



SUMMARY REPORT

Meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms

Co-organised by the OSCE and Council of Europe

13-14 June 2022

Vienna, Austria and online

The meeting was co-organised for the fifth consecutive year by the OSCE's Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) and the Council of Europe (CoE) in line with the co-operation modalities outlined in PC.EC/637 (2004) and PC.DEC/670 (2005).

During the meeting, participants from 58 countries – Council of Europe member States and OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation – discussed recent policy developments to combat technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings, the risks of trafficking in human beings stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, as well as the ways to enhance and sustain anti-trafficking capacity building efforts at national level.

The meeting was opened by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE - Polish 2022 OSCE Chair, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (SR/CTHB), the Executive Secretary of the CoE Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings¹, as well as the President of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). The speakers underlined the importance of this meeting as an opportunity to reinforce the fundamental role of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs in defining national anti-trafficking responses as well as to harmonize anti-trafficking efforts in the region. The SR/CTHB stressed that the global fight against trafficking was at a turning point as the crime had evolved and expanded significantly over the past years, with the COVID-19 pandemic and a humanitarian crisis stemming from the war in Ukraine expanding vulnerabilities and offering new opportunities to traffickers. The Executive Secretary of the CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention noted that fight against human trafficking was among the key priorities of the CoE Secretary General's four-year Strategic Framework, being related to the new CoE strategy on the rights of the child (2022-2027)² as well as the CoE Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025).³ The President of GRETA referred to the [Guidance Note](#) issued by GRETA in May 2022 providing practical advice to ensure that public agencies, NGOs, the private sector and the general public minimize the risks of human trafficking created by the war in Ukraine.

Day 1. Session 1 – Policy developments to combat technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings

During the first session, the panellists presented policy developments to combat technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings, given the growing influence ICT has had on the crime of trafficking in the last decade. Particularly, over the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic

¹ [CETS 197 - Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings \(coe.int\)](#)

² [Result details \(coe.int\)](#)

³ [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\) \(coe.int\)](#)

has accelerated the mainstreaming of technology in the commission of human trafficking, thus resulting in an expanded misuse of social media and websites, and the worst years on record for online child sexual abuse.

The OSCE informed about the results of a recent survey⁴ of the OSCE participating States and demonstrating that only few countries adopted policies to tackle tech-facilitated trafficking. To assist States, the OSCE produced the report “Policy responses to technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings: Analysis of current approaches and considerations for moving forward”⁵, which provides an analysis of how technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings has been approached from the perspective of policy and legislation across the OSCE participating States. While looking primarily at the accelerating shift toward government-led responses, the report also examines the policies and practices adopted by the private sector and civil society organizations. In addition, the report offers recommendations for policy and legislative responses by OSCE participating States to the misuse of technology to exploit victims.

The GRETA expert presented the study titled “Online and technology facilitated trafficking in human beings”.⁶ The study explores operational and legal challenges that States and NGOs face in detecting, investigating, as well as prosecuting online and ICT-facilitated THB. The study also offers twenty-one evidence-based recommendations to help States adapt and equip their law enforcement agencies and criminal justice systems with capabilities in step with this changing environment. It stresses the importance of building synergies between the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking and Cybercrime Conventions, and improving international co-operation and data-sharing procedures.

The DG HOME representative informed about a recently proposed EU legislation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online⁷, which aimed at improving detection, reporting and removal of child sexual abuse by establishing uniform obligations for all providers, setting a new EU Centre on Child Sexual Abuse and co-ordinating authorities to ensure application and enforcement, as well as enhancing victim support.

The representative of the Dutch Directorate-General for Justice and Law Enforcement and the Director of the Bureau of the National Rapporteur focused on the national approach “Together against human trafficking”,⁸ informing that – from 2023 on – it will also include digital protection, in particular: the recruitment of digital detectives; expert meetings to reduce the

⁴ <https://www.osce.org/cthb/522934>

⁵ <https://www.osce.org/cthb/514141>

⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/online-and-technology-facilitated-trafficking-in-human-beings-summary-/1680a5e10c>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_2976

⁸ <https://www.government.nl/topics/human-trafficking/news/2018/11/14/fight-against-human-trafficking>

knowledge gap related to the digitalization of human trafficking; active online outreach to (potential) victims of trafficking; and public-private co-operation.

