The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the human rights institution of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and one of the key human rights bodies worldwide.

All OSCE countries have recognized that democracy and human rights are the bedrock of lasting safety and security across the OSCE area. ODIHR plays a unique role in the OSCE’s overall mandate, assisting its 57 participating States in strengthening their democratic institutions, upholding the rule of law, increasing respect for human rights, and working towards tolerant societies in which all citizens are able and encouraged to participate.

The OSCE Office has been working since its establishment in 1991 to create resilient societies whose democratic institutions work in the interest of the people, as well as supporting the engagement of civil society organizations with national and other state authorities in meaningful dialogue.

ODIHR has played an important role in strengthening democratic institutions and respect for human rights in Ukraine, particularly since launching a dedicated and ongoing project in the country in 2015.

Much of the work undertaken by ODIHR in Ukraine has focused on human rights monitoring, democratic governance and lawmaking, and issues of tolerance and non-discrimination, with a special emphasis on the protection and integration of Roma communities. ODIHR has observed 14 elections in Ukraine, most recently in 2020.

Further information on ODIHR’s Ukraine project can be found here.

Other human rights instruments of the OSCE include the Moscow Mechanism, which is supported by ODIHR.

All ODIHR’s public statements on the ongoing conflict can be found at the following link.
Activities

Following the Russian Federation’s military attack and its devastating consequences for the civilian population, ODIHR made every effort to deliver both needed and timely support to Ukraine. The Office’s activities are based on a rapid response phase, which includes urgent activities to address the most pressing human rights issues, as well as a post-conflict phase aimed at supporting subsequent reconstruction and development.

These activities aim to empower all those working on human rights in the country, increase dialogue domestically and internationally, contribute to awareness-raising, and help mobilize civil society to effectively advocate for better human rights protection and democratic reforms.

The projects encompasses a wide variety of initiatives. Current and planned activities include:

- **Monitoring human rights**: ODIHR has been monitoring the impact of Russia’s military attack on civilians and prisoners of war for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law since its onset on 24 February 2022.

- **Combating human trafficking**: Assessments to urge national mechanisms and strategies to prevent and counter human trafficking in the OSCE countries bordering Ukraine, as well as others experiencing large refugee flows from Ukraine. A focus is on producing specific recommendations.

- **Fostering dialogue**: Workshops on freedom of religion or belief, non-violent communication and mediation to foster dialogue and bring together those who identify with a diverse variety of religious or belief communities.

- **Tracking Roma rights**: Engagement with human rights defenders from countries neighbouring Ukraine to monitor and verify alleged human rights violations and instances of racism and discrimination experienced by Roma who have fled Ukraine due to the conflict.

- **Training human rights defenders**: Comprehensive training for human rights defenders, both within Ukraine and those working with refugees fleeing the conflict, providing the knowledge and skills to carry out human rights monitoring safely.

- **Increasing gender sensitivity**: Support for Ukraine’s network of gender advisers through awareness-raising and training, as well as potential assistance to the Ukrainian Parliament in becoming a more gender-sensitive institution.

- **Strengthening the rights of people with disabilities**: Training programme on disability rights and developing of awareness-raising materials. While the initial focus will be on humanitarian concerns following the Russian Federation’s military attack, this will later move on to emphasize the political participation of people with disabilities.

- **Engaging youth**: Training to help promote mutual understanding and foster respect among young people who have fled Ukraine, as well as from host communities in neighbouring countries, to build more equal, inclusive and cohesive societies.

- **Involving Ukrainians abroad**: With the Ukrainian diaspora proving crucial in mobilizing humanitarian assistance for the areas most affected by the conflict, ODIHR will organize a workshop to analyse experiences and lessons learned from other countries and assistance provided by national diasporas in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

- **Strengthening democratic institutions**: Assistance to the Ukrainian Parliament in the field of parliamentary integrity, as well as reinforcing its oversight function over the government as a cornerstone of good governance.

- **Legislative assistance**: Offering advice to the Ukrainian Parliament and other democratic institutions on political party regulations and strengthening domestic legal frameworks, and at the same time promoting open, transparent and inclusive law-making processes.

- **Countering hate crime**: Training on combating hate crime for law enforcement and prosecutors in Ukraine to identify, record, monitor and respond to hate incidents and crimes.

- **Strengthening accountability**: Bringing together institutions from across the OSCE region working on accountability for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Ukraine. Subsequently assisting in training judges and prosecutors and other justice sector institutions in Ukraine involved in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of war crimes as well as the administration of justice during armed conflict.

Planning for specific activities remains flexible in order to respond to the needs of civil society and all those engaged in protecting human rights in Ukraine.