

# ODIHR and Human Rights



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## Why do human rights matter?

Since the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, OSCE participating States have committed to “respect human rights and fundamental freedoms”. Human rights are an essential element of the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security.

## What are ODIHR’s key activities in the area of human rights?

In fulfilling its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) assists OSCE participating States in meeting their human dimension commitments in the area of human rights. The Office’s activities serve three core functions: human rights monitoring, providing expert advice and capacity building.

**Human rights monitoring** serves the purpose of independently assessing, analyzing and reporting on the implementation of human dimension commitments by OSCE participating States, identifying gaps and good practices, and recommending improvements. It is based on an established methodology that includes direct observation, field deployments and triangulated/corroborated data collection through desk research and engagement with stakeholders. Human rights monitoring efforts aim to reflect the different needs and experiences of women and men and to produce a concrete output (e.g., a report, a non-paper or other document). Recent examples of reports include those resulting from the 2014 and 2015 human rights assessment missions to Ukraine and on Crimea, respectively, jointly carried out with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the 2015 “Report on the Human Rights Situation of Detainees at Guantanamo”.



**Expert advice** delivered by ODIHR aims to align the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments and international human rights standards across all OSCE participating States. It includes the development of thematic guidelines; contributions to legislative reviews; commenting on policies, strategies and other such state documents; the establishment of and work with expert panels; the organization of and contribution to thematic conferences, roundtables and workshops; and the production of position papers and background documents.

**Capacity-building** activities provide state and non-state actors with knowledge, skills and competencies, and promote human right compliant attitudes to enable target audiences to be effective and gender and human rights-conscious. They are based on a thorough and gender-sensitive assessment of needs of the target audiences. Capacity-building activities are delivered using set curricula, interactive approaches and modern teaching methods, and followed up on to assess results and impact. Human rights capacity-building work includes the production of capacity-building tools (training handbooks, training-of-trainers guidebooks, manuals, curricula, lesson plans, training modules, case studies, etc.), their adjustment to the needs of specific audiences and their delivery.

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## Thematic Human Rights Expertise

**Combating trafficking in human beings.** ODIHR's work in the anti-trafficking field is aimed at ensuring that states' efforts to combat trafficking fully incorporate a human rights perspective. ODIHR has developed policy tools, provided advice, supported capacity building on the establishment of anti-trafficking national referral mechanisms, on providing compensation to victims of trafficking, and on human rights in the return of trafficked persons to their countries of origin.

**Freedom of peaceful assembly.** Since 2011, ODIHR has monitored public assemblies in a number of participating States across the OSCE area, publishing key findings in regular public reports. Moreover, ODIHR has developed tools and offered training programmes for law enforcement officials on the human rights compliant policing of assemblies and, for civil society and OSCE field operations, on the monitoring of assemblies.

**Human rights compliance and gender mainstreaming in the security sector.** ODIHR assists OSCE participating States in mainstreaming human rights and achieving gender equality in the security sector, as well as in meeting their commitments on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325). This has included: advice, training and publications on promoting the human rights of armed forces personnel, increasing gender diversity in

the security sector, addressing the security concerns of women, including by supporting efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, and support in designing and implementing national action plans on UNSCR 1325.

**Human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.** ODIHR monitors compliance with human rights standards of anti-terrorism policies and practices, and provides advice to participating States in ensuring that anti-terrorism measures are in line with the protection of human rights. Capacity-building activities include the development of tools and training programmes for law enforcement and other security sector officers – counter-terrorism officers in particular – to increase their operational effectiveness by respecting and protecting

human rights when combating terrorism.

**Prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.** ODIHR's work on torture prevention includes assistance to and promotion of exchanges of good practices among national preventive mechanisms under the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention against Torture. Moreover, ODIHR assists participating States in meeting international standards on the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

**Freedom of religion or belief.** Key ODIHR activities in this area include contributing to legislative reviews, developing guidelines that clarify international standards on freedom of religion or belief, and building the capacity of State and non-State actors to

ensure the effective implementation of OSCE and other international commitments on freedom of religion or belief. In its work, ODIHR is assisted by its Advisory Panel of Experts on freedom of religion or belief, consisting of independent experts from throughout the OSCE region.

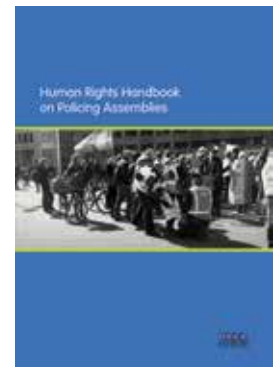
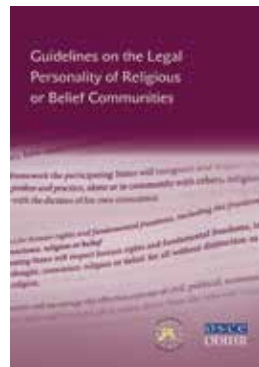
**Human rights education for secondary schools, professionals and activists.** ODIHR has developed resources to promote respect for diversity and mutual understanding in schools, and to assist educators in training their colleagues to understand and promote human rights. In this area, ODIHR has engaged in human rights education work through training groups of trainers, including among civil society representatives, school teachers, university lecturers and students.



**Protection of human rights defenders.** In 2014, ODIHR published its *Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders* and, since then, has worked to promote awareness of the Guidelines among the general public and specific audiences, as well as to promote their implementation. Activities in this area include the monitoring of the situation of human rights defenders across the OSCE area, using the Guidelines as a key benchmark, and carrying out training and awareness-raising activities for both civil society and state actors. The promotion of dialogue between human rights defenders and state authorities, and training activities for human rights defenders on human rights

monitoring and on their safety and security, are particular areas of focus.

**Support for effective and independent national human rights institutions (NHRIs).** ODIHR provides support to NHRIs in human rights protection and promotion in the OSCE area. It does so by actively engaging in strengthening the recognition and building the capacity of NHRIs. ODIHR's annual NHRI Academy, organized jointly with the European Network of NHRIs since 2014, serves as an important platform for the training of, and the sharing of experiences by, senior and mid-level staff of NHRIs from across the OSCE area.



**More information:**  
For detailed information about ODIHR's human rights initiatives and to view its full range of resources and publications, please visit:

[www.osce.org/odihr/humanrights](http://www.osce.org/odihr/humanrights)

Tel.: +48 22 520 0600  
Fax: +48 22 520 0605

E-mail: [humanrights@odihr.pl](mailto:humanrights@odihr.pl)

**OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**  
ul. Miodowa 10  
00-251 Warsaw Poland