The representative of the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies under the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan informed that since July 2020 the Ministry for Digital Development together with the Cyber Oversight Service blocked websites that are suspected of THB and child abuse material – such process was reduced from two and a half months to one day. The speaker noted that in order to enhance response to technology-facilitated trafficking investigators needed to establish closer co-operation with relevant online platforms, while governments needed to invest in software enabling detection of victims online.

The representative of the US Department of State emphasized that the US Government was increasingly using technological innovations to combat human trafficking, including artificial intelligence tools, elevated database management, and targeted Internet taskforces. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Trafficking in Persons' online case management system provides a secure, streamlined way to request assistance for trafficking victims, facilitates secure transmission of information for case processing and strengthens data privacy, security, and confidentiality for sensitive case-level data, including victim certification and assistance. The U.S. Department of Justice oversees the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force programme consisting of 61 co-ordinated task forces, representing over 5,400 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies dedicated to investigating, prosecuting, and developing effective responses to crimes against children online. Referring to numerous prevention activities, the speaker highlighted Project iGuardian⁹ that aims to educate kids, teenagers and adults about online safety, and co-operation with an NGO National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The State Department also plays its part by investing over \$16 million in programmes around the world to enhance the investigations of online sexual exploitation of children and care for its victims. Last December, the US Government also issued a revised National Action Plan with action items related to improving technology to combat THB.

The representatives of Estonia and Armenia also took the floor. Estonia underlined a new NAP on violence prevention, with one part related to crimes prevented in the digital space. Armenia informed that over the past years investigations were conducted on cases of forced begging, labour exploitation, and prostitution.

⁹ <https://www.ice.gov/topics/iGuardians>

Day 1. Session 2 – Ways to enhance and sustain anti-trafficking capacity building efforts at national level

To discuss ways to enhance and sustain anti-trafficking training and capacity building responses at the national level, the meeting participants were invited to join working group sessions. Participants mapped existing and planned capacity building initiatives in their countries, and shared good practices in this respect. Discussions also focused on strategies that States can implement to identify needs and opportunities within current training curricula as relates to trafficking in human beings, as well as to better evaluate the impact of training programmes conducted for various anti-trafficking stakeholders.

Discussing the positive practices in delivering anti-trafficking training, the participants:

- highlighted experience of including modules on human trafficking in graduate and post-graduate programmes for various professional groups (lawyers, social workers and others), which ensures proper outreach and sustainability of the capacity building efforts;
- underscored the importance of multi-agency and multidisciplinary trainings to encourage exchange among relevant professionals to identify challenges and promising practices and to compliment agency-specific training. Such trainings are also instrumental to stress the need and build the skills for establishing trust between victims and State officials, specifically law enforcement, which traffickers aim to undermine to enhance their control over the victims;
- noted the importance of gathering feedback at the end of capacity building activities to understand which adjustments should be made to improve training in the future;
- appreciated the accessibility of online training modules and educational videos, most notably during COVID-19, while recognizing limitations of such learning (e.g. covering only with non-sensitive content);
- highlighted the importance of training the general public to identify signs of human trafficking, thus engaging the population in the anti-trafficking response; and
- stressed the key role of NGOs in conducting educational workshops for minority communities and youth.

Speaking about specific needs, gaps and challenges in the current anti-trafficking training landscape, the participants emphasised the need for:

- continuous training for the professionals mandated to be in immediate contact with victims of trafficking (judges, prosecutors, police officers, social workers, labour inspectors, etc.), differentiating between basic and advanced courses;
- anti-trafficking training tailored to the sectors whose staff might be in contact with victims of trafficking, including health care, hospitality, transportation;

- reflecting anti-trafficking training in States' budgetary planning both at local and national level;
- addressing emerging THB-related trends, e.g. technology-facilitated trafficking; and
- enhancing evaluation of the long-term impact of training.

