

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Editor: **Alexander Nitzsche/Go Engage Communication**

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The OSCE participating States could not reach consensus on a Unified Budget for the year 2023. The last Unified Budget of the OSCE was approved on 18 August 2021 by PC.DEC/1413, in which the OSCE participating States acknowledged that agreement could not yet be found on all programmatic activities and noted the need to continue some of these discussions.

**\*\*\*END DISCLAIMER \*\*\***



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2023 CHAIRPERSONSHIP .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PERMANENT COUNCIL .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>FIELD OPERATIONS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Mission to Moldova.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Centre in Ashgabat .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Programme Office in Astana .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Programme Office in Bishkek.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Programme Office in Dushanbe .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Presence in Albania .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Mission in Kosovo .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Mission to Montenegro .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Mission to Serbia.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Mission to Skopje.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>INSTITUTIONS .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>High Commissioner on National Minorities .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Representative on Freedom of the Media .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>SECRETARIAT .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Office of the Secretary General.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Conflict prevention.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Transnational threats .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Economic and environmental activities.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Combating trafficking in human beings .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Gender equality .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Human resources .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Management and finance.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Internal Oversight .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>PARTNERSHIPS .....</b>	<b>98</b>

<b>ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION.....</b>	99
<b>MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION .....</b>	101
<b>CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.....</b>	102
<b>ANNEXES .....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>    OSCE Staff Composition Report.....</b>	104
<b>    PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER PARITY.....</b>	105
2023 OSCE Expenditure Report by Executive Structure.....	108
<b>    Contributions by participating States .....</b>	110
<b>    Extrabudgetary pledges and voluntary contributions .....</b>	112
<b>    Extrabudgetary expenditures* .....</b>	114

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2023 CHAIRPERSONSHIP

The OSCE Chairpersonship is selected by the OSCE Ministerial Council for a one-year term. The post of Chairman-in-Office is held by the foreign minister of the selected participating State.

Chairman-in-Office: **Bujar Osmani**

[www.osce.org/chairmanship](http://www.osce.org/chairmanship)

### CHAIRPERSONSHIP

**The Chairpersonship of North Macedonia put the people, including support in the field, at the core of its response. Addressing the war against Ukraine was a central priority—providing essential support to Ukraine and its people while upholding OSCE principles and commitments. The Chairpersonship delivered essential work to address regional instability and crises, protecting vulnerable people and preserving the essential functions of the Organization, its toolbox for the future.**

#### Geopolitical context and constraints

Since February 2022, the geopolitical context of the OSCE region has changed, affecting European security and the work of the OSCE directly and negatively. Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine has presented the greatest challenge to European security since the Second World War and breached all of the founding principles of the Organization.

In January 2023, 11 months after the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine, North Macedonia took over the Chairpersonship from Poland. Poland had initiated processes to address the context, and North Macedonia inherited a set of challenges unprecedented in the history of the OSCE. North Macedonia continued to address the greatest threat to security in the region, the war against Ukraine, while also ensuring that the Organization was equipped to manage crises in other regions, the risk of conflict in vulnerable regions of the OSCE, as well as to deliver on its essential mandates and protect the critical work delivered by its field operations.

The Chairpersonship also took on the responsibility to preserve and maintain the essential functions of the Organization and guide the process for participating States to resolve ongoing institutional problems. The Chair was responsible for steering the process to secure agreement among participating States for a 2024 Chairpersonship, normally selected two years in advance; and appoint new officials for the four most senior positions in the Organization's Secretariat and Institutions by the end of 2023.

#### Overarching strategy for 2023: Ukraine, addressing instability and crises, 'the People', and the Field

The war against Ukraine became an early and ongoing priority for North Macedonia's Chairpersonship. The vast majority of OSCE participating States continued to express their concerns about Russia's breach of OSCE principles and commitments and the impact of the war—in the security, humanitarian, and economic and environmental spheres. The Chair created a space for dialogue, allowing all participating States to express their views and to work towards accountability. Throughout the year, participating States called for an end to the damage caused by the war at weekly Permanent Council meetings and in other fora. The priority across all three OSCE dimensions was to provide essential support to Ukraine and its people.

The Chair adopted a pragmatic, ‘no business as usual’ posture for the year, while continuing to facilitate essential work to address urgent risks and to maintain the essential functions of the Organization. The Chair recognized there was little appetite among participating States to engage in regular discussions or negotiations, or to further enhance the existing commitments or develop new commitments, while the war continued.

However, this did not mean that no business took place. In Vienna, Warsaw, Prague and Skopje, meetings that were essential to address new and emerging threats to the whole region or security risks to specific countries or regions continued. All thematic meetings took account of the importance of addressing the new threats created by the war against Ukraine. Many provided an opportunity for participating States to exchange views and experiences, and to support other participating States in developing new capabilities.

The motto chosen for 2023—‘It’s About People’—placed a focus on the people of the OSCE, the most important beneficiaries of the Organization’s work and the contributors to its success, both in Vienna and in the field. All three dimensions emphasized this perspective.

This motto aimed to integrate different perspectives and inspire novel approaches, contributing to security, environmental safety, good governance, and respect for human rights—for the benefit of the people. For that reason, Chairman-in-Office Osmani for the first time appointed new Special Representatives for Civil Society and for Climate Change.

By prioritizing the work in the field, as well as organizing the Chair-in-Office country visits, North Macedonia made an even closer connection between the Organization and its people, raising further awareness of their needs and requirements.

### **Proactive engagement to address challenges**

The Chair-in-Office also brought visibility to the regions and countries vulnerable to or working to prevent and recover from conflict. A stronger, people-centred approach was generated through a focus on the work of OSCE field operations.

- **Ukraine**

The Chair-in-Office pledged throughout the year that Ukraine would remain a central priority. Ukraine-related topics were addressed horizontally, across all three dimensions. Ukraine featured prominently on the agendas of the Permanent Council as well as events organized by the Chairpersonship across all three dimensions. Addressing the real-world impact of the war against Ukraine was always treated as a priority. Through the fully extrabudgetary Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), the OSCE continued to provide tailored assistance to help Ukraine on its path of recovery, addressing the consequences of war and long-term reform efforts. To bolster these efforts, Chairman-in-Office Osmani appointed a new Special Representative – Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, to support the work of the SPU and act as the main point of contact for the OSCE in the country.

- **Support to peace and stability across regions**

North Macedonia supported OSCE principles and values across the entire region, with particular focus on protracted conflicts, rising tensions and the effects of their fallout on the people, putting the OSCE toolbox at the disposal of those in need.

Active engagement with Azerbaijan and Armenia emphasized that humanitarian concerns must prevail and the Chairpersonship pressed for inclusive dialogue over the use of force to resolve disagreements and disputes. The Chairpersonship also strove to empower the OSCE's relevant structures and institutions to apply relevant mandates where possible and co-operation with multilateral partners focused on preserving, strengthening and applying existing negotiation and engagement formats. The Chairman-in-Office offered his support to the sides of the Transdnisterian Settlement Process, with the objective of supporting the relevant processes aimed at a comprehensive and lasting political settlement of the long-lasting conflict in all its aspects.

The Chairpersonship also worked to promote the role of the OSCE in the region, as a trusted partner, to reinforce relevant institutions and people's security. In this regard, due attention and importance was attached to the stability and prosperity of South-Eastern Europe. For these reasons, in June 2023 the Chairman-in-Office presented the Roadmap for de-escalation of the situation in Kosovo, aiming at further normalization and peaceful coexistence.

- **Promoting co-operative security and the importance of OSCE values**

The Chair's active campaign across the region involved visits and direct engagement with the countries of Central Asia, to ensure relevant collaboration with the OSCE. This engagement created opportunities to discuss a broad spectrum of security challenges, OSCE support for reform processes, as well as regional co-operation and dialogue based on OSCE values and principles, and to engage civil society as a vehicle for reform.

- **Trust-building and common challenges**

The Chairpersonship identified and promoted three central priorities for South-east Europe: reconciliation and trust-building, anti-corruption, and the security implications of the climate crisis. North Macedonia also worked to promote the role of the OSCE as a trusted partner for the region, active at all levels of society, reinforcing all our state institutions and the security of its peoples.

### **Addressing contemporary challenges in all dimensions**

Thematic conferences and events organized by the Chair throughout the year focused on priority, contemporary, and evolving challenges and threats where the OSCE might add value. The Chair prioritized delivery of the key mandated meetings, annual meetings that provide a framework for the operation of the Organization, addressing the most pressing security-related issues across the three dimensions. However, North Macedonia also sought to find a mechanism to facilitate discussions on priority themes and topics, organizing a series of Chairpersonship conferences addressing the most pressing issues from across the region, all three dimensions and cross-cutting themes. While it was not possible to negotiate new thematic decisions, these conferences produced a legacy and a record, a snapshot of the dialogue among OSCE participating States, as well as with other experts, organizations and partners, producing a potential set of recommendations for the future work of the Organization.

#### **Politico-military dimension**

Throughout 2023, the First Dimension endorsed topics that reflected the Chairpersonship's priorities: a focus on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the impact of conflict on people.

The Chair's Security Review Conference in June was a timely and important opportunity for participating States to discuss the overall security situation in the OSCE area, review and reflect on the last year, and consider the Organization's future work. It delivered a clear message that an overwhelming majority of participating States wanted to continue support Ukraine and highlighted the need for an end to the war against Ukraine and full respect of OSCE principles and commitments. Participating States also discussed the importance of sustaining conflict management work in other vulnerable regions of the OSCE area.

Cyber/ICT security was a prominent theme, continuing work to implement the core cyber/ICT security confidence-building measures, sharing experiences and helping participating States to build resilience. The Cyber Security Conference in Skopje in October was a highlight, bringing together practitioners and experts from across the region.

The three FSC Chairs—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Canada—selected contemporary themes for security dialogues, including for Joint FSC/PC meetings on Women Peace and Security, the Environment and Security Nexus and the Mental Health Impact of War. The Security Committee, chaired by Romania, ensured discussions addressed a range of non-military aspects of security, including how they related to the war against Ukraine. Russia's war against Ukraine demonstrated the relevance and importance of addressing these topics in modern conflict and the importance of participating States sharing knowledge and developing capabilities to build resilience to address rapidly evolving threats. Finally, given the context, Finland, as chair of the Structured Dialogue, focused on a practical exercise, producing a map of the OSCE toolbox that was launched at the end of the year.

### **Economic and environmental dimension**

The Chairpersonship's priorities in the economic and environmental sphere reflected the topics most relevant to the security situation in the OSCE area. Overarching threats like climate change and the fight against corruption stood out as topics that required urgent attention. By appointing the OSCE's first-ever Special Representative on Climate Change, the Chair demonstrated the significance attached to this issue in the OSCE, aiming at continued resilience for the OSCE and its region. Connectivity and food security, as well as energy security, emerged as issues of increased relevance as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Regional initiatives highlighted the OSCE's value and potential in these areas.

In 2023, several natural and man-made disasters in the OSCE region demonstrated the importance of both strands in the second dimension: the economic and the environmental. For instance, the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka Dam and Hydro Power Plant by Russia's forces in Ukraine highlighted the relevance of the work of the second dimension in responding to their catastrophic effects and also demonstrated the confluence of environmental and economic concerns.

Despite comprehensive efforts, participating States could not agree on consensus-based decisions on the major mandated events. However, events organized by the Chair generated broad engagement with record numbers of delegations joining discussions on the topics highlighted above. In recognition of the productive discussions throughout the year, complemented by discussions in the Economic and Environmental Committee, chaired by Austria, participating States did adopt a decision enabling the holding of the year's main implementation meeting dedicated to the timely topic of environment and security.

### **Human dimension**

The Chairpersonship of North Macedonia placed people at the front and centre of its focus in the human dimension, a central part of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. The Human Dimension Committee, chaired by Ireland, continuously and constructively addressed relevant issues, thereby reflecting the importance the Chairpersonship attached to human rights.

People affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as by other conflicts, were given particular attention. A Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting was devoted to Torture and Other Grave Breaches of International Humanitarian Law and Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law. A report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism reflected on the *Violations and Abuses of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, Related to the Forcible Transfer and/or Deportation of Ukrainian Children to the Russian Federation*. These and other efforts aimed at supporting work to ensure accountability for the perpetrators and justice for the victims.

To counter several years of shrinking space for civil society in many parts of the OSCE regions, the Chairpersonship established the OSCE's first-ever Special Representative on Civil Society. The Chairpersonship also provided for enhanced, broad and active civil society engagement and participation in all conferences, meetings and events in the human dimension throughout the year. The crucial role of civil society in the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination was further explored at one of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings, with support from the Personal Representatives of the Chair on Tolerance Issues.

Due to the lack of consensus, and having in mind the significance of upholding OSCE principles and commitments, the Chairpersonship of North Macedonia, in close co-operation with ODIHR, organized the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, the year's largest human rights conference in Europe, in the Polish capital during the first two weeks of October. Over 800 civil society actors signed up to participate in this truly unique platform for dialogue among States, international experts and civil society.

### **Cross-cutting thematic priorities**

North Macedonia recognized the necessity to deliver on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, supporting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the security sector, and the importance of mainstreaming gender across the OSCE's work. At the start of 2023, the Chair made youth a priority for the year, integrating youth perspectives across all three dimensions and appointing a Special Representative for Youth.

Throughout 2023, North Macedonia's Chairpersonship conducted regular co-ordination meetings with the OSCE Troika. Keeping in mind the fact that the OSCE's 2024 Chair was decided at the end of 2023, during the Skopje Ministerial Council meeting, the Chairpersonship invited Finland to be a member of the OSCE Troika, which it graciously accepted. The Troika meetings addressed the activities of the Chair, the Secretary General, and the challenges the Organization faced throughout the year.

**30TH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**  
**30 NOVEMBER–1 DECEMBER 2023, SKOPJE**

**30th Ministerial Council in Skopje: Maintaining the essential functionality of the Organization**

The Ministerial Council, held in Skopje at the end of November and beginning of December, gathered Ministers and senior officials from the 57 OSCE participating States. They had an opportunity to discuss Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to consider the future of the Organization. The Chairpersonship also supported an exchange of views on the OSCE's support to the people of the region.

The Ministerial Council needed to take essential decisions to sustain the operations and functionality of the OSCE. The process to agree on a Chair for 2024 included extensive rounds of consultation on options and creating a group of friends to explore these options. Building on this preparatory work, the Ministerial Council adopted a decision for Malta to chair the OSCE in 2024.

The top most senior posts in the Organization's Secretariat and Institutions were also given extensions at the Ministerial Council, ensuring stability for the Organization's key structures.

Side events considered a range of thematic issues, including accountability for Ukraine, the safety of women journalists, climate change, youth, and the work of the field operations. At the Ministerial Council meeting, the foreign ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia signed a Joint Statement on Combating Corruption in South-eastern Europe through asset recovery and the use of digitalization. A parallel civil society conference took place ahead of the Ministerial Council meeting, offering a platform for dialogue with civil society organizations.

**AMBASSADOR ANDRZEJ KASPRZYK****Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference**

Financial resources: **€1,179,700** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization)\*

Staff: **2 international and 11 local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)**

[www.osce.org/prcio](http://www.osce.org/prcio)

The events of September 2023 resulted in a significant change to the situation on the ground. With a perspective of progress in reaching a peace agreement and normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, building trust and facilitating co-operation was and remains of greater importance than ever. In view of this, and despite the challenges of a fluid environment and the continued suspension of their monitoring activities, Personal Representative Kasprzyk and his team remained active in liaising with the sides and seeking to develop confidence-building measures.

In January, Personal Representative Kasprzyk met the Chairperson-in-Office and his representatives, and briefed them on the political situation and existing challenges. In April, he accompanied and assisted the Chairperson-in-Office on a visit to the region, and later followed up with the sides on issues raised during the visit. Personal Representative Kasprzyk regularly reported from the region to the Chairpersonship and the participating States, including in detail on specific incidents and developments. In this context, at the request of the Chair, he travelled to Armenia in August to monitor and report on the situation in the Lachin area.

In line with his mandate, the Personal Representative regularly travelled within the region and engaged at ministerial level with the sides. He consulted with the Chairpersonship, the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre and international stakeholders, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations' Resident Co-ordinator and the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He also held consultations with a wide range of interlocutors and briefed them on the political, security and humanitarian situation. This included the Chairpersonship, heads of participating States' delegations and other stakeholders. In addition, he met and consulted with high-level interlocutors from foreign ministries, various embassies and international organizations with a presence on the ground.

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\*As the OSCE participating States did not agree on a Unified Budget for 2023, the OSCE continued operating on the basis of a Provisional Expenditure Authorization based on its 2021 Unified Budget in line with relevant Financial Regulations.

**AMBASSADOR MARCEL PEŠKO****Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office – Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine**

Since his appointment in July 2023, Ambassador Peško worked to enhance dialogue with the OSCE's Ukrainian partners and served as the main focal point of the Organization for the planning and co-ordination of its projects in Ukraine. The Special Representative highlighted the Organization's role, underscored the importance of OSCE commitments and increased its visibility by contributing to a variety of project-related events across the country. This included addressing over 700 participants at the Donbas Media Forum in November, a key event for Ukraine's media community, and attending the Lviv Criminal Justice Forum in October, an important discussion platform for legal professionals.

Ambassador Peško also met environmental inspectors, officials and volunteer civic activists from across the country as part of a presentation of the OSCE tools that are available for gathering information on war-related environmental damage. Focusing especially on youth, he met participants of two OSCE summer schools on the rule of law, held in Lviv and in Zakarpattia region in August. In November, he presented to the Kyiv-based diplomatic community the OSCE's project work to help Ukraine deal with the environmental damage caused by the war, as well as projects on strengthening the country's environmental security and on humanitarian demining.

## **THE HIGH-LEVEL PLANNING GROUP**

**COLONEL GORAN VASILEVSKI**

**Head of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group**

Consisting of military experts seconded by OSCE participating States, the High-Level Planning Group (HLPG) is mandated to make recommendations to the Chairperson-in-Office regarding a possible multinational OSCE peacekeeping force. This includes planning the size and characteristic of such a force, command and control functions, logistics, resource and personnel allocation, rules of engagement, and arrangements with contributing States.

