly attention on the influence of transnational advocacy (Piper & Uhlin, 2002). The literature that exists here, further, only rarely engages with monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness (Davy, 2013). Studies mostly engage with the monitoring and evaluations of specific projects on the local and national level (Van Dyke, 2017; Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, 2012; Davy, 2016; Gallagher & Holmes, 2018; Dottridge, 2008; Bryant & Landman, 2020). Henceforth, the analysis of transnational THB advocacy will be approached through the lens of the migration-trafficking nexus (Yousaf, 2018). Human trafficking is understood as a continuum of exploitation that involves movement within and across national boundaries (Yousaf, 2018). Thus, while it is acknowledged that THB can occur within national boundaries the emphasis on migration makes it an inherently dynamic and most commonly transnational issue requiring transnational intervention.

In sum, I pursue an approach that places human rights over criminal justice and that tries to strike a balance between the agency of THB victims and the structural forces at play. Through the migration-trafficking nexus, I can highlight the dynamics and transnational nature of the phenomenon. The next section explores the role of international civil society in the monitoring of human rights.

## **2.2. Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs)**

### ***2.2.1. TAN as a Theoretical Framework***

The literature describes non-governmental transnational advocacy as a new process of global governance that brings change in governmental attitudes by compensating for the shortcoming of governments and intergovernmental organisations through their multilateral interactions (Noyori-Corbett, 2017). They surface when ‘they are believed to be beneficial in activities related to policy changes’ (Noyori-Corbett, 2017, p. 33). The dominant theoretical framework to analyse the advocacy of international NGOs is the transnational advocacy network (TAN) concept (Murdie, 2013; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Keck and Sikkink coined the term transnational advocacy networks (TANs) in 1998 as ‘those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and a dense exchange of information and services’ (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 90). The actors are defined as

committed to social change and as ‘principled actors’ because of their shared values and objectives (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 30). The theory of transnational advocacy networks predicts that international human rights regimes can improve performance where such networks are strong (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Neumayer, 2005). Networks put regimes under pressure by disseminating information, criticising the regime and mobilising international public opinion (Neumayer, 2005). NGOs, in particular, can strengthen and amplify their demands and gain leverage in the debate through international linkages (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Within the existing scholarly debate, transnational advocacy is closely intertwined with globalisation and global governance and its consequences for government’s sovereignty (Sperling et al., 2001; Hudson, 2001; Mundy & Murphy, 2001). Studies on regional interactions such as Zipper (2004) on the advocacy of transnational networks on sexual harassment policies on EU level or Sperling et al. (2004) on global advocacy on the ground in Russia are the exception. Research usually focusses not on national or regional borders but on specific topics such as global feminism (Sperling et al., 2001), education policy (Mundy & Murphy, 2001) or climate change (Hadden & Jasny, 2017). Mundy and Murphy (2002) state that TANs arise due to an increasing pressure to fill the social service vacuum left by the state. Within this context, scholars define transnational advocacy as the efforts to change institutions’ policies for the benefit of the communities whose interest NGOs aim to promote by connecting with a range of actors from different countries (Hudson, 2001, p. 333-334). Resources are a core unit of analysis in TAN literature since discourse, information and transnational expertise that networks foster are seen as multiplying ‘access routes to policy-making arenas’ (Zipper, 2004, p. 64).

Criticism of the theory comes from Carpenter (2007) who views Keck and Sikkink’s original work as too optimistic by only defining networks in terms of a reciprocal nature and horizontal relation. According to him this perspective masks power relations within networks. In line with Carpenter, Hadden and Jasny (2017) suggest that insights into the relational processes and pressures within networks is crucial. The tactics that NGOs employ are not only defined by the opportunities and constraints of the social/political/economic context but also by the influence of peers within advocacy networks. While there might be a great deal of social cohesion among the network as a whole, each NGO is embedded differently and has different partners within the network.

### ***2.2.2. The Transnational Advocacy of Non-Governmental Actors***

The theory was built around the advocacy of non-governmental actors because not only the number of NGOs that are engaged in international politics is growing but also the number of NGOs that organise themselves across national boundaries (Smith et al., 1998). NGOs are sought to directly contribute to all stages of the global policy cycle such as implementation, monitoring and enforcement (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Sharman, 2021). Some authors also view the role of international NGOs as a form ‘cross-border law enforcement’ rather than as human-rights advocates (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Sharman, 2021, p. 3). Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Sharman (2021), for instance, assume that among others the growing demand for non-governmental intervention at the international level is linked to a deficit of transnational law enforcement in criminal transnational activities such as human trafficking. This thesis understands transnational actors such as international NGOs more as an ‘epistemic human rights community’ whose advocacy increases the broader the group of actors is that is involved in the various stages of policy interactions (Neumayer, 2005, p. 929). Being part of a network or coalition provides actors with a set of tools such as increased information, resources and legitimacy that stem from the connection to other organisation who work towards the same goal (Murdie, 2013; Hudson, 2001).

The concept of transnational advocacy networks provides a fitting foundation to study civil society engagement since it views their transnational advocacy as a new form of authority within global and regional policy processes, as gatekeepers in determining what meets international standards and ultimately as drivers of global policy processes and policy change. In global governance, they provide the means for wider participation and a venue for societal voices (Stone, 2008). Forming transnational advocacy networks within the field of migration and trafficking is a natural consequence of the transnational character of these domains (Piper & Uhlin, 2002). Davy (2013) views transnational advocacy coalitions as ‘promoting cosmopolitan notions of global justice and supporting the creation of global fora to fight [*human*] trafficking’ (Davy, 2013, p. 110). They enable organisations with different expertise and authority in the field of counter-trafficking to share skills and capacity (Davy, 2013). Noyori-Corbett (2017) likewise states that the roles of NGOs and their joint transnational advocacy to collaboratively and strategically lobby for anti-trafficking policies is crucial within a global decentralised mode of governance (Noyori-Corbett, 2017). Counter-trafficking governance has evolved to a transnational regime complex where public and private actors share responsibilities over various global governance tasks, including monitoring and

evaluation (Gómez-Mera, 2017). It has become clear that the TAN concept is of value because it specifically provides insights about civil society engagement and an evaluation of their campaigns and strategies.

The literature on transnational advocacy networks and the Advocacy Coalition Framework developed in parallel with little interaction despite apparent similarities. In the following, I will attempt to bridge the disciplinary divide between International Relations and public administration by integrating the transnational advocacy networks approach within the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).

### **2.3. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) on a Transnational Level**

#### ***2.3.1. Transnational Advocacy and the Advocacy Coalition Framework***

Public administration literature is often criticised for viewing the nation-state as the natural social and political form of the modern world (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). There is little theorising of what constitutes ‘the global public’ or ‘global policy’ (Stone & Ladi, 2015). While there are exceptions, Stone and Ladi (2015) stipulate that public administration mainly tends to ‘undertake analysis of the capacity of public sector hierarchies to globalise national policies, rather than to ask if there is transnational policy-making and administration above and beyond the state’ (p. 840). In light of this, Stone and Ladi (2015) call for ‘methodological transnationalism’ in public administration to ‘recognize the inter-connectedness of different hierarchical and network structures of both a public and private nature at the transnational, international and/or global levels (p. 839). Therefore, the Advocacy Coalition Framework is used in combination with TAN theories to expand its application to a transnational scale.

The literature combining theories of transnational advocacy networks with the Advocacy Coalition Framework is very scarce. Until the late 1990s before Keck and Sikkink’s theories, the study of policy networks focused primarily on the domestic level (Farquharson, 2003). Recently, there is a growing interest in the effect that transnational non-governmental organisations have on social change (Farquharson, 2003). The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was created by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith in 1988 (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Policy participants are sought to coordinate their behaviour with allies in advocacy coalitions to influence policy within a certain policy subsystem (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). These policy subsystems are almost exclusively analysed on the local level

(Farquharson, 2005; Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Jang et al., 2016; Flores-Crespo & Mendoza Cazarez, 2019).

Both theories appear very similar at first glance: Sabatier (1998) defines advocacy coalitions as alliances collectively pursuing advocacy strategies aimed at altering the behaviour of various (governmental) institutions more effectively (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). TAN theories also conceptualise coalitions on a normative basis. Furthermore, both theories highlight the importance of information, and both are concerned with the resources of actors. In her study on global pro- and anti-tobacco advocacy Farquharson (2003), suggests that by combining the different approaches the policy situation can be analysed more effectively. ACF can provide its newer theoretical counterpart with a solid theoretical foundation while it might benefit from the strong focus of TAN theories on strategies (Farquharson, 2003). While the scope of analysis between the theories differs, there is nothing in ACF preventing the analysis of transnational advocacy coalitions. Both the TAN and ACF approach and study advocacy coalitions over time but for ACF it is the network itself that provides insights into policy change whereas TAN theories focus on specific campaigns of the networks. But by combining the different approaches the policy situation can be analysed more effectively.

### ***2.3.2. Conceptualising the ACF Framework***

When linking the theories of transnational advocacy coalitions to the ACF, TAN authors such as Gilson (2017) might question the spatial/territorial bounds that ACF sets. For Gilson, advocacy is much too easily linked to a space and rather should be seen as an ‘ongoing process resulting from intersecting and diverse experiences of individuals and groups’ (Gilson, 2017, p. 289). Members of the coalition have connections with grassroots while the coalition functions at the national and international levels (Yanacopulos, 2005). This aligns with the classical theories of transnational advocacy networks of Keck and Sikkink (1998) which highlight shared values, a common discourse, and an exchange of information and services (see above). Advocacy coalitions in ACF are further defined by a hierarchical belief system (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The top tier consists of fundamental and normative core beliefs that span across multiple policy subsystems and are highly resistant to change. Policy core beliefs are specific to a particular policy subsystem and are changed more readily. Examples of policy beliefs are the conceptualisation of problems and solutions, the distribution of authority or the perception of the effectiveness of certain policy instruments. The secondary

beliefs at the bottom of the hierarchy are empirical beliefs or policy preferences relating to a subcomponent of the policy subsystem such as specific advocacy instruments. They are comparatively easy to change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The ACF distinguishes between major policy change which affects the policy subsystem as a whole and minor policy changes which concerns alterations in specific subcomponents of policy subsystems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The theory defines three mechanism that can cause change: (1) external shocks or events occurring from outside of the policy subsystem; (2) policy-oriented learning which ensues gradual accumulation of information affects the beliefs of actors within the policy subsystem; or (3) trade-offs and negotiations among opposing advocacy coalitions when they are out of options and dissatisfied with the status-quo (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). I expect policy change to occur through policy learning since from initial research there is no indication of significant external events that would foster major or minor adjustments to the monitoring mechanisms. Neither is there any indication that within the subsystem between La Strada International and GRETA is a conflict or severe dissatisfaction with the status-quo that would motivate the parties to compromise and negotiate solutions. Policy-oriented learning can achieve change across the hierarchical belief system (even though it is very unlikely at the core belief tier) but it does so only incrementally over the course of a decade or more (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Therefore, the core expectation of this study that advocacy strategies affect policy change through policy-learning goes back to the ACF and the supporting TAN concepts even though do not specifically mention policy-learning (see Chapter 3.4).

Within that framework, advocacy strategies are the instruments that coalitions pursue to alter the behaviour of (governmental) institutions in order to achieve the policy objectives in line with their core beliefs (Sabatier, 1998, p. 117). These require coordination: actors need to agree on a policy to be pursued, a collective lobbying strategy and they must be able to monitor and enforce the agreed-upon strategy. Examples of common advocacy strategies or ‘guidance instruments’ are influencing occupants of various positions, seeking to alter rules or budgets or lobbying through demonstrations and boycotts.

When it comes to the application of the advocacy coalition framework it must be said that as Sabatier & Weible (2007) put it: ‘The ACF loses some if its utility in policy subsystems without clear coalitions (...) or with just one dominant advocacy coalition’ (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 132; see also Pierce et al., 2020). The authors characterise these policy subsystems as of low salience, outside the public’s eye with new or highly technical policy issues that are expert-driven. This applies to the case of LSI since within their policy subsystem there is no

coalition that is diametrically opposing their position and they are not part of the public discourse. I still consider the ACF a useful theoretical tool with its insights on ideologically-based cooperation, policy change and policy learning, nonetheless, this is a notable limitation in its application. Furthermore, generally a timespan of a decade or more is essential to explain policy change from the ACF'S actor-centred approach (Sabatier, 1998). ACF provides theoretical and methodological guidelines that make the analysis of the sixteen-year timeframe feasible (Pierce et al., 2017a; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). ACF's actor-centred approach is well-equipped to approach the research question since the different member organisations of La Strada International and the group of experts are at the core of monitoring the CoE Convention. In sum, together with theories on transnational advocacy coalitions, the ACF establishes the theoretical foundation to analyse the *who*, *what*, *when* and *where* between LSI's advocacy strategies and policy change in the implementation of the 2005 Convention within the realm of monitoring counter-trafficking. The next chapter looks at the existing literature about policy-learning on a local or national and transnational level to be able to analyse *how* policy change can be explained.

## **2.4. (Transnational) Policy Learning**

### ***2.4.1. Classic theories of policy learning***

The literature offers various interpretations of what constitutes policy learning (Howlett et al., 2009). The different theories vary in their understanding of who drives learning, what is learned and to what effect policy learning takes place (Bennett & Howlett, 1992). On one hand, Hall suggests that policy learning is driven by endogenous processes. Policies are deliberately adjusted in light of consequences of past policy or if new information arises (Hall, 1993). The principal agents of learning, here, are (government) experts that operate in the field of policy. These actors learn both policy goals and means of implementing policy (Hall, 1988). Hecló, on the other hand, makes the case for exogenous policy learning that manifests as an automatic response to external events in the policy environment (Hecló, 1974). He focuses on what he refers to as 'social learning' or 'organizational learning' that is driven by sets of political actors (1974, p. 308). He defines the objective of policy learning very generally as both substance and process of policy (Bennett & Howlett, 1992).