Day 2. Session 3 – Anti-trafficking data and progress measurement

The OSCE SR/CTHB presented the Survey Report 2021 of Efforts to Implement OSCE Commitments and Recommended Actions to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.¹⁰ Originally conducted in 2015/16, the survey was then repeated in 2020/21 in order to assess progress made in the OSCE area towards implementing OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. Results indicate some emerging trends in THB based on number of cases most commonly reported by States as under investigation and/or in the judicial process, particularly: THB for forced criminality and forced begging raised from 47% to 63% and 59%, respectively; THB for sham marriage increased from 23% to 39%; also, differently from 2015/16, where the category was not included, 56% of participating States reported cases of THB for the purpose of pornography, live cams, live remote sexual abuse; 31% also had cases involving people with disabilities. The survey further analyzed the progress in prevention of THB, including in government procurement and private sector supply chains, by addressing demand for services of victims of THB for sexual exploitation and reducing vulnerability to trafficking; measures to prevent and respond to trafficking in children; protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, including the aspects of identification, provision of victim services and support for victims throughout the criminal justice process; as well as investigation, law enforcement and prosecution of THB. Separate sections of the report discussed technology and THB as well as training and capacity building for anti-trafficking stakeholders. Overall, responses suggest progress in implementing the recommendations from 2015/16 survey; however, the need for political will and resource constraints are hampering further progress across all aspects of THB response.

The Executive Secretary of the CoE Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings gave an overview of the main findings of the second evaluation round (2014-2019) of the Convention, published in GRETA's ninth annual report.¹¹ During this round, GRETA examined the impact of legislative, policy and practical measures on the prevention of trafficking, the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking, and the prosecution of traffickers, paying particular attention to measures taken to address the vulnerability of children to trafficking, as well as to emerging trends. The stock-taking of the second evaluation round showed that State Parties are improving their legislative and institutional frameworks, policies and practices, in light of GRETA's recommendations. Thus 26 State Parties amended their Criminal Code provisions

¹⁰ <https://www.osce.org/cthb/522934>

¹¹ <https://rm.coe.int/9th-general-report-on-the-activities-of-greta-covering-the-period-from/16809e169e>

on trafficking in human beings, and 34 out of 42 countries had a national action plan for combating trafficking in human beings at the time of the second evaluation by GRETA. Further, in 31 out of 42 countries, there was a formalised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the identification of victims of trafficking and their referral to assistance, involving a series of actors. However, some gaps were identified, among others, in relation to identification of and assistance to child victims of trafficking, prevention and detection of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, assistance for male victims of trafficking, protection of the rights of victims, particularly the provision of a reflection and recovery period, access to legal aid and compensation, as well as implementation of non-punishment provision.

Day 2. Session 4 – Combating THB stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine

The Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine indicated that: i) 6 million Ukrainian citizens have left the country, 900,000 of which are children; ii) 7.3 million have become internally displaced persons (IDPs). She gave an overview of the measures taken by Ukraine to ensure safety and awareness of Ukrainians abroad, including launching of the website safewoman.com.ua; updating “Stay-Safe”¹² chat-bot and creating a #WorkSafe! campaign operated in co-operation with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the Ministry of Interior, producing a leaflet to be distributed at the border crossing and in shelters. Moreover, a memorandum of co-operation on ensuring the protection of children affected by hostilities in armed conflict was signed with UNICEF and Lithuania as a first step with a plan to sign such a memorandum with 23 countries. A “State Targeted Social Programme for Combating Human Trafficking for the Period up to 2025” is being updated in response to the hostilities.