One of the HLPG's goals for 2023 was to raise the number of female officers among its ranks, thereby contributing to the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The Group encouraged OSCE participating States to second female officers to the HLPG, and identified a number of other activities relevant to the Action Plan, including them in its 2023 Annual Working Plan.

Throughout the year, the HLPG continued to engage with relevant international and regional organizations to further enhance its capabilities and gain an understanding of current best practices in the field of peacekeeping. As part of its engagement, the Group reviewed, updated and improved one of the existing planning options developed in previous years, and updated and revised numerous supporting documents. The Group also continued to co-operate with relevant international organizations, including UN and EU institutions, so as to improve the Group's planning capacities.

## **SOUTH CAUCASUS**

### **AMBASSADOR VIOREL MOŞANU**

#### **Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus**

2023 marked the 15th year since the six-point ceasefire agreement of 2008, which also created the Geneva International Discussions (GID) to address the consequences of the 2008 armed conflict in Georgia. Throughout the year, the GID continued to contribute to the absence of military hostilities, focusing its discussions in April, July and December on pursuing the non-use of force and international security arrangements and on improving the situation of the conflict-affected population, and displaced persons in particular.

Ambassador Viorel Moşanu, OSCE Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus, and his fellow GID Co-Chairs from the United Nations and the European Union, continued meeting in the GID format, emphasized inclusive approaches to mediation and engaged in frequent meetings with conflict-affected communities, vulnerable groups and civil society, in particular women and youth. Ambassador Moşanu also focused on detentions and outstanding missing persons cases.

Together with the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), Ambassador Moşanu co-facilitated seven rounds of meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Ergneti, addressing responses to the closures of crossing points and the erection of obstacles along the administrative boundary line. Other key topics of the EUMM and OSCE's engagement were irrigation and other related issues.

## **TRANSNISTRIAN SETTLEMENT PROCESS**

### **AMBASSADOR THOMAS MAYR-HARTING**

### **Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transnistrian Settlement Process**

The 2023 OSCE Chair of North Macedonia continued to work closely with the OSCE Mission to Moldova during the year to facilitate discussions within the framework of the Transnistrian Settlement Process, against the backdrop of the war against Ukraine and its possible implications for the overall security situation in the region. Given that a conference in the 5+2 format was not possible in 2023, the efforts of the Chairpersonship and the OSCE Mission to Moldova focussed on encouraging and facilitating dialogue and engagement between the Sides, at the level of the Chief Negotiators, as well as in the framework of 1+1 meetings and thematic Working Groups. The Chairman-in-Office visited Moldova in February, and Special Representative Mayr-Harting travelled to the country on four separate occasions, while also maintaining formal and informal contacts with the Sides, mediators and observers throughout the year. The Chairpersonship continued to place a particular emphasis on the security situation, freedom of movement between both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River, legislative developments, human rights and humanitarian issues, as well as on the repercussions of closed borders and the loss of established trade routes.

## PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

LILIANA PALIHOVICI

Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender

In 2023, the Special Representative on Gender worked on the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's programme to strengthen the Organization's women, peace and security (WPS) agenda and to work towards the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the security sector and in decision-making.

Assessing the progress made by some OSCE participating States, Special Representative . Palihovici pointed out to the Permanent Council that women continued to be underrepresented in the labour market and the decision-making processes. Unpaid work remained a widely spread problem, while the burden of care rested still largely on women's shoulders. The Special Representative called on participating States to empower women to efficiently participate in decision-making processes and to increase women's and girls' safety, physical and mental health, and economic security.

During several visits to Central Asia, Special Representative Palihovici advocated for increased budget allocations to implement the countries' national WPS agendas and to update the National Action Plans. She also made a strong appeal for this during an expert consultation on *Operationalizing WPS by inclusive participation and strengthened connectivity* in Almaty in October, and at the International Conference on Women, Peace and Security, organized in Kazakhstan in October in the framework of the Central Asian Women Dialogue. She called on national parliaments in Central Asia to address current challenges and gaps in the implementation of the WPS agenda, to enable the participation of women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) in peacebuilding processes, protect women human rights defenders from reprisals, finance the implementation of the agenda's commitments, and improve the accountability and monitoring of the agenda's progress. She also called for improving sub-regional governmental co-operation to address cross-border and regional issues hindering the WPS agenda's implementation.

At the OSCE Chair's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Conference in Tetovo in September and the Human Dimension Conference in October, Special Representative Palihovici urged the OSCE States to proactively remove barriers affecting women's political participation as well as gender discriminatory provisions, such as the registration fees for electoral candidacy that prevent women with limited access to funds from participating in the governance process.

During a visit to Kazakhstan, the Special Representative discussed with government representatives the challenges in implementing the gender agenda and stressed the importance of enhancing the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes and peacebuilding, as provided by the OSCE Gender Action Plan and UN Security Council resolution 1325.

The Special Representative participated with the OSCE Missions to Serbia and in Kosovo<sup>†</sup> at the 8th Dialogue Academy for Women, a ten-day leadership development programme to strengthen young women's capacities to engage in a sustainable dialogue for peace. She also partnered with UN Women and other international organizations, focused on building platforms for women's participation in peacebuilding processes; supporting the partnership between state authorities and gender CSOs in the implementation of the WPS agenda; strengthening participating States' response in preventing violence against women; and supporting women's organizations active in this area.

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<sup>†</sup> All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

These partnerships also aimed at enhancing women's participation in political life and decision-making.

## **TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

**RABBI ANDREW BAKER**

**Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism**

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR REGINA POLAK**

**Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions**

2023 year marked the 20th anniversary of the first OSCE conference on anti-Semitism. At the time, participating States were only beginning to address hate crimes and had yet to recognize the resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in the OSCE region. In the following years an expanding toolbox offered governments the ability to address the problem, which included Jewish community security assistance, educational curricula and police training.

The *Conference on Addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region*, held in Skopje in February, provided an opportunity to review the progress made and the challenges that remained. Both Personal Representatives attended the event. Professor Polak highlighted that anti-Semitism was a severe threat for Jews but also for human rights, democracy and security in all societies, as increasing anti-Semitism had always been accompanied by the increase of other forms of intolerance and discrimination, such as racism and discrimination against other religious or ethnic minorities and groups.

Throughout the summer, Rabbi Baker worked closely with United Nations Under-Secretary-General Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé to advise and assist in the drafting of the forthcoming United Nations action plan to address anti-Semitism and provide recommendations for UN Agencies and UN Member States. Professor Polak gave a speech at the ODIHR event *Understanding Anti-Roma Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Roma and Sinti Communities: A Practical Guide* in May, in support of ODIHR's new Practical Guide on Anti-Roma Hate Crimes. In June, she put a special focus on the role of women in civil society in a speech at the OSCE's Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting II that was held to discuss *The Role of Civil Society in the Promotion and Protection of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination*.

On 22 August, the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, Rabbi Baker and Professor Polak issued a joint statement expressing their concern at the alarming number of violent incidents and hate-motivated attacks based on religion or belief occurring throughout the OSCE region. Both Representatives travelled in late September to Norway, the first country to issue a national action plan to combat anti-Semitism. As such, Norway is considered to have the unique position to evaluate the success and shortcomings of such an action plan as it prepares a follow-up plan.

On 7 October, Hamas terrorists carried out a violent assault on Israeli concertgoers and towns and villages near Gaza, murdering over 1,200 civilians, wounding thousands and taking more than 200 hostages. Shortly after the attack, considered to be the most lethal attack on Jews since the Holocaust, Personal Representatives Rabbi Baker and Professor Polak issued a joint statement calling on the OSCE participating States to address the "heightened security concerns" that their Jewish citizens would likely face in its aftermath. In the weeks that followed the world witnessed an unprecedented surge in anti-Semitism.

At the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference in October, Professor Polak highlighted the situation of migrants and refugees as the most vulnerable groups in terms of human rights. She reminded the OSCE participating States to take their commitments seriously and encouraged them to develop further commitments for the 21st century, expected to be marked by waves of refugees and migrants as a result of a growing number of wars, conflicts and crises, as well as the climate catastrophe.

Also in October, as part of her work on combating discrimination against Christians, Professor Polak participated in ODIHR's workshop *Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide* and gave a speech calling on the OSCE participating states to raise their awareness of this increasing problem in the OSCE region. She urged for more research to be undertaken to tackle this partly new phenomenon efficiently.

In early November, both Personal Representatives participated in an event organized by ODIHR and the Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations of the Dublin City University in Ireland on *Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue in support of peacebuilding and sustainability in the OSCE*. Professor Polak emphasized in her intervention at the event that at times of multiple crises a structured and systematic co-operation of the OSCE participating States with religious leaders and communities on all levels and interreligious dialogue as a diplomatic tool were more necessary than ever. She also underscored that religious communities were important partners of civil society in implementing and strengthening human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination.

In December, Rabbi Baker made an official country visit to Italy. In Rome, he addressed the Special Committee for Countering the Phenomena of Intolerance, Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Incitement to Hate and Violence of the Senate of Italy.

## **YOUTH AND SECURITY**

**Memet Zhaku**

**Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security**

Strengthening the role of young people, encouraging them to become involved in decision-making processes and advancing their mutual relations in the OSCE region are high on the agenda of the 2023 Chairpersonship of North Macedonia. Special Representative Zhaku used several events held in 2023 as a platform to advocate for the advancement of young people's position in the OSCE region so their voices are heard, their concerns taken into consideration, and their active and effective involvement ensured.

The central youth-related OSCE event in 2023 was the Youth Forum held in Skopje, North Macedonia, in November. Organized by the Chairpersonship and the Special Representative, with the support of the OSCE Secretariat, the Forum brought together young people from the entire OSCE region and gave them a platform to discuss the protection and advancement of youth rights and how to ensure a better future for next generations.

Earlier in the year, at the 5th edition of the Youth Academy in Prishtinë/Priština in May, Special Representative Zhaku underlined that constructive engagement was a two-way process, and that decision makers needed the support of youth as powerful partners. In September, at the Model OSCE in Central Asia in Istanbul, organised by the OSCE Secretariat, Special Representative Zhaku emphasized that such simulation exercises provided young people in the OSCE region with the opportunity to acquire first-hand experiences in becoming involved in peace and security questions. At the Western Balkans Youth Forum in Tirana in October, Mr. Zhaku stressed the essential importance of recognizing the power of youth in a world burdened by conflict and violence.

In October, Special Representative Zhaku took part at the 9th OSCE Dialogue Academy for Young Women co-organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and OSCE Mission to Serbia in Struga, North Macedonia. At the event, young activists from Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade debated about the power and strength of youth and their decisive potential in striving for peace and security while removing stereotypes and barriers.

Special Representative Zhaku also spoke at the School on Politics, Leadership and Advocacy, organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Warsaw in October. He underscored the importance of actively involving youth in processes ensuring peace and security, as well as in economic and environmental and human dimension issues.

Later that month, Special Representative Zhaku addressed the International Forum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where he underlined that youth fundamental rights represent the cornerstone of a just and inclusive society and that the OSCE provided a platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices on this issue.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

### ANDREJA STOJKOVSKI

#### Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Civil Society

In recent years, the space for civil society – which acts as a bridge between government and citizens in a democratic society – has shrunk in many parts of the world, a trend further exacerbated by the war of aggression against Ukraine. In an effort to protect and again expand this space, and to support a robust and inclusive democratic system throughout the OSCE region, the 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship appointed the first-ever Special Representative on Civil Society.

Throughout the year, Special Representative Andreja Stojkovski focused his efforts on advocating for better inclusion of civil society in policy- and decision-making at the state level, discussing models for improving the exchange between governments and civil society across all OSCE dimensions. He engaged with many participating States while working with the Civic Solidarity Platform to engage and consult civil society organizations in the OSCE region.

To further deepen this inclusion at the OSCE level, Special Representative Stojkovski supported the establishment of a network of think-tanks that work in the orbit of the Organization. The OSCE Expert Network, comprising 17 institutes from 17 OSCE participating States, was officially launched at an event in November under the North Macedonia Chairpersonship.

Working closely with the Irish Delegation, in their capacity as Chairs of the Human Dimension Committee, the Special Representative attended three of the Committee's regular monthly meetings, in April, September and December. At the September meeting, he spoke on the issue of human rights defenders and the shrinking space for civil society. He also attended the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in June and, in October, the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, interacting with civil society and preparing for the civil society event at the margins of the Ministerial Council meeting in Skopje in December.

At a meeting with the delegations of France, Finland, Lithuania and Sweden, in June, the Special Representative raised the issue of supporting civil society in Moldova and Transnistria. He also maintained close co-operation with his counterpart at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement, Kyriakos Hadjyianni.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Naser Nuredini**

#### **Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Climate Change**

In 2023, the OSCE Chairpersonship appointed for the first time a Special Representative on Climate Change, with the task of monitoring climate change-related developments in the OSCE region and reporting on ongoing activities and opportunities for the OSCE so it can play a greater role in addressing this pressing issue. The appointment reflects the recognition that the intertwining of climate change and security, along with its detrimental effects on the lives of people across the OSCE region, will remain a critical topic of discussion in the years to come.

In conjunction with the Chairman-in-Office, Minister Bujar Osmani, Special Representative Naser Nuredini undertook visits to South-Eastern European and Central Asian OSCE participating States to engage in discussions about the challenges they face in the context of climate change and the ongoing OSCE project “Strengthening Responses to Security Risks from Climate Change in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia”. Beyond this project, most participating States in Central Asia raised the issue of water resource management, and its implications for their economies and livelihoods.

During the 30th OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje, Special Representative Nuredini and the Chairpersonship organized a side event on “Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Human Security in the OSCE Area”, bringing together ministers of foreign affairs and the OSCE Secretary General to discuss project progress and identify further avenues for fostering a transboundary dialogue on addressing identified climate hotspots. Additionally, the Special Representative participated in a panel at the COP28 side event organized by the OSCE, alongside environment ministers and representatives from Central Asian participating States, to delve into the OSCE’s potential support for their climate change initiatives.

## PERMANENT COUNCIL

The Permanent Council is the OSCE's principal body for regular political dialogue and decision-making among representatives of the Organization's participating States. It meets every week in Vienna.

### Permanent Council

[www.osce.org/permanent-council](http://www.osce.org/permanent-council)

The weekly meetings of the Permanent Council serve as the main platform for dialogue, debates, consultations, exchange of ideas and decision-making not only on recurring issues on the OSCE agenda but also on matters related to the Chairpersonship's priorities and to unpredicted developments in the OSCE area. Throughout the 2023 North Macedonia Chairpersonship, the meetings were chaired by the Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the OSCE, Ambassador Igor Djundev. Under the North Macedonia Chairpersonship, the Permanent Council gathered for 54 sessions, including 18 special meetings (taking place outside of the regular schedule) and two reinforced meetings (on the level of foreign ministers).

Given the unprecedented crisis in the OSCE area since 24 February 2022, every meeting of the Permanent Council considered the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. Throughout the year, the North Macedonia Chairpersonship invited numerous special guests who addressed the Permanent Council.

“For each and every issue of common OSCE importance, we were transparent, receptive and constructive, but always followed our own principled position, as well as our gut feeling and what we believed was right. Our willingness and readiness to consult openly, hearing and embracing divergent views and positions, became instrumental and invaluable to achieve the final outcomes of the Ministerial Council in Skopje. And if there is one thing, one piece of advice that we can pass on to our successors, that would be—stick to your principles. Once we start diluting values, we will strip our Organization of its unique features, strengths, and the very reason for its existence.”

*Ambassador Igor Djundev,  
Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council,  
Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the OSCE*

## CHAIRPERSONS OF THE THREE COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

- **Ambassador Stelian Stoian**, Romania: Chairperson of the Security Committee
- **Ambassador Florian Raunig**, Austria: Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee
- **Ambassador Anne-Marie Callan**, Ireland: Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee

## CHAIRPERSONS OF THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUPS APPOINTED BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

- **Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen**, Norway: Chair of the Informal Working Group on Civil Society Participation at OSCE meetings, with a focus on the implementation of Paragraph 16, Chapter IV of the 1992 Helsinki Document
- **Ambassador Károly Dán**, Hungary and **Ambassador Christophe Kamp**, Netherlands: Chair of the Informal Working Group established by PC Decision 1039
- **Ambassador Vesa Häkkinen**, Finland: Chair of the Informal Working Group on Structured Dialogue on the Current and Future Challenges and Risks to Security in the OSCE Area
- **Ambassador Helmut Tichy**, Austria: Chair of the Open-Ended Informal Working Group on Strengthening the Legal Framework of the OSCE

## High-level speakers at the Permanent Council in 2023

12 January: Bujar Osmani, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia

17 January: Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

19 January: Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjord Gylfadóttir, Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

26 January: Ambassador Ann Bernes, President of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

16 February: Gillian Triggs, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection

12 April: Daria Herasymchuk, Adviser and Commissioner of the President of Ukraine for the Rights of the Child and Children Rehabilitation

20 April: Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

6 June: Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan

8 June: Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

22 June: Ruslan Strilets, Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine

20 July: Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

12 September: Vahe Gevorgyan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia

## FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION

The Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), the OSCE's key decision-making body on politico-military aspects of security, meets weekly in Vienna to discuss the most tangible issues related to arms control, disarmament and confidence- and security-building, security co-operation and conflict prevention in the OSCE area. The Forum's Chairpersonship rotates among the OSCE participating States in alphabetical order, with each State chairing it for four months. In 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Canada chaired the FSC.

### Forum for Security Co-operation

[www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation](http://www.osce.org/forum-for-security-cooperation)

## FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION

Russia's war against Ukraine continued to negatively impact the whole security architecture in Europe and beyond, jeopardizing the Organization's underlying concept of co-operative security. In its response to the unprecedented security situation, the FSC Chairpersonships, in close co-ordination with the Chair of the Permanent Council and supported by the OSCE Secretariat, led the FSC's work in the spirit of preserving its mandate as a platform for dialogue, in the context of the current security challenges, including unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region.

Despite the challenges, the Forum's meetings and Security Dialogues conducted in 2023 underscored the FSC's importance as a platform for dialogue and for addressing politico-military security issues of concern and relevance. In addition to regular exchanges on the situation in Ukraine, the following 12 Security Dialogues took place:

#### **Bosnia and Herzegovina (January to April)**

- Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition in South-East Europe;
- OSCE Code of Conduct and the Security Sector;
- Mine Action: Security and safety risks related to landmines and explosive remnants of war;
- Joint FSC-PC Meeting on UNSCR 1325 Women Peace and Security.

