



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

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

**25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons**

*Protecting Childhoods, Shaping Futures:*

*A Call to End Child Trafficking*

31<sup>st</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025

Hofburg, Vienna, Austria

## **THE ALLIANCE**

The Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference is a high-level annual gathering of key stakeholders from across the OSCE region that aims to raise the political profile of the fight against trafficking in human beings (THB) and discuss emerging topics and trends in this area. With participation from national authorities, as well as international and civil society organizations, the Alliance helps to align and amplify the efforts of all stakeholders toward the common goal of combating human trafficking. Since its establishment in 2004 as a framework for advocacy and co-operation, the Alliance has supported OSCE participating States in developing a robust, harmonized approach to combating THB that seeks to protect human rights, security, the rule of law, and good governance throughout the region.

## **THE FOCUS**

The 25<sup>th</sup> OSCE High-Level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference, titled *Protecting Childhoods, Shaping Futures: A Call to End Child Trafficking*, offers a timely opportunity to reflect on two decades of efforts to combat child trafficking within the OSCE region. Since the adoption of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>1</sup> and its subsequent 2005 Addendum on Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance<sup>2</sup>, participating States have made significant progress in combating child trafficking. However, despite notable efforts over the last 20 years, the prevalence of child trafficking across the OSCE region and globally remains high, and translating OSCE commitments into practical solutions remains a significant challenge.

This year's conference will underscore the need for a renewed focus and collective action to end child trafficking by providing a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of child trafficking with an analysis of current trends, the vulnerabilities and risk factors that expose children to trafficking, and gaps in existing responses and by highlighting promising practices and up to date tools to combat the crime and protect children.

By emphasizing the importance of shared responsibility, the conference will call on OSCE participating States to adopt a whole-of-society approach to end child trafficking that prioritizes inclusivity and multi-stakeholder collaboration and is built on robust partnerships among governments, civil society, the private sector, and local communities while addressing the unique vulnerabilities of specific groups of children, including those in institutional care, children with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, and children from minority or marginalized communities.

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

The prevention of child trafficking, the protection of child victims, and the prosecution of traffickers in child trafficking cases have been central to the OSCE's anti-trafficking efforts. Already the 2005 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings called on participating States to develop national co-ordinating and referral mechanisms to specifically address protection and assistance measures in relation to child trafficking, by urging countries to make every effort to find a durable solution for every child victim of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/5/23866.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/0/15932.pdf>

trafficking in the best interest of the child. These commitments have been further reinforced through Ministerial Council Decisions 13/4<sup>3</sup>, 15/06<sup>4</sup>, 7/17<sup>5</sup> and 6/18<sup>6</sup>, which serve as guiding frameworks for the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) in its support to participating States.

Despite these efforts, child trafficking remains a growing concern. Over the past 15 years, the prevalence of child trafficking has tripled globally<sup>7</sup>, with online child sexual exploitation and abuse escalating at an alarming rate — particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, reports that referred to incidents of suspected Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) submitted to the U.S. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) CyberTipline more than doubled from 16.9 million in 2019 to 35.9 million in 2023.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to produce CSAM is on the rise, with the technology advancing at a rapid pace. For example, in 2023, NCMEC’s CyberTipline received 4,700 reports related to artificially generated CSAM<sup>9</sup> and a 30-day review by the Internet Watch Foundation found a total of 3,512 AI-generated CSAM images and videos.<sup>10</sup> This means that technology has become the most significant enabler of human trafficking, with traffickers exploiting digital platforms to recruit, control, and abuse victims, including children.

Children are also disproportionately targeted for exploitation in illicit activities such as forced criminality, with many facing arrest and punishment instead of being recognized and supported as victims of trafficking. While many targeted for forced criminality are older teenagers, traffickers are increasingly targeting younger children who fall below the age of criminal accountability to avoid prosecution. By 2020, trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality had become the third most prevalent form of exploitation after sexual and labour trafficking, with the number of victims across the OSCE region rising from 2% in 2015 to 24% in 2020.<sup>11</sup> This concerning trend is echoed globally, with UNODC data confirming that trafficking for forced criminality is rapidly increasing, particularly affecting children.<sup>12</sup> Despite this, many child victims continue to be arrested and prosecuted without adequate screening for trafficking indicators, leaving them without the protection and support they urgently need.

