

PUTTING VICTIMS FIRST: THE 'SOCIAL PATH' TO IDENTIFICATION AND ASSISTANCE

Launch of the latest OSCE publication on combating human trafficking



WHEN: 19 April, 13:00 – 14:00 (CET - Vienna time)

WHERE: Ratsaal, Hofburg and online (Zoom)

ORGANIZERS: Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

REGISTRATION: [In person](#) or [online](#)

BACKGROUND

The **State obligation to promptly identify and assist victims** of human trafficking is enshrined in international legal documents, including most prominently in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. It is a key commitment of the OSCE participating States, embedded in the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and its Addenda, as well as in a number of OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions.

However, **insufficient protection for victims remains a major persisting challenge** in today's anti-trafficking efforts. This manifests in low identification numbers, lack of tailored assistance and rehabilitation services, unclear prospects for (re)integration, and, very often, the re-trafficking of victims.

To address these deficiencies, there is a growing recognition of the **need to separate assistance to victims from their participation in investigations and criminal justice processes**, as heavy reliance on victims' testimonies remains a major obstacle to their formal recognition as victims and long-term protection.[1]

Against this backdrop, the OSR/CTHB has recently released its paper "**Putting victims first: the 'social path' to identification and assistance**".[2]

It offers a discussion on why and how to adopt a ‘social path’ approach to identifying and assisting human trafficking victims irrespective of their willingness to participate in criminal proceedings. Based on a review of international law, engagement between the OSR/CTHB and the OSCE participating States, and a desk review of the information available about the emerging ‘social path’ practices, the paper aims to serve as a reference and advocacy tool to support the introduction of the ‘social’ path framework at the national level, to expand and strengthen States’ identification and protection systems.

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention, has consistently recommended to States Parties to the Convention to adopt legislative or other measures to ensure that assistance to victims is not made conditional on their willingness to act as a witness or otherwise co-operate with the competent authorities in the investigations and criminal proceedings.

The **Launch Event**, co-organized on the margins of the 23rd Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, by the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, will offer an opportunity to **share key conclusions and recommendations presented in the paper**. The event will also discuss the **advantages of the ‘social path’** as a means of ensuring the implementation of a victim-centred approach to combating trafficking in human beings by **highlighting current national promising practices** in this domain. A panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A session.

[1] See Conclusions from the 22nd Alliance against Trafficking in Persons conference, Protection: upholding victims’ rights and strengthening assistance. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/525273>

[2] Available at: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/538452>

PROGRAMME

I. Introductory remarks and presentation of the paper

- **Valiant Richey** - OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
- **Petya Nestorova** - Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

II. Panel presentations

- **Theodora Gianni** - NRM Co-ordinator, Greece
- **David Mancini** - Chief Prosecutor, Juvenile Court in L’Aquila, Italy
- **Miroslav Jovanovic** - Centre for Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, Serbia

III. Floor discussion

Moderated by **Oleksandr Kyrylenko** - Programme Officer, OSCE