#### **Bulgaria (April to July)**

- Black Sea Region – Security Horizons;
- Capacity Development in Humanitarian Mine Action;
- OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (International Humanitarian Law, Private Military Security Companies);
- UNSCR 1325 Women Peace and Security;
- Joint FSC-PC Meeting on Security and Environment.

#### **Canada (September to December)**

- Mine Action (focus on the impact on children);
- Women, Peace and Security;
- Joint FSC-PC Meeting on Mental Health Impacts of War.

The work of the FSC has been affected by Russia's war against Ukraine and the corresponding deterioration of trust in relation to certain participating States. Despite the efforts of the FSC Chairpersonships 2023, three out of 15 proposed Security Dialogues did not take place due to lack of

consensus on the agendas of those meetings. As a result, respective FSC Chairs, with the support of the FSC Troika, organized side events on the topics in question, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina's event on *Value of Sub-regional Initiatives for Arms Control*, and Canada's two events on *International Humanitarian Law with a focus on military command responsibility* and on *Information Integrity in the Military Space*.

In 2023, several initiatives undertaken by some participating States were designed to support the implementation of existing politico-military commitments in the field of information exchange on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security by updating the voluntary questionnaire on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325. To raise awareness on the topic of Children and Armed Conflict, an OSCE Group of Friends on this topic, set up in late 2022, developed a new voluntary questionnaire on this topic.

Military information exchange remained at a high rate, although some participating States decided not to exchange military information at all or to not provide it to all participating States, in light of Russia's war against Ukraine.

The FSC continued to support the OSCE's work in the politico-military dimension of security on practical assistance in the area of small arms light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA) controls. The OSCE's assistance projects on SALW and SCA continued to provide steady support. In 2023, the OSCE managed a portfolio of 19 assistance projects, worth €52 million, delivering a wide range of tailored technical assistance throughout the OSCE region.

Several projects were aimed at ensuring the secure and safe management of stockpiles of SALW and SCA through infrastructure, material and equipment upgrades at storage sites, as well as the establishment of laboratories for chemical analysis of SCA stability and its surveillance. A significant element of the projects was to provide support to the efforts to combat illicit trafficking in SALW across the OSCE region. Central Asia received considerable support for countering the threat and risk of potential SALW and SCA trafficking from Afghanistan, as well as the strengthening of physical security of SCA. Consistent progress in this field was also made throughout South-Eastern Europe.

In 2023, FSC-related annual meetings could not be held due to a lack of agreement by all participating States. An informal briefing on SALW and SCA projects in the OSCE was held for participating States, Partners for Co-operation, the OSCE Secretariat and field operations in the absence of an annual meeting. In the absence of consensus on the Annual Discussion on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, a dedicated thematic FSC security dialogue was held in the second session. Moreover, in 2023, the Forum witnessed the withdrawal of one State Party (Russian Federation) from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, followed by the suspension of the Treaty by a large majority of States Parties.

The FSC underscored the importance of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda by holding three Security Dialogues dedicated to this topic. Throughout the year, the FSC Chairpersonships supported the 2023 OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security training programme empowering youth, especially women, to engage meaningfully in policy-making, planning and implementation processes in conflict prevention and resolution through arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the OSCE area.

The FSC continued to serve as an important platform for dialogue and decision-making in the first dimension, a platform to discuss politico-military security issues, raise security concerns, and hold

each other accountable for their adherence to the OSCE's principles and the implementation of their commitments.

## OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Bringing together 323 parliamentarians from across the OSCE region, the Parliamentary Assembly provides a platform to engage in dialogue, conduct diplomacy, observe elections, and promote governments' compliance with OSCE commitments. In 2023, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly prioritized a diverse array of critical issues, focusing in particular on the war against Ukraine, the situation in the South Caucasus, migration, and counter-terrorism.

### OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Secretary General: **Roberto Montella**

Budget: **€4,213,184**

Staff: **31** (including six research assistants)

[www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org)

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## PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Russia's Federation war against Ukraine remained at the top of the agenda in 2023, dominating debates at OSCE PA meetings and featuring prominently in the Vancouver Declaration adopted at the 30th Annual Session. In Vancouver, the OSCE PA's Standing Committee approved a proposal to establish a Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine (PSTU), ensuring that the war remains at the forefront of the PA's activities and that Ukraine's needs are well considered by the Assembly. The PSTU held its first in-person meeting at the 21st Autumn Meeting in Yerevan, featuring discussions on the security, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of the war. OSCE PA President Pia Kauma (Finland) delivered opening remarks, noting that the PSTU will predominantly focus on support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the economic and environmental recovery of Ukraine, and the establishment of international justice mechanisms for war crimes.

## ADDRESSING MIGRATION

The OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration focused largely on the refugee crisis stemming from the war against Ukraine. In March, members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration visited Moldova, where they met ministers, legislators, stakeholders and policy advocates to learn more about the country's significant efforts in hosting more than 100,000 individuals fleeing the war. The OSCE PA delegation praised Moldova's positive achievements in welcoming refugees and facilitating the safe transit of more than 600,000 people towards Europe, and highlighted areas where governments and parliamentarians can provide assistance. Other activities of the committee sought to facilitate the exchange of best practices between OSCE participating States and highlight positive aspects of migration.

## PROMOTING COUNTER-TERRORISM CO-OPERATION

Throughout 2023, the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism (CCT) explored the relationship between counter-terrorism legislation and international humanitarian law, which led to the adoption of a new resolution in July. In March, CCT members visited Switzerland and met with

interlocutors from the international community and Swiss Government to discuss global trends and effective strategies to prevent radicalization, with a focus on human rights. Owing to its efforts promoting inter-parliamentary co-operation, the Assembly was re-elected in October to lead the Co-ordination Mechanism of Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism under the aegis of the United Nations.

## **REGIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS**

With OSCE PA envoys working on geographical areas such as Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and the Mediterranean Forum being held at the Yerevan Autumn Meeting, the Assembly maintained its strong engagement with various regions of the OSCE. President Kauma and Special Representative on South Caucasus Kari Henriksen (Norway) visited Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia in November. The visit served as an opportunity to promote greater collaboration among political forces and foster enhanced regional co-operation, including by urging Armenia and Azerbaijan to normalize relations. Under the leadership of OSCE PA Special Representative on Central Asia Farah Karimi (the Netherlands), the Assembly also focused attention on the geopolitical landscape and specific challenges facing Central Asia, with a view towards fostering stability and co-operation in the region. Special Representative for the Arctic and High North Mark Pritchard (United Kingdom) concluded an official three-day visit to Iceland in November, where discussions focused on various aspects of security in the region and the development of co-operation with other Arctic states.

## **CONTRIBUTING POLITICAL EXPERIENCE TO OSCE ELECTION OBSERVATION**

OSCE PA election observers contributed their political experience, judgement and visibility to this essential OSCE endeavour while working closely with ODIHR and other international partners. In 2023, some 370 OSCE PA observers deployed for elections in Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Poland and Serbia.

## **MEETINGS**

Winter Meeting: Vienna, 23–24 February  
Annual Session: Vancouver, 30 June to 4 July  
Autumn Meeting: Yerevan, 18–20 November

“Through shared values and effective multilateralism, the OSCE has strived to achieve greater stability and security throughout our vast region. But without strong political will, multilateralism will always be limited.”

*OSCE PA President Pia Kauma*

## **FIELD OPERATIONS**

The OSCE maintains a network of field operations and local project activities in Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. This field presence gives the OSCE an edge when it comes to managing crises, helping host countries to achieve their reform goals and playing a critical post-conflict role. The field operations help their host countries implement OSCE commitments and develop their local capacities. They contribute to early warning and conflict prevention, and monitor and report on developments on the ground.

## Mission to Moldova

Head of Mission: **Ambassador Kelly Keiderling**

Financial resources: **€2,302,700** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€471,612** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **10** international and **34** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova](http://www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova)

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**The Mission worked constructively with representatives from Chisinau and Tiraspol, the two Sides of the Transnistrian Settlement Process, to address unresolved problems. While the 5+2 talks continued to be on hold, the Mission facilitated 1+1 and Working Group meetings, and encouraged the Sides to achieve a lasting comprehensive political settlement. As authorities from both Sides debated issues between them, the Mission brought together residents and professionals from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River to forge partnerships that will be needed to support a future settlement.**

### CIVIL SOCIETY FROM BOTH BANKS ADVOCATE FOR RESILIENCE AND STRONGER PARTNERSHIP

On 26 October, the Mission held a Donors' Forum that united over 80 civil society organizations (CSOs) from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River to assess developments, challenges and successes of these organizations over the past ten years. The participants discussed the health sector, sustainable partnerships for economic development, the promotion of human rights, and the development of democracy and the rule of law.

Many participants noted that CSOs make communities more resilient to challenges, whether supporting refugees from Ukraine or preventing gender-based violence. During the Donors' Forum, CSOs from both banks strengthened their connections with donors and development partners.

"This event allowed me to analyse the various directions of our activities in the past ten years. We need this retrospective to assess results and make further plans. Also, this communication helps to better understand our partners from the other bank and the donor community, thus, to be more constructive in developing further joint steps," said Janna Vilhovaia, representative of the Alliance of Public Health.

### HUMAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING EXPERTS FROM BOTH RIVERBANKS PARTICIPATE FOR FIRST TIME IN NATIONAL SIMULATION EXERCISE

In September, for the first time the entire Moldovan human anti-trafficking community took part in an OSCE-supported national simulation exercise on how to combat trafficking in human beings. At the five-day event, 80 practitioners from Moldovan law enforcement agencies, social welfare officials, prosecutors and magistrates, as well as CSOs from both banks, worked together in a simulation that required them to identify and assist victims of trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation, and to detain traffickers and prepare judicial cases against them.

The project strengthened co-ordination mechanisms among participants and their institutions, so that Moldova will be in a position to better prevent and respond to trafficking in human beings in the future. The Mission organized the exercise in co-operation with Moldova's State Chancellery and the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human

Beings. The Ștefan cel Mare Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs hosted the event, which is part of the Mission's project titled '*Ending trafficking in human-beings by fostering multi-agency collaboration and strengthening the civil society organizations capacity across both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River*'.

#### **TENTH EDITION OF MODEL OSCE TEACHES YOUTH FROM BOTH BANKS NEGOTIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS**

Twenty young women and men from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River developed negotiation skills and participated in a conflict resolution simulation exercise at the tenth edition of the Model OSCE for Youth event organized by the OSCE Mission to Moldova in October. During the four-day event, participants learned about negotiation skills and the history of the OSCE, and discussed the role of diplomacy in conflict prevention and resolution. They also engaged in teambuilding exercises that helped them build relationships among each other.

The event concluded with a conflict resolution simulation exercise that required the participants to step into the shoes of diplomats, play the roles of different participating States, OSCE independent institutions and other relevant actors, and work together to solve a hypothetical crisis in the OSCE area. The Model OSCE helped to build confidence and strengthen the dialogue between young women and men from both banks.

“One of my favourite experiences ever! The atmosphere of safety in self-expression and openness towards alternative opinions created an honest and genuine dialogue between all present people, both participants and trainers. That is what multilateralism is all about,” said Mohammad Abumani, Model OSCE participant and aspiring diplomat.

## **Centre in Ashgabat**

**Head of Centre: Ambassador John MacGregor**

Financial resources: **€1,661,200** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€478,824** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **4** international and **26** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/centre-in-ashgabat](http://www.osce.org/centre-in-ashgabat)

**The Centre expanded support for Turkmenistan's efforts to promote cyber/ICT security and prevent transnational threats; enhance good economic and environmental governance; facilitate Turkmenistan's accession to the World Trade Organization; and develop renewable energy; as well as uphold human rights, gender equality and media freedom commitments; and strengthen human rights institutions. It intensified activities to address confidence- and security-building measures, capital market development and climate change, while preventing gender-based violence and promoting best journalism practices.**

### **STRENGTHENING CYBERSECURITY AND BORDER MANAGEMENT**

The Centre continued to provide support to the Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence inaugurated in 2022 at the Institute of Telecommunications and Informatics in Ashgabat by facilitating training activities and providing equipment. Jointly with the EU Border Management Programme in Central Asia, the Centre trained national trainers on travel document security. It also promoted confidence- and security-building measures and effective negotiation as a tool of preventive diplomacy. In addition, the Centre expanded activities within its extrabudgetary multi-donor project *Strengthening State Border Service Capacities of Turkmenistan*.

### **NEW INITIATIVES TARGET CAPITAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION**

The Centre intensified its support of Turkmenistan's efforts to enhance the country's anti-corruption and anti-money laundering system, as well as its combat of the financing of terrorism. It helped promote economic connectivity, modernize customs mechanisms and facilitate Turkmenistan's accession to the World Trade Organization. It also expanded its assistance in the area of renewable energy development and the promotion of good environmental governance and international standards in the oil and gas sector. New activities initiated in 2023 addressed capital market and small and medium-sized enterprise development, climate change and the reduction of methane emissions.

### **CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

Activities in the human dimension focused on activities promoting human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of national minorities. The Centre assisted the country with further strengthening the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsperson and continued to support a public organization in running a shelter for victims of domestic violence. It also expanded its work to promote media freedom and media development, implementing activities that address media literacy and defamation, and training journalists on the skills necessary in a modern media environment.

## NEW PREMISES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, NEW TRADITIONS

### The Centre moves house

In 2023 the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat moved to its new building. On 1 June, OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, together with Vepa Hajiiev who was then Turkmenistan's Deputy Foreign Minister, cut the symbolic ribbon opening the new premises. The occasion was special and rare in the OSCE: the facilities were provided free for use by the Government of Turkmenistan, setting a positive example for other participating States hosting OSCE field operations.

The new premises brought a variety of new opportunities. Since the new premises can host close to 90 per cent of all of the Centre's activities, it can operate more cost-effectively. Working conditions for staff and visitors have improved, not the least because the building is embedded in a garden, creating a positive work environment. The Head of Centre John MacGregor initiated the new tradition to plant trees around the building, the first of which was put into the ground together with the 2023 OSCE Chairperson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani during his visit to Turkmenistan in October.

Responses from both staff and visitors were overwhelmingly positive. Ussa Ussayev, editor-in-chief of the Nebit-gaz newspaper commended the improved working conditions during a training course on media literacy. William Leaf, Political Officer and the Centre's staff representative, lauded the green surroundings: “[It] has become a regular venue for [...] teambuilding activities [...] encouraging communication among colleagues and enhancing staff motivation”, he said.

### TAKING THE LEAD ON TACKLING THE USE OF THE INTERNET FOR TERRORISM PURPOSES

Nargis Achildiyeva and Rustam Geldiyev are Leaders from Turkmenistan in the fight against intolerance and violent extremism. Ever since they completed the OSCE training-of-trainers programme *LIVE* (which befittingly stands for *OSCE Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism*) in 2022, they have carried forward the message of how to recognize and combat the threat of violent extremism and radicalization across the country. And they are not alone: four other local trainers have joined them in delivering such training courses.

In May, both participated in a national table-top exercise on countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes while respecting human rights. The event, which was organized by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department and the Centre, aimed at producing actionable responses and recommendations for preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism on the internet. In total, 25 participants from Turkmenistan's governmental agencies, law enforcement, civil society, the media, academia and the private sector took part.

“The training contributed to my professional growth as a trainer since I gained new knowledge and skills, which will allow me to apply modern approaches and methods to raise public awareness of countering terrorism online,” Rustam Geldiyev, who represented the public organization Yenme, said.

Nargis Achildiyeva, representative of the economic society Ynamly Egindeş, added how impressed she was by the interactive format of the event: “[It] had a tremendous impact on the engagement of

all participants and enhanced trust, thus offering a platform for an open exchange of views and experiences,” she said.

The table-top exercise format allowed the participants to engage in interactive and scenario-based discussions on how to counter terrorism-related online threats prevalent in Central Asia and find practical human rights-centred approaches to tackling these issues. International experts summarized the recommendations developed during the exercise and produced a document detailing the outcomes, which was shared with the participants and relevant national stakeholders.

It is envisaged that the identified strategies will enhance the effectiveness of national efforts in addressing threats posed by the use of the internet for terrorist purposes while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, they are expected to also benefit the OSCE: “They will help the Centre prioritize its efforts in providing practical assistance to Turkmenistan in countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes,” Head of Centre John MacGregor noted.

## Programme Office in Astana

Head of Office: **Dr. Volker Frobart**

Financial resources: **€2,232,700** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€231,135** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **5** international and **25** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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Head of Programme Office: [Volker Frobart | LinkedIn](http://Volker Frobart | LinkedIn)

**The Programme Office continued to foster dialogue and co-operation between government, civil society, academia, the private sector and the international community in all three OSCE security dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human. The Office also explored new opportunities to work with Kazakhstan's authorities on cybercrime, disaster risk reduction and gender-based violence, while supporting national human rights institutions, judicial reform and youth inclusion.**

## TRAINING OF MILITARY EXPERTS STRENGTHENS REGIONAL SECURITY

To support Kazakhstan's commitment to transparency and compliance with the 2011 Vienna Document, and to strengthen regional security and security co-operation, the Office organized a series of events for more than 70 military experts from verification centres of 26 OSCE participating States. This included training seminars on the Vienna Document and field visits to the 36th Air Assault Brigade near Astana and the 604th Air Base and 37th Air Assault Brigade in Taldykorgan province.

During the seminars, OSCE and military experts shared their experiences and explained the provisions of the 2011 Vienna Document on conducting and hosting inspections and evaluations, risk reduction, as well as military-to-military contacts and co-operation. The visits to the military facilities showed the participants the practical application of these provisions and gave them an insight into the daily and long-term activities of the facilities, including training and maintenance operations. Combined with demonstrations of military hardware, these activities contributed to the verification of data Kazakhstan provides in accordance with its commitment to participate annually in an exchange of military information.