As mentioned above, Sabatier defines ‘policy-oriented learning’ within the ACF as the gradual accumulation of information that incrementally changes the beliefs of actors within a policy subsystem (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Unlike in Hecló’s conceptualization, for Sabatier the (less institutionalized) advocacy coalition is the agent of learning. Sabatier does not concern himself with organizational but more with ideational policy learning (Sabatier, 1988). Policy-oriented learning, thus, refers to improving one’s understanding of the variables of one’s belief system, refining the understanding of logical and causal relationships within the belief system and identifying and responding to challenges of that belief system. The ongoing process of learning within the advocacy coalition is motivated by the desire to realize one’s core beliefs. Networks learn from past experiences about how to better achieve their core beliefs (Sabatier, 1987). For Rose, policy learning manifests in ‘lesson-drawing’ between different national contexts (Rose, 1993). The driving force behind these processes are transnational epistemic communities consisting of expert professionals and policy-makers. Like Sabatier, Rose suggests that actors learn instruments to implement policies. Policymakers that are unsatisfied with current approaches to a policy problem seek for alternative means or avenues to realize their goal. Most authors of classic policy learning theories assume that learning does not take place unless policy change results from that learning process (Bennett & Howlett, 1992). Bennett and Howlett (1992) reconcile the abovementioned theories by suggesting that learning is highly complex, that it can affect organisations, processes, programs, instruments or policy goals and that the agents of policy learning differ.

#### ***2.4.2. Policy-learning on a transnational scale***

Stone (2003) remarks that internationalisation and globalisation increase the opportunities to learn from experiences of policy interventions elsewhere. Within the literature on policy-learning, the global and transnational mechanisms seem to be a niche since the larger discourse is focused on the national or local level. Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) suggest that policy-learning differs between various types of transnational networks. Transnational advocacy networks, for instance, learn through the construction and production of knowledge and values. In the information, ideas and strategies they share lies their power to alter the information and contexts within which states make policies. What defines transnational networks is that they are ‘not confined to any one national policy arena [*and*] resource interdependencies are critical to network functioning’ (p. 479). Resources can vary from knowledge, intelligence, values to

a vision or a certain problem framing. It is these resources that tie the transnational network together. Policy learning occurs not only because of these interdependencies but also to re-frame policy agendas and to add political weight to particular coalitions within a policy arena. This links back to the concept of TANs and their ability to ‘influence policy outcomes (and) transform the terms and nature of the debate’ (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 2). The authors stress that unlike theories of i.e., Sabatier, policy learning is not purely rational but happens discursively. As in other theoretical discussions outlined above, it is also mentioned here that there is a need to move away from viewing the state as the primary target of transnational networks. Further contradicting the assumption of classical policy learning theories, Stone (2004) reminds us that policy learning or transfer can take place without it being translated into practice, it does not only take place when policy change ensues (see above; see also Colomb, 2007).

As has been established for networks in TAN or advocacy coalitions in the ACF, resources are, thus, a core element of transnational policy learning (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Emphasising the primacy of shared resources, Radaelli (2008) suggests that the potential for policy-learning hinges on policy instruments such as the diffusion of knowledge and experiences, the development of a common policy discourse or the strategic use of policy linkages. Lähteenmäki and Smith Dubois (2006) state that scholars view network solutions and the cooperation they foster as particularly fruitful for learning processes. From their case study they found the following resources to be commonly recognised: (1) confidence-building, (2) cross-sectoral benefits, (3) working methods, (4) concrete tools such as guidelines or best-practice guides, (4) lessons in project-management, (5) internationalisation such as improving the international competence of personnel, (6) partnerships and (7) expertise development (p.16-17). Learning for Stone (2003) emphasises the redefinition of interests on the basis of new knowledge affecting fundamental beliefs and ideas behind policy approaches. She distinguishes between ‘soft’ forms of transfer like the spread of norms and the ‘hard’ transfer of policy tools, structures and practices. She suggests that non-state actors might be better at ‘soft transfer’ (rather than ‘hard transfer’) of broad policy ideas for influencing public opinion and policy agendas. She also says that ‘soft’ transfer of ideas and information is relatively easy whereas the institutionalisation of these ideas is much more difficult. Non-state actors ‘provide essential services for decision-makers by acting as resource banks, advocating policy ideas and developing discourses of transfer; as well as spreading ideas and information through their professional networks and into media and civil society’ (p. 13). She particularly links transnational policy learning/transfer to networks: a

shared problem is a stimulus for exchange and thus provides an ideal framework for policy-oriented learning. Their soft and informal mode of dissemination of information promotes alliance-building and the discursive construction of consensual knowledge. She created a model of three modes of policy transfer:

	<b>Ideational</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Networks</b>
<b>What is transferred?</b>	‘Soft’ transfer of ideas, paradigms, lessons, problem definition and policy interpretation	‘Hard’ transfer of instruments, legislation, policy approaches	Hard and soft transfer

Table 1. *Types of Policy Transfer (Stone, 2003).*

Organisations and transnational networks are a recurring theme in this strand of literature. De Jong and Edelenbos (2007) propose two mechanisms through which knowledge and information is exchanged transnationally: (1) through the social interaction between the participants in a network and (2) through the conceptual replication of ideas over time within that network. The authors view transnational networks and communities as substantial in spreading policy models, ideas and institutions. Likewise, Colomb (2007) suggests that the advocacy through transnational cooperation gains value through organisational and policy learning. She defined the latter as actors learning to work on new scales in networks to be able to better address issues of transnational importance (which can also mean issues on local or regional level). She stipulates that knowledge sharing, peer review, mutual learning and exchanges of good-practices can lead to ‘cognitive convergence’ between actors. Colomb states that for truly transnational issues, learning processes are likely to be focused on finding joint solutions to address that transnational project area as a whole. Thus, issues affect areas across national and regional borders and require transnational cooperation because they cannot be tackled adequately otherwise.

As all above-mentioned theories, the concept of transnational policy-learning also pursues an actor-centred approach. De Jong and Edelenbos (2007) highlight that in policy transfer (as most likely in policy learning as well), the role of policy actors often overlaps: they might be producers, senders, facilitators or recipients of knowledge, information and experience depending on the situation. Feelings of mutual understanding, trust and shared interest within the network are the foundation for transnational policy learning to take place. Radaelli (2008) also examines the power dynamics that are involved in transnational policy-

learning. For him learning occurs either by (1) looking at one's own institutional and organizational past, by (2) looking at the experience of others or (3) via organisational networks. In the case of the latter, the underlying idea is that there are solutions to policy problems somewhere in the network and that this local knowledge should be utilised. These three different modes of learning imply a hierarchy. Learning might happen at the top, from the top down or bottom up. Radaelli suggests that deliberative policy-making may be hindered by too much monitoring from above. Altogether, transnational policy learning integrates itself well into the joint ACF/TAN approach and in combination the theories allow for a comprehensive analysis of how La Strada International influences the GRETA monitoring processes.

## **2.5. Gaps in Literature**

This thesis aims to add to the following gaps in the literature: Generally, by applying a public administration perspective this thesis offers a rare view into the background processes in counter-trafficking governance to migration literature. Furthermore, in (public administration) literature there is a tendency to be biased by methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). More particularly, in the field of human trafficking there is little scholarly attention on the influence of *transnational* advocacy (Piper & Uhlin, 2002). The little literature that exists here only rarely engages with monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness (Davy, 2013). Overall, the TAN theory is still relatively new and thus can benefit from closer engagement in different contexts such as the one LSI and GRETA present (see Noyori-Corbett, 2017). Furthermore, TAN theories and ACF do not engage with each other much despite them being complimentary (Farquharson, 2003). Research based on the concept of transnational advocacy coalitions can be seen as a niche of ACF because it has a transnational outlook and focuses more specifically on non-governmental actors. Thus, by examining the role of international NGO networks in external monitoring processes through the application of insights from International Relations behind TAN theories and insights from Public Administration behind ACF, the interaction between the theories can be analysed more closely. The specific case of La Strada International allows for a regional (rather than global) outlook on transnational advocacy and transnational policy learning.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter lays out the methodology that this thesis applies in pursuit of answering the following research question: How have the advocacy strategies of the European counter-trafficking NGO network La Strada International (LSI) influenced policy change regarding the monitoring of the CoE Trafficking Convention (2005)? To answer this question the following sub-questions are posed: To start with I engage with questions on (1) how is the policy subsystem surrounding the monitoring of the CoE Convention and the La Strada advocacy coalition defined? (2) What advocacy strategies has La Strada International pursued in relation to the monitoring of the CoE Convention? (3) What policy change has occurred in the monitoring processes of the CoE Convention? To better grasp the causal relationship between the advocacy strategies and policy change, I will engage with the question of (4) how the observations can be explained through the literature on transnational advocacy networks, the ACF and transnational policy learning. Furthermore, to be able to develop recommendations I will address the question (5) how can civil society advocacy strategies contribute efficiently to the monitoring of international treaties? To this end, the research design and case selection are outlined which is followed by a closer look at the approach this thesis takes to data collection and data analysis. Subsequently, this chapter operationalises the theory discussed in the previous section. The chapter further provides an overview of expectations for this study that emerged from theoretical and methodological reflections and reflects on ethical considerations that need to be taken into account.

#### **3.1. Case Selection**

The Council of Europe involved La Strada International (LSI), Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International in the development of its ‘Action against Trafficking in Human Being’ policies (Planitzer, 2012). The CoE later extended the list of partners in the field of countertrafficking to two more NGOS: ECPAT and Terre des Hommes (Council of Europe, 2021). There is a clear advantage to look at an international NGO that has followed the process from early on and has witnessed and participated in multiple evaluation rounds. Hence, the case of La Strada International was selected because it has a distinct focus on human trafficking – unlike Amnesty International – and has a European outlook unlike Anti-Slavery International which works globally and in its work in Europe focuses on the UK (Anti-Slavery, 2021). LSI not only focuses specifically on human trafficking but more particularly also

on ‘monitoring and advocacy for change to ensure accountability for the effective implementation of European Anti-Trafficking policies and regulations’ (LSI, 2021a). La Strada was vocal in its criticism about early evaluation rounds by GRETA with its publication of a survey of the experiences of its member organisations. With its 26 member organisations as well as four associate members in 23 European countries LSI classifies as a transnational advocacy network (LSI, 2021b; Stone, 2008, see Appendix 4). It can thus provide valuable insights into the theoretical concept since it consists of independent national NGOs with their own interests and agenda that is transnationally negotiated with partners under the umbrella of the LSI secretariat.

### **3.2. Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The theoretical foundation of the research question in ACF guides the methodology for both data collection and data analysis, since most ACF research relies on a qualitative approach (Pierce et al., 2017). Deductively, I will investigate the advocacy strategies of La Strada and how they influenced the monitoring mechanisms of the CoE Convention. With its emphasis on the causal mechanisms between advocacy and policy change, this thesis follows a positivist approach. However, the positivist approach is relativised by the actor-centred focus of the study that places considerable value in the stakeholders’ interpretation and expectations regarding both advocacy and policy change.

#### **3.2.1. Data Collection**

The LSI advocacy strategies and policy change regarding GRETA’s commitment to a human-rights and victim-centred approach that involves civil society are deducted from content analysis. With data from La Strada International secretariat and the member organisations, I gain insights into the strategies that LSI pursued and how these strategies changed overtime. Through content analysis of the documentation of country evaluation rounds and general reports by GRETA, I can get an idea to what extent these strategies were considered in the overall monitoring mechanisms. The types of data, their origin and further details are explained in Appendix 6. Qualitative interviews establish the causal relationship between the advocacy strategies and policy change; they further help understand underlying processes of policy learning. While content analysis is well-equipped to study policy change (Sheppard, 2020),

qualitative interviews provide the flexibility and in-depth understanding needed to grasp the extensive research site of transnational advocacy coalitions and the advocacy strategies which could vary significantly among different stakeholders (see Babbie, 2010). Since the scope of the study requires a high level of comparability the interviews will be semi-structured (Sheppard, 2020). While the RQ focuses on advocacy strategies of LSI, to analyse their impact I conducted interviews with LSI staff and members of the group of experts itself. For interviews, I follow the snowball-sampling technique which is particularly suited to trace networks (Barglowski, 2018). In total I conducted 11 interviews with 9 respondents from LSI and two with current and former members of the Council of Europe group of experts. The respondents from La Strada International almost all have an executive or directing function at the member organisations or the network (see Appendix 3). The NGO of one participant did not participate in the GRETA evaluation despite the country being monitored (R09). Altogether the respondents represented a diverse sample when it comes to their interaction with GRETA depending on their home country's evaluation status (see Appendix 5).

### ***3.2.2. Data Analysis***

Following data collection, I will rely on deductive coding for both content analysis and the analysis of qualitative interviews. The latter will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. For this thesis, data management and data reduction are best approached deductively since the advocacy coalition framework lays clear guidelines regarding advocacy strategies and policy change (see Sheppard, 2020). The study has a well-specified and pre-defined interest in La Strada's advocacy and their impact for policy change along the dimensions of the human rights, victim-centred approach that integrates NGOs (see Sheppard, 2020). In a process of descriptive coding, I will apply these areas of interest and identify the relevant passages and quotes in order to develop a set of preliminary codes (Sheppard, 2020). Subsequently, I will elaborate on the preliminary codes through interpretative coding by making finer distinctions within the categories of LSI advocacy strategies and GRETA monitoring practices (see Sheppard, 2020).

