



ODIHR e-newsletter

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

July/August
2009

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Latest reports

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[Early parliamentary elections in Moldova - preliminary findings and conclusions](#)

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Anti-Semitism teaching tools unveiled in Lithuania



The beginning of July saw the introduction of a Lithuanian-language version of ODIHR's anti-Semitism teaching materials.

Lithuania is the third country (after Germany and Poland) to officially launch the ODIHR teaching materials, which are designed for use in secondary schools.

"It is worrying that many different forms of anti-Semitism historically encountered in Europe can still be seen today," ODIHR head Janez Lenarčič said at the launch event in Vilnius.

Guests included Lithuanian educators and government officials, and representatives of the local Jewish community.

"I hope that after studying the teaching materials, teachers and pupils will be able to think beyond all-too-common stereotypes about ethnicity, religion and colour of skin," commented Ruta Puisyte, Assistant Director of the Yiddish Institute at Vilnius University (pictured, with Lenarčič).

"In a word, this is an important contribution to Lithuania's civic society."

The development phase lasted three years and was undertaken in close co-operation with the Yiddish Institute and Amsterdam's Anne Frank House.

Freedom of religion conference urges OSCE members to honour commitments



The ODIHR-organized Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief opened on 9 July with calls for increased efforts on the part of participating States to put into practice their relevant commitments.

"Violations of the freedom of religion or belief ... occur predominantly where there are recurring episodes of violation of several human rights," noted Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli (pictured), a Professor at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Italy, in her keynote speech.

"In these countries religious freedom constitutes a sort of litmus paper to test the respect of all other human rights."

The two-day meeting focused on obstacles to the implementation of relevant OSCE commitments, the status of religious or belief communities and questions related to places of worship.

The OSCE participating States are bound by a far-reaching catalogue of commitments relating to freedom of religion and belief that are contained in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1989 Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting and other OSCE documents.

[Conference website](#)

Lenarčič in Budapest

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič participated in the second Human Rights Forum in Budapest on 26 June 2009.

The two-day conferences - hosted each year by the Hungarian government - are staged within the framework of four panel debates.

As a member of this year's panel on election observation and democratisation, Lenarčič presented ODIHR's election activities and methodology.

The ODIHR head also met with Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Balász and the Ministry's Political Director, Gábor Iklódy. They discussed the issues of human rights and co-operation with ODIHR, particularly in the areas of elections and Roma and Sinti affairs.

ODIHR Roma affairs expert addresses Helsinki Commission

Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues Andrzej Mirga was in Washington in early June to [address the US Helsinki Commission](#) at a briefing held in response to the recent [rise in anti-Roma violence](#) in several European countries.

In his [statement to the Commission](#), Mirga warned that far-right political parties and extremist groups have succeeded in entering mainstream politics by using anti-Roma rhetoric and exploiting prejudice that has its roots in the social and economic marginalisation of Roma and Sinti communities.

"Governments have to demonstrate real political will and take vigorous action to close the gap between the majority populations and Roma and Sinti communities," Mirga told the Commission on 9 June.

Two weeks later, Mirga led a nine-day OSCE/ODIHR field assessment visit to Hungary to explore possible factors leading or contributing to the attacks on and killings of Roma there over the past 18 months and the responses of the authorities to these incidents.

The delegation visited 12 localities and met with representatives of central, regional and local government, police and civil society.

The report on the field visit is scheduled for release in autumn.

Return of trafficking victims not always risk-free

ODIHR's [Anti-Trafficking Programme](#) hosted an expert meeting in Warsaw on June 24-25 to map out the key issues surrounding the safe return of victims of trafficking to their home countries and to identify gaps in the protection of their human rights.

At the meeting (which was attended by over 20 experts from inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental agencies), four country papers examining the return process in Italy, the UK, Spain and Germany were also presented.

The studies found that states do not systematically assess the safety of the return process for identified victims of human trafficking. Moreover, many victims are held in immigration detention centres without having been identified as trafficking victims and without access to basic legal or other assistance.

"Much more could be done to establish the risk to trafficked persons upon return, and there is also a need to monitor the actual return process in order to assess the impact of return policies," noted Shivaun Scanlan, ODIHR's Senior Advisor on Anti-Trafficking Issues.

"There is a community of organizations that specialize in the issue of return - in particular those working on refugee and asylum issues - but their work and knowledge is often not known to anti-trafficking stakeholders."

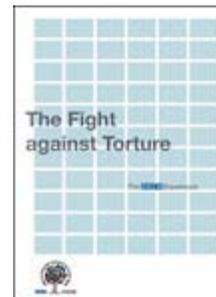
It is important to look at how processes to protect persons from being returned to places where their lives or freedoms could be threatened - i.e. "non-refoulement" - can be used to safeguard trafficked persons' rights, Scanlan added.

A detailed [report](#) of the expert meeting - together with the four country papers - will be available in the autumn.

New torture publication comes online

On 13 July 2009, ODIHR's Democratization Department launched its online publication "The Fight against Torture: The OSCE Experience".

The initiative (the fruit of a research phase involving an analysis of responses from OSCE field staff to a questionnaire that was designed by ODIHR) identifies best practices and proposes concrete strategies for OSCE field personnel and other practitioners seeking to combat and prevent torture.



It covers the latest developments in the international legal framework governing the issue of torture prevention, paying particular attention to the [Optional Protocol](#) to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Inhumane and Degrading Treatment.

In 2005, the OSCE (in a Ministerial Council Decision) urged its participating States to give early consideration to signing and ratifying the Protocol.

The publication, which builds on the 1999 ODIHR handbook, "Preventing Torture", also lists the OSCE's experience in the area of torture prevention and presents examples of how the Protocol has been implemented by some participating States.

ODIHR welcomes new Deputy Director

In July, Douglas Wake joined ODIHR as the Office's new First Deputy Director.

Before assuming his new function, Mr. Wake served as a senior career diplomat for the US Department of State and has a long background in OSCE affairs, including as deputy head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro from 2004 to 2006, OSCE co-ordinator in the US Department of State from 2003 to 2004, and participant in the CSCE Vienna meeting in the late 1980s.



Wake succeeds Toralv Nordbo, who served as Deputy Director from June 2005 to June 2009.