## STUDY VISIT BOLSTERS SEAPORT MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

As Kazakhstan continues to expand its global connections, including in trade, the Office supports the country in developing its capacities to manage the ports of Aktau and Kuryk at the Caspian Sea. Port management requires not only the development of infrastructure but also to deal with the environmental challenges that result from more shipping traffic. The long-term goal for Kazakhstan is to establish its own national maritime safety and rescue centre in Aktau. The Office supported the country in its preparations for this by organizing a study visit for port officials to meet the port authorities in Bremen and Hamburg, Germany. The study visit gave an opportunity for both sides to exchange experiences and good practices, particularly on the question of how to approach environmental stewardship and maritime rescue operations.

In Bremen, the officials from Kazakhstan visited the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, which gave them an opportunity to learn about the intricacies of maritime safety and rescue operations, including how its co-ordination room handles emergency and distress calls, how multi-stakeholder response measures are initiated, and how damages or contamination of the environment are being addressed. In Hamburg, the officials visited the city's port authority to learn about water infrastructure development, port operations, as well as dredging processes of Hamburg harbour, dealing with oil spills, and how to hold violators of environmental regulations accountable.

#### **TEACHING ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING OFFICIALS ABOUT DIGITAL TOOLS USED BY CRIMINAL NETWORKS**

Information and communication technology has become a key tool for human traffickers, who use the internet to recruit and exploit their victims, and to run their illegal financial transactions. Following a comprehensive approach to counter the trafficking in human beings – to prevent, to protect and to prosecute – the Office partnered with several institutions to hold a series of workshops to train practitioners on this evolving threat from the nefarious use of modern technologies. The workshops took place in southern, central and northern Kazakhstan and are in line with Kazakhstan's 2021–2023 State Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. The Office organized these events in partnership with the Karaganda Police Academy under the Ministry of Interior, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and the EU-funded Border Management Programme in Central Asia.

More than 80 anti-trafficking practitioners from across Kazakhstan took part in these workshops, where they learned about online recruitment methods, how to track digital footprints and identify patterns in online transactions, and how to use machine learning tools such as web crawling and robust hashing for investigative work. The programme was developed with the support of experts from Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine and followed an iterative structure, adapting to lessons learned from the implementing team.

The Office also supported the training of 30 prosecutors in the city of Shymkent at the district and city level on how to supervise the investigation of criminal human trafficking cases and the subsequent prosecution in court. Particular emphasis was put on ensuring that a gender-sensitive perspective was applied when analysing the nexus of human trafficking and modern technology tools, addressing such issues as gender-based coercion and control, as well as sexual harassment via the internet.

## INSPIRING OTHERS TO INSPIRE: HOW AN OSCE COURSE TURNED A LAWYER'S LIFE AROUND

How to train a trainer? Using the Training of Trainers model, of course! From health to fitness, to confidence building or youth empowerment, "ToTs" have become a standard technique to impart knowledge to a large group of people, using the snowball effect. "Teaching is more than imparting knowledge, it is inspiring change", 20th century American writer William Arthur Ward once famously coined. For Aizhan Daribayeva, lawyer from Kazakhstan's Abay province, a ToT run by the OSCE became the turning point in her professional life, very much epitomizing Ward's maxim. Initially equipped with minimal teaching experience, Ms. Daribayeva has to date trained more than 3,700 lawyers, legal professionals, human rights defenders, students and teachers in rural parts of Kazakhstan.

Ms. Daribayeva approached the OSCE Programme Office's course, held in 2021 and meant for defence attorneys, with verve and energy. "Highly motivated to learn and absorb material from the first minute", was how she characterized her approach to the first class. Once she had completed the three-day course and proudly held her certificate in her hands, Ms. Daribayeva was equipped with solid skills in the principles of learning, the design and delivery of training courses, as well as communication and public speaking, and assessment and evaluation techniques. "The hands-on practical exercises helped me tremendously with my professional development," Ms. Daribayeva said.

Even more importantly, the programme gave her access to a network of like-minded individuals, opening doors for future collaborations. "Consulting with both experts and peers while developing the agendas of my own training sessions was particularly beneficial at the beginning, when I first organized my own training courses".

Ms. Daribayeva, now a member of the Republican Bar Association and the Commission for the Professional Protection of Lawyers, applied her newly-acquired skills and knowledge to help legal professionals in local communities of Kazakhstan better safeguard human rights. She particularly championed the inclusion of young people of into this process. "I felt so empowered and inspired after the training to pass on my knowledge further not only to lawyers, but especially to the youth and women representatives in rural areas", she said. The satisfaction she experiences from her work is not a one-way street: her audiences regularly pass on feedback to her, which in turn motivates her to continue inspiring others.

## Programme Office in Bishkek

Head of Office: **Ambassador Alexey Rogov**

Financial resources: **€6,811,000** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€1,502,547** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **11** international and **111** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Programme Office continued to promote peace and security in the politico-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions. It created special opportunities for young people to learn about climate change, financial security, and combating trafficking in human beings. It also prioritized gender mainstreaming and co-operation with other OSCE field operations in the region. A flagship institution, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek continued to grow its four academic degree programmes.**

### **PROGRAMME OFFICE ENGAGES LOCAL YOUTH TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUPPORTS REGIONAL TRAINING ON FINANCIAL SECURITY**

The Programme Office organized a specialized comprehensive training course on safety regulations for working on glaciers in Kyrgyzstan's Tian Shan and Pamir-Alay regions. The initiative aimed to enhance the safety and efficiency of glaciological activities conducted in these areas to help promote sustainable water resource management. It also supported the premiere of the ballet performance ADAM (Human) in the town of Naryn in Kyrgyzstan's south-east, which reflected on the crucial problems of ecology and climate change. The NGO Students of Kyrgyzstan for Green Economy organized the performance together with the initiative group ARTIS and Kyrgyzstan's Opera and Ballet Theatre.

Together with high-level officials from across Central Asia, the Programme Office held a series of training events on national anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism to promote international and interagency co-operation.

### **GENDER EQUALITY AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING FOCUS OF LOCAL EVENTS**

The south-western city of Batken hosted an OSCE-supported forum on *Women's Participation: A Pillar for Peace and Stability* in October, a topic that holds particular significance for the country as it is an integral component of 2022–2024 Kyrgyzstan's National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. Aligned with strategic imperatives defined by the country's leadership, rule of law and peacebuilding agenda, the Forum also served as a platform for participants to examine and identify shared challenges, and prioritize actions dedicated to advancing the global Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Young people were the focus of another activity, organized by the Migration Council under the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic with support of the Programme Office. Thirty young leaders from across the country, selected in a competitive essay contest on the topic *How I Understand Human Trafficking?*, participated in a four-day Youth Forum on Combating Human Trafficking in the city of Issyk-Kul in October.

## **SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CROSS-BORDER CONFIDENCE BUILDING**

The Programme Office supported the Service on Countering Illicit Drug Trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in hosting an annual competition celebrating National Police Day. The competition featured canine units from four government entities showing trainers working with police dogs to help identify narcotics in simulated searches.

As part of an extrabudgetary initiative aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the illicit movement of small arms, ammunition and explosives across Kyrgyzstan's state border, the OSCE helped enhance the institutional capacity of the Border Service of Kyrgyzstan's State Committee for National Security to effectively counter transnational threats. Together with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan and the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, the Programme Office supported a high-level meeting of the heads of Batken, Fergana and Sughd regions in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan, to strengthen confidence-building measures in border areas. Some 40 officials attended the event, which helped, with a long-term perspective, to enhance trust, increase cross-border dialogue, reduce the risk of conflicts, and reinforce peace and security among the neighbouring states.

## **OSCE ACADEMY IN BISHKEK CONTINUES TO GROW**

In 2023, the Academy welcomed the second cohort of its first-ever bachelor's degree programme in economics, resulting in another increase of its student numbers. The Academy also further developed its two long-standing master of arts programmes and launched its third master's programme, in human rights and sustainability, together with the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice. In June, it hosted Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. In December, to observe Human Rights Day and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Academy invited international experts, current students, lecturers, staff and OSCE representatives to commemorate the events and listen to a variety of presentations, including on the importance of human rights education at schools and universities.

## **COMBINING KYRGYZ CULINARY TRADITIONS WITH SOUND BUSINESS ACUMEN**

### **How the OSCE helped a dairy entrepreneur promote development in her region**

Meet Bermet Musayeva, an entrepreneur from Talas, a town in north-western Kyrgyzstan. Bermet is the president and founder of *Üch-Bulak* (Three Springs), a dairy company that specializes in fermented milk products and supplies large supermarkets in the region with its products. Bermet was able to turn her dream into a successful business with the support of the Entrepreneurship Support Centre — a local body established to help business development — and the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek.

Bermet's passion for sustainability and organic farming burgeoned into a thriving business. Her dairy products — velvety *kaymak* (clotted cream), rich *suzma* (strained yogurt) and organic *kefir* (fermented milk made with probiotics) — became sought-after delicacies in local markets where she makes daily deliveries to meet the high demand. The community loves her not only for the exceptional quality of her products but for her dedication to preserving traditional Kyrgyz gastronomy while bringing new jobs to the area, which has struggled with a lack of employment opportunities.

Through her perseverance and unwavering commitment, Bermet not only succeeded in her entrepreneurial endeavours but also became an emblem of empowerment for aspiring women in the region. As a single mother of four, her path to business success was not a simple one. But it is

part of her story that echoes throughout Central Asia, inspiring others to follow their passions while preserving the rich cultural traditions.

As Bermet puts it: "In my region, there are many talented and capable women who hesitate to start their own businesses due to fear. I hope that my story motivates and inspires women, showing them that there are many opportunities, and they can successfully run their own businesses despite any challenges, just like I do."

She is quick to tell other young women and girls not to give up on their dreams. "I believe people should pursue what they love. This job not only gives me a lot of energy, but I also gladly give it back. I can confidently say that I've found my life's work, and it makes me happy."

## Programme Office in Dushanbe

Acting Head of Office: **Jukka Tuononen** (since 31 August 2023)

Financial resources: **€7,311,600** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€3,238,934** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **17** international and **126** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**In 2023, the Programme Office continued to provide support to Tajikistan in implementing its commitments in all three security dimensions. Its priorities were on countering security threats, regional co-operation, border management, disaster risk reduction, and issues related to freedom of the media.**

## REGIONAL CO-OPERATION TO BETTER RESPOND TO EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE HAZARDS

In 2023, the Regional Explosive Hazards Training Centre (REHTC), which operates under Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence, received full ownership of the explosive ordnance disposal training component conducted as part of the Integrated Co-operation on Explosive Hazards Programme. This OSCE-supported Programme, which aims to foster comprehensive collaboration among the stakeholders, also includes technical assistance and the facilitation of exchange visits. Since the Programme's inception in 2013, almost 1,100 people from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern and South-eastern Europe have participated in 57 training courses on subjects related to the reduction and response to hazards from explosive ordnance. This training component was developed and delivered in co-operation with the United States military. The REHTC has hosted the explosive hazards training programme since its establishment in 2019. The collaboration between Ministry of Defence, the OSCE and U.S. Army Central is integral to the progress and success of the REHTC's work in the country.

## PHASE II OF PROJECT TO ASSIST TAJIKISTAN'S BORDER TROOPS LAUNCHED

In 2023, the second phase of a project to support Tajikistan's border guards kicked off. The *Patrol Field Capacity Building of the Tajik Border Troops – Phase II (PFCB2)* project supports the efforts of Tajikistan's Border Troops to secure the country's 1,374-km-long border with Afghanistan. Under the PFCB2 project, 49 members of the Troops' special units received training in patrolling and mountaineering, and 42 members were trained in survival swimming and small boat operations. The project also included training in UN-standard operational planning (44 trained) and in adult learning, curriculum development and evaluation (40 trained). Complementing this assistance was the transfer of computer equipment, four inflatable motorized boats and 25 tactical patrolling kits to the border troops. PFCB2 is scheduled to run through 2024.

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES TO BETTER MANAGE NATURAL DISASTERS

Reducing the risks of natural disasters is crucial in Tajikistan, a predominantly mountainous country prone to floods and landslides. The Programme Office worked with the country's Government and its partner, the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, to strengthen the management and build-up of operational capacities in disaster risk reduction (DRR). It did this by supporting national and regional conferences, updating educational curricula, enhancing teaching on DRR, and running simulation exercises.

In parallel, the Office assisted disaster-prone communities, raising their awareness and resilience to potential emergencies. In 2023, 480 community members (40 per cent women) from 24 high-risk villages were trained in disaster risk reduction and management. Sixty participants (50 per cent women) became members of voluntary Local Disaster Management Committees. The Office organized in-depth training for them on emergency preparedness so they and their communities can react and mobilize themselves better in disaster situations. The Office also supplied them with essential first aid kits that will enable local community members to provide first line response in case of emergencies.

### **IMPROVING JOURNALISM STANDARDS THROUGH INNOVATIVE TEACHING**

Since 2021, the Office has worked with the Ministry of Education and Science on the development of a new curriculum for journalism studies, produced with help from international experts. The curriculum was completed and approved at the end of 2022 and reflects the highest norms and standards of education in journalism.

In 2023, the Programme Office continued working with the Ministry on new teaching modules to complement the curriculum, in co-operation with UNESCO, Panthéon-Sorbonne University and the Superior School of Journalism of Paris. The Office also facilitated access for members of the group working on the teaching modules to institutions known for their best practices and pedagogical excellence in teaching journalism, to allow for highly innovative teaching methods to be incorporated.

### **TOTAL NUMBER OF BORDER MANAGEMENT STAFF COLLEGE COURSE GRADUATES PASS 4,210 IN 2023**

[www.oscebmst.org](http://www.oscebmst.org)

The Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe had another successful year, progressing steadily with a total of 4,210 mid-to-senior level border security and management officials trained, including 894 women, since its inception. These participants come from 71 OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, with 931 attendees from Afghanistan (86 women) and 1,268 from Tajikistan (260 women). Since 2009, the BMSC has conducted 193 training courses. In 2023, the College expanded its offerings to include Training-of-Trainers modules for BMSC experts and a webinar series for its alumni.

In all its programmes, the BMSC actively promotes and implements gender equality and awareness. Notably, 37 per cent of female graduates attribute their career advancement to the influence of the College, indicating that they have gained recognition and respect among their male counterparts within border agencies.

## Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan

Acting Project Co-ordinator: **Sergei Sizov**

Financial resources: **€2,499,200** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€124,495** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **2** international and **36** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Project Co-ordinator continued implementing key activities in cybersecurity education and the prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization. The office also supported scaling up the number of women entrepreneurs and promoted digital entrepreneurship, as well as transparency in governance. In addition, it helped strengthen torture prevention and the fight against human trafficking.**

### **MORE CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION AND A BROADER APPROACH TO COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Continuing its work to make Uzbekistan's public more aware of and resilient to cybercrime and internet fraud, the Project Co-ordinator's office trained cyber/ICT security specialists on the tools used to identify and prevent cyberattacks. Expanding this outreach to young people, the office, together with the Atlantic Council, the US State Department and Inha University in Tashkent, brought a multi-disciplinary cyber competition to Uzbekistan, the Cyber 9/12 Strategy Challenge. A total of 22 students from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan learned from high-level cyber-professionals valuable skills in policy analysis and cyber crisis management and resolution. Working with Uzbekistan's authorities and the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department, the office of the Project Co-ordinator also continued its webinar series on trends in contemporary policing, including on crimes related to cryptocurrency and on the Dark Web criminal landscape.

Recognizing that a multi-stakeholder approach is crucial to effectively counter violent extremism and terrorism, the Project Co-ordinator's office held a series of thematic roundtables and training courses on the prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/C VERLT) that not only involved security officials but civil society institutions, such as non-governmental organizations. More than 80 participants representing the country's authorities as well as NGOs and media outlets took part, increasing their level of professionalism and strengthen their co-operation on PC/VERLT. They particularly focused their discussions on women and youth, and improved their skills in using modern multimedia and fact-checking tools.

### **SCALING UP WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN UZBEKISTAN AND BEYOND**

Promoting the economic empowerment of women, digitalization and a move towards more inclusive economic development were central targets of the Project Co-ordinator's activities in 2023. By amplifying the voices of women entrepreneurs and empowering them through meaningful and concrete projects, the office strove to contribute to a change of policy and to make a positive difference to women's lives.

One example was the support the office gave to Coozin, a start-up that gives women a digital platform to run an online cooking business. The office of the Project Co-ordinator also organized

training courses on computer literacy and digital marketing for women from rural areas in the Surkhandarya province, working with the local partners IT Park and the International Business Women Association of Uzbekistan (IBWA). Another important opportunity for women was the e-commerce market, a booming sector that allows people to tap into new business opportunities through online stores, thereby creating more income for women and helping them to reach economic independence.

In May, the Project Co-ordinator co-organized with the IBWA in the city of Termez the regional forum *E-commerce in handicraft as a driver of key changes in women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia*, which brought together 130 women entrepreneurs from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, as well as Afghan women living and working in Uzbekistan. The event gave them a platform to discuss the role information technology and digital solutions play in the development of the handicraft sector, in particular for businesswomen.

“Women always have a craft, but they often lack opportunities to introduce it to the world community. E-commerce helps overcome this problem.”

*Yagmura Kargar, a participant from Afghanistan*

“Digitalization helps promote goods, keep records of customers and, of course, increase the profit without additional advertisement.”

*Shahlo Vatanova, a participant from Tajikistan*

## **STRENGTHENING TORTURE PREVENTION**

To implement the UN Human Rights Council Resolution and OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on torture prevention and eradication, the Project Co-ordinator, in partnership with the National Human Rights Centre and the country's Ministry of Internal Affairs, organized several events in 2023 to promote a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach to torture prevention, based on the practical application of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (also known as the 'Nelson Mandela Rules') and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders ('the Bangkok Rules').

The events included a series of training courses in places of detention in Tashkent and Bukhara for 55 participants (7 women, 48 men) from five provinces of Uzbekistan, representing the Department of Correction under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. These training sessions emphasized the core principles of the Nelson Mandela Rules and their most recent revision. Other training events targeted mid- to senior-level officers managing a women's penal colony and detention centres in the country, focusing on preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence in places of deprivation of liberty. Complimenting this training series, the Project Co-ordinator's office translated into Uzbek the ODIHR publication *Preventing and Addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Places of Deprivation of Liberty*.