### **3.3. Operationalisation**

The independent variable of this study is La Strada International's advocacy aimed at the Council of Europe monitoring body GRETA. I will analyse the impact of the advocacy strategies on policy change in GRETA's monitoring mechanism as the dependent

variable. The operationalisation is guided by the theories about transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) as laid out above. In line with the subquestions, the dependent and independent variable are first embedded and operationalised within their policy context or ‘policy subsystem’ in line with ACF terminology (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). After a closer look at advocacy strategies and policy change, I will break down the concept of transnational policy learning for a better grasp on the causal relationship between the two variables. The reason why the indicators are phrased as questions is the ACF’s actor-centred approach that places the expectations, experiences and opinions of the stakeholders at the core of the study (Sabatier, 1998).

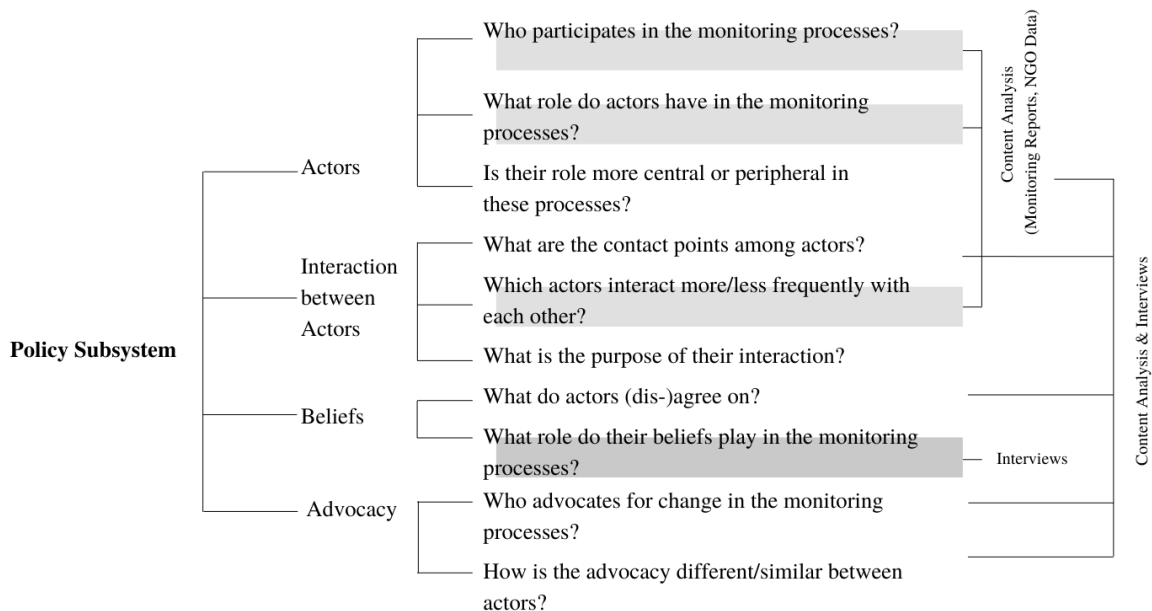


Figure 1. Operationalisation of the concept of the policy subsystem.



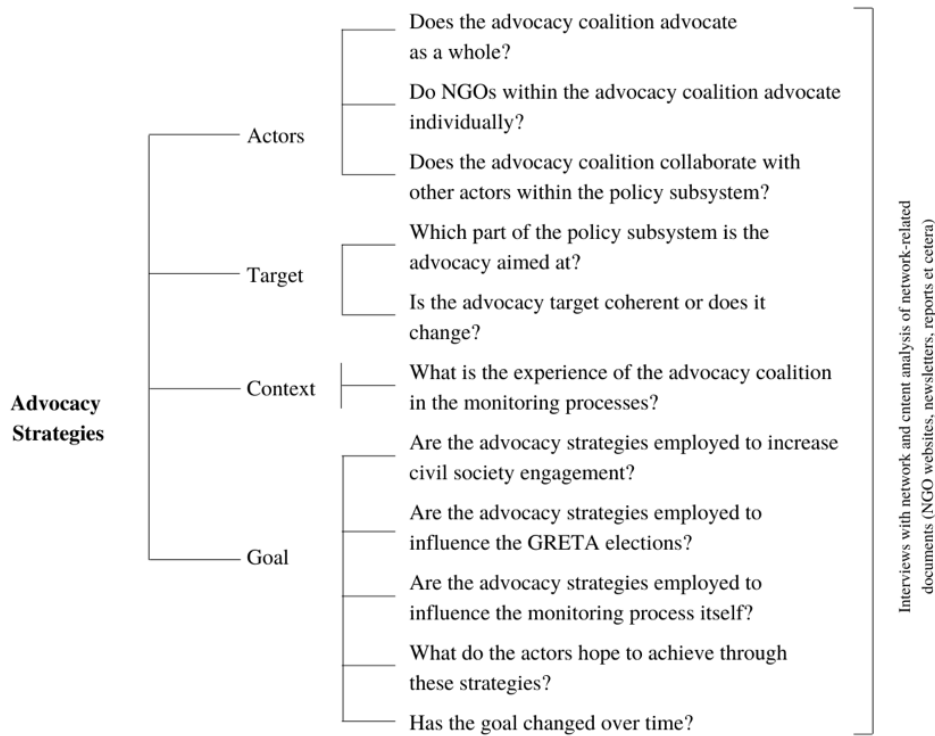


Figure 2. Operationalisation of the concept of advocacy strategies.

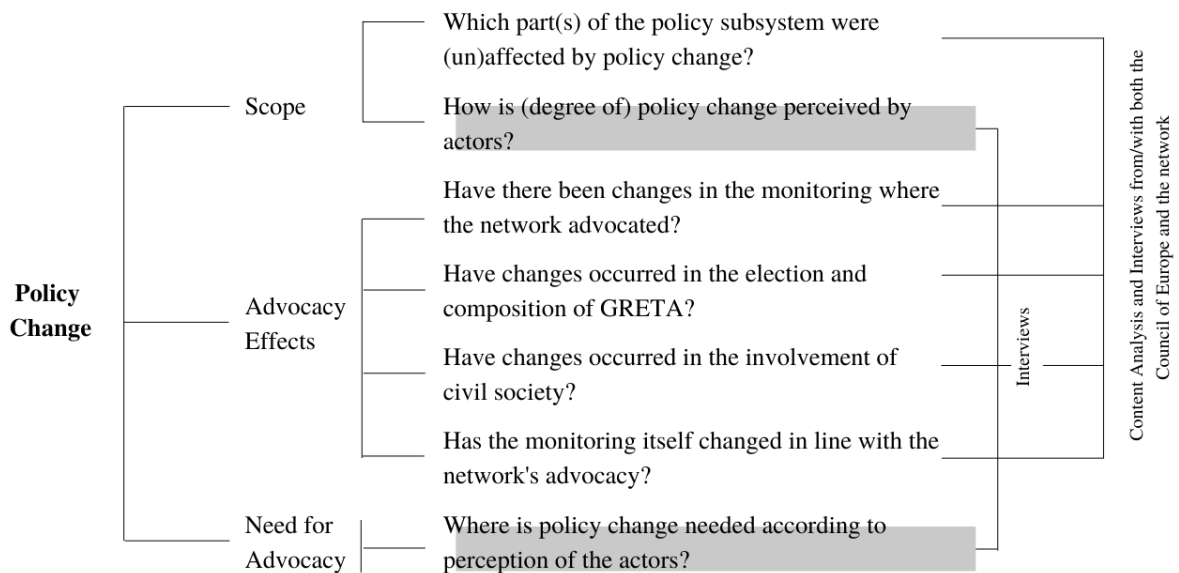


Figure 3. Operationalisation of the concept of policy change.

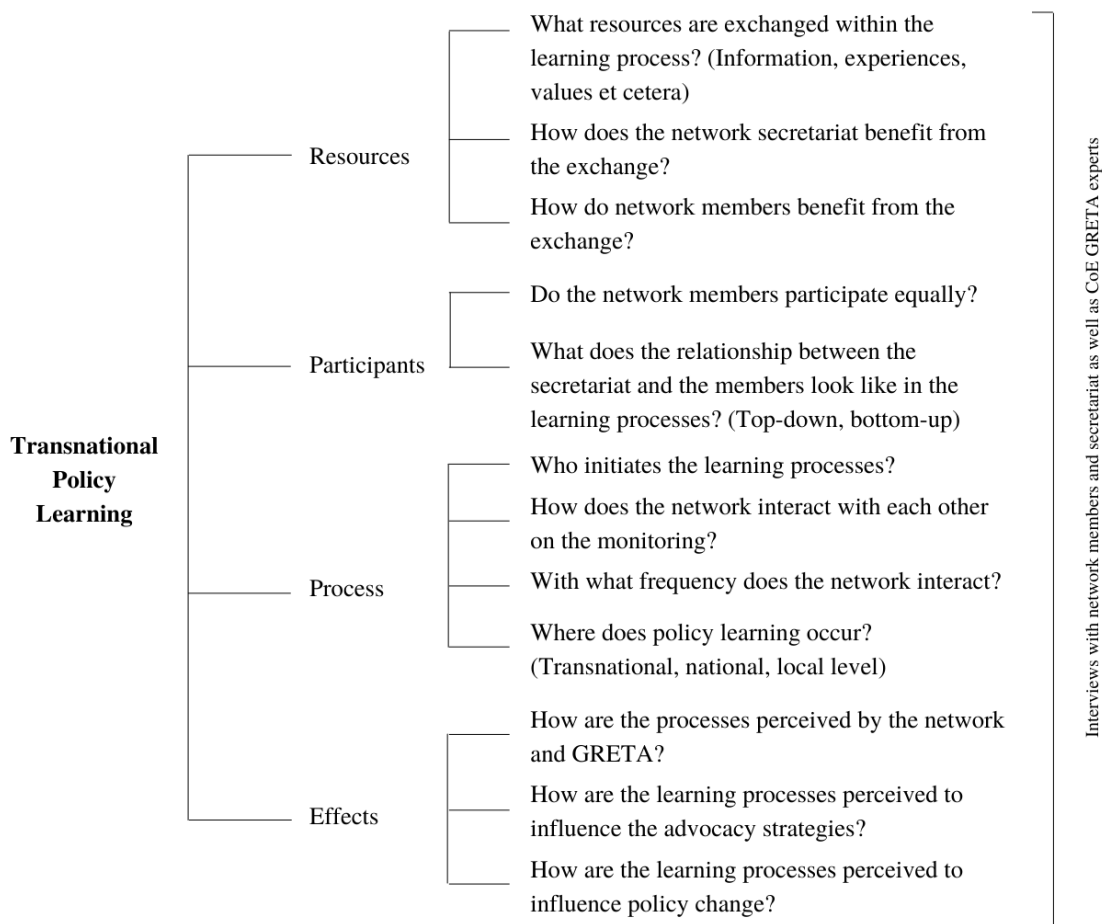


Figure 4. *Operationalisation of the concept of transnational policy learning.*

The operationalisation guided the content analysis as well as the interviews. For the topic guide of the latter, see Appendix 2.

### 3.4. Expectations

Regarding the first sub-question and based on literature I assume that the policy subsystem surrounding the GRETA monitoring is structured by different values and ideas on policy approaches (see Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Initial research did not show any clear advocacy coalitions in the sense that there would be clear opposing views which is why I expect the different subcomponents of the subsystem to be difficult to distinguish from each other. Secondly, I expect the advocacy strategies to be in line with LSI's early criticism. Thirdly, I generally expect policy change to have occurred since criticism ebbed down after the first evaluation round. Overall, I expect that La Strada International achieves policy change through the gradual adaptation of its advocacy strategies in line with theories of (transnational) policy learning. As the merging of the ACF and TAN theories indicate, transnationally operating

advocacy coalitions or network operate through transnational policy learning to achieve change.

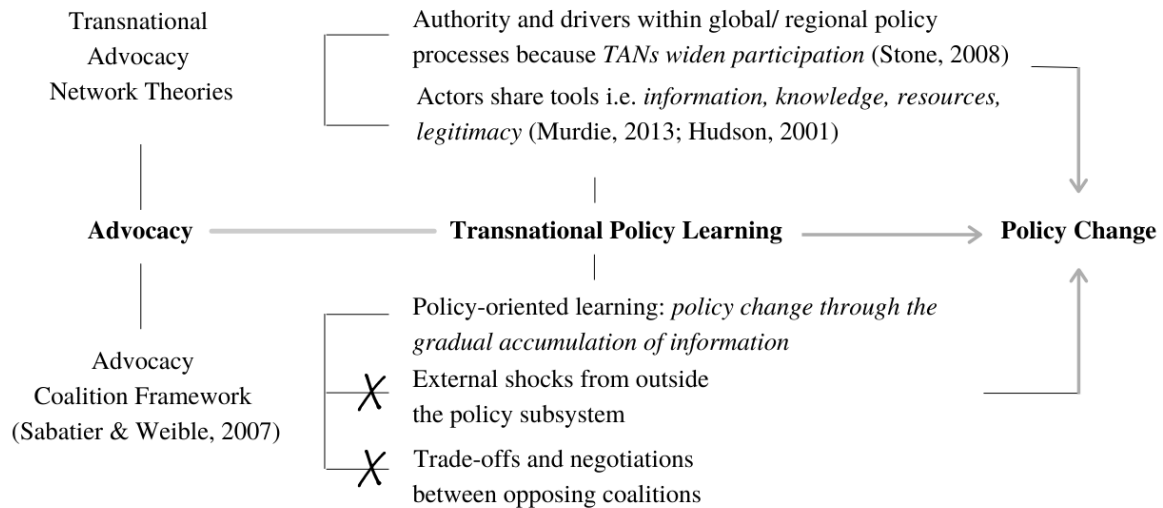


Figure 5. *Expectation emerging from ACF and TAN literature.*

I assume that in a multilateral exchange, the NGO members share information, knowledge and experiences in and about the GRETA monitoring processes. Thereby, the goal of the advocacy towards GRETA is to achieve an international monitoring that is not only in line with the Convention but also with the networks' core beliefs in a victim- and human-rights-centred approach (LSI, 2021a). Hence, I assume that LSI's transnational advocacy to function as a secondary monitoring mechanism in which the NGO network monitors the implementation of the 2005 Convention and the work of the group of experts in particular.

