

The Critical Role of State Child Protection Agencies in Combating Trafficking in Children

International conference

18-19 November 2026

Venue: Meeting room Torberg, Steigenberger Hotel Herrenhof, Herrengasse 10, Vienna

The OSCE participating States have paid special attention to the persistent threats of trafficking in children and ensuring that their anti-trafficking responses embody specific child-friendly procedures from the moment a presumed child trafficking case is detected.

MC Decision 13/04 reaffirmed the general principles of the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, survival, participation and development, and provided the framework for all actions concerning children, recognising the vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated children.

The Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings on *Addressing the Special Needs of Child Victims of Trafficking for Protection and Assistance* (PC.DEC/685) called for an urgent need to develop child-specific national co-ordinating and referral mechanisms, which would develop durable solutions for child victims of trafficking through targeted long-term assistance measures in the best interest of the child.

Responding to an alarming spread of child sexual exploitation online, as well as recognising the heightened human trafficking risks for unaccompanied and separated children in mass migration flows, the OSCE participating States committed to action by adopting the MC Decision 7/17 on *Strengthening Efforts to Combat All forms of Child Trafficking, Including for Sexual Exploitation, as well as Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children*, and the MC Decision 6/18 on *Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Combat Child Trafficking, Including of Unaccompanied Minors*.

To assist the OSCE participating States in implementing the above commitments, the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) has undertaken a series of actions both at the policy level and through targeted capacity building initiatives aimed at a closer and more effective engagement of State child protection actors in a national anti-trafficking response.

The event is conducted in the framework of an Extra-Budgetary Project "Preventing and responding to trafficking in human beings amid the humanitarian crisis related to the war in Ukraine" implemented with the financial support from the Governments of Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Liechtenstein, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, UK and US, in co-operation with the OSCE Support Programme for Ukraine



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U.S. Mission to the OSCE

These, *inter alia*, include:

- High-level [Alliance against Trafficking in Persons](#) conferences in 2017 and 2025 dedicated to combating trafficking in children
- An occasional paper on [CHILD TRAFFICKING AND CHILD PROTECTION: Ensuring that Child Protection Mechanisms Protect the Rights and Meet the Needs of Child Victims of Human Trafficking](#)
- A practical guidance on [Establishing National Focal Points to Protect Child Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings](#)
- Strengthening a multi-agency response to child trafficking through international and national [simulation-based training exercises](#)
- [Recommendations on human trafficking prevention](#) in the context of the humanitarian crisis caused by the war against Ukraine and support in their implementation
- Developing a model OSCE e-learning course on combating trafficking in children for child protection professionals across the OSCE region.

Yet, against this backdrop, and as reiterated by the [25th Alliance against Trafficking in Persons conference](#), child trafficking remains a persistent global challenge. Despite a plethora of commitments and available tools and instruments, national responses to trafficking in children often miss out on timeliness and prompt action, nuanced interventions, an effective application of gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches and the implementation of the non-punishment principle, continue to be over reliant on criminal investigations and do not lead to durable solutions in the best interest of the child. Most significantly, identifying and addressing child trafficking is seldom regarded as an integral part of a broader child protection framework, with State child protection agencies not properly trained and adequately engaged. Meanwhile, traffickers are increasingly targeting children for sexual exploitation online and recruitment for forced criminality.

To address these deficiencies, the conference, primarily conceived for State child protection specialists, will discuss ways of how national child protection systems can be strengthened through integrating a child trafficking response and what resources and practices are already available to facilitate this transformation, including in conflict settings amidst the ongoing humanitarian crisis caused by the war against Ukraine. It will provide an interactive platform for an expert exchange among policy makers, practitioners, and survivor leaders to identify further practical measures and steps to make the OSCE region a safer and child-friendlier space.

Working languages:

- In the conference room: English only; interpretation will not be provided
- Online participation: English, with simultaneous interpretation into French, German, Italian and Spanish

Draft agenda:

Wednesday, 18 November	
9:30 – 11:00	Welcoming remarks Keynote addresses
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Session 1 – Enhancing identification of child victims of trafficking in human beings against new and recurrent challenges

	<i>This session will discuss the role of State child protection agencies in identifying and preventing trafficking in children, in co-ordination and with support from other agencies, with a particular focus on the forms of trafficking in human beings that disproportionately affect children, including sexual exploitation, forced begging, and forced criminality. Special attention will be given to addressing the needs of unaccompanied and separated children displaced due to conflicts, political and economic instability, natural disasters, and other factors.</i>
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Session 2 – State-led durable solutions for victims of child trafficking <i>The session will highlight the need to separate the formal identification of child victims of trafficking from their participation in criminal and legal proceedings as a critical precondition for long-term assistance leading to a durable solution in the best interests of the child. It will encourage an exchange on pre-requisites for a successful durable solution and the engagement of State child protection specialists in managing child trafficking cases in co-ordination with other agencies and designing and overseeing the implementation of such solutions in a multi-agency setting and within a broader child protection framework. A part of the exchange will specifically focus on the implementation of a safe return solution taking into consideration the best interest of the child and the co-operation between returning countries and countries of origin or habitual residence.</i>
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 17:30	Practical workshop 1: OSCE model e-learning course on combating child trafficking

Thursday, 19 November

10:00 – 10:10	Introduction into Day 2
10:10 – 11:30	Practical workshop 2: Trauma-informed identification of and assistance to child victims of trafficking in human beings
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 13:00	Practical workshop 2: Trauma-informed identification of and assistance to child victims of trafficking in human beings (Cont.)
13:00 – 13:30	A way forward