Together with the National Centre for Human Rights and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Project Co-ordinator's office carried out a specialized training course for 30 senior and mid-level government officials (5 women, 25 men) from the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan's parliament, the Oliy Majlis, and from other ministries and agencies, to give them a deeper understanding of how to prepare the periodic state report on the *Implementation of the Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* to the UN Committee against Torture. The participants also examined the importance of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the UNCAT.

## Presence in Albania

Acting Head of Presence: **Ambassador Bruce Berton** (until 31 December 2023)

Financial resources: **€2,981,200** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€1,317,868** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **14** international and **77** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**Together with its Albanian partners, the Presence carried on its work on strengthening the rule of law and law enforcement; fighting organized crime and weapons proliferation; combatting corruption and human trafficking; reforming electoral legislation; strengthening the Assembly's capacities; supporting freedom of opinion and expression; promoting human rights and gender equality; and empowering civil society and youth.**

## INCREASING STATE POLICE CAPACITIES IN COMBATING SYNTHETIC DRUGS TRAFFICKING

In September, the Presence organized a three-day training programme for the Albanian State Police on synthetic drugs trafficking. This formed part of its continued support to Albanian law enforcement offices to prevent and suppress the proliferation of illegal narcotics. Fourteen police investigators participated in the programme, and learned of the latest trends in production, illicit trafficking and distribution of new synthetic drugs regionally and globally. They were also introduced to the best international practices in investigating and dismantling organized crime groups involved in the illicit trafficking of synthetic drugs.

The Presence organized the programme with the support and involvement of highly experienced synthetic drugs experts from the US Drug Enforcement Administration, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon, and the Belgian Federal Police.

## SUPPORTING ALBANIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Concerns about the complex and organized nature of environmental crimes have become a challenge in Albania over the years. The annual statistics from the General Prosecution Office of Albania show an increasing trend of these cases, which demand a greater focus from legal institutions. Responding to this, the Presence supported the School of Magistrates in 2023 with the launch of a new course on environmental legislation and judicial enforcement mechanisms, in the framework of a broader project to enhance environmental governance and security in the country.

The single-semester course was approved to be delivered as part of the initial education programme for magistrate students and focused on administrative, civil and criminal aspects of international and domestic environmental legislation. It aimed to equip future prosecutors and magistrates with the knowledge and tools to address environmental challenges, enforce environmental laws and safeguard the rights of citizens who seek justice in environmental matters. The new course will impact the legal community in the long run and ensure that rule of law becomes a more powerful tool in the fight for environmental justice in Albania.

## **TRAINING JOURNALISM STUDENTS IN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING**

In October and November, the Presence and the University of Tirana's Journalism Department jointly organized a five-day workshop on reporting skills for journalism students. Goal of the training was to equip a new generation of Albanian journalists with innovative reporting techniques to give them the skills to compete in a rapidly changing media environment, and to give them an edge in finding employment. The media trainer, an international news correspondent, conveyed to a group of 16 students basic investigative journalism techniques and interviewing skills. The event, which also included practical exercises, culminated in a final critique session and an award ceremony hosted by the Presence.

## **CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR STAFF WORKING IN HIGH-SECURITY PRISONS**

Continuing its support for Albania's prison reform process begun several years ago, as well as its active promotion of detainee rights, the Presence helped organize a training seminar for 25 senior prison staff in June. Held in collaboration with Albania's General Directorate of Prisons, the training introduced the participants to the concepts, tools and skills required to manage high-risk offenders who are subject to a special regime in high-security prisons for serious crimes. The special regime – introduced in Albania in 2020 based on the Italian 41-bis model – puts several restrictions on the offenders, which, if applied improperly, may lead to violations of human rights, contrary to commitments under Albanian and international law.

The categories of offenders included in this special regime consist of individuals sentenced or awaiting trial for criminal offences related to terrorist acts, and criminal offences as part of organized criminal gangs. The training course aimed at providing prison staff specialized skills to be able to deal with the security aspects as well as the management of high-risk inmates, balancing security concerns and compliance with international human rights standards.

## **"JOURNALISM IS NOT A PROFESSION BUT A MISSION"**

### **A reporter's quest to protect the rights of journalists in Albania**

Esiona Konomi is not your average reporter. A political journalist based in Albania's capital Tirana for 15 years, she is better known as a defender of the rights of journalists and promoter of media self-regulation, while also calling for more transparency from the authorities.

"We cannot protect the rights of others if we can't protect ours in the first place," Konomi says. "We ought to point the microphones to ourselves and voice the issues media professionals face." Statements like these have put Konomi into the public spotlight as a civil society activist. Rather than sitting back and only focussing on doing her reporter job well, she would be seen waving protest signs to demand that journalists be heard.

This is just what happened in June 2021, when Konomi was protesting with other reporters in front of Albania's parliament against the Assembly's decision to prohibit journalists from participating in parliamentary activities. "Journalism is not a profession but a mission. Whenever I ask a powerful person a question, I seek to represent as much as possible citizens' concerns and the public interest," the reporter explains.

Konomi is also laying the foundations of an ambitious structure for best-standard journalism in Albania. In 2023, she led the Political Reporters' Community Practice, a forum initiated by the OSCE Presence in Albania. "We realized that whenever we faced difficulties in our work, we didn't get any support, neither from news editors or media owners nor, unfortunately, from organizations that are

supposed to protect journalists. As reporters, we could only rely on each other,” Konomi says. “Our voice wouldn’t be powerful if we didn’t stick together and for us, the OSCE became an indispensable umbrella of unification.”

With help from the OSCE, Konomi and her colleagues have been invited several times by the Assembly to put forward their proposals, some of which have been accepted. The Presence has a close and long-standing partnership with the Albanian Assembly, which has also served to increase transparency and trust between parliament and the media. As part of these efforts, the Presence organized country visits for the reporters so they could see how media access works in other European parliaments.

Another focus touches upon one of today’s most burning media issues: mis- and disinformation. Konomi is founder of ‘Spot the lie’, an initiative aimed at raising public and in particular youth awareness of disinformation. In 2023, the Presence organized a competition on fact-checking and open-source research. Konomi was on the jury that selected the winners.

## Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Head of Mission: **Ambassador Brian Aggeler**

Financial resources: **€11,682,000** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€2,573,689** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **30** international and **272** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Mission continued to work on a broad range of topics, including democratic governance and elections, human rights and education, rule of law and gender equality, security governance and co-operation, arms control and anti-terrorism work, environmental and economic activities as well as trust-building and youth engagement. Pushing ahead on its mandate, the Mission engaged with citizens and authorities at the municipal, cantonal, entity and State levels.**

### HELPING TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

Pursuing its efforts to help Bosnia and Herzegovina prevent terrorism and counter violent extremism that lead to terrorism (P/C VERLT), the Mission conducted 12 tabletop exercises on this topic that involved more than 500 participants from the country's academia, civil society, media, religious communities and the health, social protection, security and education sectors.

The participants worked on fictional scenarios that heightened their knowledge and awareness of how radicalization gradually can lead to violence, and the consequences this has for individuals, communities and entire countries. The exercises were practical and evidence-based, and focused on the challenges arising from the activities of foreign terrorist fighters and from ethno-nationalism and right-wing extremism. The participants also received training on how to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to the issue, allowing them to deal more effectively with the different manifestations of P/C VERLT.

“Projects of this nature contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, thereby enhancing the co-operation of all stakeholders engaged in implementing these critical policies.”

*Nebojša Tonković,*

*Head of Administration for Countering Terrorism and Extremism,  
Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska*

“The exercises provide a tangible and sustainable contribution to the prevention and fight against violent extremism so it does not turn into violence”.

*Psychologist Aida Ganović,  
OSCE workshop participant*

In a related development, Bosnia and Herzegovina integrated recommendations for a systemic promotion of gender equality and youth involvement into its 2021–2026 strategy for the prevention and combat of terrorism and the related action plans, a move the Mission had advocated for throughout the year.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO MANAGE WASTE

The Mission reached an important milestone in 2023 when five neighbouring municipalities in the mountainous Majevica region co-ordinated their efforts towards establishing a joint waste management system. Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country of outstanding natural beauty, also suffers from countless 'wild' waste dumps and unsanitary landfills, which poses health risks to the population and undermines the country's tourism potential. Working with local authorities and citizens, the Mission implemented a two-pronged approach to improve waste management practices: to heighten awareness and to strengthen co-operation between municipalities and between the two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

The Mission supported the five municipalities – Čelić, Lopare, Sapna, Teočak and Ugljevik – in developing an integrated, 'separation at source' waste management system. The assistance included providing technical expertise, organizing study trips for representatives of the municipalities' public utility companies to their counterparts in other cities, and commissioning a comprehensive needs assessment. As a first step, the five municipalities drafted waste management action plans, thus laying a solid basis for the next phase: pooling resources and raising funds to set up joint waste sorting facilities and buy the equipment needed for sorting and transporting waste.

## JOINT COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROJECT HELPS REBUILD TRUST

Rebuilding mutual trust, respect and understanding between people and within the country's fractured society following the 1992–1995 war continued to be a challenge. Responding to this, the Mission pursued its programme of activities to reimagine and reinvigorate peace building across the country, as previous efforts had not yielded desired or expected results.

At the core of this work was the *Možemo Bolje* ('We can do better') project, a joint endeavour of the Mission and the offices of the European Union, United Nations and Council of Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project involved 23 municipalities from both entities, which took part in a total of 15 community dialogue forums held across the country. To ensure buy-in, the project involved local mayors and municipal or city representatives, who underscored the need to join forces to further strengthen such reconciliation efforts.

The forums gave a voice to citizens, civil society organizations, local government institutions and various community groups, and helped kickstart several initiatives tailored to the unique context of each municipality. This resulted in the establishment of new collaborations between authorities and citizens, which in turn paved the way for concrete project ideas. By autumn 2023, the Mission and the United Nations had selected 44 projects to be implemented in all 23 municipalities, ranging from reconciliation initiatives and cultural exchange initiatives to plans to renovate community centres and other "bridge building" infrastructure.

## **Mission in Kosovo‡**

**Head of Office: Ambassador Michael Davenport**

Financial resources: **€17,462,600** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€745,993** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **93** international and **366** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**In 2023, the Mission continued to deliver on its mandate across its three pillars: human rights and communities, democratization, and security and public safety. Together with Kosovo institutions and civil society organizations, the Mission worked steadily on the protection and promotion of non-majority communities' rights; on strengthening the electoral framework; and on enhancing the institutional response to domestic and gender-based violence.**

### **SUPPORTING ELECTORAL REFORM AND LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

2023 marked an important step forward in the electoral reform process. Owing to the Mission's sustained advocacy efforts, coupled with technical expertise it provided, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a new law on general elections, which enhances the integrity, transparency and efficiency of the electoral process and further aligns the electoral framework with international standards and recommendations from international election observers, civil society organizations and institutions.

The Mission also continued to work with the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Elections Complaints and Appeals Panel to refine secondary legislation, consolidate the voters' list, and advocate for more women to be included in election management bodies.

To further amplify transparency and efficiency, the Mission developed a vote count and results software for the CEC, with funds from Norway and Poland.

### **IMPROVING LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Protection and promotion of the rights of non-majority communities remained at the core of the Mission's activities. Important progress included the establishment of an Office for Language Control and Harmonization (OLCH), an initiative the Mission has been involved in since 2018. This new Office has the aim to improve linguistic accuracy and harmonize legislation in both official languages, as well as to promote language and other constitutional and legal rights of all communities in Kosovo. The Mission provided technical expertise and supported a working group to prepare the necessary amendments for the Office's establishment. It also developed a concept for an extra-budgetary project to support the operationalization and functioning of the new Office.

A second major development in 2023 was the Government's decision to restart the verification of diplomas issued by the University in Mitrovica North. This was a priority for the Mission's advocacy

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<sup>‡</sup>All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

activities since 2021. Among other benefits, this decision is expected to boost the number of non-majority community students enrolling in the Mission-supported Balkanistics Study Programme at the University of Prishtina. In October, the mandate of the Commission was extended to include the verification of diplomas issued by Serbian-curriculum high schools in Kosovo.

The Mission, through the Nansen Dialogue Centre, also supported the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in developing a handbook and teachers' training programme on interculturalism, which has introduced this idea as an accepted concept in formal education in Kosovo.

### **ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL REONSE TO DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Following several years of advocacy in the fight against domestic violence by the international community, including the OSCE Mission, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a new law on domestic violence in September. As an additional tool in the fight against domestic and gender-based violence, the law is aligned with the Istanbul Convention, creating new obligations in domestic law and strengthening the legal basis of the Municipal Co-ordination Mechanisms Against Domestic Violence (MCMDVs).

The MCMDVs are comprised of municipal officers for gender equality, police, judiciary, social workers, victim advocates, judges, prosecutors, health institutions, municipal directorates for education, domestic violence shelters, and women's rights NGOs at the local level. They are tasked to co-ordinate a more effective response in domestic violence cases. Kosovo has established these mechanisms in 34 out of 38 municipalities; 22 with direct Mission support. With the support of France, the Mission also drafted Guidelines to streamline their work and make them more effective, improve their functioning, and strengthen co-ordination and support for the most vulnerable.

Jointly with the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the Mission also trained Kosovo Police in the legal and practical application of family safe interview rooms, with a view to ensuring a victim-centred approach in domestic violence cases.

## Mission to Montenegro

Head of Mission: **Ambassador Dominique Waag**

Financial resources: **€2,152,100** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€424,731** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **10** international and **27** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro](http://www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro)

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**By implementing a results-oriented programme through innovative activities, the Mission continued to support Montenegro in achieving its national policy objectives. It further strengthened police professionalism, helped address trafficking in human beings, and built capacities to prevent small arms and light weapons trafficking. It worked on addressing organized crime and on judicial reform. It also promoted democratic institutions and electoral processes, gender equality and youth engagement, and freedom of information and reliable media reporting.**

### TRAINING ON NEW SOFTWARE MAKES INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING MORE EFFICIENT

The Mission worked with its long-standing partners, the Montenegrin police, to promote the force's professionalization and strengthening of its capacities to prevent and combat serious and organized crime. One cornerstone of the Mission's work has been for years its support for intelligence-led policing, for which it organized a training on the Infostream 2 application in 2023. Infostream 2 collates data into one single database, serving as a 'one-stop shop' for analysts and police officers and providing them with time-saving access to information needed for an investigation. The application can also be used to exchange information with other databases.

One of the force's licensed trainers, Ljiljana Zejak, who also heads the Criminal Intelligence Department's Unit for Criminal Intelligence Analysis, trained 16 officers and analysts from regional security centres and the border police sector on Infostream 2. Since the installation of the application in 2009, Zejak has provided support and mentorship to her fellow officers on how to operate the application. With 29 years in the police force, and a trainer since 2008, she has conducted over 60 training courses for her colleagues.

In 2022, the Mission provided the GeoTime® software to the Criminal Intelligence Department, an application that helps with the combat of illicit trafficking and the misuse of small arms and light weapons. "This software has made an immeasurable contribution in solving the serious and organized crime cases by identifying suspects, tracing movement routes, and identifying users of 'encrypted' phones. In 2022, the software analysed evidence in 32 cases," said Zejak, whose team also trained officers on the new software.

"Intelligence analytics has always been my greatest passion. I love it."

*Ljiljana Zejak,  
Police trainer and Head of the Unit for Criminal Intelligence Analysis*

### GIVING JOURNALISTS A NEW TOOL TO COVER ELECTIONS

Montenegro's journalists had their work carved out for them during two rounds of presidential elections in March, followed by parliamentary elections in June. To support their extensive election reporting tasks, the Mission worked with representatives of media self-regulatory bodies in Montenegro to publish a *Manual on Media Reporting during Election Campaigns*. The manual

reflects OSCE commitments and international standards on media and elections, as well as Montenegro's code of ethics for journalists.

Andrijana Dabanović and Nataša Spaić, journalists writing for the widely read daily newspaper *Dan*, used the publication for different purposes. Dabanović, who had to write profiles of the parties competing in the elections, turned to the manual for its "simplicity, precision and clarity" and to help her write balanced stories that informed citizens about their election choices. Her colleague Spaić, consulted the manual for concrete tips on how a news room should be organized during an election campaign. "Although this seems simple, it is not so, and the authors of the manual warn how easy it is to fall into chaos if the newsroom is not prepared, Spaić said. "The manual included how to prepare formats, tables, photo materials and to archive materials. It emphasized that reporting on elections should not focus on personality clashes among candidates, but on candidates' positions."

#### **CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Mission continued its programme to support key democratic institutions in the country, building on long-standing partnerships with, for example, Parliament and select committees and staff to support transparency, gender mainstreaming and adoption of key reforms. In May, it organized a workshop for 15 parliamentary committees' staff members to deepen their knowledge on the practices of law making and the oversight role of Parliament. At the event, participants also discussed the role of Parliament in the context of the European Union integration, and in considering reports of independent institutions. Other priorities for the Mission were to contribute to a better and more transparent election administration, and to support the rights of people with disabilities to vote. For this, it worked with a variety of local civil society organizations, such as the Association of Youth with Disabilities.

"I thank the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, which continuously provides assistance and support to the State Election Commission, ultimately contributing to the additional improvement of its work."

*Nikola Mugoša, Chair of the State Election Commission,  
presenting the results of the 11 June parliamentary elections  
at the opening of Parliament on 27 July.*

ODHIR noted the mentioned improvements in its preliminary statement on the elections.

## **“HIT THE BALL ON THE PITCH, NOT YOUR GIRLFRIEND!”**

### **Montenegrin star footballers speak out against gender-based violence**

Fair play – we learn about it in sports and in life. And yet, fairness is not always a reality. However, as long as there are role models who have the courage to speak up, fair play has a chance in society.

Stevan Jovetić and Stefan Savić, internationally famous Montenegrin football players, are such role models. They are the public face of ‘See for yourself, you’re not a small boy!’, a public awareness campaign launched by the OSCE Mission in November, in partnership with the Football Association of Montenegro, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and the NGO Women’s Safe House. Their message to boys: “When a girl says ‘no’ and you ignore it, it’s not fair play”.

