



Human Dimension Seminar

Warsaw and online, 16 - 17 November 2021

SCHEDULE AND OVERVIEW OF SIDE EVENTS *as submitted by the organizers*

The Helsinki Document of 1992 (Chapter IV) called for increasing the openness of OSCE activities and expanding the role of NGOs. In particular, in paragraph (15) of Chapter IV the participating States decided to facilitate during CSCE meetings informal discussion meetings between representatives of participating States and of NGOs, and to provide encouragement to NGOs organizing seminars on CSCE-related issues. In line with this decision, governments, civil society and other participants are encouraged to organize side meetings at the Review Conference on relevant issues of their choice.

The side events below have been exclusively organized and scheduled exclusively at the request of participants of the Human Dimension Seminar. The below descriptions have been provided by the organizers. They have been lightly edited by ODIHR for language but not for content. Responsibility for the content remains with the organizers. Neither the text below nor the events themselves necessarily reflect the views of the OSCE.

Tuesday, 16 November

Time: 13:30-14:30

Venue: online (Access info will be shared with registered HDS participants at <https://meetings.odihr.pl/resources>. Please log in to access the link.)

Title: Threats to Women's and Girls' Sexual and Reproductive Health during Covid-19

Convenor: Human Rights Watch (United States of America)

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Access to the sexual and reproductive health, an essential service, has decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic, including in many OSCE participating states. Denial of access to sexual and reproductive health can amount to violence against women and girls. This panel hosted by Human Rights Watch and featuring sexual and reproductive rights defenders from Poland, Romania, and Slovakia will discuss how government actions during the pandemic have curtailed or threatened access to abortion and contraception, increased the risk of domestic violence, and in some cases stifled peaceful dissent. Panelists will outline good practices and recommend measures to address and prevent such harms.

Covid-19 lockdowns create obstacles to women and girls escaping domestic violence. Closures of primary care clinics and transfers of sexual and reproductive healthcare providers to pandemic-related

responses have deprived victims of gender-related violence of access to vital care including emergency contraception, safe abortion, and pre- and post-natal care. Moreover, service providers can be key in identifying and responding to violence against women and girls, as they are often the people to whom women or girls first disclose experiences of violence and from whom they seek assistance.

Laws and measures that decrease access to sexual and productive health services have in some cases been introduced or enacted without necessary transparency and public debate. Restrictions on free speech and assembly can stifle peaceful dissent intended to bring attention to concerns about these issues.

Denial of access to sexual and reproductive health care can amount to violence against women and girls in and of itself, as articulated by treaty bodies such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee and United Nations experts including the Special Rapporteurs on the right to health and on violence against women. Furthermore, international jurisprudence has found that forcing women or girls to carry pregnancies to term – including in cases of non-viable pregnancies – is a form of torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Speakers:

Ms. Hillary Margolis, Women’s Rights Division, Human Rights Watch
Ms. Marta Lempart, Polish Women’s Strike (Poland)
Ms. Andrada Cilibiu, Centrul Filia (Romania)
Ms. Zuzana Bendikova, Slovak Family Planning Association (Slovakia)

Wednesday, 17 November

Time: **09:00-10:00**

Venue: Sofitel Victoria, Side events room

Title: Structural state violence against biological mothers. Case study of Norway not fully implementing the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

Convenors: Pantarey Foundation

Working language: English

Summary: Norway, a small country with the population equal to the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, is quick to moralize and condemn other countries for human rights violations, but does what it can to sweep its own gross violations under the rug and silence human rights activists.

In less than three years, Norway has been convicted eleven-11- times in the European Court of Human Rights in serious child welfare cases. In short, Norway has been convicted by the Court for not facilitating family reunification between parents and children who are in public care. "State kidnapping", are words many people and international institutions use about the Norwegian practice. Norway has an obligation to put an end to the violations found by the Court under Article 46 of the Convention. In the light of the Courts case-law, any continuation of the violations will entail a prolongation of the violations

of Article 8 as well as a breach of the obligations on Norway to abide by the Court's judgment in accordance with Article 46 § 1 of the Convention.

In those conditions, the Norwegian government must take every measure to put an end to the violations. However, the reality is totally different: The Norwegian authorities do everything they can to sabotage the judgments. We have spoken to most of the victims, where the Court has found violations of Article 8 of the Convention by Norway in child welfare cases, and the conclusions are clear: the victims are about to give up justice, as Norway constantly ignore to abide by the judgments and its consequences.

On 10 September 2019, the Grand Chamber found a violation of both applicants with regard to the authorities refusal to lift the public care order, the decision to remove the first applicant's parental responsibilities and to authorize adoption. But almost 26 months after the release of the GC-judgment, NOTHING has been done by the government to reunite mother and child. And the domestic courts refuse to reopen the case. More than 10 years after the care order should have been lifted according to the Grand Chamber, Norway continues to violate the human rights by refusing to reunite mother and child. And the same happens in the other cases, where Norway was found to have violated the Convention.

Wednesday, 17 November

Time: **13:30-14:30**

Venue: Sofitel Victoria, Belweder room

Title: Delivering on our Commitments: how can the OSCE work more effectively to counter violence against women and girls

Convenor: Albania, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, UK, with the support of the Swedish Chairpersonship

Working language: English

Summary: The importance of ending violence against women and girls is recognized by all OSCE participating States. Commitments undertaken by participating States include the MC decisions 15/05, 7/14, 4/18. In addition, the 2004 action plan for the promotion of gender equality included comprehensive actions to eliminate violence against women and girls. The OSCE also has several tools at its disposal, including a range of projects managed by ODIHR, the OSCE secretariat and the field missions. The 2019 OSCE-led survey provides useful data as a basis for additional work.

At the same time, considerable implementation gaps remain in the participating States, and there are signs that the global situation regarding violence against women and girls is deteriorating rather than improving. The situation has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. More coordinated action between participating States, secretariat, institutions and missions could help address these gaps and advance concrete efforts.

In this informal discussion, arranged in the margins of the Human Dimension Seminar in 2021, experts, civil society representatives and participating States will discuss how to make the OSCE more effective in delivering on its EAW commitments. What can be done using the existing tools and commitments;

what topics and challenges deserve more attention; where is the largest need for action? How can we better use the expertise of CSOs and experts, as well as other international organizations, in coordinating effective responses?

The event is arranged by Albania, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, UK and with the support of the Swedish Chairpersonship, and is part of a series of events that highlights the OSCE's work to eliminate violence against women and girls. This side-event will feed into formulating a set of key takeaways, which will be compiled at the end of the event series.

PROGRAM

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| 13.00 | Guests welcome for lunch in the side event room (Belweder) |
| 13.30 | Opening by the moderator, Mr. Sebastian Gahnström, Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OSCE |
| 13.40 | Panel discussion
Ms. Ajla Van Heel, Independent Gender Expert
Ms. Letta Tayler, Associate Director, Crisis and Conflict Division, Human Rights Watch
Ms. Jonna Naumanen, Human Rights Officer, Gender & Security, ODIHR |
| 14.10 | Q&A |
| 14.30 | Conclusion, wrap up |