

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

2023 REPORT UPDATE

“Change does not happen by itself. We need leaders to carry it through. It is leadership and political will that can move us from combating trafficking to finally ending it. I call on leaders to join us to take action and to help us finally build a world free from exploitation.”

Former OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, **Valiant Richey**, at the closing of the 23rd Alliance Conference

Since the signing of the Palermo Protocol 24 years ago, countries have enacted laws to criminalize and prevent human trafficking. Yet, despite these efforts, this pervasive crime continues to surge throughout the OSCE region, at levels unlike before, and traffickers adapt new ways to exploit vulnerable people. However, amid this concerning trend, there is a glimmer of hope as political leaders and the general public are showing heightened awareness and commitment to combat human trafficking. Additionally, promising and innovative policies have emerged, illustrating that progress is being made in the ongoing battle against this persistent issue.

The 2023 OSCE Alliance Conference highlighted and emphasized these efforts. Consistent determination is needed to raise the unwavering political will necessary to curb the scale of the problem and adapt to current challenges. The 2023 Alliance underscored successful examples of strong national leadership and pioneering initiatives to combat human trafficking within and between OSCE participating States.

At the end of his term, former Special Representative Valiant Richey provided participating States with a Decalogue of anti-trafficking action, outlining the ten most promising measures and policies to conduct a more effective fight against this heinous crime.

Decalogue of anti-trafficking action

1. Establish a **National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator**, a high-level figure centrally placed in government, in charge of directing the national anti-trafficking efforts.
2. Establish an **Anti-trafficking Task Force**, a mechanism to gather all the actors, including survivors, to elaborate key strategies and policies to prevent trafficking, punish perpetrators, and protect victims.
3. Establish a **National Action Plan**, a policy tool ensuring that State anti-trafficking action is strategic, comprehensive, and duly funded.
4. Establish an independent **National Rapporteur**, collecting data, identifying trends, and advising the government on sound courses of action.
5. Enhance **protection and prosecution**, aiming at providing justice at scale, identifying more victims, and protecting them better while recognizing their specific individual needs.
6. Engage **financial investigations**, an effective tactic to break the business cycle of trafficking and cut off the lifeline of exploitation money.
7. Address the **intersection between technology and trafficking**, mandating tech companies to take responsibility by conducting proper due diligence on their platforms to prevent harm and equip justice systems with the tools to effectively shut down websites that facilitate exploitation.
8. Enact laws and policies to prevent **labor exploitation in supply chains** by mandating private companies and public buyers to conduct due diligence in their supply chains while strategically leveraging market-sized forces.
9. Discourage the **demand fostering sexual exploitation** through the implementation of policies - from educational to criminal justice measures - that will reduce the demand and hold accountable those who abuse trafficking victims.
10. Incentivize and mobilize **national leadership and political will** to ignite all the changes needed to build a world free from exploitation.

2023 | A YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2023, the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) went through a year of internal transition. Yet, despite the change in leadership, it consistently and relentlessly fulfilled its mandate, responding to persistent and emerging challenges across the OSCE region in a volatile international security situation.

In 2023, the OSR/CTHB advanced the OSCE's anti-trafficking efforts through:

1) ASSISTING PARTICIPATING STATES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OSCE COMMITMENTS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In 2023, the Office was physically present in **39 participating States**, in various capacities and in different fora.

Finalization and publication of country reports following SR official visits by the Special Representative in 2022:

- The United Kingdom
- Norway
- Latvia

Country visit to:

- Kyrgyzstan

Joint official visit to:

- Bulgaria (organized with the Council of Europe)