The OSCE OSR/CTHB reminded about the numbers and profile of the Ukrainians fleeing the war and highlighted the increase in demand for sexual exploitation of Ukrainians online, including 600% increase in global search traffic for “Ukrainian porn” and 200% for “Ukrainian escorts”. To help the States and to prevent the humanitarian crisis from turning into a human trafficking crisis, in March and April 2022, the OSR/CTHB has developed two sets of recommendations to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amidst mass migration flows¹³ and identify/mitigate THB risks online.¹⁴ The OSR/CTHB has developed a self-assessment tool participating States can use to self-monitor their progress with respect to the implementation of the recommendations, and planned to launch a project to further support participating States in the context of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

The Office of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, EU Commission, stressed that the number of victims from Ukraine was already high before the war, and spoke of increasing exploitation, both

¹² <https://www.osce.org/project-coordinator-in-ukraine/517584>

¹³ <https://www.osce.org/cthb/513784>

¹⁴ <https://www.osce.org/cthb/516423>

online and offline – particularly, demand for sexual services from Ukrainian women. The Office then presented the EU Common Anti-Trafficking Plan,¹⁵ highlighting among others:

- the development of the webpage Stay safe when travelling to the EU;¹⁶
- setting up a European Platform tackling undeclared work by the EU Labour Authority;
- monitoring activities on social media/online platforms by EUROPOL;¹⁷
- increased Member States' law enforcement presence in transportation hubs and reception centres;
- the first informal meeting of the focus group of specialized prosecutors and judges from Member States organized by EU Commission together with EUROJUST.

The Office concluded by informing that an evaluation process of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive¹⁸ was carried out, and data was so far consistent with that of OSCE and GRETA. Few cases of Ukrainian refugees becoming victims to human trafficking have been confirmed for the moment.

The First Vice-President of GRETA confirmed that the number of reported cases of THB in relation to the war in Ukraine remained low and no case had been confirmed by judicial proceedings yet. A member of GRETA had recently taken part in a fact-finding mission to the Czech Republic and Slovakia together with the Council of Europe Special representative of the Secretary General on Migration, which demonstrated good prevention efforts being made. In May 2022, GRETA issued a Guidance Note on addressing the risks of THB related to the war in Ukraine¹⁹ which focuses on actions that can be implemented quickly, without the need of legislative reforms or structural changes. It addresses a broad range of issues such as registration and safe routes, immediate assistance and integration, information and awareness-raising, detection of potential victims and traffickers, vulnerable groups, as well as co-operation, co-ordination and data collection. Among the recommended actions, the following four were highlighted: 1) unaccompanied and separated children should be registered and benefit from effective care; joint protocols on missing children should be developed; 2) protection should be provided to all without discrimination; 3) sufficient resources should be ensured so that immediate and long-term assistance does not rely mostly on private as well as non-governmental initiatives; 4) measures should be taken to address challenges in the medium and long-term, focusing on all forms of exploitation, providing work opportunities, counselling

¹⁵ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/anti-trafficking-plan-protect-people-fleeing-war-ukraine-2022-05-11_en

¹⁶ https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/information-people-fleeing-war-ukraine/stay-safe-while-travelling-eu_en

¹⁷ See, for example: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/human-traffickers-luring-ukrainian-refugees-web-targeted-in-eu-wide-hackathon>

¹⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036&from=en>

¹⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/greta-issues-guidance-note-on-addressing-the-risks-of-trafficking-in-human-beings-related-to-the-war-in-ukraine-and-the-ensuing-humanitarian-crisis>

and vocational training, monitoring high-risk sectors, and screening job advertisements and sexual services websites.

The representative from the Moldovan Directorate for Human Rights and Social Dialogue, State Chancellery, informed that since 24 February, 455,615 Ukrainian citizens (and 41,316 citizens of other States) had entered and left the territory of Moldova; 77,679 foreign nationals stayed in Moldova, 41,629 of whom were minors. Furthermore, 440 unaccompanied children were identified and referred to protection services, and 7,898 asylum applications (88% Ukrainian citizens) were received as of June 12. The Moldovan representative also highlighted the efforts to provide Ukrainians with information about their rights in Moldova, including access to services; operation of a number of hotlines, including on THB; establishment of up to 120 centres to respond to refugees' needs; setting up of Blue Dots for children at the border in co-operation with UNICEF and other. The Moldovan representative informed that no THB cases had been registered or identified so far; and noted some challenges, including the existence of uncontrolled parts of the border.