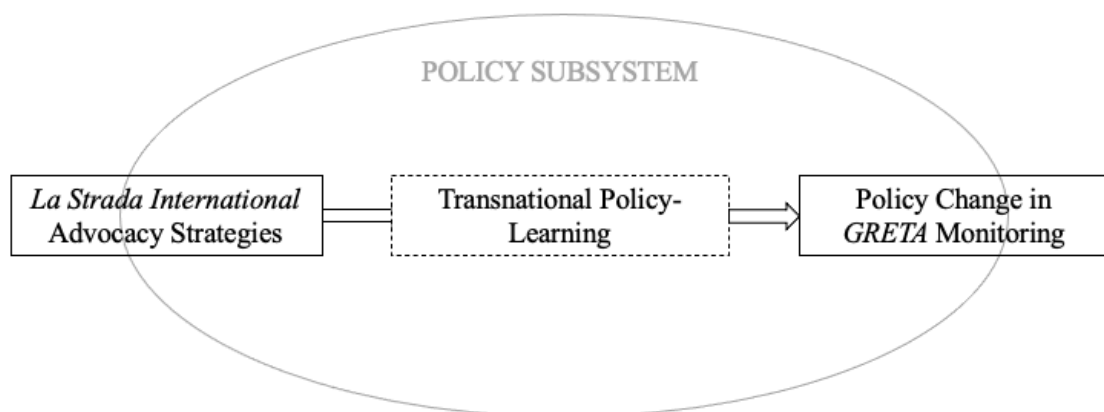


Figure 6: *Expectations regarding the interaction of variables.*

### **3.5. Ethical Considerations**

The victims/survivors of human trafficking are an important group of actors within the policy subsystem around the monitoring of the CoE Convention. Their inclusion in this study is an ethical dilemma: on one hand their voice is important for THB monitoring processes in general but particularly in the GRETA and La Strada interactions since both are bound to a victim-centred approach. On the other hand, it is not only difficult to access the group to study their involvement in GRETA monitoring processes and LSI member organisations but also ethically questionable to include them seeing that I have no qualification to conduct interviews with possibly traumatised interviewees. It is a considerable limitation to this study to analyse the role THB victims within evaluation rounds only through the eyes of GRETA and LSI without directly reaching out to them, but I am convinced that alternatives would be ethically more difficult. Furthermore, in compliance with GDPR rules, the respondents are asked for their consent prior to the interview, they are anonymised in the findings and all data is securely stored on a USB-stick.

## **4. Identifying the Policy Context**

The goal of this chapter is to establish the context in which the advocacy of La Strada International (LSI) towards the Council of Europe counter-trafficking monitoring takes place. It is important to understand the position of the 2005 Convention within international anti-trafficking legislation and of the basic mechanisms behind the monitoring processes. Before discussing the findings about LSI's advocacy, it is essential to get an idea of the position that the Convention holds for civil society. Furthermore, the advocacy strategies and policy change cannot be analysed and discussed without first giving an overview over criticism of the early work of the GRETA monitoring body that sparked subsequent actions.

### **4.1. The 2005 Convention and Its Monitoring Body GRETA**

The literature on policy monitoring emphasises that generally international human rights regimes are relatively weak, largely because they lack strong monitoring and enforcement mechanisms or because monitoring, compliance and enforcement provisions are non-existent, voluntary or deficient (Neumayer, 2005). Within international legislation, the Council of Europe and its Conventions are somewhat an exception. The international organisation has one of the most developed systems of the protection of human rights at a regional level and extensive experience in the field of monitoring. In legally binding treaties, the CoE establishes monitoring bodies mandated to monitor human rights standards set out in the same legally binding documents. The Council of Europe Convention on the Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted in 2005, entered into force in 2008 and its monitoring body GRETA started its first round of evaluations in 2010 (Rijken, 2014). It has been ratified by all member states but one and has received requests for accession by non-member states (GRETA, 2019). Unlike other CoE monitoring mechanisms GRETA is part of 'hybrid' monitoring system as it comprises both independent experts and state delegates (Kicker & Möstl, 2012, p. 31). GRETA, the expert body itself independently monitors compliance with the convention's principles while a political body – the Committee of the Parties composed by state representatives – ensures the implementation of GRETA's conclusions. Kicker and Möstl (2012) indicate that the selection of GRETA candidates by the Committee of Ministers and election of the final members of the expert group by the Committee of the Parties is a deficiency

compared to other more independent monitoring bodies. GRETA started its monitoring activity in 2009. The duration of evaluation rounds was set to last four years.

GRETA monitoring procedure	
GRETA	Sends a standardised questionnaire to the states parties in order to collect information. May ask civil society or NGOs active in the field for additional input.
State party	Replies to the questionnaire.
GRETA	GRETA conducts country visits or requests further information. If all necessary information is in order, GRETA drafts a report and sends it to the State party.
State party	May comment on the draft report.
GRETA	Modifies the draft report in light of the comments of the state party and adopts a final report. The final report is sent to the State party for possible comments. The final report together with the State parties' comments is made public. It cannot be modified by the Committee of the Parties. The Committee of the Parties may adopt recommendations based on the final report and the State's comments in order to advise the State party on how to implement GRETA's conclusions. It may set a date for the State party to submit information of the progress of implementation.

Table 2. *GRETA monitoring procedure and interaction between states, Committee of the Parties and civil society (Kicker & Möstl, 2012).*

#### 4.2. Committing to Civil Society Engagement – NGOs in the 2005 Convention

According to Article 35 of the CoE Convention '[e]ach party shall encourage state authorities and public officials, to cooperate with non-governmental organisations, other relevant organisations and members of civil society (...) with the aim of achieving the purpose of this Convention' (Council of Europe, 2005). As Planitzer (2012, p. 40) put it: 'It follows that civil society should play a strong role in monitoring' as well. However, the Convention is directed at the national governments of the signatory states and does not legally bind GRETA to the same standards. Regarding the relation between GRETA and civil society Article 38(3) of the Convention stipulates merely: 'GRETA may request information from civil society'. Outside

of this provision, only Article 38(4) could be interpreted as to further determine their interaction since it proposes the assistance of independent national experts for country visits. Nonetheless, as can be seen in its General and Country Reports, GRETA does emphasise the integration of civil society in its work. GRETA asks civil society for input before adapting the questionnaires for new evaluation rounds (GRETA, 2011, GRETA, 2015); the experts exchange with international organisations and NGOs on how to improve the contribution of NGOs to its monitoring processes (GRETA, 2012); and despite it not being legally required, the group so far has continuously conducted country visits where meetings with NGO representatives are considered to ‘provide valuable information’ (GRETA, 2015, p.27).

### **4.3. Criticism From Civil Society About the Early Work of GRETA**

During and after the first evaluation round, members of civil society from both academia and non-governmental organisations expressed criticism of GRETA’s work. It needs to be said, however, that all criticism is relativised without exception: Scholars and organisations collectively recognise the value that the 2005 Convention and GRETA contribute to the field of international counter-trafficking approaches (Planitzer, 2012; Rijken, 2014; LSI, 2014; Planitzer & Sax, 2020). Nonetheless, it was remarked that GRETA asks rather general questions that do not mention the human rights-based approach which make it difficult to assess whether the States actually implement it (Planitzer, 2012). There is, further, no indication in the questionnaire to the child rights approach that the Convention sets out. The same is the case for other vulnerable groups such as male victims and victims suffering from physical or mental disabilities even though Article 2 states that ‘(t)his Convention shall apply to all forms of trafficking in human beings’ (Rijken, 2014). This does not only apply to groups of THB victims but also to the forms of trafficking. While GRETA criticises countries for not sufficiently paying attention to labour exploitation there is little further elaboration (Rijken, 2014). In a study commissioned by GRETA, Rijken (2014) suggests that the group of experts draft a document in which it clarifies its interpretation of the legal basis of the Convention for more transparency.

A shortcoming of the Convention (rather than the implementation by GRETA) is said to be the lack of an individual complaint procedure as an additional means of monitoring (Planitzer, 2012). Another issue with the Convention that manifests in GRETA’s work is the issue of what happens *after* GRETA’s report is finalised. There are only weak provisions in

place and only ‘if necessary’ are state parties subjected to a certain deadline for submitting information on their implementation of the recommendations (Article 38(7); Planitzer, 2012).

A major point of criticism was the disadvantaged position that civil society organisations were placed in. GRETA decided to hold the answers of the State Parties to the questionnaire confidential which hinders public discussion at the national level and would allow civil society to focus their advocacy (Planitzer, 2012). Furthermore, the Convention or GRETA do not make it mandatory for states to involve civil society when preparing the questionnaire (Planitzer, 2012). Neither do they require states to publish their replies to the evaluation which make it difficult for civil society to comment on or engage with them (Planitzer, 2012). Moreover, the Council of Europe (CoE) and GRETA have not – as UN treaty bodies – encouraged or developed guidelines for civil society to conduct ‘shadow reports’ to support its own information gathering (Planitzer, 2012, p. 35). ‘Shadow reports’ are an important tool for non-governmental organisations to supplement or critique reports that governments are required to submit (Paul, 2020). The small number of reports that were independently prepared were not published on the website of the CoE (Planitzer, 2012). It is mentioned that the participation of civil society itself also remains intransparent because there are no criteria publicly available on how actors for meetings during country-visits are selected (Rijken, 2014). La Strada International, in particular, circulated a survey on NGO experiences of the first round of evaluation. How the network approached this will be discussed in further detail in the findings in the next chapter.



## **5. Findings & Analysis**

The main finding of this thesis is that La Strada International influences the GRETA monitoring through transnational policy-learning processes that shape its advocacy. This chapter follows the general structure provided by the sub-questions. At first, a closer look at (1) the policy subsystem provides insights into how the context of the GRETA monitoring and the network advocacy promote transnational policy learning. Sub-questions (2) and (3) are analysed together to be able to see how advocacy strategies and policy change interact. The findings (4) specifically on transnational policy learning is divided in two parts. On one hand, the interaction of the various scales is outlined, followed by an in-depth description and analysis of the policy-learning processes that shape the advocacy of LSI.

### **5.1. The Policy Subsystem: Fostering Transnational Policy Learning**

In a first instance, it is explained where the advocacy, policy change and processes of policy learning take place to determine who is involved in the GRETA monitoring processes and to better understand the positions and relations that actors have within these processes. To that end, this chapter progressively moves from the larger scale of the policy subsystem of CoE monitoring, over policy subcomponents of GRETA and other INGOS within that system to the advocacy coalition of La Strada International itself and the learning processes that the network pursues. It will become clear that in the policy context surrounding the GRETA monitoring, cooperation, exchange and mutual learning processes are highly valued.

#### ***5.1.1. International Collaboration in the Council of Europe and Beyond***

To understand the advocacy of La Strada International and its effects it is important to embed it within the policy subsystem in which both advocacy and policy change occur. As has become apparent in the annual general reports on the CoE action against THB, the group of experts works in close collaboration with other international bodies such as the EU, the UN and OSCE. GRETA highlights that to avoid adverse effects and ‘for greater complementarity and synergies’ it is important to create partnership between international organisations that are involved in counter-trafficking activities (GRETA, 2011, p. 16). Thus, the interaction beyond the CoE monitoring’s own policy subsystem is an intrinsic part of the values and beliefs that

define it. Cooperation and partnerships are seen as ‘indispensable prerequisites for successful international action’ against human trafficking (GRETA, 2012 p. 18). The Convention itself requires parties to cooperate ‘to the widest extent possible’ and emphasises that this international cooperation should include NGOs and other civil society actors (GRETA, 2014, p. 61). In the fifth general report from GRETA, the then president Nicholas Le Coz sets out the five priority fields of intervention for action against THB following the ‘five key players’ in that field. In order he introduces (1) NGOs, (2) judicial authorities and legal professionals, (3) medical staff, (4) media and the business sector and (5) the national coordinators as key players to achieve the goals of the Convention. On one hand, this illustrates the primacy that is ascribed to NGOs and on the other it shows how the actors on the international, national and local actors are intertwined in CoE THB action (GRETA, 2016, p. 9).

The CoE policy subsystem is set apart from the larger international monitoring of counter-trafficking interventions in the following ways: It clearly and rigorously follows a victim-centred and human-rights based approach. This means that THB is first and foremost understood as a violation of human rights and ‘an offence to the dignity and integrity of the human being’ (GRETA, 2012, p. 11). The most central actors that participate in the monitoring of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention is the Committee of the Parties, the group of experts GRETA, the executive secretariat for the monitoring of the Convention, the governments and national representatives of the member states that are being monitored and the (international) civil society that contributes to the work of GRETA. Of those actors, GRETA and its executive branch are the stakeholders steering the processes. The following chapter investigates what defines them as a subcomponent of the policy subsystem. Furthermore, to analyse the advocacy of La Strada International it is important to look at another subcomponent of the policy subsystem: the role of international NGOs in general within the monitoring processes.