Capacity-Building

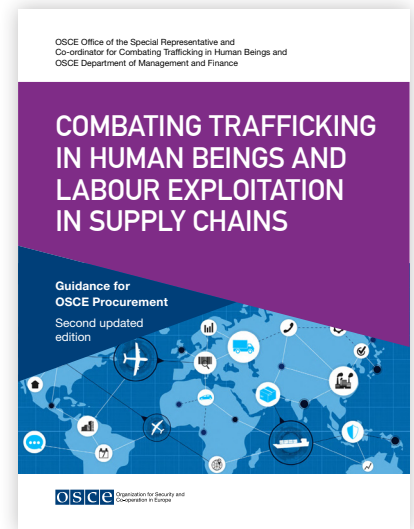
Building upon the recognized and appreciated method developed internally, the Office organized or supported several simulation-based training exercises, including:

- The first regional Central Asian simulation-based training exercise held in Kazakhstan, with practitioners from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan participating;
- The first regional simulation-based training exercise held in Germany for five Baltic Sea States (Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, and Sweden), in collaboration with the Council of the Baltic Sea States;
- The second national simulation-based training exercise in Georgia;
- The first national simulation-based training exercise in Moldova;
- A National simulation-based training exercise in Ukraine.

The Office's ultimate goal is to provide the format to national authorities and help them integrate it into their regular anti-trafficking training curricula for all anti-trafficking stakeholders in a multi-agency setting.

Preventing and combating labour exploitation in supply chains

- In partnership with the Department of Management and Finance, the Office continued working to ensure the OSCE's procurement does not foster forced labour. In 2023, the OSR/CTHB released the second edition of the OSCE procurement guidance, rolled out mandatory e-learning on *Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Labour Exploitation in OSCE Supply Chains* for all the OSCE procurement staff, and continued procurement training exercises for the staff at the OSCE Field Operations.
- In 2023, the OSR/CTHB joined the Secretariat of the multi-agency UN Task Force for Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Supply Chains. The OSCE OSR/CTHB is a founding member of this initiative and served as a co-Chair in 2019-2022. This collaboration works to leverage the UN's extensive procurement power to address trafficking for labour exploitation within its supply chains, replicating the OSCE's efforts.



Following the money to prevent and combat human trafficking

The Office has continued working closely with financial intelligence units and the financial sector in several States to promote partnerships between public and private sectors and develop guidance on how to identify cases of trafficking through assessment of risks and monitoring of financial transactions and financial intelligence. In 2023, the OSR/CTHB key activities in the area included:

- Facilitating the drafting and release of the first Strategic Analysis Report on human trafficking in Cyprus. The document, developed jointly with Cyprus Financial Intelligence Unit (MOKAS), provides country-specific information related to human trafficking and serves as an operational alert for the financial sector to identify trafficking red flags in financial transactions.
- Organizing the joint regional round-table, "Strengthening the role of the private sector and financial institutions in detecting and preventing trafficking in human beings," held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in collaboration with the Council of Europe. The event was attended by participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

The intersection between technology and human trafficking

To help participating States address the misuse of technology by traffickers and also assist them in taking advantage of tech tools that can help to prevent exploitation, protect victims, and hold traffickers accountable, the Office organized **four regional workshops with participation from 30 participating States** in:

- Tallinn, Estonia;
- The Hague, the Netherlands;
- Bucharest, Romania; and
- Almaty, Kazakhstan.

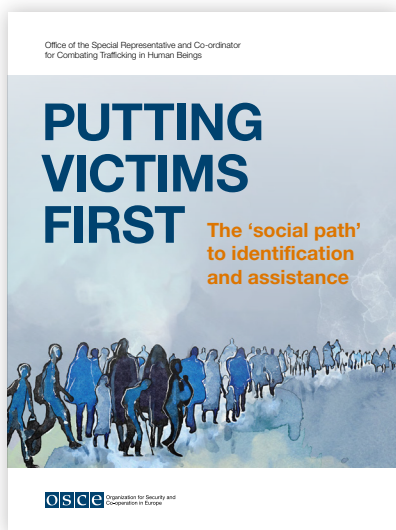
The OSR/CTHB

launched the ground-breaking study *Mapping the online landscape of risks of trafficking in human beings on sexual services websites across the OSCE region*. Based on the mapping and analysis of almost 2,900 sex services websites containing over 3 million advertisements across 40 OSCE participating States, the study seeks to address the existing information gap regarding websites at potentially high risk of facilitating sex trafficking across the OSCE area. Regardless of geographical location, economic or cultural standing, or national jurisdiction, the study found that every country has platforms with high risks of trafficking. To enhance the monitoring of online platforms and proactively combat criminal activities, it is thus essential to establish comprehensive international measures that include all participating States.



