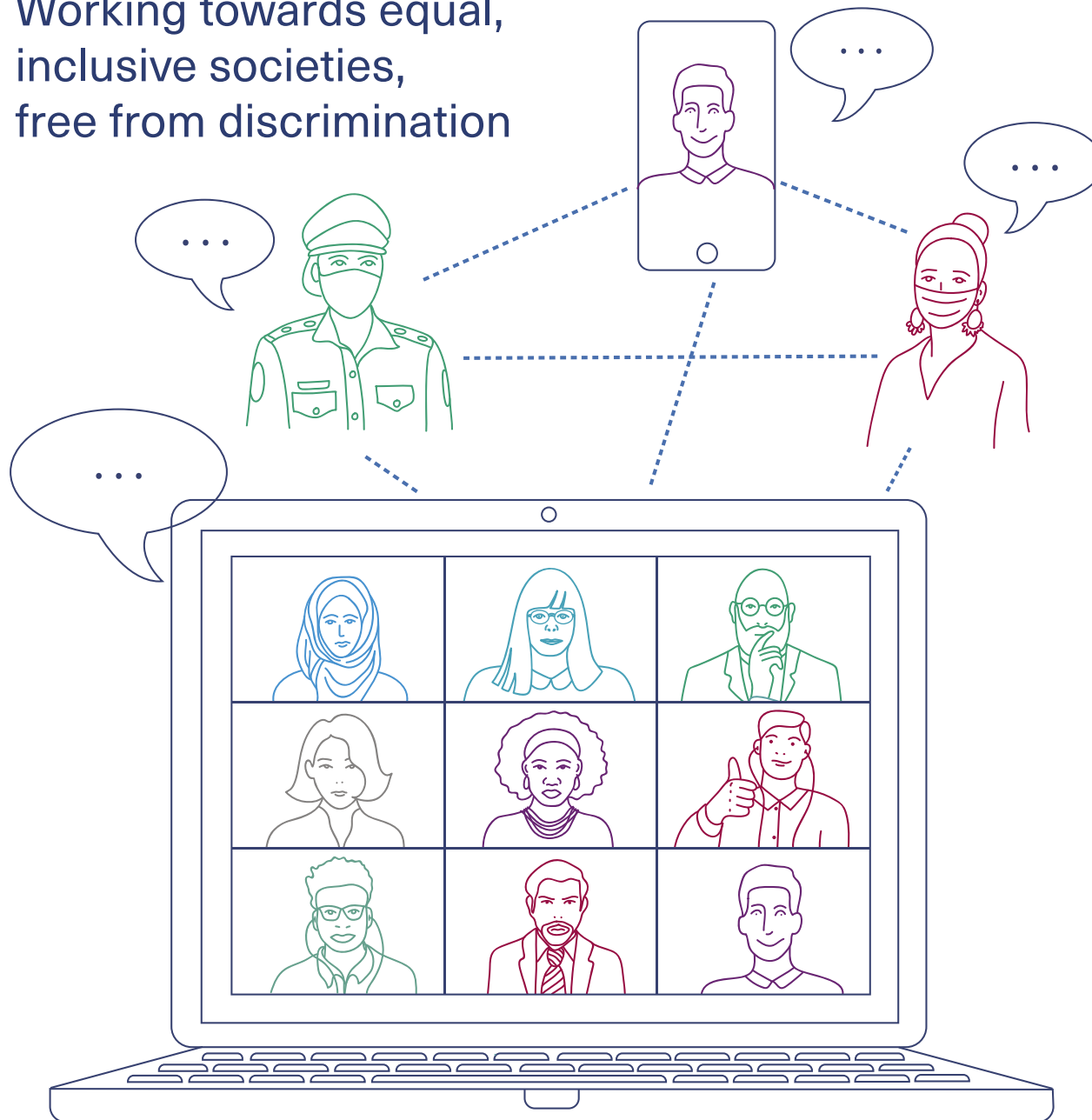


## PART 3

# Working towards equal, inclusive societies, free from discrimination



Thirty years ago, participating States committed to protecting the rights of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities. This remarkable leap for international standards in respect to human rights remains a key focus for ODIHR, and one that intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Office engaged national authorities, teachers, young people, media representatives and civil society in combating the discrimination, exclusion and hate crime experienced by many people across the diverse societies of the OSCE region. To build inclusive societies based on human rights and address vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic, ODIHR provided resources and tools such as practical guides, easy-to-read material and interactive training in 2020.

