

OFFICE OF THE OSCE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE AND CO-ORDINATOR FOR COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

2022 REPORT UPDATE

“The humanitarian crisis created by the war against Ukraine is a microcosm of the growing challenge of human exploitation facing the OSCE region and the world.”

Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, in his statement on the need to strengthen anti-trafficking efforts in a time of crisis

There are about 25 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, and the figure is growing.

This pervasive crime continues to plague the entire OSCE region, and is as embedded in our societies and economies as it has ever been. At the same time, the current anti-trafficking response remains too modest – in terms of political will, resources, and policies – to effectively address the problem of trafficking today.

The humanitarian crisis – and resulting risks of exploitation – stemming from the **war against Ukraine** put a spotlight on this harsh reality, and provided insights into the complex and largely unresolved issues that must be prioritized across the OSCE area to put an end to trafficking in human beings: demand as pull factor; technology as a facilitator; the need for adequate protection measures; and the need to ensure criminal accountability for perpetrators and **justice to victims**.

These four areas remain the major challenges in the global fight against trafficking in human beings, and the key priorities of the OSCE in 2022 and moving forward.

The war against Ukraine: a looming trafficking crisis

Since the start of the war, the OSR/CTHB has been working closely with participating States hosting millions of people seeking refuge in order to minimize the risks for Ukrainians to fall victim to human trafficking abroad:

- The Special Representative conducted **official visits to bordering/neighbouring countries** – Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Latvia and Romania – to assess the situation and promote crucial anti-trafficking measures, and launched a major project to assist countries in scaling up their anti-trafficking efforts
- The OSR/CTHB issued **two sets of policy recommendations**: [the first](#) covering immediate prevention responses as well as medium-term policy and legislative measures to protect

people seeking refuge; the [second set](#) providing recommendations on how to combat tech-facilitated trafficking

- The OSR/CTHB organized high-level events to raise political awareness on risks of human trafficking stemming from the war on the margins of the 77th UN General Assembly, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference and the 29th OSCE Ministerial Council
- In partnership with Thomson Reuters, the OSR/CTHB launched a digital awareness campaign – **Be Safe** – to help people seeking refuge spot the warning signs of traffickers, minimize the risks and get assistance, including through country-specific helplines.

2022 | A YEAR IN REVIEW

1) Technology and human trafficking

Over the past decade, technology has become **the single greatest facilitator of human trafficking**. Yet, policy action to curb the misuse of technology has been slow and fragmented:

- *Only 14 participating States require tech companies/internet service providers to report trafficking cases on their platforms*
- *Only 7 participating States have made tech companies criminally liable for knowingly facilitating or supporting human trafficking*

To support OSCE action, the OSR/CTHB published a comprehensive paper on [policy responses to technology-facilitated trafficking](#), and is now turning that analysis into practice through workshops and consultations with parliaments and anti-trafficking authorities across the OSCE area.

2) Discouraging demand

Efforts to discourage the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation continue to be a priority in the OSCE's prevention strategy.

On the **labour exploitation** side:

- The Office convened national and regional workshops and conferences (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and in Uzbekistan) to foster approaches that advance **human rights due diligence in supply chains**
- The OSCE continues leading by example by strengthening its

own **sustainable procurement** policies and practices, and chairing the UN Task Force mandated with developing coordinated UN-wide approaches on prevention of labour exploitation through procurement.

There is strong interest and momentum across the OSCE area in adopting such approaches:

- *30 participating States now reported having public procurement policies (twice the number in 2015)*

On the **sexual exploitation** side, data show that:

- *Despite it being an international legal obligation and an OSCE commitment, one-third of OSCE participating States have not yet adopted legislative, educational or social measures to discourage the demand that fosters sexual exploitation*

That is why the OSR/CTHB is promoting the insights and recommendations from last year's paper on [discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation](#) to OSCE participating States to help improve their responses, including:

- Conference on combating trafficking for sexual exploitation through addressing demand in South-Eastern Europe (with UNODC)
- Workshop on non-legislative responses to demand for countries of destination in Western Europe
- Side event at the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC on States' obligations to discourage demand
- Regional event for Central Asia on legislative tools to discourage demand



MEASURING PROGRESS: SURVEY REPORT 2021 S

In 2015-16, the OSR/CTHB conducted a survey to assess progress made in the OSCE area toward implementing anti-trafficking commitments. This year, the Office published a follow-up survey that tracks progress made since then, and features new sections related to vulnerability reduction, awareness raising, addressing demand, as well as tech-facilitated THB/online exploitation of children. It describes emerging trends and presents recommendations to participating States.

Emerging trends reported in 2020/21 included:

- Use of live web camming and/or live remote sexual abuse (pornography)
- Trafficking of pregnant women for selling their new-borns
- Targeting of people with disabilities (31% of responding countries reported cases)
- Increased risks of online sexual exploitation for minors due to COVID restrictions
- Increases in forced criminality (+16%), trafficking for forced begging (+12%), and sham marriage (+16%)



OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Valiant Richey presenting the third Panel of the 22nd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, 5 April 2022, Vienna (OSCE)

3) Serving victims: Protection and Prosecution

States are still falling short in **identifying and protecting victims** of trafficking as well as prosecuting their exploiters. The OSR/CTHB views protection and prosecution efforts as **mutually reinforcing**, and designs its activities accordingly. Protection is not only an obligation related to the rights of victims, but also an effective law enforcement strategy to ensure stronger cases. Likewise, prosecution is critical both to counter impunity and to protect victims' rights.

