

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Conference

Warsaw, 22 September- 3 October 2014

Working Session 6: Humanitarian issues and other commitments

Contribution of the Council of Europe

The fight against trafficking in human beings

Overview of the development of co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR

For the last eight years¹, the focus of co-operation between Council of Europe and the OSCE in the field of action against human trafficking has been set on promoting the widest possible signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and encouraging full implementation of the OSCE anti-trafficking commitments. The OSCE has observer status with the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention and the two organisations are pursuing co-operation, making efforts to avoid unnecessary duplication and aiming for synergies.

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE structures and institutions in the field of action against trafficking in human beings follows the principles agreed between the President and the First Vice-President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (SR/CTHB) and representatives of the OSCE/ODIHR at their Paris meeting in June 2010. This commitment was confirmed at the meeting between the then Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the SR/CTHB in Saint Petersburg on 18 April 2012.

The two organisations regularly exchange information relevant to identifying their respective priorities. They co-ordinate activities in the field of:

- awareness raising and advocacy (including, where relevant, the ratification of Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the implementation of the OSCE political commitments);
- assistance to Member States, including to National structures (governmental or non-governmental) that are responsible for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, especially in the field of training for relevant officials;
- assessment and monitoring.

¹ Since the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in May 2005.

During its country visits, GRETA delegations regularly meet the local offices of the OSCE (where they have Field Operations and anti-trafficking Focal Points). For instance, in 2013, such meetings were held between GRETA and anti-trafficking officers of the OSCE missions to Azerbaijan, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Information about the publication of GRETA's evaluation reports is communicated to the SR/CTHB and ODIHR as these reports have a potential to become the basis for developing joint co-operation initiatives. The SR/CTHB also communicates her reports to GRETA. These reports and other publications from the two organisations serve as a valuable source of expertise for Council of Europe member States and OSCE participating States.

GRETA was involved in the consultations surrounding the development of the paper “Policy and legislative recommendations towards the effective implementation of the non-punishment provision with regards to victims of trafficking” published by the Office of SR/CTHB in May 2013. Further, GRETA participated in the consultations on the draft Guide to Human Rights in the Return of Trafficked Persons.

A joint Council of Europe/OSCE conference on the occasion of the Austrian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe and the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, entitled “Not for Sale – Joining Forces against Trafficking in Human Beings”, took place on 17-18 February in Vienna. The conference took stock of the first five years of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention and discuss the challenges ahead. It will also provide an opportunity to exchange on practices and tools developed on the basis of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and on how legally binding standards, monitoring mechanisms and political strategies can mutually reinforce each other and lead to effective action to counter trafficking in human beings. At the end of the conference, a draft Framework for Joint Action was proposed by the organisers, identifying common points of action and avenues for co-operation in four areas: i) prevention: addressing demand; ii) protection: facilitating access to residence permits on humanitarian grounds; iii) prosecution: promoting the non-punishment provisions; and iv) partnership: strengthening international co-operation. As a follow-up to the conference, the Council of Europe and OSCE are currently discussing the organisation of joint activities in the four previously mentioned areas.

The need for avoiding duplication has been repeatedly stressed. Despite exchanges of information on the planning of country visits, there have been cases where the SR/CTHB visited the same countries as GRETA during the same year. Although the nature of the work of SR/CTHB and GRETA is different, it would be preferable to avoid such situations in the future.