These impact stories include work to change the narrative around migration and media coverage of Roma and Sinti communities, as well as creating more effective ways of supporting hate crime victims. Projects to build tolerance between different religious communities and address anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic hate show that progress towards building equal, inclusive societies is possible even in challenging circumstances.



## 3.1 Building Stronger Support Structures for Hate Crime Victims

**Hate crimes affect both the victim and the entire community targeted by the crime, sending the message that a particular group is not welcome in society.** Repairing the harm inflicted

requires a response that focuses on the needs of individual victims as they evolve from the moment the hate crime is reported through every stage of the criminal justice process, to continued psychological or other support, if necessary, even after the case has been closed.

Too often, these needs are overlooked because the focus of efforts is on investigating and prosecuting perpetrators. Even when hate crimes are recorded, a lack of co-ordination, communication and capacity among the authorities and specialist service providers can result in a piecemeal approach to meeting the needs of hate crime victims.

In 2020, ODIHR launched a two-year project to help strengthen support structures and enable a more collaborative approach to addressing victims' needs, titled [Enhancing Stakeholder Awareness and Resources for Hate Crime Victim Support \(EStAR\)](#). The project is developing a collection of tools and resources to increase co-ordination among

government agencies and those offering specialist support to hate crime victims, including legal representation, counselling and medical care.

Already, the EStAR project has led to the creation of the first ever network of experts on hate crime victim support, as well as a digital platform for sharing international standards, good practices and resources. Comprising experts from 41 project countries, the network is designed to operate remotely and was therefore largely unaffected by constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the EStAR network members contributed to two ODIHR publications and shared their expertise during four ODIHR-organized events and numerous other conferences and webinars. A further 11 publications and 17 events are planned within the project for 2021.

ODIHR is implementing the EStAR project in partnership with the [Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-wing, Racist and Anti-Semitic Violence in Germany \(VBRG\)](#), with funding from the EU Commission and the Federal Government of Germany.

The EStAR project's Network of Experts has provided a unique opportunity to share and build on Austria's experience in hate crime victim support. Austria has already drawn on good practice identified in ODIHR's publications and guidance, for example flagging hate crime victims as especially vulnerable in a new police IT system for recording crimes.

— Johanna Eteme, a network member and Head of the Austrian Interior Ministry's Department for Fundamental and Human Rights Affairs.

### In Focus: Consultations to improve hate crime recording processes in Belgium

In line with ODIHR's recommendations, Belgium set up a new working group representing different government agencies and equality bodies tasked with updating national guidelines for police on recording hate crimes – a key step to ensure that hate crimes victims receive the support they need. In 2020, ODIHR held monthly consultations with the working group, and the updated guidelines are expected to be in place by mid-2021.



## 3.2 Reshaping political narratives around migration: promoting a human rights-based approach

**ODIHR and others noted intensified populist rhetoric across the OSCE region and increased racist, xenophobic and toxic political narratives around migration in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.** These narratives may rely on misinformation about migrants or national migration policies, or the selective use of information, and frequently employ hateful, inflammatory language. This can affect policy-making and have a negative impact on the process of migrant integration into host societies and relations between communities, undermining a human rights-based approach to migration and potentially leading to hate crimes. While ODIHR works with a range of stakeholders, it is essential for political leaders and those creating and shaping political discourse in particular to base their policies and their public statements on evidence, reflecting the positive contributions migrants make to receiving countries across the OSCE region.

OSCE participating States have committed to supporting migrant integration, and at the same time working to counter xenophobia. ODIHR has been called

on to reinforce activities that support migrant integration and combat discrimination against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as raising public awareness of the contributions of migrants to OSCE societies.

Building on previous work, in 2020 ODIHR focused on raising awareness about the detrimental short- and long-term impact of toxic narratives around migration. At the same time, the Office engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders, networking and bringing together representatives of international organizations, politicians, journalists, researchers, migrant and civil society activists to exchange good practices and feed into ODIHR's forthcoming guidance on shaping political narratives on migration. An online webinar on combating hate speech against migrants and refugees that ODIHR organized with UNHCR and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in July was a useful opportunity for reflecting on the specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public attitudes and developing recommendations to combat toxic narratives.