- ❑ *In more than half of the OSCE participating States, only law enforcement can formally identify victims, and in eight participating States only law enforcement can refer victims to support services*
- ❑ *Only 29 participating States reported providing full support services to victims regardless of their cooperation with criminal proceedings*

In July 2022, the OSR/CTHB held its annual **Alliance Conference against Trafficking in Persons** on **protection**. The Conference emphasized that:

- States should ensure proactive identification of victims, and unconditional access to support regardless of their **cooperation with law enforcement**
- States should strengthen systems to ensure protection of children at risk of being exploited or who have already become victims
- There is a need for laws and policy measures across the OSCE region that meet victims' needs and ensure that survivors play a key role in informing policy-making

In 2022, the OSR/CTHB supported **national simulation-based trainings** in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to enhance multiagency collaboration and foster **victim-centred approaches** among prosecution and protection professionals.

It continued engaging with the judiciary to improve judicial capacity and awareness of the issue. Together with judicial associations and academies, and in partnership with the European Judicial Training Network, the Office is developing a practical training toolkit for judges focused on critical soft skills to ensure victim-centered approaches in the court proceedings.

The OSR/CTHB also organized a series of **peer-to-peer events for criminal justice practitioners on applying gender-sensitive approaches in combating THB** to build awareness that

“The single greatest ingredient for success in tackling human trafficking is political will”

Valiant Richey, OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, addressing the OSCE Permanent Council

such approaches are key in all steps of the anti-trafficking response, from providing assistance and protection, to addressing root causes and securing justice through criminal proceedings.

In 2022, the OSR/CTHB continued to enhance awareness of **“Following the money”** by engaging anti-trafficking law enforcement, financial intelligence units and the financial sector on identifying financial flows related to trafficking.

4) Building political will

The OSR/CTHB continues working to foster broad engagement and keep human trafficking high on the political agenda to build an OSCE region free from exploitation.

One of the main tools the Special Representative has to foster political will and support participating States are **country visits** and other **official visits**. In 2022, he visited:

Canada, Belgium (EU), Hungary, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the UK, the US, and Uzbekistan.

He also increasingly exchanged with **parliaments** across the OSCE region, including through fruitful cooperation with the **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** and its leadership:

- Meetings with national parliaments during official visits
- Special debate on Human Trafficking in a Globalized Economy at OSCE PA Winter Meeting
- Joint Hearing of the EU Parliament's LIBE and FEMM Committees on “combating trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in the context of the war in Ukraine”

The OSR/CTHB has also enhanced policy exchange with **the EU**, in particular with **the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator**, including by providing expert input on areas in need of legislative change.



OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Valiant Richey at the Palanca Border Crossing Point between Moldova and Ukraine, 21 April 2022

LOOKING AHEAD | 2023

1. Alliance against Trafficking in Persons

To turn the tide in the fight against human trafficking, national anti-trafficking authorities need **adequate policies** and **laws, effective structures** and **resources**, as well as the necessary **political will** to drive this action. **In 2023, the Alliance Conference** will focus on these elements, to support a much-needed **paradigm change** in global anti-trafficking efforts: defeating trafficking can no longer be the goal of law enforcement alone, but of **society as a whole**. Governments, civil society and individuals – all have a collective responsibility to combat trafficking in all its forms.

2. National Action Plans

In 2023, the OSR/CTHB will continue supporting States with tailored workshops on how to modernize **anti-trafficking National Action Plans** to better account for the growing and rapidly-changing nature of trafficking, and it will publish a **short handbook** on best practices in this field.

3. Country Visits and Partnerships

Country visits remain one of the most effective tools the OSR/CTHB has to support States in their anti-trafficking efforts. In 2023, the Special Representative will carry out three **country visits** (Kyrgyzstan, Spain, and the Netherlands), and numerous other **official visits**.

Partnerships are crucial to foster political will, build synergies and avoid duplication. In 2023, the OSR/CTHB will continue its engagement with the UN and its Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking (ICAT), the EU bodies, and the Council of Europe – including in the context of the joint annual meeting of the **National Anti-Trafficking Coordinators and Rapporteurs**.

4. Publications to be launched

In 2023, the Office will publish its research for the identification and assistance of victims outside the criminal justice system through a **“social path”**.

The OSR/CTHB and ODIHR will also publish the research findings on the **nexus between trafficking** in human beings **and national minorities**.

5. New research areas

Finally, the OSR/CTHB will expand its research activities on new thematic areas, starting with the nexus between **trafficking in human beings and disabilities** – which was highlighted as an emerging trend in the 2021 Survey Report.



OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Valiant Richey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Anniken Huitfeldt, at the OSCE Ministerial Council Side Event “A year in conflict: joining forces to prevent a human trafficking crisis in the region,” Łódź, 1 December 2022 (OSCE)

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OSCE Secretariat
Office of the Special Representative
and Co-ordinator for Combating
Trafficking in Human Beings

Wallnerstrasse 6

1010 Vienna, Austria

Office: +43 1 514 36 6257

Email: info-cthb@osce.org