### ***5.1.2. GRETA and International Civil Society as Subcomponents of the Policy Subsystem***

It has already been established in Chapter 4 of this thesis that GRETA values the input from civil society and other international partners highly. Thus, beliefs or values that define GRETA are very much aligned with the above-mentioned characteristics of the Council of Europe Action against Trafficking policy subsystem as a whole. What sets them apart is the particular

position, responsibility and authority they have within that policy subsystem. GRETA itself expresses a need to exchange on information and good practices among international organisations to be aware of each other's activities and priorities for more effective coordination (GRETA, 2012, p. 18). There is an external incentive from GRETA itself for NGOs to practice policy learning. First, the group of experts is aware that the monitoring process requires a lot of resources from NGO staff members which means that GRETA does not ask NGOs for specific or individual input but considers 'any information, in whatever form is welcome' (R10). Moreover, when it comes to the country-visits, GRETA recommends NGOs to coordinate with other civil society organisations by structuring their input in meetings according to certain topics (R01, R11). LSI forwards these recommendations, hence, in a way it can be said that the amplify the original impetus for policy learning (R01, LSI, 2014).

This study considers other NGO actors active in the CoE-THB policy subsystem a subcomponent rather than an advocacy coalition. The manifold actors do not necessarily interact with each other and if so, they do not pursue a common agenda or share ideological approaches to human trafficking. Examples of other international civil society actors in the subsystem are for example the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), Anti-Slavery International and ECPAT International. There a numerous NGOs involved in the monitoring that are not part of LSI as well as other national NGO networks against human trafficking. The organisations that have an observer status and hence can be authorised to observe meetings of the Committee of the Parties are La Strada International, Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International and the International Federation Terre des Homme and ECPAT International (DG-HL, 2008, p. 3; CoE, 2021). Especially in the early days of GRETA and its development, various international NGOs next to La Strada International were also actively involved some even more so than LSI; Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International in particular.

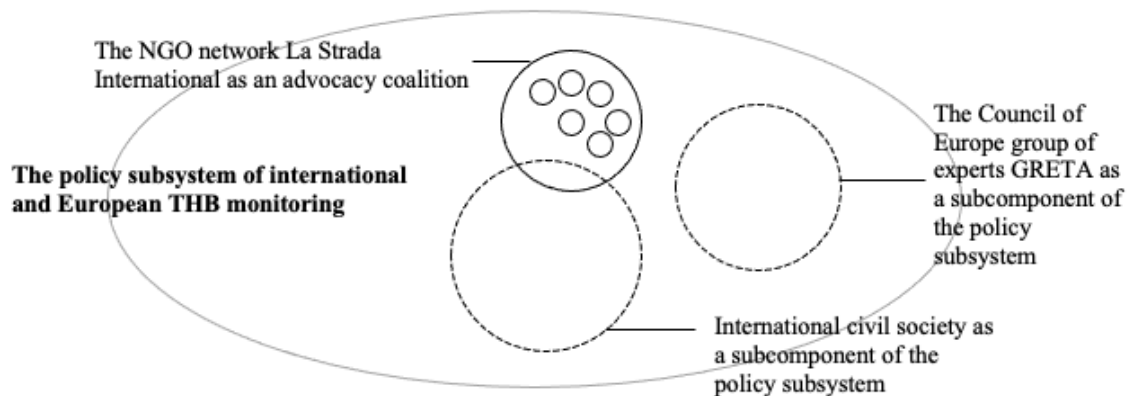


Figure 7. *The policy subsystem in which the advocacy of LSI is embedded in.*

### 5.1.3. *La Strada International as an Advocacy Coalition*

Advocacy coalitions are the central unit of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). What ties the La Strada International network together as an advocacy coalition vis-à-vis GRETA and what sets it apart from other similar international actors are its shared values and common goals. Respondents referred to this as a ‘fundamental understanding’ (R02) or ‘common denominator’ (R06) that is shared by all LSI members that speaks to the quality of the advocacy of the individual NGOs. Being a member of LSI means pursuing human trafficking and particularly the trafficking in women from a feminist-political approach. Members clearly distinguish themselves from organisations that lobby anti-sex work and pursue abolitionist agendas. The safety and protection of victims is at the heart of the work of the belief system of the advocacy coalition. The network takes a critical approach to action against THB regarding for instance government or non-governmental approaches that instrumentalise human trafficking for anti-immigration rhetorics. To be part of the network means to be aligned with these implicit values that structure the networks’ advocacy.

Within La Strada International, there are some organisations that work more closely together than others. Independent from their LSI membership, the Austrian NGO LEFÖ-IBF for instance collaborates closely with the German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings (KOK) (LEFÖ, 2017, p. 17). LEFÖ-IBF also provides an example of how individual NGOs interact with or advocate towards GRETA outside of La Strada International. The Austrian NGO responds to GRETA requests about civil society input for country evaluations both on its own and as part of the Austrian Taskforce on Combating Human Trafficking (R02). The involvement of the different members of LSI within the platform also varies. Some are

more involved because they have been part of the network since its early days (R08); while others have a closer relation with the secretariat because a staff member is a board member of LSI (R01, R02); for Dutch organisations the relationship also seems closer because the vicinity between the NGO and the LSI secretariat that brings the two parties in regular contact (R07). The interactions within the advocacy coalition will be discussed in further detail below. Altogether, it can be said that LSI operates in a policy subsystem that emphasises the importance of interaction among international partners and civil society in particular.

## **5.2. GRETA – Advocacy Target or Advocacy Strategy in Itself?**

Unlike originally expected, when enquiring about the advocacy strategies directed at GRETA, it became apparent that for La Strada International the monitoring mechanism is seen more as an advocacy tool to achieve change on the national level rather than a target for advocacy per se. LSI advocates not to monitor GRETA itself but to instrumentalise it to be able to better monitor national governments.

### ***5.2.1. Process versus Effects of Advocacy on Policy Change***

Interviews with the various stakeholders that are involved in the GRETA monitoring processes have shown that the actors (1) do not perceive change to be necessary and (2) are often not actively aware of changes that have occurred. This is largely true for actors of LSI member organisations. There is a difference between NGOs that are more centrally tied to the LSI secretariat and are more active in the network (R02, R01). In two cases, interview requests also have been forwarded to high-level staff at NGOs that were ultimately not the main representatives in the GRETA processes, which could explain these findings (R03, R08). The findings are nonetheless sufficiently significant.

The finding that actors are not aware of policy changes will be unpacked first. It must be recalled that at all times criticism of the monitoring processes has been relative. LSI – and through it NGOs – have always highlighted that they see the Convention and the GRETA monitoring as an important element of international counter-trafficking efforts. Additionally, what needs to be factored in is that the GRETA monitoring processes for national NGOs are a fraction of their THB advocacy. Many of them work on a grass-root level in victim protection and focus on local level or national lobbying for their cause. The country evaluation every four years and the occasional calls for input from GRETA or the LSI secretariat only to some extent

increase the contact and engagement with the topic. The knowledge about the process correlates to some extent with the degree of engagement in LSI and the size or resources available to that NGO. Smaller NGOs with little resources that are also more peripherally involved in the network were often unaware of the details of the procedure. In one case, the respondent repeatedly mentioned facts that are not in line with the actual monitoring procedure such as GRETA members only consisting of academics visiting on annual basis (R06).

The unawareness intersects with the experience of the monitoring processes as requiring little to no change. This thesis explains this through the fact that for the NGO network and its member organisations, GRETA is not the primary advocacy target but rather a tool to reach their actual target: national governments. Through GRETA, NGOs hope to engage their governments in topics that are essential to them through the international attention and pressure that the Council of Europe monitoring entails (R05). Thus, what is the main take-away point regarding policy change is not the change itself that happened but the goal that was behind the advocacy and the ways in which the advocacy occurred. Through the transnational advocacy, member NGOs and La Strada International want to gain legitimacy for their demands on the national level vis-à-vis their governments. The research question of how LSI advocacy affected policy change then becomes less of a matter of actual civil society influence on the monitoring of the 2005 Convention but of the objectives, processes and means behind the advocacy to increase influence. This will be looked at more closely when analysing modes of transnational policy learning. It will become clear that the processes of transnational policy-learning are what increases the weight of the advocacy of LSI in the eyes of GRETA because they attach a reputation, quality and values to the network's advocacy.

### ***5.2.2. Transnational Advocacy for National-Level Change: GRETA as an Instrument for Civil Society to Reach National Governments***

When enquiring about the experiences of the monitoring processes for NGOs, about the opportunities and challenges they perceive for their organisations, feedback has been largely positive. NGOs themselves do not see a particular need for advocacy for change in the approach of GRETA to the monitoring per se. Even criticism that appeared repeatedly in the data collection is difficult to categorise as such. Some respondents noted when asked about challenges in the process that GRETA's response is to politically cautious or diplomatic (R01). Simultaneously, all of them are aware that this is necessary for the work of the group of experts.

Similarly, a need for improvement is seen in the public outreach of GRETA and the limited public awareness (R03, R07). But NGOs do not consider this an aspect where they must advocate. This also becomes visible in the comparison with the U.S. TIP report. Generally, the interviewees from civil society have a worse experience here and feel less heard than in the CoE monitoring (R01, R03, R06, R07). Even there, however, the respondents do not see a need to intervene because ultimately any form international monitoring gives their THB advocacy exposure on the national and international level (R03, R05). Challenges are mostly associated with the response and interaction with the national governments rather than with GRETA. GRETA's function and its procedures often remain unquestioned by the respondents when talking to NGOs. The monitoring mechanism appears to be a tool in the advocacy on national level rather than a target for LSI advocacy in and of its own right (R01). Rather, the monitoring provides NGOs with the opportunity to share their experience on how their national government is dealing with THB and to focus international and national attention specifically on concerns or issues that are important to them. The published reports are 'ammunition' in the lobby and advocacy work of civil society (R07).

An example is the lobby-work of the network for certain GRETA candidates in elections. The network is interested in influencing the elections because they feel that the composition of GRETA affects the monitoring processes. Especially for country-visits, respondents consider 'the quality of the monitoring [*as*] dependent on the members' of GRETA (R02). This is experienced particularly in the case of candidates with whom there has been a previous close collaboration which provides NGOs and LSI with informal access to GRETA (R07, R03). Beyond that, members feel that it affects the interaction in country-visits as well as the monitoring and recommendations themselves (R08). This was confirmed by an expert from the CoE group: 'If we have a criminal law professor, then criminal justice has a different priority than when [*someone*] has a children's rights background for example' (R11).

Likewise, the feedback of LSI to questionnaires indicates that the advocacy is ultimately not aimed at GRETA but that the group of experts is a tool that they hope to sharpen through their advocacy to reach national governments. The instrumental logic behind their advocacy as well as the actual target can be seen when LSI provides input to drafts of evaluation questionnaires. Since that is a way for them to force governments to gather or publish data on specific issues 'because if our questions are included (...) then they will ask these questions to the government (...) and governments have to answer them' (R01). Moreover, the central role that the Convention assigns to civil society also means that NGOs are invited to round tables to provide feedback on GRETA's reports and the recommendations of the Committee of Parties

(GRETA, 2016, p. 33). La Strada International, for instance, submits input for the questionnaires of the evaluation rounds with proposed questions that they consider important for GRETA to ask the governments (Hoff, 2018). For both GRETA and the participating NGOs this seems to be mostly focussed on the THB situation itself rather than the monitoring mechanism and monitoring procedures. This illustrates how despite their transnational shared advocacy their ultimate goal is an improvement of the *national* contexts.

### **5.3. Policy-Learning on Different Scales**

It has been established that it is difficult to clearly allocate advocacy strategies, goals and targets to either a transnational or national scale. This also applies to the policy-learning processes that inform the advocacy of LSI. Learning occurs in interaction with other international NGOs and the national contexts of member organisations as well as network-internally. The latter will be elaborated on in Chapter 5.4.

#### **5.3.1. Learning Transnationally in Interaction with Other INGOs**

Early advocacy towards GRETA was pursued in cooperation with other international NGOs (LSI, 2008, p. 3). This could relate back to the fact that La Strada International became more institutionalized only during the years when the Convention and GRETA were set up. Here, the cooperation with other stakeholders with long-standing experience in the field – as is the case for both Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International – is logical. In later years the advocacy from those two organisations towards GRETA seems to have declined while La Strada International appears as an increasingly present voice for civil society within the monitoring processes. Together with Anti-Slavery and Amnesty International, LSI submitted a joint letter to NGO representatives across the member states of the Convention in 2005. Here they emphasised that: ‘In order for GRETA to become an effective and independent body that focuses on the (...) rights of trafficked persons and affected groups, we need to work together as national and international NGOs to ensure the best possible experts are elected to GRETA’ (p. 2). The letter provides NGOs with support vis-à-vis their governments to be heard in their recommendations. The three INGOs offered to collect information from NGOs and state parties to facilitate open and transparent procedures for an effective identification and selection of candidates (p. 3): ‘The collected information can provide a basis for identifying good practices



and a resource of mutual learning and effective campaigning or joint lobbying’ (p. 3). From the three international NGOs that offered to collect data about NGO experiences, ultimately, it was only La Strada International that implemented it. In 2014, after the first evaluation round, the network circulated a survey to its member organisations about their experiences of the first evaluation round. This is an example of how throughout the advocacy of LSI there is an indication of policy-learning processes – within and beyond the network.

Similarly, in 2013, La Strada International and Anti-Slavery International developed a guidance for NGOs as a template to draft an alternative report. The organisations reacted to experiences of NGOs explaining that it was difficult for them to provide input and the official guidelines from GRETA about civil society submission was unclear (LSI, 2014). In the first evaluation round after the publication of the guidelines, most NGOs relied on the guidelines when submitting their input and ‘did not work on the questionnaire by themselves’ (LSI, 2014, p. 1). This collaboration, however, appears to be limited to the national level. A respondent stated that their NGO used the Guidance to be able to properly prepare the information for GRETA, to get in a dialogue with other national NGOs and to generally orientate in a ‘new process’ (R08). That guidance had a momentum at the beginning of the GRETA evaluation round whereas there is no feedback anymore since NGOs are aware of the procedure and already involved.