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**Toxic migration narratives produced and disseminated deliberately or unwittingly can negatively impact the effects of our work to improve refugee integration policies across Europe. ODIHR's work on migrant integration, hate speech against migrants and poisonous narratives around migration processes has been crucial for us. The guidance on political narratives around migration being developed by ODIHR addresses a range of key stakeholders and convincingly demonstrates why it is vital that we base our discussions on evidence. It will be a valuable tool for civil society.**

— Jacek Kucharczyk, President of the Board of the Institute of Public Affairs, which currently co-ordinates a project devoted to migrant integration in several OSCE participating States.

The ODIHR's new resource is for political leaders and those who shape political discourse. The guidance will not only assist stakeholders in resisting the attractions of populist discourse on migration, particularly during emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but will also offer positive strategies to react to such rhetoric when it is used by others. It will equip both policy makers and policy shapers to develop constructive and rights-based political narratives around migration that include contributions from migrants themselves.

Political narratives, including those on migration, are generated, replicated and reshaped by many people, not only politicians. To develop and share a deeper understanding of these questions, ODIHR has reached out to a wide range of stakeholders, including key NGO partners, for example the Quaker Council for European Affairs. As a result, ODIHR guidance on political narratives on migration is stronger and more relevant.



### 3.3 Addressing the portrayal of Roma and Sinti in the media

#### Media coverage of Roma and Sinti communities has long been a driver of racist attitudes and hateful discourse.

While media often report on Roma issues, the [coverage](#) is frequently biased and further disadvantages the Roma community. OSCE states have called on media to portray Roma and Sinti in a balanced manner, and refrain from promoting stereotypes that contribute to the hatred they often face. Although a growing number of Roma journalists are helping to improve the situation, there is still much work to be done.

As news of the COVID-19 pandemic spread in early 2020, Roma communities braced themselves not only for an impact on their health but for a media backlash too. History has taught human rights advocates that difficult times are often accompanied by even more difficult experiences for minorities, who often find themselves blamed for the misfortunes that befall the societies in which they live. With this in mind, ODIHR assembled a team of ten independent Roma journalists from ten different participating States to monitor the media across Europe. For ten months, the journalists analysed the media discourse on Roma, providing

insight into how Roma communities experienced the pandemic and how they were depicted in a wide range of media outlets. As part of the media monitoring process, a database was built comprising 500+ articles from national and local media, focusing on the portrayal of Roma and the way in which pandemic-related measures impacted Roma communities.

Aside from monitoring the media, ODIHR also supported independent investigative journalism, resulting in published features about the impact of the pandemic on Roma and Sinti communities. The journalists' work aimed to combat biased media coverage as well as misinformation. They gathered information and stories that illustrated how Roma have been actively involved in countrywide efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic, as well as examples of how members of the community have initiated support to vulnerable Roma families that were most affected. Twelve articles and multimedia stories were published by seven different online portals and media outlets in seven OSCE participating States.

After ten months of intense work, ODIHR organized, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, a roundtable on promoting the fair portrayal of Roma and Sinti by the media. It brought together journalists, both Roma and non-Roma, and other relevant organizations and professionals working on the topic.

Regular and systematic monitoring of the portrayal of Roma and Sinti is key to countering the negative media bias revealed during the research. ODIHR, together with its OSCE institutional partners and journalists, will continue to keep a spotlight on this issue.

Within the media monitoring scheme, Jake Bowers, a Roma journalist from the United Kingdom, initiated an investigative blog series to find out how the pandemic was affecting the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. He has collected a number of remarkable stories honouring members of the Roma community, some of whom have died from COVID-19.



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**No deeper loss has been felt than that of Les Stevens, a proud Romany man who died of Coronavirus in April at the age of 69. 'He was known as Big Les, boxer, trainer, father, granddad and the man at the very heart of a boxing gym for 40 years,' says Boxing journalist Steve Bunce. 'He retired from professional boxing in 1979, finishing with 23 wins and just five defeats. And then he became an iconic figure as the man in the corner at Pinewood Starr, the trainer of champions, as many as 200 over a nearly 40-year period in the gym.' His story illustrates exactly how quickly the virus can take advantage of community events to spread right through the community.**

— (An excerpt from one of the stories featured in the blog series.)

## 3.4 Teaching easy-to-read methodology for better inclusion of people with disabilities

**People with disabilities can experience multiple legal, institutional, communication and social barriers when it comes to exercising their rights to vote, stand for office or participate in public life.** Although political participation is a democratic right guaranteed for all, people with intellectual disabilities face challenges when attempting to access relevant information on this topic. The easy-to-read format helps make language more accessible, particularly for people with intellectual disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes the importance of accessibility to information and communication, stating that information should be available to everyone in various formats, including easy-to-read.

The pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges due to a lack of information, in easy-to-read format, on the health crisis and access to relevant social services. ODIHR sought to fill this gap by providing disabled people's organizations (DPOs), educators, and care-givers

in Ukraine and Central Asia with the tools to develop easy-to-read documents.

The first two-day online workshop was organized in partnership with the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine. It raised awareness about the importance of including people with intellectual disabilities in political life by providing accessible information in easy-to-read format. After learning about the methodology, participants had hands-on training, translating Ukrainian documents into this format. Training participants were then invited to apply their new skills to translate key documents into easy-to-read and disseminate them in their communities.

After ODIHR's training, essential pandemic-related information was made available to at least 100 people with intellectual disabilities in Ukraine, including advice for adults infected with COVID-19, the needs of people with disabilities during the pandemic, and state social service support of the elderly and people with disabilities. In addition, the

Despite some positive developments in Ukraine, people with intellectual disabilities still lack access to information on political participation. This means that they remain the most discriminated against in political life. ODIHR's webinar on easy-to-read methodology addresses this need.

— *Nataliia Skrypka, Executive Director of National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine.*

Constitution of Ukraine, the Electoral Code and other key public documents were translated into easy-to-read versions for the first time. Following the workshop, participants were encouraged to create an online resource hub of easy-to-read information for Ukrainians.

The Ukraine event was attended by an observer from a DPO in Kazakhstan, who subsequently requested a similar webinar for DPOs in Central Asia. Later in 2020, ODIHR organized a multi-day online workshop about the easy-to-read methodology for participants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, in partnership with the OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan and SHYRAK, a leading DPO in Kazakhstan.

The two capacity-building workshops had a direct impact on participants, but also an indirect impact on over 440 people through outreach via the online groups created to share work and ideas (380 members in Ukraine and 64 from Central Asia). The establishment of

self-sustaining knowledge hubs online supports the continuing use of skills promoted in ODIHR's training.

Feedback and guided practice after the event are key to ensuring the long-lasting impact of the training. This was achieved by adding a second phase to the project, which included the translation of key easy-to-read documents by volunteer participants under the guidance of an expert. ODIHR also worked to harness the interest of participants in the topic of accessible communication as a tool for inclusive participation in political and public life by facilitating the development of a participant-led online group and information hub on the topic. Both strategies will be incorporated into ODIHR's future capacity-building work.



## 3.5 Supporting youth dialogue among different religious or belief communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

I think that the project was extremely useful for all participants, and what makes me most happy is the fact that in our local community we managed to interest people in the project of religious holidays and explain the rights that each of them has. We have learned that diversity is what makes us special, and religious diversity and mutual tolerance is what makes Zenica (our city) a wonderful place.

— Hinda Topovčić, participant from Zenica

ODIHR's seminar was an amazing experience. It was an opportunity to work with people who share the same values and who see the future as a place where we can put the past behind us, in order to welcome a brighter future without hatred towards any nation and religion. This project refreshed my thinking and gave me hope for future projects of this type.

— Igor Kanjski, participant from Prnjavor

Final in-person training event on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Prnjavor and Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2019.

**As well as causing immense upheaval, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing discrimination and intolerance on grounds of religion or belief, fueling an uptick in incitement to hostility or violence, conspiracy theories and scapegoating as was outlined in ODIHR's report on governments' responses to COVID-19.**

Nevertheless, many young people in particular are eager to counter negative stereotyping and stigmatization and build a culture of peaceful coexistence among individuals and communities of different ethnic, religious or belief backgrounds. They therefore often welcome opportunities to learn more about human rights and seek "safe spaces" where they can articulate their anxieties and concerns about living well in the midst of diversity.

In light of this, ODIHR has developed a methodology to combine training on the right to freedom of religion or belief within a "safe space" for dialogue among youth and students of different religious and belief backgrounds. The Office held two successful events in 2019 in Prnjavor and Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina,



which allowed young people to engage in a constructive dialogue on sensitive and difficult topics. At the same time, the events helped them to develop concrete action plans to advance the right to freedom of religion or belief for all.

Building on the success of these events, ODIHR, in co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, held periodic co-ordination meetings throughout 2020 with two groups of participants from Prnjavor and Zenica to discuss the implementation of their respective action plans.