Compounding this issue are overlapping crises — including armed conflicts, political instability, economic hardships, natural disasters, and climate change — that heighten children’s vulnerability to trafficking, particularly for those already in precarious circumstances, such as unaccompanied children fleeing violence, persecution, or poverty. The ongoing war against Ukraine has intensified these risks, with UNICEF reporting that over 2.2 million children in refugee-hosting countries and three million children within Ukraine now require humanitarian assistance.<sup>13</sup> While receiving States have mobilized resources to support

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.osce.org/mc/23164>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.osce.org/mc/23041>

<sup>5</sup> [MC.DEC/7/17](#)

<sup>6</sup> [MC.DEC/6/18](#)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP\\_2022\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP_2022_web.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.missingkids.org/cybertiplinedata>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2024/generative-ai-csam-is-csam>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.iwf.org.uk/media/nadlcb1z/iwf-ai-csam-report\\_update-public-jul24v13.pdf](https://www.iwf.org.uk/media/nadlcb1z/iwf-ai-csam-report_update-public-jul24v13.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/1/522934\\_1.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/1/522934_1.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP\\_2022\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP_2022_web.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/one-hundred-days-war-ukraine-have-left-52-million-children-need-humanitarian>

these children with accommodation, education, and care, some services are now being scaled back. Vulnerabilities are particularly acute for children with disabilities, those evacuated from institutional care, and families under financial strain, including single mothers with limited access to child care or employment. These evolving risks underline the urgent need to integrate anti-trafficking measures into humanitarian responses, child protection frameworks, and social welfare systems.

The risks associated with institutional care settings further highlight the importance of comprehensive care reform and de-institutionalization. Research consistently shows that institutional environments heighten children's vulnerabilities to violence, exploitation, and trafficking before, during, and after their time in institutional residence. However, according to EUROCHILD, 40% of children in alternative care are still in residential care in the EU<sup>14</sup>; and similarly, UNICEF reports that nearly half a million children in Europe and Central Asia live in residential care facilities, including large-scale institutions.<sup>15</sup> This issue extends beyond the OSCE region, as the growing phenomenon of orphanage voluntourism has brought increasing attention to the problem of orphanage trafficking. This recently exposed form of trafficking has been documented in 37 countries globally, with the demand often driven by well-meaning, yet misguided, support in the form of funding and volunteering originating within the OSCE region.<sup>16</sup> This highlights the urgent need of addressing the link between child trafficking and institutionalization as an essential component of broader efforts to combat child trafficking and protect children from exploitation.

These trends, along with the significant shifts in trafficking dynamics affecting children, are compounded by systemic vulnerabilities children face across the OSCE region. Additionally, the fragmentation of anti-trafficking efforts, insufficient resources, and the lack of comprehensive, holistic approaches have all contributed to a lack of sustainable progress in combating child trafficking. To effectively address the current state of child trafficking, OSCE participating States must fulfil their responsibility to protect children and take concrete actions within a strong and integrated child protection framework and a whole-of-society approach.

## **THE OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the Alliance conference is to take stock of the achievements made in combating child trafficking since the 2005 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan while addressing the persistent gaps and challenges that hinder the full implementation of OSCE anti-trafficking commitments, particularly in relation to children. The conference programme is designed to foster dialogue among participants on current trends in child trafficking and the intersecting vulnerabilities that heighten the risk of exploitation. It seeks to inspire collective action to end child trafficking by fostering a common understanding of its evolving nature and by advocating for a whole-of-society approach, highlighting promising practices, and sharing effective methods and tools. The conference is therefore not only an opportunity to share knowledge but also a platform for building momentum towards a future where every child is safe from human trafficking.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://eurochild.org/resource/datacare-country-overviews/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-half-million-children-europe-and-central-asia-live-residential-care>

<sup>16</sup> <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/itht-a-practical-guide-to-stopping-orphanage-trafficking-booklet-web.pdf>

## **THE AUDIENCE AND FORMAT**

The Conferences of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons are attended by representatives of the 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation, major international organizations and NGOs that are partners in the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, as well as civil society, lived experience experts, media, the private sector, academia, and relevant professional networks of national anti-trafficking practitioners. The 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons will be conducted in Vienna and bring the OSCE anti-trafficking community together in person. Active participation during the discussion sessions and via X - @osce\_cthb, #CTHB25 – is highly encouraged. For those who cannot travel to Vienna, a Zoom link to follow the discussions will be provided. Ahead of the Alliance, participants can use the hashtag #askOSCE on X to ask questions to the speakers. More information will soon be available at <https://www.osce.org/event/alliance25>.

# DRAFT AGENDA

MONDAY 31 March 2025

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## **Registration of participants**

12.30 onwards

## **High-level opening**

13.30 – 14.30

## **Coffee break**

14.30 – 15.00

## **Panel 1: *The evolving landscape of child trafficking: Trends and Patterns***

15.00 - 17.00

## **Side events**

17.00-18.00

TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2025

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## **Side events**

09.00 – 10.00

## **Panel 2: *From Vulnerability to Protection: Addressing Risks in Child Trafficking***

10.00 – 12:00

## **Lunch**

12.00 – 13.00

## **Side events**

13.00 – 14.00

## **Side events**

14.05 – 15.05

## **Panel 3: *It takes a village to raise a child - and a whole society to end child trafficking***

15.15 – 17.15

## **Closing session**

17:15 – 17.30