As was the case in the advocacy for NGO engagement in the monitoring processes, La Strada International initially lobbied for the elections of the GRETA members together with other international organisations. In collaboration with Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International, LSI advocated for the inclusion of civil society in the national nomination processes since 2008 (LSI Newsletter, 2008, p. 3). In 2016, La Strada International, Anti-Slavery International and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) published a letter to civil society organisations in CoE member states to contribute to the elections of the new GRETA members. There they highlighted why joint advocacy matters for NGOs on two levels: On (1) the national scale, it is emphasised that [t]he influence of civil society to the national selection process is much stronger if [NGOs] are united and recommend the same candidate(s)’ (LSI, ASI & GAATW, 2016, p. 4). On the other hand, the input from national NGOs would enable their international counterpart ‘to explore the possibilities for joint advocacy for the best group of experts for GRETA’ on a transnational scale (LSI, ASI & GAATW, 2016, p. 3). The advocacy and learning processes in cooperation with INGOs outside the network seemed to have declined in recent years which increases the weight of the advocacy

of LSI. A reason for the legitimacy and reputation of LSI is its network-internal exchange which in turn intertwines with national learning processes.

### **5.3.2. *The Dialogue of National and Transnational Policy-Learning Processes***

It can be said that LSI is a classic example of transnational policy learning throughout its advocacy and work. National, local and grass-roots organisations provide input to similar member organisations under the umbrella of La Strada International and through stimulation, guidance and supervision of the secretariat. One respondent described the sharing of information on a European level with equivalent NGOs as ‘the power of La Strada International’ (R07). Members of LSI see a particular need for international collaboration because of the nature of human trafficking and its cross-border element. Besides the informational exchange, resources such as the added weight to advocacy work and in funding applications is crucial (R05).

‘It’s very good to learn from each other, from other countries and also to exchange best-and malpractices. (...) When you want to do lobby and advocacy work on a European or international level, it is good to have allies – also to apply for grants on EU level to combine forces. There I see the added value of an organisation like La Strada (...) because on a daily basis we have our hands full on a national level (...)’ (R07).

When looking specifically at the advocacy of LSI towards GRETA it is more difficult to establish a clear picture of transnational policy learning. For most respondents from member NGOs, GRETA and the La Strada International in the first instance are two separate sections of their work (R05, R10). With LSI they have larger projects and GRETA is only one of multiple monitoring processes that the partners participate in. Regarding GRETA, NGOs usually think of the country-visits and national level interaction with the group of experts (i.e., R08). In the case of GRETA in particular, the policy learning processes comes back to the divide between national and international advocacy that the LSI member organisations must balance. The member organisations have little experience or standing on an international scale or few resources to take their advocacy beyond the local or national territory. LSI facilitates the latter by minimising bureaucratic efforts for its members and saving them time and resources which are often scarce in NGOs to begin with. LSI also strengthens the advocacy of the individual members by bringing their concerns and suggestions together.

What needs to be mentioned in this context, are the differences in the position that NGOs have in their home countries. Some work with significantly less funding, they are struggling with a government that has little to no interest in (supporting) their work whereas the civil society in other cases benefits from strong (financial) support in their respective national contexts (R06, R10). Another difference between La Strada member organisations is the access to EU funding and the coordination among EU THB civil society in that regard. A respondent from a Danish NGO for which neither of the above applies, states that La Strada International, can only dampen these factors in an ideal world. However, transnational policy learning within the network still appears to be a crucial factor in her work. Because of the erosion of civil society in Denmark, the respondent is the only paid employee of the NGO. Even if she is an expert in her own right due to her long-standing experience, the transnational nature of the problem and the transnational cooperation allows her and other partners to function as an organism where they save resources through collaboration – solidifying and expanding individual expertise. Another respondent calls this the ‘content’-dimension of their advocacy in which the local-level NGOs benefit from each other’s’ input (R08). This indicates the national environment increases the interest of NGOs in transnational policy-learning processes.

Beyond the exchange of resources, national and transnational policy-learning processes also can be distinguished along the lines of values. This can be well-illustrated by one respondent’s comparison of a national and international network that they are part of. It must be noted that the previous country-evaluation by GRETA only went through the national network and the individual NGO was not separately consulted. As a small NGO, the respondent considers the coordination, the support and representation on a national level important. Thus, there is an indication that policy learning takes place to strengthen the advocacy of the individual NGO. However, policy-learning and shared advocacy is impeded by the fact that the values among the LSI members do not always align. The respondent says that the NGO prefers to work independently in some instances and is cautious on occasion because the national network associates them with organisations that i.e., are in favour of the criminalisation of sex work which clashes with their own approach. She sees the coordination on the national level as purely instrumental whereas the membership with LSI goes beyond that:

‘The reasons why we share a platform with organisations in [*name of the country*] is because they are in [*same country*] and it is important to coordinate because of that (...). On an international scale we choose more who we want to cooperate with, we check with whom we share values not geographical ties’ (R04).

National and transnational policy-learning processes are not only stimulated internally by shared values. GRETA also promotes policy-learning itself on a national scale. In its meetings with NGOs, if a certain aspect of human trafficking is widely covered in discussions with civil society, the group points out areas that also need to be included. While the trafficking of women for purposes of sexual exploitation is often covered in the input from NGOs, labour exploitation remains underexplored (R11). A GRETA expert who has visited some countries repeatedly says that he saw improvement in later country-visits with civil society providing a more balanced and comprehensive overview to GRETA (R11). He says that the group of experts has a complementary function where GRETA stimulates a shift away from a too one-sided focus of civil society advocacy (R11). This occurs through recommendations by GRETA to civil society to coordinate their input to GRETA to make sure all information is considered. LSI is entangled in that dynamic by promoting the calls from GRETA for national-level exchange through its transnational platform, thereby amplifying the original impetus for policy-learning (R01; LSI, 2014). In sum, it can be said that policy-learning processes of civil society in the GRETA monitoring are highly interlocked between local, national and transnational level and hence need to be approached in their entirety.

#### **5.4. Transnational Policy Learning in a European NGO Network**

Throughout the GRETA monitoring processes, the advocacy of La Strada International is informed by transnational policy-learning. LSI learns multilaterally when it comes to the GRETA monitoring mechanism. Unlike, in their other advocacy the GRETA advocacy processes are steered more top-down from the network secretariat because of the transnational and complex nature of the issue. The learning does not only involve an exchange of knowledge and information but also other soft resources such as reputation and values.

### 5.4.1. *LSI Processes of Transnational Policy Learning Throughout GRETA*

#### *Monitoring*

Throughout the establishment and the various monitoring procedures, LSI engages in various forms of transnational policy learning. The interaction outside the network has already been previously discussed. Within the network when it comes to the election process, for instance, LSI facilitates the involvement of NGOs. In this context, a member of the LSI secretariat states that the platform is successful in its advocacy in the GRETA processes because it concerns all its members unlike EU processes for instance. The joint interest means that LSI is also following it more closely (R01). This in turn suggests that LSI sees its strengths in the increased effort and exchange among its members. The secretariat sends an e-mail to its members with information on the candidates for them to decide whether they want to endorse a potential candidate or not. Since some LSI members work and advocate transnationally, they can also give input on nominees in other countries (R03). Member organisations also inform the secretariat if they have collaborated with a nominee previously and would like the support of LSI in its endorsement on national level (R07). The secretariat drafts letters of support and shares them with its network which in turn forwards it to their national governments. LSI submits recommendations for the final nominees for the election by the Committee of the Parties (LSI, 2020). Thus, information exchange within the network defines the advocacy.

‘We heard actually through [*name of NGO*] (...) because everybody knows we [*LSI*] are following. So then if they hear something, they immediately share. (...) So, once we know we inform our members and say listen, 4<sup>th</sup> of June GRETA elections. Here’s the call, check if your government did a call, check if the procedure is open, check if they want to nominate someone. (...) Very often we are one of the first to know because (...) we follow so closely, sometimes we already know about 6-7 candidates before they [*governments*] put them online (...) Then we go back to our members and say, listen, do you know these candidates?’ (R01).

From the perspective of a GRETA candidate the bottom-up policy learning processes within LSI look as follows:

‘So, my main contact definitely was [*name of NGO*] and the work in [*name of country*] (...) We knew each other for a while and then I told them I was interested in running as a candidate [*for GRETA*]. [*Name of NGO*] then said, that they will try to support me through LSI’ (R10).

The GRETA member was aware of the lobby work of LSI and considered the platform a valuable resource for her application. Due to previous interaction, her access to the transnational support went through national level resources.

The network learns through its members also outside of the election procedures. GRETA members and the Secretariat were invited to a seminar about a two-year La Strada International project about enhancing the compensation for trafficked persons and related crimes (GRETA, 2020, p. 36). In an interview with one of the participating NGOs, it has become clear that the advocacy in that regard is central to LSI and its members and that there was an active lobbying to integrate the topic more centrally in GRETA's evaluations (R02). In another example, one member organisation that has not partaken in the GRETA monitoring process despite her country being evaluated. Together with LSI, the director of the NGO recently decided to initiate contact themselves (R09). Through the platform, she exchanged with other LSI member organisations to see if anybody had similar experiences. Hence, both actors within LSI and outside feel that its advocacy benefits from or gains legitimacy through transnational learning processes.

#### ***5.4.2. Relational Dynamics within the NGO Network***

La Strada International comes together every month in an online meeting as well as (prior to Covid-19) once annually in person (R01, R06, R08). In the context of the GRETA monitoring, they particularly share their experiences of the country-visits. They discuss questions such as who was invited to participate, what their thoughts on the recommendations are, with whom of GRETA did they interact (R08). However, there are also NGOs that only to limited extent engage with LSI partners about the GRETA monitoring, and if so, only on a superficial level. Some feel that since the country-visits are a national event that there is no interaction required (R02). Because of that, ultimately, the case of GRETA within general LSI advocacy seems to be somewhat less active when it comes to bilateral and multilateral interaction among partners themselves in comparison to other LSI joint advocacy. Outside of the GRETA monitoring, the network's advocacy is higher because shared projects are more tangible to members. The network secretariat best knows the intricacies of the processes and engages with and reflects on the monitoring of GRETA beyond the country-visits. The LSI secretariat provides the framework for the advocacy strategies and its member organisations in turn provide the input (R02).

‘Sometimes there already is a draft and then we add examples (...) or if there is a general submission then we fill it with country-level examples. (...) I am always happy about templates and drafts where I only have to explain the [*name of country*] situation (...)’ (R02).

For requests for input from LSI about GRETA, NGOs aim to contribute as much as possible, to provide information because it is in their interest to raise awareness which they see as a capability of LSI (R09). LSI and its members practice a mutual exchange. The secretariat and LSI as a whole provide individual members with a certain reputation, with information about ongoing processes, with access to transnational advocacy (through for instance the GRETA observer status) and it saves its members bureaucratic hurdles and time resources by coordinating the advocacy regarding the CoE monitoring. Members provide the expertise from the grass-roots level and the direct interaction with THB victims (R05). A senior member of staff at the secretariat explains the influence of the LSI on the GRETA monitoring processes in the following way:

‘I think the most relevant is who our members are, so it is not necessary so much because we are a platform. Of course, it is relevant (...) it takes less time (...) but also because who the NGOs are (...). 80%, 90% of the members that we have are quite well respected (...) that’s also what GRETA knows; they say (...) that’s probably an NGO that has knowledge, experience because LSI accepted them as a member’ (R01).

Again, the transnational and national dimensions of the LSI come together to enforce advocacy strategies.

#### ***5.4.3. Learning as a Network through an Exchange of Resources***

The exchange of resources is at the core of policy learning processes. These resources can take many forms. In the application form of the CoE for the observer status of NGOs to the Convention, there is a question specifically about the transfer of knowledge and skills that the NGO is planning to pursue. LSI lists the distribution of fact sheets, case studies, best-practice examples and reports among its members. In this application, LSI is also asked to lay down the ways in which it feels it can contribute to the CoE activities. Here, the extensive experience in the field and its close collaboration with manifold actors in the field of THB is highlighted. Valuable input arises among others from its member organisations and for instance the annual

platform for European NGOs that LSI organises (CoE NGO Unit, 2006). It has been already laid down how LSI exchanges information and experiences about the monitoring. Another important resource that La Strada International provides its members with is its reputation on a (trans-) national scale.

On one hand, the reputation relates to the values of LSI that also external actors such as GRETA are aware of. Candidates for a GRETA membership actively approach the network for their endorsement throughout the election processes (R01). The expertise of the network and its members is felt to be more readily recognised (R08). Some feel that this might contribute to GRETA spending more time with them or GRETA directly reaching out to them in the first place (R06). Respondents also are convinced that the membership with LSI means their own advocacy on the national level has more weight (R03). On the other hand, LSI also has an internal reputation among its members as ‘a reliable partner, an experienced organisation’ (R08). The shared understanding and approaches to THB are seen as a quality feature (R02). Furthermore, members perceive the reputation that comes with their membership not only as a ‘stamp’ but see the values and responsibilities that are associated with that reputation as something that they live in their day-to-day work (R02). The reputation of LSI and its staff is an important resource for policy change in the GRETA monitoring processes. When asked about the decline in the involvement of other international NGOs, another former GRETA member responds:

‘(...) La Strada International is probably the most pronounced organisation lobbying on European level on the topic of human trafficking. They are connected best through the various sections in the different countries. Anti-Slavery still is a key-actor but there I feel it depends more on the people, how capacities are used and available. La Strada simply is a *network* (...)’ (R11).