The OSR/CTHB published the study *Putting Victims First: The 'Social Path' to Identification and Assistance in March 2023*. The paper provides an analysis of how to identify and assist victims of trafficking outside of the criminal justice framework. Following publication, the Office began conducting national workshops related to this paper to assist in carrying out the work from policy to practice. Such workshops were held in:

- **Latvia**
- **Lithuania**
- **Romania**
- **Bulgaria**
- **Portugal**
- **Slovakia**
- **Moldova**



2) CO-ORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Office continued to ensure impactful co-ordination of all the OSCE work in combating trafficking in human beings across the three dimensions within the OSCE, as well as with external partners:

- The OSR/CTHB facilitated the Joint Meeting of the three Committees in connection with the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.
- The Office ensured effective co-ordination with OSCE Field Operations and other executive structures, and especially the CTHB focal points through regular meetings, to build synergies and alignment.
- As a member of **ICAT**, the Interagency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, the Office facilitated the endorsement of a joint **Call to Action to combat and end child trafficking**.
- The Office continued to co-organize, together with the **Council of Europe**, the annual meetings of the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms.
- Collaboration with the office of the **EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator** included joint work and advocacy on addressing technology-facilitated trafficking and responding to the humanitarian crisis stemming from the war against Ukraine.
- The Office provided support and expertise to the **European Parliament's** members in their drafting efforts on the new EU Anti-trafficking Directive, particularly on the complex issue of how to discourage the demand that fosters sexual exploitation and advocating for comprehensive policies to address the misuse of technology.

3) RAISING THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF THE OSCE ANTI-TRAFFICKING AGENDA

In 2023, the Office kept up a strong profile and efforts in assisting participating States in preventing the humanitarian situation emerging from the war in Ukraine from turning into a human trafficking crisis. The OSR/CTHB conducted **workshops in 15 participating States**:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| – Estonia | – Romania |
| – Lithuania | – Austria |
| – Norway | – Portugal |
| – Slovakia | – Bulgaria |
| – Czech Republic | – Greece |
| – Switzerland | – the Netherlands |
| – Germany | – the United Kingdom |
| – Hungary | – Sweden |

Other workshops are being planned for 2024, including in North America.

LOOKING AHEAD | 2024



Meet Dr. Kari Johnstone, the new OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

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 focused 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.

SR Kari Johnstone's priorities for 2024

1. Advancing efforts to combat all forms of trafficking, including growing forms such as trafficking for forced criminality.
2. Further enhancing co-ordination among OSCE executive

structures, national institutions, and other partners, including international organizations, civil society, survivors, and the private sector, to maximize impact and efficiency in the fight against human trafficking, ensuring efforts are as strategic, nimble, and proactive as possible. This must include good internal and trans-border co-ordination and capacity-building on innovative tools such as technology, financial investigations, and supply chain due diligence.

3. Working to help States fulfil their commitments by meaningfully implementing victim-centered, gender-sensitive, trauma- and survivor-informed policies and programmes and preventing the punishment of victims.
4. Helping participating States and OSCE structures tailor their efforts to prevent trafficking and protect vulnerable individuals, including minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, and those fleeing conflict or natural disasters.
5. Working to extensively and actively integrate the expertise of those with lived experience into anti-trafficking policies and programmes.

“The mandate of the OSR/CTHB is both comprehensive and operational. It provides the necessary toolbox to deliver meaningful activities and adapt to the times in which we live.”

OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, **Dr. Kari Johnstone**, delivering her first address to the OSCE Permanent Council, 9 November 2023

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