“Through the campaign, we recognize other forms of violence besides physical, because not all violence leaves bruises and injuries,” said Mersida Aljićević, Director from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare at the campaign kick-off. “Violence is persecution, harassment, sexual harassment and psychological and emotional abuse, and it is our duty to recognize it and to do everything in our power to influence every individual and prevent every form of violence against women and girls.”

The campaign features cartoon caricatures of Jovetić and Savić, drawn by Montenegrin influencer Zombijana using the language of football to connect people from all walks of life. “A relationship with a girl is like a football game, don’t be offside”, reads one of them, while others call out “We cheer against violence against women” or “Be better than violence against women”. The two star players naturally have a very large social media following, a fact the campaign exploits by sharing content with their more than 360,000 followers.

“I am sure that the participation of our most successful footballers, who are role models for young generations, will contribute to changing attitudes and creating a society with zero tolerance for violence,” said Jovana Hajduković from Women’s Safe House. Her stance is mirrored by Branko Latinović from the Football Association of Montenegro: “Our captains Savić and Jovetić were more than willing to participate and set an example to younger generations that violence in our society is absolutely unacceptable, and to draw attention to the problem faced by women and girls. Their involvement is key, they are real examples to the youth of which behaviour models to follow,” he said.

The campaign can be followed on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/vidjisam](http://www.instagram.com/vidjisam) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/vidjisam](http://www.facebook.com/vidjisam).

## Mission to Serbia

Head of Mission: **Ambassador Jan Braathu**

Financial resources: **€6,258,600** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€1,286,837** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **16** international and **107** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Mission continued to work with Serbia on building strong and effective institutions, pluralistic and professional media, and a security sector representative of its diverse population. The Mission also focused on fostering dialogue and co-operation on such issue as anti-corruption, environmental policy, education, human and minority rights, youth participation, gender equality, rule of law and regional co-operation.**

## MOVING AHEAD WITH MEDIA REFORM

Responding to a request by the Serbian Government, the Mission supported a media reform process that included the 2020–2025 Media Strategy, a guiding policy tool to improve media freedom and foster progressive media legislation and informed and well-researched policy and law-making. The Strategy comprised the 2020–2022 Action Plan, which called for the adoption of two key draft laws: on public information and media, and on electronic media.

In support of the reform process, the Mission delivered expert assistance based on international best practices, as well as evidence-based research, and facilitated inclusive and transparent debates between the media community and government representatives. It also played a unique role by providing a forum for an open and constructive dialogue on the provisions of the draft laws. On 26 October, Serbia's National Assembly adopted both laws, "a significant step in the right direction towards the regulation of the media scene in Serbia," according to the statement endorsed by all participants included in the process. As a next step, the Mission prepared plans to assist Serbia with the drafting of the bylaws and the practical implementation of the new legislation.

## AFTER MASS KILLINGS, MISSION AND AUTHORITIES STRENGTHEN PREVENTATIVE SAFETY MEASURES FOR YOUTH

In May, Serbia witnessed the two worst mass killings in its modern history. On two separate days, attackers targeted civilians in Belgrade and two neighbouring villages, leaving 17 people dead and 21 injured. After the attacks, the national authorities turned to the Mission for help in strengthening their cross-governmental preventative child safety measures. On 30 August, the Mission signed a formal agreement with the Ministries of Interior and of Education, the Equality Commissioner, the Road Traffic Safety Agency and CARITAS Serbia that outlines the mutual co-operation in implementing the project *Together and Safely through Childhood*.

This project was launched at the beginning of the 2023/24 school year in all primary schools across Serbia. The project consisted of interactive workshops that conveyed to pupils in primary school levels 5 to 8 different approaches of how to prevent violence, including peer and digital violence.

From mid-May to late June, the Mission also supported the Serbian government's national campaign calling on the population to voluntarily surrender their weapons. The campaign contributed directly

to the country's 2019–2024 Strategy for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, administered by the Ministry of Interior as an integral part of a multi-year project implemented by the Mission and funded by France, Germany, Slovakia and the European Union. The campaign resulted in the collection of 108,883 weapons, including 26,485 mines and explosive devices, and more than 4.2 million pieces of ammunition.

### **TRAINING POLICE AND PROSECUTORS TO COLLECT EVIDENCE THAT IS BOTH RELIABLE AND LAWFUL**

According to court data from 2023, almost 25 per cent of criminal cases before Serbia's Supreme Court concern the alleged use of unlawful or unreliable evidence, although the Criminal Procedure Code clearly prohibits the use of such evidence and requires it to be excluded from proceedings. To address this issue, the Mission, the Supreme Prosecutors Office, the Ministry of Interior's national forensics centre and the Judicial Academy delivered a hands-on training for 500 police forensic technicians and prosecutors. This training programme, which had started in 2019 and concluded in 2023, aimed at giving the participants the tools to more efficiently collect evidence that is lawful and also reliable. It was designed as a practical exercise that follows a guidance paper written by forensic experts with the Mission's assistance, the *Guidelines for police forensic technicians and prosecutors*. As part of the training, participants examined a mock crime scene and collected various pieces of evidence, including some originating from biological, toxicological and firearm sources.

### **"I HAVE ALWAYS CONTINUED TO FIGHT FOR EQUALITY"**

**Brankica Jankovic, Serbia's Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, reflects on her first professional aspirations and what motivated her to campaign for gender parity in the security sector.**

Reflecting on my past, I realized that even in my early childhood, I had a strong inclination to help others and champion justice.

Although my vision was not distinctly defined during that period, I was not confined by expectations either. I grew up in a village in Šumadija, where traditions held significant sway, and gender roles were rigidly established. I always had an unconventional aspiration for the time – a desire to enrol in military school.

Looking back, I believe this stemmed from a profound inner drive to demonstrate my equality with boys and assert my ability to pursue a 'traditionally male' profession.

Nevertheless, I had to confront a harsh reality because at that time it was not possible for girls to enrol at military schools. This injustice affected me deeply, leading me eventually to choose a path in law, dedicating my entire career to aiding those in need – from the elderly, individuals with disabilities and the socially disadvantaged, to anyone facing discrimination because of their personal characteristics.

A few years ago, I was reminded of my childhood wish when, as Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, I enabled girls to study at Serbia's military academy on equal terms. I am glad to say that I have always continued to fight for equality in the security sector.

I worked together with the OSCE Mission to Serbia on many such issues, for example antidiscrimination training classes for police officers. We also co-operated on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The result was the publication in 2022 of the monitoring report on the

implementation of Serbia's second National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

I am hopeful that we will continue our successful co-operation and achieve together many more positive outcomes for the benefit of a more equal security sector in Serbia, and a more equal society altogether.

## Mission to Skopje

Head of Mission: **Ambassador Kilian Wahl**

Financial resources: **€6,506,100** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€2,854,064** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **28** international and **120** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Mission intensified its efforts to strengthen the rule of law and address corruption, further social cohesion and modernize the police. It focused on the need to strengthen the justice system: from the investigation of crimes to the filing of quality indictments and improvement of court proceedings. The Mission also worked to combat transnational threats, protect human rights and media freedom and strengthen democratic governance and gender equality.**

### **IDENTIFYING CORRUPTION RISKS IN THE JUDICIARY**

The Mission partnered with the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption to publish a landmark corruption risk assessment. The first-hand accounts of the judges and prosecutors surveyed for this research explored external and internal threats to the independence of the judiciary and prosecutorial autonomy. The assessment provides a concrete roadmap to address the persistent issue of corruption and strengthen public trust in the judiciary.

“I hope that [the assessment] will significantly contribute to the implementation of legal mechanisms for an independent, accountable and open judiciary, as a prerequisite for raising public trust.”

*Judge Xhemali Saiti,  
President of the Association of Judges of North Macedonia*

A landmark development in strengthening the judicial system occurred in March with the signing of the Police-Prosecutor Protocol, an agreement between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Public Prosecutors Office to strengthen their mutual co-operation and to make the justice system more effective and efficient. The Mission played a critical role in championing the protocol from inception to its rollout in 2023 across the country.

### **SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN ENDING STATELESSNESS**

Thanks to the Mission’s strong backing, North Macedonia has made considerable steps forward to ending statelessness: from over 700, the number of unregistered people has dropped to a handful of complex cases in 2023. The Mission supported the adoption of amendments to the respective legislation and rolled out training for administrative staff on how to apply the new laws.

Working closely with the Commission for Political System and Inter-Community Relations, UNHCR and civil society in the country, the Mission also closely monitored and advised institutions on how to speed up registration and deal with complex cases. As a result, North Macedonia has gained experience on this critical issue that it can share effectively with other countries in the region.

## WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY TO BETTER COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Engaging with a broad cross-section of society, the Mission helped introduce the National Strategies for Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and facilitated discussions on their implementation. These discussions demonstrated that the previously prevailing taboo on discussing violent extremism has largely lifted since all participants engaged in productive conversations about how to identify and prevent radicalization within communities.

In Veles, students participated in another training in November on how to more effectively counter extremism. They discussed national security issues and visited key institutions to improve their knowledge and understanding of the national security structures. Highlights included visiting the country's Special Antiterrorist Unit to discuss counter-terrorism responses and observe an inter-agency civil emergency exercise led by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Students came away from the programme with a better understanding of the mechanisms of radicalization and how each institution plays its role in preventing, identifying and responding to violent extremism.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY ACROSS NORTH MACEDONIA

**For the first time, the Mission expanded the concept of integrated classrooms with Macedonian and Albanian pupils to schools outside of the capital Skopje.** At Goce Delcev Primary School in Tetovo, for example, two teachers instructed together in both languages, teaching their pupils English, physical education, natural sciences and art at several grade levels. By working together in mixed groups on class projects, the pupils forged friendships and a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and languages. The Mission supported this project, titled "Building New Bridges", at 13 other such schools throughout the country.

Another project involved secondary grade students and aimed at explaining the roots of extremism and promoting positive inter-ethnic contacts between the participants. At the Mission's *United4Change* seminar, the students discussed media literacy, stereotypes, prejudices, gender-based violence and gender equality, and peer violence. To find solutions and counter the forces that keep people and communities apart, the students focused on the use of creative thinking, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and promoting the active participation of youth.

## **“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO NOT GIVE UP”**

### **Interview with Suza Trajkovska, Head of the Police Training Centre in Skopje**

*Until recently, women in North Macedonia represented only a small fraction of uniformed police officers, and not more than a handful were in management positions. Suza Trajkovska has successfully broken through this glass ceiling. Since 2022, she heads the Police Training Centre in Skopje and serves as an Assistant Minister within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.*

#### **What inspired you to pursue a career in policing?**

Police work is a noble but also difficult profession. This inspired me to progress in my career, from being a regular police officer to where I am now, and to inspire and help other colleagues. Equally important for me was to challenge the stereotypes regarding this profession, and to show that women can do policing work as well as men.

#### **Have you noticed any changes in the stereotypes regarding women in the police?**

When I started 22 years ago, there were far fewer women in the police, and no women in managerial positions. Today, women are heads of departments and chiefs of units.

#### **How did the lack of women in leadership affect you when you entered the police?**

It wasn't easy – 90 per cent of the police force were men. When I was up for promotion as chief of unit, the first questions I was asked were: Could I handle the pressure of working at this position as a woman? Could I deal with the tasks that come with this position? But these questions did not demotivate me; rather on the contrary, they motivated me to fight on for a managerial function.

#### **What are your experiences with the OSCE Mission's Gender Mentoring Programme?**

I was part of the first generation of the programme in 2016. At first it was foreseen that the Mission would only support the first two generations, but then it continued into the fourth generation. It was agreed that the third generation would be run by seven trainers, including myself. We took part in a training-of-trainers course and are now working on taking over the programme.

Through the programme, we achieved an increase in our self-confidence and learned how to network within the police. We also got to know each other better and shared our experiences with each other. However, the most important thing is that we are able to help younger police officers to succeed in this profession, and to not give up.

## **INSTITUTIONS**

The OSCE includes three institutions dedicated to specialized areas of work: the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights promotes democratic standards and human rights; the High Commissioner on National Minorities uses quiet diplomacy and early action to seek resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace and security; and the Representative on Freedom of the Media monitors media developments and provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom.

## Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Director: **Matteo Mecacci**

Financial resources: **€16,394,000** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€8,432,033** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **81** international and **65** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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

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[OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights \(ODIHR\): Overview | LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/osce-office-for-democratic-institutions-and-human-rights-odihr/)

**As one of the main OSCE institutions focusing on the human dimension of security, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) helps ensure that every individual across the OSCE region is able to enjoy the rights and freedoms enshrined in the OSCE commitments. The Office supports participating States in strengthening democracy and the rule of law, increasing respect for human rights, and in building tolerant and inclusive societies across the OSCE region.**

“As our region continues to face serious security issues, OSCE countries need to redouble their efforts to uphold and protect human rights and democratic standards. This is the time to strengthen, not weaken the defence of human rights and democratic aspirations.”

*ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci*

### ODIHR REPORT REFLECTS 20 YEARS OF WORK ON ROMA AND SINTI ISSUES

In 2023, the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area marked its 20th anniversary. Coinciding with this, ODIHR published the [Fourth Status Report](#), a comprehensive account of activities by OSCE participating States on the persistent challenges in meeting the objectives of the Action Plan in the past five years. It also made recommendations on how to address priority concerns. It detailed how various actors had stepped up their efforts to address Roma and Sinti issues, in particular by developing and implementing equality policies, demonstrating good practices and making visible progress on local and national initiatives. However, the Status Report also underlined the continued, and sometimes growing, manifestations of anti-Roma racism and discrimination, and showed that Roma and Sinti continue to have limited opportunities for equitable participation in public and political life and still struggle to access quality education, employment opportunities, health care and housing.

### NEW E-COURSE TO BETTER INCLUDE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

ODIHR launched an [eLearning course](#) on promoting the political participation of people with disabilities in November at the Oireachtas, the Irish Parliament. The event marked Ireland's huge stride towards comprehensive integration of people with disabilities in the political process, affirming its dedication to democratic excellence and the principles of universal representation. The e-course offers tips, tools and good practices to mitigate common barriers people with disabilities face in accessing political and public life. It also mainstreams disability rights throughout parliaments and political parties. The course content is available to all parliaments and political parties in the OSCE region and the public on the [OSCE e-learning platform](#).

## **BUSIEST YEAR TO DATE FOR ELECTION OBSERVERS**

ODIHR continued to provide independent and impartial election observation to promote democratic values and support democratic rights and freedoms. The Office deployed 18 Needs Assessment Missions, which helped optimize limited resources to provide OSCE participating States the best possible assistance. In total, more than 2000 election observers monitored 18 elections in 16 countries.

Maintaining its commitment to transparency, ODIHR published 61 election-related reports, which offered assessments and recommendations to participating States for enhancing their election processes. The Office also published a [Handbook for the Observation of Election Administration](#).

Upon request, ODIHR also assisted 14 participating States in implementing recommended improvements, supporting the continuous refinement and evolution of electoral practices in the OSCE region.

## **2023 ELECTIONS WITH ODIHR OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES**

Presidential Election

13 and 14 January 2023, Czech Republic, EET

Parliamentary Elections

26 March 2023, Turkmenistan, EAM

Early Parliamentary Elections

19 March 2023, Kazakhstan, EOM

Presidential Election

19 March and 2 April 2023, Montenegro, EOM

Parliamentary Elections

5 March 2023, Estonia, EET

General Elections,

14 May 2023, Türkiye, EOM

Presidential Election, Second Round

28 May 2023, Türkiye, EOM

Early Parliamentary Elections

21 May 2023, Greece, EAM

Local elections

14 May 2023, Albania, EOM

Early Parliamentary Elections

2 April 2023, Bulgaria, EOM

Early Parliamentary Elections

30 September 2023, Slovakia, EAM

Early Presidential Election  
9 July 2023, Uzbekistan, EOM

Early Parliamentary Elections  
11 June 2023, Montenegro, EOM

Parliamentary elections  
15 October 2023, Poland, LEOM

Federal Assembly Elections  
22 October 2023, Switzerland, EET

Local Elections  
5 November 2023, Moldova, EOM

Early Parliamentary Elections 2023  
17 December 2023, Serbia, EOM

LEOM — limited election observation mission

EOM — election observation mission

EET — election expert team

EAM — election assessment mission

RAM — referendum assessment mission

## **STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICING IN UZBEKISTAN**

As part of a joint training programme for law enforcement officers in Uzbekistan, ODIHR and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan continued to train local police officers and prosecutors on how to better protect human rights while countering terrorism, and thereby tackle related security threats more effectively. This year's courses were held in Urgench and Bukhara. It was the second time national trainers from the State Law University and the National Human Rights Centre delivered such courses, together with ODIHR and an international police trainer.

Since 2018, over 100 officers have taken part in seven similar courses. In 2021, ODIHR and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator held a training-of-trainers to build a pool of national experts to facilitate the training sessions. The continuous involvement of national trainers in the latest series of workshops not only harnesses their specific expertise but also supports local ownership and creates opportunities to work together in the future on human rights and counter-terrorism training.

“Human rights education for everyone working in law enforcement needs to be a priority to foster effective responses to terrorism and ensure greater security for all.”

*Qodirjon Obidov,  
national trainer and lead specialist at the  
International Department of the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan*

ODIHR created an online course on Trauma-Informed Interviewing: Skills and Techniques for Monitors to support human rights defenders who conduct monitoring in conflict and non-conflict situations. It is available in English, Ukrainian and Russian on ODIHR's FreedomLab platform for Human Rights Defenders.

ODIHR created an online course on *Trauma-Informed Interviewing: Skills and Techniques for* “[...] too often, [monitors] do not consider the impact of their technically conceptual questions on traumatized individuals. This course helped me not only with approaching my interviews with more confidence, but also with learning strategies to minimize harm.”

*Course participant*

## **HIGHLIGHTING DEFENCE LAWYERS’ ROLES IN DEATH PENALTY CASES**

In February, ODIHR co-organized a side event at the 52nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to raise awareness of the important but difficult role of defence lawyers in death penalty cases. The event, organized together with the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute and the Belgian Permanent Mission to the UN, drew on ODIHR’s 2022 Death Penalty Background Paper.