The participants not only had an opportunity to learn about the right to freedom of religion or belief, but also to apply the knowledge and skills gained during the training by developing social media campaigns to raise awareness of these issues among a wider audience. ODIHR also supported the youth involved in organizing a roundtable with candidates for local elections to discuss ways of fostering social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between different religion or belief communities. They also built relationships with other young people from different religious or ethnic backgrounds, and were therefore able to form support networks during a year in which they faced challenges that included the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions and the local elections. ODIHR aims to build the specific interests, needs and sensitivities of young people into the design of future projects across the OSCE region from the outset.

## 3.6 Promoting a holistic and inclusive response to anti-Muslim hate crimes



**Anti-Muslim violence and threats do more than endanger the physical security of Muslim communities: they instill fear, which can cause lasting psychological harm.** Muslim women are targeted both for their gender and religion, making them especially vulnerable to hate-motivated attacks. As detailed in [ODIHR's report on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), the current global health crisis in 2020 led to an upsurge in discrimination and intolerance against already marginalized groups, which includes Muslim communities in many countries of the OSCE region.

In this context, the need to address hate crime became ever more pressing. In 2020, ODIHR published its [Practical Guide on Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes – Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities](#). The culmination of an extensive consultation process, the guide draws on a wide range of viewpoints and experiences to highlight good practices and key principles in responding to anti-Muslim hate crimes. The guide's holistic approach demonstrates that efforts by state authorities to foster respect for all communities through their

ODIHR's timely Guide fills an important void by identifying practical steps to address the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region through a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach. It is evidence of ODIHR's long-term engagement and expertise on these issues, and can also be applied to tackle hatred targeting other victimized groups.

— Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

**Many victims are unfortunately skeptical about the ability and willingness of the authorities to respond to anti-Muslim hate crimes. By developing tools to improve state responses to such crimes, ODIHR helps to boost trust in the authorities, making the intimidating task of reporting hate crimes that much easier for the victims and their communities.**

— Marianne Vorthoren, the former director of the Platform for Islamic Organizations in Rijnmond in the Netherlands.

response to hate crimes is the most effective means of ensuring security.

Following its publication, ODIHR has begun responding to requests to translate and adapt the guide in order to reflect the security needs of Muslim communities in different OSCE participating States. For example, the COREIS Islamic Religious Community, a leading CSO in Italy, is exploring the possibility of incorporating excerpts of the guide into a training manual for police on preventing discrimination against

Muslims, developed in co-operation with Italy's Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination.

The guide was also presented together with ODIHR's other work on anti-Muslim hate crimes to Norwegian officials and civil society during a virtual country visit of Ambassador Mehmet Paçacı, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims.

## 3.7 Addressing anti-Semitism through education

**Schools and teachers have a significant role to play in raising young people's awareness of anti-Semitism and in building their capacity to counter the toxic narratives that drive discrimination and hatred.** They also have a duty to ensure that educational environments are inclusive and safe for all students, whatever their background.

In order to address anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance, specific school management policies, practical guidance and educational curricula must be in place. ODIHR has developed a number of educational materials to effectively prevent anti-Semitism both in and through education. Following the successful co-publication of its guidelines for policymakers, ODIHR once again joined forces with UNESCO and launched a four-volume publication [Addressing Anti-Semitism in Schools: Training Curricula](#), developed with the support of the University College London Centre for Holocaust Education.

A comprehensive and practical resource, the curricula can be used to train school directors and teachers across the system to combat anti-Semitism and counter prejudice while at the same time promoting human rights, a global citizenship approach and gender equality. The innovative methods proposed in the curricula, including scenario and self-knowledge-based approaches, can be further developed and adapted by training institutions. The curricula can also contribute to the continuing professional development of educators.

To meet the specific needs of teachers in the classroom, ODIHR has also published a set of ten teaching aids on addressing anti-Semitism through education, with the support of CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe. The teaching aids help respond effectively to challenging questions or behaviour from students, provide brief but essential background information on topics related



to anti-Semitism, and highlight other useful resources for further reading. They were translated into Russian, French, German and Polish in 2020.

In 2021, ODIHR plans further translations, presentations and meetings with educators to exchange good practices in addressing anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in education. The Office will also continue to support states in implementing its materials in schools and education systems across the OSCE region.

**School directors and teachers are in a unique position to challenge dangerous misconceptions and anti-Semitic tropes. To do this well, they need and deserve support, direction, and first-rate resources. This new curriculum aims to empower them with the necessary knowledge to recognize anti-Semitism in its many guises and to act.**

— Ruth-Anne Lenga, Associate Professor (Teaching) and Programme Director, UCL Centre for Holocaust Education