Thus, he specifically sees a reason for the increasing influence of LSI in their organisation and resource-sharing. He also states, however, that sadly because they have a certain focus on women’s (sexual) exploitation, other topics might come short in their advocacy (R11). Furthermore, LSI appears to have an influence so that their organisations are approached in country-visits and they are seen as a contact point to local level civil society as discussed by a member of the LSI secretariat:

‘If it is a country where we are based, I would say that in 99% of the cases, one of our members is met (...). There have also been occasions where GRETA is asking us for members, like what are your contacts for example in Lithuania or Moldova’ (R01).



A GRETA expert confirms the experience of the network regarding their reputation:

‘I believe if I engage with a country where I know that LSI has a member organisation, then I have the impression that everything is organised and that LSI coordinates with its members (...) LSI has a certain reputation as a network and does a lot for its members’ (R10).

Furthermore, the policy learning process is significantly defined by the values of LSI. This ideological closeness seems to build trust in the transnational policy learning processes within the transnational network. For instance, La Strada International recently circulated a survey from GRETA about the impact of technology on THB (2021) where they seek input from civil society. La Strada International suggests possible responses to the survey which members do not have to use but which could serve as guidelines for their own input (R03). GRETA does also reach out to individual NGOs, but LSI members prefer to join their statements (R01). An interviewee emphasised that this does not only minimise work effort for her NGO but also maximises the echo of their replies (R05). One respondent said that she reacted very passively because of limited time resources and stated that she did not feel the need to add or revise points of LSI’s draft because there is a certain level of trust in the network and the shared beliefs (R04). The same value-based distinction does not only apply to national but also to other international THB networks such as the EU platform ENPATES where respondents feel less ‘at home’ (R04) and where NGOs do not have the same amount of self-determination over the agenda (R03). The shared values and beliefs that tie La Strada International together make the exchange possible. They provide the framework in which transnational policy learning is possible because all participants share a goal and the approach to achieve the goal.

‘We share criticisms on issues like non-witness protection, the way in which law enforcement regards people as trafficked, the narrowness of police having a tendency of viewing THB through the prism of prostitution and the inability to look at THB from a more broad, dynamic angle. These are all the things we share and we share *[them]* in a very interesting way – in a way that is stimulating – with LSI. LSI is interesting, it is a big organisation that is extremely well-informed and therefore there is a sort of fertile nexus of activities and comments about trends (...). For me being in La Strada *[International]* as *[name of NGO]* means bouncing our ideas, our reflections, our observations, or frustrations (...). For me that is why LSI is so important because we are all people wishing to combat human trafficking, and all of us doing work on the ground (...)’ (R06).

Thus, shared values and beliefs are an important resource for both the secretariat and the NGO members that allow for exchange and policy learning to happen in the first place. Altogether,

it can be said that values build the framework in which transnational learning takes place. Learning processes then include an exchange of a various types of resources such as knowledge, information, experiences and reputation.

In sum, the advocacy of La Strada International influences the GRETA monitoring mechanism through transnational policy-learning processes. The three main findings of this study are as follows: Corresponding with the first subquestion, the advocacy of the network takes place within a policy subsystem that values and incentivises policy learning. Regarding subquestions (2) and (3), it has become apparent that the advocacy strategies ultimately are not directed at the GRETA monitoring mechanism itself but indirectly used as a tool to reach national governments and achieve change on the national or local level. Lastly and closely related to the previous finding, the processes of transnational policy learning within the network are intertwined with policy learning processes on other regional or national scales. Learning occurs through an exchange of a range of soft and hard resources such as the reputation of LSI or policy documents as responses to GRETA.

## **6. Discussion**

This chapter discusses the findings in the context of the larger theoretical debate. I will review the theoretical framework integrating transnational advocacy network (TAN) theories into the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and what lessons can be drawn from its application to this study and beyond. Subsequently, the power dynamics within the policy subsystem and the network are embedded within the findings of other scholars. This is followed by a discussion of the goals that the network pursues in its advocacy and learning processes. The section concludes with a closer look at the resources that the network exchanges with a particular focus on the shared values and beliefs.

### **6.1. Reviewing the Integrated TAN/ACF-Approach**

The approach that integrated theories of transnational advocacy networks in the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) proved useful for answering the research question. This study can show that future research on transnational advocacy and policy-learning would benefit from an integrated TAN/ACF approach to overcome ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). As Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) suggest, it is important to move away from the idea that states are the primary target of transnational networks. While for LSI national governments are indeed the target, their advocacy is multi-layered since they aim to reach national governments by advocating to GRETA on a transnational scale. It could be suggested that to understand transnational advocacy, policy change and learning processes, the idea of advocacy targets needs to be complexified: In a first instance, members of an advocacy coalition might advocate among themselves. Network-internal learning processes of information sharing are targeted bilaterally or multilaterally at partners or the LSI secretariat. The advocacy strategies that this thesis analysed are transnational at heart since they are directed at the international CoE monitoring body. However, while this is the most obvious advocacy of LSI in the context of the monitoring procedures, these strategies are ultimately targeted at national governments and GRETA only functions as an instrument to reach the actual target. The ACF allows for a structured analysis of the policy subsystems in which the advocacy, policy learning and change take place (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). TAN theories place the strategies or campaigns at the centre which allows for a more differentiated analysis of this policy subsystem and the multiple layers of advocacy targets (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Farquharson, 2003).

The TAN/ACF approach is not only of value when looking at transnational advocacy itself, but also provides lessons for governance research on the local or national level. When applying the ACF within a local or national policy subsystem, the case at hand indirectly shows that it is important to investigate transnational links as well. The study has shown that neither issue nor effect need to be (considered) transnational for transnational policy-learning to occur. Colomb (2008) would argue that the CoE monitoring can be understood as a truly transnational issue which affects areas across national and regional borders and hence, requires transnational cooperation. Thus, transnational policy-learning according to Colomb is a necessity in light of a problem that is not otherwise solvable. However, for LSI members the GRETA monitoring is neither an issue per se nor is it experienced as primarily transnational. Rather, the secretariat engages its members in transnational learning processes and NGOs participate because of the effects they expect for their advocacy on a *national* level. In turn, this suggests that when governance processes are researched on a local or national scale there might be transnational processes at play as well. In sum, by integrating theories of transnational advocacy networks into an ACF approach, the multiple scales on which advocacy and change occur can be explored more effectively.

## **6.2. Exploring Power-Structures in a Learning-Conducive Policy Subsystem**

One of the findings of this study has been that the policy subsystem as a whole as well as subcomponents such as GRETA or the international civil society foster an environment that is conducive to policy-learning. This is also reflected in the advocacy coalition itself. Exchange and cooperation are highly valued which implies fewer hierarchies, nonetheless, it is important to understand the power dynamics (see Carpenter, 2007). While there was no indication of peer pressure as Hadden and Jasny (2017) suggest, the learning within the network varied between the different actors. On one hand, there are external pressures that define power relations within the network such as the situation of civil society on a national level and the funding that goes along with it. Thus, some actors that work for a significantly smaller NGO with less funding rely more heavily on the input and exchange with the network. On the other hand, structural factors such as geographical vicinity can also bring some members closer together and strengthen bilateral ties between network members (R01, R02, R03, R07). The reputation of an individual NGO on a national level can also make them a more valuable partner for the network as a whole (R02). However, not only the staff of individual member organisations have different roles in the transnational learning processes depending on their position.

It has become apparent that LSI's advocacy to GRETA is steered more top-down than in other advocacy projects of the network. This contradicts Radaelli's conceptualisation of organisational learning in which solutions to policy problems are sought within the network in a bottom-up process (Radaelli, 2008). While the information on and experiences within the GRETA monitoring of NGOs on the grass-root level determine *what* is learned, the LSI secretariat steers that process. In the case of the GRETA monitoring, the individual NGOs do not interact with each other on their own account because they view it mostly in terms of country-visits where international cooperation is not seen as essential. Hence, the LSI secretariat provides the framework to engage the network members with each other. It also often is the LSI secretariat that learns in the different advocacy strategies such as campaigning for certain GRETA candidates or gathering and providing feedback about the experience of NGOs. There the information from the grass-roots level comes together. This means that organisational learning that places an emphasis on knowledge within networks does not necessarily have to entail bottom-up learning processes. In the case of LSI this can be explained with the GRETA monitoring being a transnational issue that requires considerable expertise and resources to engage with. Thus, complex transnational issues potentially can shift learning structures and hierarchies within NGO networks.

### **6.3. Instrumental Advocacy – Discursive Learning: The Goals of Transnational Advocacy**

While the advocacy strategies of LSI aim to improve the GRETA monitoring mechanism to reach national governments, the learning processes within the network do not necessarily have to be goal-oriented. Policy-learning theorists such as Hall (1988), Hecllo (1974), Sabatier (1987) or Rose (1993) build on the assumption that learning is a rational process that serves as a means to achieve policy change. The case of La Strada International challenges this instrumental understanding of policy-learning. Obviously, the actors have an interest in an exchange with LSI to improve the GRETA monitoring mechanism in a way that it provides them with ammunition vis-à-vis their governments. However, while their advocacy might be instrumental and goal-oriented, the learning processes themselves that inform the advocacy are more discursive. For the NGOs and the secretariat, the exchange also takes place for the learning process itself to share ideas, reflections, observations or frustrations (R06). Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) suggest that this might be particularly true for transnational policy-learning. The findings of this study confirm this. La Strada International sets itself apart from other

national networks that its members participate in because they are not bound together geographically but ideologically (R04). The interaction on a national level is perceived to be required and thus purely instrumental whereas the interaction with LSI is a more voluntary coalition where the interaction itself is valued (R04, R06).

#### **6.4. Shared Values as the Currency of Transnational Policy-Learning**

This study has shown that shared values are not so much a resource that is exchanged among members but a requirement for policy-learning to take place within the network. As a kind of currency, the values and beliefs provide the framework in which transnational policy-learning and the exchange of resources take place. As Stone (2003) suggested, transnational policy-learning is intrinsically linked to networks. In her opinion, networks pursue both ‘hard’ transfer of policy tools and structures and ‘soft’ transfer of ideas or policy interpretations. This applies to LSI seeing that it not only exchanges about the monitoring processes and the experiences of members but it also institutionalises the exchange in tangible advocacy strategies such as GRETA election campaigns or guidelines for NGOs for the GRETA monitoring. It needs to be emphasised that the two modes of transfer are not independent from each other but highly intertwined. In the case of LSI, in particular, the ‘soft’ forms of transnational policy-learning can be said to be implicit to some extent. The LSI members do not discuss or question aspects of the monitoring process of their advocacy because they share a belief system that pre-defines how a problem is defined or approached. Betsill and Bulkeley’s (2004) suggest that transnational advocacy networks learn by constructing and producing knowledge and values. While this study agrees that policy-learning occurs through the construction, production and exchange of knowledge, *values* seem to be a pre-requisite for learning to take place. Values themselves are not adjusted throughout the policy-learning processes because they are what ties the network together on a transnational level in the first place. The feminist, non-abolitionist and structural approach to counter-trafficking is what defines La Strada International and these values facilitate the learning within the network. This very much aligns with De Jong and Edelenbos (2007) who emphasise that mutual understanding, trust and shared interest within the network are the foundation for transnational policy learning.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study set out to understand how the advocacy strategies of the NGO platform La Strada International influences policy change within the GRETA monitoring processes. To that end, the thesis pursued a qualitative approach and collected data through semi-structured interviews with relevant actors within LSI and GRETA. Moreover, data was gathered through content analysis of Council of Europe documents on the monitoring processes and information provided by NGOs and LSI. Throughout data collection and analysis, the theoretical concepts surrounding transnational advocacy networks (TAN) and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) were applied. The findings confirmed the expectation that LSI advances its advocacy and influence on change through processes of transnational policy learning.

### **7.1. Summary**

First, this study has shown that these learning processes take place in a policy subsystem that is conducive to exchange and cooperation. GRETA, LSI and other international organisations see an added value in national and transnational policy-learning. Secondly, within this policy subsystem and LSI, GRETA is perceived as a transnational advocacy tool to achieve national policy changes rather than a target for advocacy in itself. This means that La Strada International and its members advocate to GRETA first and foremost to adjust the monitoring in a way that it provides them more effective ammunition vis-à-vis national governments. Thirdly, the lines between transnational and national are further blurred in the policy-learning processes. LSI engages with other INGOs as well as with GRETA itself and member organisations interact on a national level. This leads to the last core finding of how LSI advocacy differs within this nexus of (trans-)national policy learning: On one hand, the shared values of LSI build the framework in which NGOs voluntarily engage in an exchange and appreciate the process and outcome more than in other national or transnational processes. On the other hand, advocacy towards GRETA distinguishes itself from LSI's other joint advocacy in that it is steered more top-down because of the resources and expertise the transnational monitoring requires.

## **7.2. Further Research & Limitations**

Further studies could research how GRETA sparked national policy-learning outside of La Strada International as well as specifically how NGOs experience national networks or taskforces versus the international cooperation in LSI. When looking into the external factors that shape transnational policy learning, it could be beneficial to have a closer look at how the national position of civil society affects their engagement on a transnational level. It needs further exploration of whether countries such as Denmark or Belarus where NGOs are increasingly hollowed-out might increase their engagement on a transnational level. Furthermore, to differentiate between modes of transnational policy-learning, a closer look at how various international organisations such as Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International and La Strada International interacted with each other throughout the development of the monitoring of the Convention would be beneficial.