## **POLISH AND UKRAINIAN YOUTH FORGE MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES**

As part of its response to the military attack in Ukraine, ODIHR organized workshops, under the Youth for Inclusion project, for Polish and Ukrainian youth in seven cities in Poland, equipping 107 young people with the knowledge, insights and skills needed to forge more equal, inclusive and cohesive societies. Launched in December 2022, ODIHR trained and coached young participants on how to develop youth-designed, local activities to strengthen solidarity and respect for diversity. By the end of 2023, the workshop participants had completed 30 activities, including an interactive art clinic in Kraków for Polish and Ukrainian women, workshops in Warsaw on recognizing bias, and an art installation in Gdańsk. The activities concluded in December with a conference to celebrate the participants’ achievements, share lessons learned and identify future initiatives to foster inclusion and social cohesion.

## **TRAINING JUDGES IN UKRAINE ON INTERNATIONAL LAW CASES**

ODIHR has become an important platform for interaction between judges from Ukraine and other OSCE participating States, advancing justice and fair trial principles during hearings that assess alleged war crimes in Ukraine. In October, ODIHR held a seminar in Warsaw on the application of norms of international humanitarian and international criminal law in adjudicating war crimes cases in Ukraine. Twenty-five judges from Ukraine’s Supreme Court and first-instance and appeal courts received training on identifying elements of international crime, applying international humanitarian and international criminal law in domestic jurisdictions, the procedural challenges of evidence admissibility, the treatment of prisoners of war, and how to draft verdicts. Participants discussed the experience of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the rules of procedure of the International Criminal Court.

## **TACKLING TRAFFICKING OF UKRAINIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

ODIHR organized training for 275 civil society and frontline responders from 42 countries, leading to the creation of a co-ordination platform that helps users to refer potential trafficking victims between countries and to support their identification. Users also discussed ongoing issues and trends in the OSCE region regarding the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees to trafficking on the platform. Co-ordination of users via the platform helped prevent several trafficking cases, while others could be referred to law enforcement.

ODIHR also published a [survey](#) that provides empirical data on the vulnerability of Ukrainian women refugees and their children to trafficking in human beings. The publication was widely used by OSCE

participating States, international governmental and civil society organizations in supporting this specific group of people.

#### **“IF NOT NOW, WHEN?”**

#### **Five women from different backgrounds join forces to overcome violence against women**

Aneta, Marija, Mersiha, Neda and Tanja: five women, five different stories. All are from North Macedonia and have lived their lives without ever saying more than “hello” to each other. Until CHANGE came along. ODIHR’s eponymous CHANGE project aims to advance gender equality, women’s human rights and women’s safety. For the five women, meeting at a CHANGE event on ways to engage male allies, held in Skopje in July, was a watershed moment.

Two of the women teach at the theology university in Skopje. The other three are civil society and feminist activists. All five are connected by one desire: to reverse the gender backlash. At the CHANGE event, they realized that they are all in fact working towards the same objective, only from different angles and starting from different places. Whether from a freedom of religion or belief or from a gender perspective, every one of them is working to address violence against women, to support diversity, contribute to women’s empowerment and engage male allies for gender equality.

“We have to join up these ‘dots of connection’ between each of us if we want to contribute to a more peaceful and better world”, Neda says. Mersiha is more straightforward: “Each of us can make a change, we just need to dare to start!”

The five women are connectors, bridges in their respective communities who are trying to change the status quo with their good will and their energy to collaborate for women’s rights and against violence against women. Aneta, Marija and Mersiha bring leaders on board in their respective religious communities, encouraging them to send a clear message against violence against women. Neda and Tanja work with women victims and focus on the gender mainstreaming of policies. While they are both feminists and came to the CHANGE event with their specific views regarding women in religion, they have now begun working on communicating the fact that there are women and men who oppose violence against women, while being primarily focused on freedom of religion or belief.

“If we are to succeed in articulating a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for endurance, we must work where we can maximize women’s resources and minimize the roadblocks that either our religious or secular efforts may offer”, Aneta says. “This is our challenge. It is also our sacred obligation. If not now, when?”

## High Commissioner on National Minorities

High Commissioner: **Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

Financial resources: **€3,504,000** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€885,479** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **19** international and **15** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/hcnnm](http://www.osce.org/hcnnm)

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**The High Commissioner on National Minorities provides early warning and takes early action at the first sign of escalating tensions involving national minorities in the OSCE region. During this 30th anniversary year, High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov continued using quiet diplomacy to promote the benefits of integration with respect for diversity throughout the OSCE region. Empowering minority women and youth and reducing statelessness were priority areas.**

### NEW PUBLICATION FOCUSES ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES

A society in which every national minority can thrive, have influence and be empowered has the greatest resilience against conflict and therefore the best chance to prosper. At the 30th anniversary event in October, the High Commissioner presented a publication that outlines the steps needed to realize this vision: the *Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life*. This is the tenth publication in the High Commissioner's series of HCNM Guidelines and Recommendations. It offers practical tools to governments and policymakers on how to ensure the social and economic participation of national minority communities at different levels and in various settings in their diverse societies.

### ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS TO MOVE FORWARD ON NATIONAL MINORITY CONCERNS

High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov continued to identify new opportunities for co-operation by reaching out to a broad array of partners with whom he shared complementary approaches on conflict prevention and fresh ways to address the evolving challenges relating to national minorities. Statelessness, as an example, is a growing challenge for many participating States and one that disproportionately affects minority groups, particularly the Roma. As part of his commitment to prevent and address statelessness in the OSCE region, High Commissioner Abdrakhmanov signed a landmark memorandum of understanding with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in June; co-organized a regional conference on *Access to Civil Documentation and Prevention of Statelessness in South-Eastern Europe* with UNHCR, the OSCE Chairpersonship and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Skopje in October; and made a five-year pledge with ODIHR to continue to build capacity and exchange good practices on statelessness, including co-organizing one annual joint activity on statelessness together with UNHCR.

In June, the High Commissioner achieved another milestone with the first online collection of key OSCE and Council of Europe National Minority Standards launched jointly with the Council of Europe.

### CULTIVATING A SENSE OF BELONGING BY ADVOCATING FOR RESPECTFUL INTEGRATION

The hallmark of an inclusive society is a strong sense of belonging, regardless of gender, ethnicity or age. During a series of visits to the participating States, the High Commissioner continuously promoted the importance of integration with respect for diversity, combined with ensuring the participation of national minorities in all aspects of society.

Initiatives to enhance participation included the first Public Administration School for Minority Youth in Moldova, developed jointly with the Institute for European Policies and Reforms; the tenth edition of the Regional School of the Central Asia Education Programme in Almaty, Kazakhstan on *Mother-Tongue Education: The Path to Quality Assurance and Social Inclusion*; and the publication of the High Commissioner's Recommendations on Social and Economic Participation. The latter enriched discussions at a joint round table held with the UN Office at Geneva on *Promoting Conflict Prevention through the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Minorities* by explaining the importance of including minority women, youth and the elderly in social and economic life.

#### **TIME TO REFLECT: 30 YEARS OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES**

Anniversaries are an ideal moment to reflect and take stock. The 30th anniversary of the High Commission on National Minorities' office first opening its doors in The Hague presented such an opportunity. Following a series of events and panel discussions during the year with the 2023 OSCE Chair, the United Nations offices in New York and Geneva, the Council of Europe, the European Centre on Minority Issues and others, the office held a high-level anniversary event at the Peace Palace in The Hague in October. The common thread running through the reflections was the dedication of the six successive High Commissioners to promote inclusive societies and the important role of HCNM within the OSCE's security landscape. The High Commissioners emphasized the continued relevance of promoting the integration of diverse societies as a way to prevent conflict, especially through the advice offered to participating States through the thematic Guidelines and Recommendations.

## Representative on Freedom of the Media

Representative: **Teresa Ribeiro**

Financial resources: **€1,608,800** (Provisional Expenditure Authorization), **€885,524** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **14** international and **5** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media](http://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media)

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[The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media | YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@OSCE_RFoM)

[OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media | Telegram](https://t.me/oscerfom)

**Media freedom in the OSCE region continued to deteriorate in 2023. The Representative's activities were dedicated to confronting threats to media freedom: two regional media conferences emphasized the OSCE's commitment to strengthen democracy by defending media freedom; and three new, innovative tools helped enhance journalists' safety and investigate the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on freedom of expression.**

## SOUTH-EAST EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA CONFERENCES ADDRESS MEDIA CHALLENGES

Two pivotal conferences addressed critical challenges in the media landscape: the ninth South East Europe Media Conference, held in Skopje in May; and the 24th Central Asia Media Conference in Bishkek, held in July. Titled *At a Crossroads: Safeguarding Media Freedom to Protect Democracy*, both events brought together over 160 and 120 participants, respectively, from the region, including journalists, legal experts and civil society representatives.

Among other issues, the events focused on the challenges of the digital era, emphasizing the importance of independent journalism and the security of journalists for functioning democracies. Discussions delved into the improvement of media professionals' safety and their working conditions, including the impact of legal harassment, AI's influence on freedom of expression, enhanced media freedom literacy, and the necessity of media self-regulation.

Specific attention was given to the interlink between media freedom and democratic governance and technological shifts in journalism. The conferences also highlighted the need for media pluralism and the inclusion of diverse voices, particularly from women journalists.

## NEW RESOURCES FOR JOURNALISTS DEVELOPED

The Representative developed three key resources to enhance journalists' safety and uphold freedom of expression.

The Safety of Journalists toolbox, using material put together during seven thematic round tables, provides a comprehensive collection of good and innovative practices and resources. Tailored to various contexts, it equips state authorities, media and civil society with tools to implement OSCE commitments and develop journalist safety plans.

As a result of the Representative's long-standing work on the Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO) campaign, the office presented new Guidelines for Monitoring Online Violence against Female Journalists, which aim to help identify key indicators and metrics signalling an escalation of

online violence against women journalists, and ultimately to be able to predict and prevent future attacks.

A third new tool developed in 2023 was the Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression (#SAIFE) resource hub, which, enriched with expert contributions, includes a policy manual and guidelines for mitigating harm caused by AI and aims to ensure that the use of it supports freedom of expression and benefits society.

#### **OVER 150 INTERVENTIONS ON MEDIA FREEDOM**

In 2023, the Representative intervened in more than 150 instances in the OSCE participating States, either through direct intervention or quiet diplomacy. Her actions reflected an acute awareness of this difficult environment and underscored the necessity for participating States to adhere to OSCE commitments to ensure the safety of journalists and the freedom of the press. The Representative's continued efforts to foster dialogue, enhance journalist safety and promote media freedom underscored the importance of working towards a future in which media freedom is the norm, not the exception.

## **SECRETARIAT**

The OSCE Secretariat, based in Vienna, assists the Organization's Chairpersonship and participating States and carries out programmatic work in support of OSCE commitments. It also supports the Organization's field activities; maintains relations with international and non-governmental organizations; and provides conference, language, administrative, financial, personnel and ICT services.

## **Office of the Secretary General**

Acting Director: **Ambassador Luca Frattini** (until August 2023), **Patrick O'Reilly** (August 2023 onwards)

Financial resources: **€11,446,200<sup>§</sup>** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€958,000** (additional provisional expenditure authorization), **\*\* €515,179** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **47** international and **57** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/secretariat](http://www.osce.org/secretariat)

**The Office of the Secretary General supports co-ordination and collaboration across the OSCE and provides central services for all executive structures of the Organization. It also manages OSCE programmes and has a policy advisory function for the Chair and the Secretary General.**

### **PROVIDING POLICY ADVICE AND GREATER OUTREACH**

The Office's Executive Management team supported the OSCE Chair and the Secretary General with policy advice as well as in preparing meetings, statements, speeches and official travel. The team also ensured effective co-ordination of activities with other Secretariat departments and executive structures, facilitating a whole-of-OSCE approach.

The team of the Communications and Media Relations Section continued to build effective relations in support of the Secretariat and OSCE field operations. The team strengthened its focus on messaging, campaigns and especially social media to promote the OSCE's programmes and activities and the positive impact they have on people in the region. It continued to focus on elevating the importance of communications with key stakeholders and, in doing so, ensured that senior management received timely strategic advice. This resulted in greater engagement on the social media platforms LinkedIn (247 per cent increase) and Instagram (134 per cent increase), as well as an eight per cent increase in followers overall from 2022 to 2023.

The External Co-operation Section supported the Secretary General and programmatic departments in maintaining and enhancing relationships with, the Macedonian Chairmanship, international and regional organizations, as well as Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. This is a significant aspect of the OSCE's work, given the unique strengths that different organizations can leverage in shaping complementary approaches to global challenges.

### **CENTRAL SERVICES CONTINUE SUPPORT OF THE OSCE'S DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS**

The Office's central services include Conference and Language Services, Security Management, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Documentation Centre in Prague.

Throughout 2023, Conference and Language Services continued to provide meeting and language support to the delegations of OSCE participating States, the Chair and OSCE executive structures. In total, it organized 1,800 meetings in blended, in-person and fully virtual formats, 150 of which involved interpretation. It distributed just under 10,000 documents and provided for the safe and effective conduct of the day-to-day business of OSCE delegates at the Hofburg meeting premises in Vienna.

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<sup>§</sup>Includes financial resources of Gender Section

<sup>\*\*</sup>According to Permanent Council decision 1462

Security Management provided continuous support to the Crisis Management Team (CMT – a designated team convened by the Secretary General within the Secretariat in the event of a major emergency affecting the OSCE) and Security Management Team (SMT – a designated team established in an OSCE executive structure, advising on security management-related matters) in preparing and implementing security risk assessments and security across the OSCE region. Security Management also processed travel requests and contributed to the work of the Joint Analysis and Operations Centre (convened to support the CMT and the Secretary General in crisis management activities in the OSCE area by providing situational awareness and other relevant information). Security Management continued to support all OSCE executive structures by reviewing and endorsing their mandatory security requirements, providing security advice and carrying out technical security training.

The Office of Legal Affairs continued to deliver centralized advice to the OSCE Secretary General, Chair and all executive structures on all legal issues affecting the OSCE. These included interpreting the regulatory framework; handling administrative appeals and complaints; advising on host country arrangements, privileges and immunities issues, dispute settlement, tenders and negotiations of complex contracts; and reviewing administrative policies; along with other ad hoc requests for advice.

Preserving and sharing the OSCE's institutional memory is the central task of the Documentation Centre in Prague. The Centre hosted researchers from the OSCE region and Partners for Co-operation, and strengthened co-operation with the professional archival and information management community. As part of its outreach programming, the Centre gave lectures on the OSCE's history and the CSCE/OSCE Archives at the George Washington University and at thematic conferences in Strasbourg and Prague. It also delivered a regular series of presentations for young diplomats, students and trainees, and launched a new training course for OSCE staff on how to efficiently manage records.

The Office of the Secretary General launched a project to provide sustainability to OSCE's efforts to work with and for youth, including by promoting youth dialogues and intergenerational interactions with policy makers. In 2023, two regional 'OSCE Model' events were organized, respectively with a focus on Western Europe and Central Asia, as well as the OSCE-wide Youth Forum. The initiatives aimed to build confidence and links among young people with different backgrounds, and empower them by enhancing their knowledge and skills on OSCE principles, values and processes which they can apply and promote in their respective professional, political and civic engagement roles. The interaction also enables youth to share their perspectives on security issues and to foster mutual learning and development of their communities.

## Conflict prevention

Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre: **Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä** (until 15 October 2023), Acting Directors **Catherine Fearon** and **Małgorzata Twardowska** (alternating until year end)

Financial resources: **€5,239,700** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€6,966,526** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **50** international and **86** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/conflict-prevention](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/conflict-prevention)

**The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) is the main contact point on matters concerning OSCE field operations. It addresses all phases of the conflict cycle by providing policy, programming and operational guidance and advice, including in the areas of early warning, crisis response and efforts to find lasting political settlements to existing conflicts. The CPC is at the core of the OSCE's politico-military work and assists participating States with the implementation of associated confidence- and security-building measures. It also provides Organization-wide support on programmatic work and project management.**

## SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE OSCE REGION, FROM SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE TO CENTRAL ASIA

In South-Eastern Europe in 2023, the CPC remained at the forefront of the OSCE's Regional Trial Monitoring initiative, in its third year of implementation. This endeavour involves monitoring nearly 300 cases related to organized crime and corruption. The project's comprehensive reports provide insights into pervasive systemic challenges, including in effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. These insights helped to empower evidence-based policy-making to foster a transformative justice system reform.

In the South Caucasus, the CPC supported the Chairman-in-Office's Special Representative serving as Co-Chair of the Geneva International Discussions (GID – the format dealing with the consequences of the 2008 armed conflict in Georgia) and co-facilitator of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Ergneti. In the GID, a CPC representative co-moderated, with the EU and UN, the working group on humanitarian affairs. The CPC also continued to support, within its mandate and existing efforts, advancing sustainable peace in the Armenian-Azerbaijani context.

Co-ordinating the OSCE's response to the impacts of the situation in Afghanistan in Central Asia remained a key role for the CPC in 2023. Through co-ordinating Secretary General's initiated repository programme "*Response to the Implications of Afghanistan in the OSCE Region*", of 35 extra-budgetary projects, the CPC helps to address the most pressing threats facing the region as a result of the Taliban takeover in 2021.

The two OSCE flagship learning centres in the Central Asia region, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, continued their successful activities, providing high-quality education to young Central Asians and to mid- to senior-level border professionals from across the OSCE region, respectively.

Working closely with the extra-budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU) and other Secretariat departments, CPC helped to co-ordinate overall OSCE programmatic activities in Ukraine. The SPU implemented 20 projects with its 27 national partners, and efforts focused on helping to mitigate the effects of war on Ukrainians and on supporting the resilience of the country's democracy and rule of law institutions. They were supported by contributions of 31 participating

States and Partners for Co-operation. The CPC also continued to support conflict-resolution efforts by the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for the Transnistrian Settlement Process. This work included support to the Chairman-in-Office's visit in February.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLITICO-MILITARY COMMITMENTS CONTINUES**

Via the OSCE Communications Network, the CPC facilitated the secure exchange of military and cyber/ICT-security-related information and reported on the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), thereby supporting the analysis of military data exchanged by participating States. The CPC also continued developing the OSCE Information Management and Reporting System, a database-driven geographical application to enhance such analysis.