The representative of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior informed that 761,000 people had arrived in Hungary with almost 25,000 applying for temporary protection as per EU Temporary Protection Directive.²⁰ About 2,200 minors were enrolled in the public education system and about 5,000 refugees underwent medical treatment. On 21 March, the major humanitarian crisis centre in Budapest opened, whereas the Charity Council received an extraordinary funding of 7.5 million euros from the State budget. To address human trafficking risks, the national authorities created a leaflet that warns about the dangers of sexual and work-related exploitation. At an operational level, the police co-operates with EUROPOL with one investigation related to child sexual abuse ongoing. The visit of the OSCE SR/CTHB to Hungary was also instrumental to enhance anti-trafficking prevention.

The representative of the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security noted that 18,000 Ukrainian citizens had applied for asylum, while 15,000 were granted collective protection. The representative informed that, due to the exceptional situation, Norway made legislative adjustments, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security worked with municipalities on assessing the risks for various forms of exploitation. The Labour Inspection Authority prepared information campaigns and targeted control over high-risk sectors.

The representative of the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia informed about 32,000 people from Ukraine had been registered and 26,000 had received residence permits, mostly women and children. It was also noted that 2,500 people already went back to Ukraine or moved to another country, while 70,000 Ukrainians entered Latvia through the Russian or Belarusian border. The representative noted that Latvia provided services under the EU Directive, and referred to the

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0055&from=en>

Permanent Ukrainian Crisis Management Working Group, a high-level working group dealing with several topics (e.g. accommodation, people crossing the border from Russia, unaccompanied minors, and THB). Latvia also focuses on strengthening its national system, including referral mechanism, protection of exploited children, as well as efforts to reduce demand. The Latvian representative informed that no investigations were ongoing.

The representative from the Czech Ministry of the Interior said that no THB cases had so far been confirmed or identified, and that temporary protection was issued to 372,282 people in line with the EU Directive. The Ministry of the Interior set up a hotline for Ukrainian citizens, while police intensified criminal intelligence operations, both offline and online. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs also created leaflets for safe working conditions and employment, and issued information on ensuring the protection of children, including unaccompanied ones.

The representative from the US State Department highlighted the commitment to supporting efforts to prevent trafficking of Ukrainian citizens and third-country nationals fleeing the war and increasing protection of those whom traffickers exploit, and underscored the importance of holding traffickers criminally accountable to deter them from exploiting others. The speaker offered some recommendations, namely: i) incorporate survivors' input and child-sensitive approaches in policy and programme development; ii) share promising practices on child and youth education to prevent child trafficking; iii) share information on impact and challenges associated with technology-related measures, including evidence gathering and prosecution; iv) in the context of people fleeing the war in Ukraine, develop websites with age-appropriate prevention information for children and youth as well as information on trauma-informed care, psychological support, jobs, etc.

The representatives of the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, which serves as a National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur, took the floor highlighting the opportunities to enhance multi-agency anti-trafficking response based on the lessons learnt from the current situation and underscoring vulnerabilities of minors as well as submitted a written contribution, focusing on trafficking risks to the persons with disabilities. In the context of the war in Ukraine, the Commission noted the presence of people with cognitive, mental and psychosocial disabilities among the migrants particularly targeted by trafficking networks, especially for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The disability of these people, mainly women, does not allow them to understand and appropriate the awareness-raising tools developed and makes it challenging to establish a relationship of trust to provide them with appropriate care. The speaker suggested considering the presence of experts on disabilities issues in the field; adapt the awareness-raising tools already developed and design new ones as needed; as well as establishing co-operation between ministries and institutions dedicated to disability and THB and exchanging information with National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs.

The concluding remarks by the Executive Secretary of the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings highlighted the upcoming Committee of Ministers recommendation on preventing and combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, plans to organize a meeting of the network of specialized anti-trafficking lawyers, and preparing the ground for the next evaluation round by GRETA.

Closing the meeting, the OSCE SR/CTHB stressed the need for a whole-of-society approach to meet the scale of human trafficking nowadays, including laws, policies, recourses, capacity and political will. He also underlined the key role of the National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs in advancing a modern anti-trafficking response.