A strength and simultaneous limitation of this study is that it itself is part of the transnational policy-learning processes in the eyes of the respondents. Particularly staff of the NGOs have an interest in sharing their work. On one hand, this increases the interest in the participation and outcome of the study. On the other hand, however, because the GRETA monitoring processes are only a small aspect of their advocacy, they see the interviewer as having more knowledge and wanting to learn in that regard. The author attempted to relativise repeated insecurities by highlighting that it is the respondents' experience and knowledge that matter. Secondly, the study could not evaluate the interaction with other international NGOs that are an important factor in the GRETA monitoring. The position of LSI changed over-time within international civil society representation and it would have been beneficial to explore how this is experienced by members from other INGOs such as Amnesty International or Anti-Slavery International, especially because they have been important stakeholders in early advocacy.

## **7.3. Policy Recommendations**

An academic examination of the theoretical concept of transnational policy-learning has practical implications as well. This research has indicated that the monitoring processes might benefit if GRETA would not only promote national but also transnational exchanges. The group of experts could set clear guidelines on how NGOs with observer status can best provide feedback, thereby encouraging an exchange among international civil society. This can only



increase the legitimacy of the work of GRETA since it adds to the reflection and meta-monitoring of their work. La Strada International as the leading civil society organisation in the monitoring processes is in an ideal position to coordinate this advocacy beyond its members. To strengthen its advocacy, the LSI secretariat could provide members with a clear overview particularly over how they are and could be involved in the processes and in which areas LSI lobbies. While members consider the top-down approach that the secretariat takes when advocating to GRETA useful since it simplifies bureaucratic hurdles, it is nonetheless important to strengthen the understanding for the GRETA processes among LSI members. Only then it can be ensured that the interest in NGO involvement is sustained and that policy-learning continuous to take place. Next to a renewed guidance, LSI could also circulate questionnaires to its member organisations after they have been evaluated by GRETA with more regularity. More, and more solid data on NGO experiences in the monitoring processes supports their advocacy. Member NGOs themselves should increase the awareness among its staff members that GRETA is a *transnational* process, even if the main interaction with the group experts happens in a national context. LSI can serve as a platform not only after an evaluation has taken place but also before. In bi- or multilateral settings, the member organisations can exchange on how best to structure input to GRETA as well as country-visits. An NGO might only meet with GRETA once in four years which makes it paramount that the topics that partner organisations highlight in their meetings with the group are coordinated to align LSI advocacy transnationally.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1a. List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Types of Policy Transfer</i> .....	19
Table 2. <i>GRETA monitoring procedure and interaction between states, Committee of the Parties and civil society</i> .....	30

### Appendix 1b. List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Operationalisation of the concept of the policy subsystem</i> .....	24
Figure 2. <i>Operationalisation of the concept of advocacy strategies</i> .....	25
Figure 3. <i>Operationalisation of the concept policy change</i> .....	25
Figure 4. <i>Operationalisation of the concept of transnational policy learning</i> .....	26
Figure 5. <i>Expectation emerging from ACF and TAN literature</i> .....	27
Figure 6. <i>Expectations regarding the interaction of variables</i> .....	27
Figure 7. <i>The policy subsystem in which the advocacy of LSI is embedded in</i> .....	36

### Appendix 2. Interview Guide for NGO Staff

The interviews were semi-structured, thus, the question catalogue outlined below was extended according to prior content research or based on information from previous interviews.

#### *Introduction and role of the organization*

- 1a) What is your position in your organization and what does your position entail in the context of the GRETA monitoring processes?
- 1b) How long have you been active in that position?
- 1c) How would you describe your interaction with GRETA?

#### *General questions about monitoring processes*

- 2) From your perspective and in your specific position, do you think the monitoring processes of GRETA have changed?

- 2a) If so, in what way(s) have they changed?
- 2b) If so, why do you think they have changed?
- 3a) What are the main opportunities of the GRETA monitoring processes for your organization?
- 3b) What are the main challenges of the GRETA monitoring processes for your organization?
- 4) In your opinion, how could GRETA monitoring processes improve?
  - 4a) Why do you think they need or do not need improving?
  - 4b) How urgently is their improvement needed?
  - 4c) How would your organisation approach this?

***Advocacy regarding monitoring processes and interaction with LSI***

- 5) How would you describe your influence on the GRETA monitoring processes?
- 6) What role do you think your membership with La Strada International (LSI) plays regarding the influence on monitoring processes?
- 7a) How do you interact with La Strada International headquarters about the monitoring of the 2005 Convention?
- 7b) How do you interact with other La Strada International member organisations about the monitoring of the 2005 Convention?
- 7c) Follow-Up questions both regarding the interaction with LSI secretariat and LSI partners:
  - How do you interact with them regarding the GRETA election processes?
  - How do you interact with them regarding the input about the questionnaires for each evaluation round?
  - How do interact with them regarding your experience of the GRETA monitoring processes?
  - Were you involved in developing the guidelines for NGOs on how to respond to GRETA questionnaire? Did you use these guidelines?
- 8a) How do you think your organisation benefits from the membership with LSI?
- 8b) How do you think LSI benefits from your organisation as a member?

## **Appendix 2a. Adjustment to Interview Guide for La Strada International Headquarters**

6) What role do you think does it play that you are operating as an international (European) network?

7a) How do you interact with member organisations about the monitoring of the 2005 Convention?

9a) What other actors do you think are important when it comes to your work in the GRETA monitoring processes?

9b) What would you say sets La Strada International apart from other actors in the monitoring processes (such as Anti-Slavery International, ECPAT, Amnesty International)?

## **Appendix 2b. Adjustment to Interview Guide for GRETA members**

5) How would you describe the influence of civil society on the GRETA monitoring processes?

6) How would you describe the influence of La Strada International on the GRETA monitoring processes? (In elections, feedback about monitoring, input for questionnaires)

7) How does the approach of La Strada International compare to other INGOs that have an observer status to the GRETA monitoring processes?

8) How do you interact with the La Strada International Secretariat about the monitoring of the 2005 Convention?

9) How do you think GRETA benefits from the input of La Strada International? Are there any challenges associated with the interaction with LSI?

## **Appendix 3. List of Respondents**

The list below outlines the roles of the interview respondents. There is no further description of the position of the respondents for reasons of data protection and privacy since La Strada International as well as the group of experts are limited which increase the chances of identification.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Role</b>
R01	High-level Function at La Strada International Secretariat
R02	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R03	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation

R04	Outreach & Liaison Officer at LSI Member Organisation
R05	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R06	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R07	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R08	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R09	Executive NGO Staff Member at LSI Member Organisation
R10	Member of GRETA (Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action Against Human Trafficking)
R11	Former Member of GRETA (Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action Against Human Trafficking)

#### Appendix 4. List of La Strada International Member Organisations

La Strada International has 26 member organisations and 4 associate member organisations in 23 European countries (see table below). Next to their member organisations, LSI itself also is a member of international counter-trafficking networks: the Global Alliance against Traffic in Women (GAATW), the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrations (PICUM), the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (IRCSE) and the Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons coordinated by OSCE (LSI, 2021b).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
ADPARE	Romania
ALC	France
Animus Association	Bulgaria
Anti-Slavery International	United Kingdom
ASTRA Anti-Trafficking Action	Serbia
Ban Ying	Germany
CoMensha	The Netherlands
Comité Contre l'Esclavage Moderne (CCEM)	France
SICAR Cat	Spain
FairWork	The Netherlands
FIZ	Switzerland
Focus on Labour Exploitation	United Kingdom
Gender Perspectives/Social Changes	Belarus
Hope Now	Denmark
Human Resource Development Foundation	Turkey

KoK Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Menschenhandel e.V.	Germany
La Strada Czech Republic	Czech Republic
La Strada Moldova	Moldova
La Strada Poland	Poland
La Strada Ukraine	Ukraine
LEFÖ-IBF	Austria
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)	Ireland
Novi Put	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Open Gate	North Macedonia
Pag-Asa	Belgium
Pro Tukipiste	Finland
Proyecto Esperanza	Spain
Victim Support Finland	Finland
On the Road	Italy

## Appendix 5. Overview of the GRETA Evaluations by Member States

The list below displays all the countries that signed the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. It provides an overview over the current status in regards to the evaluation by GRETA. The countries in which La Strada International member organisations are highlighted. In the 47 countries signatory to the Convention, LSI organisations are represented in 23. Of the Council for member states, the Russian Federation is the only country that has not signed the Convention.

Country	Convention (Signed/Ratified/ Entry into force)	Current evaluation status (June 2021)
Albania	22 December 2005 06 February 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations
Andorra	17 November 2005 23 March 2011 01 July 2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Armenia	16 May 2005 14 April 2008 01 August 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2011 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties, government's reply to the recommendations and government's reply to GRETA's questionnaire
Austria	16 May 2005 12 October 2006	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2010 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016

	01 February 2008	3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Azerbaijan	25 February 2020 23 June 2010 01 October 2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2019
Belarus	n/a 26 November 2013 01 March 2014 (first non-CoE signatory to treaty)	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2019 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding GRETA's report and government's comments, recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Belgium	17 November 2005 27 April 2009 01 August 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2013 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19 January 2006 11 January 2008 01 May 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2018 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Bulgaria	22 November 2006 17 April 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2011 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Croatia	16 May 2005 05 September 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Cyprus	16 May 2005 24 October 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2013 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Czech Republic	02 May 2016 29 March 2017 01 July 2017	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations Urgent procedure
Denmark	05 September 2006 19 September 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2011 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> evaluation round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Estonia	03 February 2010 05 February 2015 01 June 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Finland	29 August 2006 30 May 2012 01 September 2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
France	22 May 2006 09 January 2008 01 May 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2013 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Georgia	19 October 2005	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2011

	14 March 2007 01 February 2008	2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Germany	17 November 2005 19 December 2012 01 April 2013	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Greece	17 November 2005 11 April 2014 01 August 2014	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Hungary	10 October 2007 04 April 2013 01 August 2013	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Iceland	16 May 2005 23 February 2012 01 June 2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Ireland	13 April 2007 13 July 2010 01 November 2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016
Italy	08 June 2005 29 November 2010 01 March 2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 (urgent procedure) 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Latvia	19 May 2006 06 March 2008 01 July 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2012 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Liechtenstein	30 November 2015 27 January 2016 01 May 2016	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round (combined): completed in 2019
Lithuania	12 February 2008 26 July 2012 01 November 2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Luxembourg	16 May 200 14 April 2009 01 August 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2019
Malta	16 May 2005 30 January 2008 01 May 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2018 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Republic of Moldova	16 May 2005 19 May 2006 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Monaco	30 November 2015 30 November 2015 01 March 2016	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round (combined): outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Montenegro	16 May 2005 30 July 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016

	01 November 2008	3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Netherlands	17 November 2005 22 April 2010 01 August 2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2019
North Macedonia	17 November 2005 27 May 2009 01 September 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017
Norway	16 May 2005 17 January 2008 01 May 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2018 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Poland	16 May 2005 17 November 2008 01 May 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2013 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Portugal	16 May 2005 27 February 2008 01 June 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2018 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
Romania	16 May 2005 21 August 2006 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations
San Marino	19 May 2006 29 November 2010 01 March 2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2018
Serbia	16 May 2005 14 April 2009 01 August 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017
Slovak Republic	19 May 2006 27 March 2007 01 February 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2011 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Slovenia	03 April 2006 03 September 2009 01 January 2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2014 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017
Spain	0 July 2008 02 April 2009 01 August 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Sweden	16 May 2005 1 May 2010 01 September 2010	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2019
Switzerland	08 September 2008	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017



	17 December 2012 01 April 2013	2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
Turkey	19 March 2009 02 May 2016 01 September 2016	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding government's reply to recommendations
Ukraine	17 November 2005 29 November 2010 01 March 2011	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2020
United Kingdom	23 March 2007 17 December 2008 01 April 2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2015 2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation Round: completed in 2017 3 <sup>rd</sup> Evaluation Round: outstanding recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and government's reply to recommendations

## Appendix 6. Overview over Content Analysis

For more transparency and the replicability of the research, the content that was analysed in the course of this study is listed below.

Type	Origin	Information
GRETA General Reports	GRETA Council of Europe Website	GRETA publishes an activity report on an annual basis. GRETA has published 10 reports from 2011-2021 with a total of 636 pages.
GRETA Country Reports	GRETA Council of Europe Website	Only the country reports of Austria were analysed because the country reports in general turned out to be of little value to answer the RQ.
Data LSI Secretariat about Interaction with GRETA	LSI Website + Data from Personal Correspondence with LSI Secretariat	The content from the LSI website was obtained through online archival research and the websites' search function for the key word 'GRETA'. Analysed content includes the Guidance for NGOs, input to GRETA elections, survey about NGO experience of GRETA monitoring, input to GRETA questionnaires and newsletters. Additional information was made available by the LSI Secretariat on the application for the Council of Europe observer status.
Data NGOs about Interaction with GRETA	Websites of LSI Member Organisations	Documents (annual reports, newsletter), articles and blog posts available on the websites of NGO members of LSI. The content was obtained through online archival research and the websites' search function for the key words 'GRETA' and 'La Strada International'/'LSI'.
'Basic Texts': Official Council of Europe Documents	GRETA Council of Europe Website	Analysis of the 2005 Convention, Rules of Procedure for Evaluating the Implementation for the Election Procedure, for the Committee of the Parties and Internal Rules for GRETA as well as the Questionnaires for the three GRETA evaluation cycles.

GRETA Meeting Reports	GRETA Council of Europe Website	GRETA meets three to four times a year. These meetings are held in camera but a list of decisions is published. From 2009 to 2021, there are 42 meetings. The reports for the 41 <sup>st</sup> and 42 <sup>nd</sup> meeting were not available online at the time of the study.
Committee of the Parties Meeting Reports (GRETA Election related)	GRETA Council of Europe Website	For the purposes of this thesis only those reports that related to the GRETA elections were analysed because this is the most important involvement of the Committee of the Parties for this study. Out of the 29 total reports, reports 1, 5, 6, 9, 15, 19 and 23 were studied.