The CPC's Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) Support Unit continued to assist the participating States with the implementation of the mandate of the FSC. The CSBMs agreed upon under this mandate include documents that regulate small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA), the Vienna Document 2011, the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, and matters related to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (as outlined in UNSCR 1540).

The CPC also finalized the development of the OSCE's programme to reduce the risks of the illicit trafficking and uncontrolled spread of SALW, ammunition and explosives to and from Central Asia, stemming from the instability in Afghanistan. The OSCE developed eight extra-budgetary projects totalling around €24 million, in close co-operation with the border security management authorities and respective ministries of defence of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The projects included a programme of training courses, the first of which took place in Kyrgyzstan, on physical security and conventional ammunition, in November; and in Uzbekistan on combatting the illicit trafficking of SALW, ammunition and explosives, in December.

### **STRENGTHENING BIOLOGICAL SAFETY AND SECURITY IN UKRAINE**

The OSCE continued to support Ukraine's national authorities in strengthening the country's biosafety and biosecurity. Working with its Ukrainian counterparts, the OSCE ran a training-of-trainers course for laboratory personnel dealing with hazardous biological materials to enable them to train other scientists on a special OSCE-developed course on biosafety and biosecurity. The training consisted of 11 interactive modules, case studies and practical exercises. It provided a dynamic platform for participants to establish long-lasting professional relationships, to enable continuous improvement and to keep up-to date on the latest biosafety standards.

### **RECORD NUMBER OF APPLICANTS FOR 2023 OSCE PEACE AND SECURITY SCHOLARSHIP**

In total, 150 participants (85 per cent women) took part in the online 2023 OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security course, which took place from 29 May to 28 July. The course taught conflict prevention, resolution and management, and post-conflict rehabilitation through the lens of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation towards building confidence and security in the OSCE area. Organized in co-operation with other Vienna-based international organizations—including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, and the Wassenaar Arrangement—the programme focused on the OSCE's politico-military instruments.

In November, 42 women graduates from 36 participating States and one Partner for Co-operation participated in a one-week in-person training in Vienna. They learned about the work of international organizations on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of conventional

“The whole training exceeded my expectations [and I am] more than sure that this all will be absolutely beneficial in my professional future! Hope this is not the end of our experience with the OSCE and looking forward to more new opportunities for women.”

*Gulnar from Turkmenistan*

weapons and weapons of mass destruction, as well as the practical implementation of related commitments.

“The OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security, with its online summer part and in-person week [...] has comprehensively enriched my expertise in the arms control architecture in Europe and globally. This experience has definitely become a valuable step in my professional development.”

*Kateryna from Ukraine*

## **ASSESSING MONTENEGRO’S K9 POLICE UNITS TO STRENGTHEN FIGHT AGAINST ARMS AND AMMUNITION TRAFFICKING**

In March, the CPC visited Montenegro to assess the country’s Special Purpose Police and Border Police canine units (K9). Participants included the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, French Gendarmerie, and relevant OSCE experts and beneficiaries. The overall goal of the visit was to support the Montenegrin police’s efforts to fight the illicit trafficking of SALW and of conventional ammunition.

The experts assessed the country’s legislative framework and the management and organizational requirements of the police’s service structure, as well as the human resource management, infrastructure requirements, training requirements and standards for handlers and police dogs. They also looked at K9 information management and communication issues. While benefiting the Montenegrin police, the assessment provided a valuable baseline for the OSCE to consider the scope and magnitude of future assistance in this field.

## **TRAINING FOR DOG HANDLERS IN UKRAINE ADDRESSES ARMS AND AMMUNITION SMUGGLING**

Detection or sniffer dogs are indispensable for tackling the illicit cross-border trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives. In Ukraine, the OSCE and the Spanish Guardia Civil organized a specialized course for K9 instructors from the State Border Guard Service and the State Customs Service to train them in product scent detection. The course took place at the Guardia Civil Dog Training Centre in Madrid from March to July and was designed based on the European methodology of K9 team training, focused on threats posed by weapons, ammunition and explosives.

## **FURTHERING WORK ON THE CONFLICT CYCLE**

The CPC continued to provide situational awareness and early warning analysis to the Secretary General and the OSCE Chair. Conflict cycle work focussed on new technological tools for early warning, early action and crisis management; reconciliation; the climate/security nexus; protecting

displaced persons, in co-operation with UNHCR; strengthening women's participation in law enforcement in Central Asia; and training young future leaders on good governance in the security sector.

The Centre also started mapping OSCE dialogue activities in the field to develop recommendations that will strengthen their effectiveness and sustainability. Alongside support to high-level mediation processes, the Centre provided tailored capacity-building on mediation and dialogue for staff of the missions in Kosovo, Skopje and Bishkek, and continued its mediation mentoring programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL READINESS**

In March and October, the CPC facilitated training for OSCE staff (conducted by the Austrian Armed Forces International Centre) in hostile environment awareness (HEAT). To prepare staff to handle field security challenges the courses included sessions on mines and unexploded ordnance; field communication; checkpoint, convoy and evacuation procedures; stress management; as well as practical exercises on patrolling, hostile environment driving, aggressive behaviour at checkpoints and conduct after capture.

To improve OSCE early action capabilities, the CPC established a 'Strategic Asset Reserve', a pool of critical assets, including vehicles, and communications, medical and safety equipment. With this equipment, an OSCE team of up to 24 members can deploy at short notice for crisis response.

To prepare for crisis response, the CPC updated its 'SIMEX' table-top crisis simulation exercises for OSCE field operations, integrating operational and security lessons learned. The updated SIMEX will be tailored to the mandates and requirements of each OSCE field operation, with rollout to start in 2024.

### **STRONGER DEMAND FOR PROGRAMMING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

Responding to an increasing trend for extra-budgetary project and programme level planning, the CPC provided programming and project management support to the Secretariat and field operations, overseeing a portfolio of 209 active extra-budgetary projects representing a value of €339 million (as of October 2023).

### **REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE CLOSES WITH 36,000 DISPLACED PERSONS RECEIVING NEW HOMES**

"It's about people". Hardly anything manifests better this motto of the 2023 OSCE Chairpersonship than the success of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP) in South-Eastern Europe. Eleven years after it was launched in Sarajevo, almost 36,000 of the region's most vulnerable displaced persons have finally found a home. Still grappling with the scars of the conflicts that ravaged the region more than 20 years ago, four RHP partner countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia – pledged their commitment to respect the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons. The OSCE threw its full support behind the RHP, recognizing its crucial role in addressing the legacy of the conflicts left behind in a region where the Organization has maintained field operations since the early 1990s.

Nuriz and Senada Mehmedović are two beneficiaries of the Programme. After they escaped the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they were constantly forced to move from one low-quality accommodation to another. They ultimately settled in an abandoned, barely habitable residence

near Tuzla. Years later, they learned of the RHP and applied for housing. *“When the city officials called us, I simply could not believe that we had been selected for an apartment. It was beyond comprehension,”* Senada said in an interview in January 2022.

The OSCE field operations in three of the four partner countries – the Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia – played a central role in the Programme. Collaborating closely with their strategic partner, the UNHCR, they supported the selection process, ensuring that only the most vulnerable were selected and that the sustainability of the provided solutions was guaranteed. As part of the OSCE’s broad support for the RHP since the beginning, the Conflict Prevention Centre assumed an overall co-ordination role, representing the OSCE at the various RHP co-ordination bodies while co-operating closely with the mission staff in the field.

In 2023, the year of its official closure, the RHP achieved a significant milestone: almost 11,300 durable housing solutions had been provided to beneficiaries. At a high-level closing conference fittingly held in Sarajevo on 29 November and attended by European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, and OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid, the RHP was roundly declared a success. *“Our house is not just a home, but a symbol of hope and resilience,”* Janja Ždrnja from Serbia said at the event. *“We have finally created a space where our children will be able to dream freely and build their own paths to success without the worries of previous years.”* In a video message, OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid called the RHP “an almost ‘perfect fit’ for the Organization: “it was a natural continuation of our earlier post-conflict, rehabilitation engagement from the late 1990s”, she said.

In the end, the PHP achieved not only to help resolve displacement but it also enhanced good neighbourly relations, built confidence and fostered security and stability in the region – all key elements of the OSCE’s long-standing engagement in South-Eastern Europe. And it could potentially serve as a model elsewhere, a consideration the Secretary General highlighted in her speech. Lessons learned, such as the significance of local political will, the vital role of close partnerships between international collaborators, and the securing of necessary funding, would need to be carefully considered for such wider application.

## Transnational threats

Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats: **Ambassador Alena Kupchyna**

Financial resources: **€2,769,600** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€4,607,428** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **30** international and **14** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/cyber-ict-security](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/cyber-ict-security)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/terrorism](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/terrorism)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/policing](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/policing)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/borders](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/borders)

**The mandate of the Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) is to assist the participating States and Partners for Co-operation in their efforts to address transnational threats, focusing on strengthening cyber/ICT security, preventing and countering terrorism, enhancing border security and management, and building law enforcement capacity—including in combatting transnational organized crime. In 2023, the Department carried out capacity-building projects, enabled the sharing of information and good practices, and convened expert meetings.**

## OSCE MARKS TEN YEARS OF ADOPTION OF CYBER/ICT SECURITY CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are at the heart of development, commerce and diplomacy, requiring a secure and co-operative cyberspace. The OSCE has been a pioneer in enhancing cyber/ICT security for years, successfully adapting its expertise to the digital age and focusing on building confidence to reduce the risks of conflict arising from the use of ICTs. To support this effort, participating States developed 16 confidence-building measures (CBMs) for cyberspace, ensuring that cyber/ICT security has continued to be an area of co-operation and progress since then.

December 2023 marked the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the first set of these CBMs. On the day of the anniversary, Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid noted that they had been used “to develop concrete tools to strengthen participating States’ cyber resilience and strategic partnerships so they themselves can tackle the increased threats in cyberspace.”

One of those measures, CBM 8, established a network of national policy and technical points of contact that functions as a crisis communication network and platform for co-operation for OSCE participating States. By sharing its experience in establishing this measure, in 2023 the OSCE supported discussions at the UN on setting up a global directory of points of contact for cybersecurity.

## MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PREVENTING YOUTH CRIME

In July, the TNTD and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, in co-operation with the Programme Office in Dushanbe, held a Central Asia Youth Dialogue Forum in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The event attracted youth from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and gave them a platform to identify and discuss key security challenges concerning the rule of law and youth crime. It also allowed them to come up with policy recommendations in these areas.

In 2023, TNTD and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, in co-operation with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek also

organized initiative on youth crime prevention was the #KolubuzdanKelet (“We can do it!”) social media awareness campaign, in which leading Kyrgyz influencers, youth activists, entrepreneurs and athletes were engaged. The campaign reached 1.5 million young people in Kyrgyzstan and showcased the stories of local celebrities involved in it. It highlighted how they pursued their passions, built successful businesses and gave back to their communities, all while adhering to the values of lawfulness and integrity, creating positive role models and showcasing alternatives to criminality.

“Many young people try to cope with their fears and insecurities. Some resort to illicit substances, some to criminal and corrupt activities. But this is a road to nowhere. Education, development of our creative abilities, setting goals—that’s what will help us succeed in life.”

*Erkin Ryskulbekov, Kyrgyz TV presenter,  
#KolubuzdanKelet campaign Participant*

### **OSCE-LED MOBILE TRAINING TEAM DEVELOPS NEW TRAINING MODULES**

The OSCE-led Mobile Training Team (MTT) of border security experts has been deployed across the OSCE area since 2016 to support national efforts in strengthening border security and counter-terrorism, in close co-operation with UNOCT, INTERPOL and Frontex. In 2023, the MTT developed and introduced for the first time a training curriculum focused on identifying suspected foreign terrorist fighters, cross-border crimes and potential victims, with a strong emphasis on human rights and gender- and age-sensitive approaches. The new curriculum is based on five specialized modules: on identity management and travel security, behavioural analyses and interviewing techniques, crisis management, prevention of smuggling of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, and countering trafficking in human beings. The MTT then delivered pilot courses in Albania and Uzbekistan, and developed a training plan for 2024 based on the learning needs identified by the countries.

“The dynamic landscape of terrorism necessitates continuous learning, adaptation and innovation ... Therefore, we must promote close co-operation among all frontliners in the fight against terrorism. As always, the OSCE has proven to be an exceptional partner in ensuring that the training leaves a lasting impact on the participants.”

*Gertian Brovina, Senior Investigator,  
Counter Terrorism Department of Albania’s State Police*

### **STRENGTHENING MEDIA LITERACY TO COMBAT ONLINE VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

Violent extremist and terrorist groups exploit the internet, contributing to societal polarization while taking advantage of existing vulnerabilities to radicalize individuals to violence. The OSCE promotes media and information literacy to build critical thinking and analytical skills, and to inoculate individuals and communities against harmful messages online, with a strong focus on human rights and gender. In line with these objectives, a training programme on media and information literacy in the context of preventing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, was organized in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina for national and local stakeholders, including social workers, civil society, police and media representatives.

Commending the event and the work of the OSCE on the topic, one of the participants, Lea Tajic Cengic, Head of Content and Media Literacy at Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Communications Regulatory Agency, noted that “social workers who are dealing with different kinds of vulnerable children, youth and adults do need much stronger support to understand how dis-/mis-

/malinformation are created and spread, and how to enhance our resilience against potentially harmful information.”

## Economic and environmental activities

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities: **Ambassador Igli Hasani** (until 30 September 2023), **Mr. Ralf Ernst** Acting Co-Ordinator (5 October 2023 onwards).

Financial resources: **€ 2,235,700** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€ 4,927,039** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **17** international and **7** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/oceea](http://www.osce.org/oceea)

**The Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) works on a broad array of topics in these two activity areas. This includes promoting good economic and environmental governance; preventing and combating corruption; fostering digitalization and trade and transport connectivity; tackling socio-economic disparities, including economic empowerment of women; and promoting transboundary water co-operation, climate change resilience, disaster risk reduction, hazardous waste management and energy security.**

### PROMOTING GREEN TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Freight transportation significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, largely due to the extensive use of fossil fuels in this industry. In keeping with its mandate and following a demand-driven approach, the OCEEA has been actively supporting interested OSCE participating States to reduce the environmental and carbon footprint of the transportation sector, while concurrently advancing connectivity through transport and trade facilitation.

The landmark initiative ‘Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity’ has supported Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in strengthening green ports and connectivity in the Caspian Sea Region, strategically positioned to facilitate transportation and trade between Central Asia and Europe. By 2023, the Office established a network of over 80 stakeholders committed to advancing frictionless, digitized and green trade between the two regions.

In addition to fostering regional co-operation in the Caspian Sea region, this OSCE-led project has played a pivotal role in guiding the country’s seaports towards sustainability, according to Abay Turikpenbaev, Chairman of the Executive Board (President) of Aktau International Commercial Sea Port (Kazakhstan). “The expertise provided by the OSCE has enabled our seaport authorities to independently conduct comprehensive environmental impact assessments, set sustainability targets and employ best environmental management systems, in accordance with international standards,” he said.

Andrew Danilov, Head of Integrated Management System and Standardization Department at the Batumi Seaport, Georgia underscores the importance of exchanging experiences with leading European seaports on green connectivity practices. “Connecting the Caspian and Black Sea ports with their peers in the North Sea is a key component of the project. Last year, I and my peers from the Central Asian and South Caucasus regions visited the leading European green ports of Le Havre (France) and Antwerp-Bruges (Belgium), gaining valuable insights on how to advance sustainability, digitalization and connectivity practices,” he said.

Thanks to the project, the ports of Aktau and Kuryk in Kazakhstan and the port of Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan have successfully obtained the renowned EcoPorts certifications in 2023. The Georgian port of Batumi on the Black Sea coast, undergoing the same process, is anticipated to become certified in 2024.

Looking ahead, the Office plans to continue supporting these ports in meeting environmental and energy targets that contribute to a sustainable future and ensuring economic development for the benefit of OSCE participating States and their communities.

## **SUPPORTING YOUNG INNOVATORS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

In a region where youth migration is a social and economic matter of increasing concern, investing in and upgrading the skills and capacities of young people is the best way to provide opportunities to a new generation of digital and social entrepreneurs. This is the rationale behind the OCEEA's YDEAS project, a flagship initiative designed to support developers and entrepreneurs from South-Eastern Europe advance start-ups in the context of social economy models. The YDEAS project kicked off in Tirana, Albania, in spring 2022.

Thanks to this initiative, 30 young entrepreneurs and 'startuppers' aged between 18 and 25 travelled to Porto, Portugal, in July and August to attend a three-week scholarship at the European Innovation Academy, one of the world's leading summer entrepreneurship programmes. These exceptionally skilled young women and men from South-Eastern Europe had a unique opportunity to work with leading start-up coaches and mentors to further develop and scale up their socially and environmentally impactful business ideas.

Petar Huska, a 23-year-old student at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad in Serbia, was one of the scholarship recipients. He described his motivation for developing an innovative IT solution that would enable the early detection of hazardous and highly toxic gases that could lead to explosions and other great damage in the mining, waste management and gas industries. "I see entrepreneurship as a vehicle for innovation, prosperity and conflict prevention", he said. "Young entrepreneur should not wait for opportunities but should create them – not only for themselves but also for others."

Another OSCE scholarship recipient was Ana Morina, a software engineering student, coder and youth activist from Albania who works on climate change, gender equality and civic engagement. Ana hopes to close the gender gap in the understanding and ownership of cryptocurrencies and digital assets through an educational platform targeted at young women. "It is important that the OSCE invests in the region's youth for a brighter future", she said. "The OSCE's support means a lot to us. It amplifies our voices and ensures that our needs in the area of education and capacity building are met with adequate national policies."

Both Petar and Ana took part in the 2023 Youth Forum organized in Skopje by the OSCE Chairpersonship of North Macedonia. They spoke about the challenges young entrepreneurs and young leaders from the OSCE region face in starting businesses and contributed to the development of a series of recommendations from youth to the 30th OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje later in the year.

## **SAFER, HEALTHIER AND MORE CONNECTED THROUGH CLEAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS**

### **How an OCEEA project improves living and working conditions of communities in rural Tajikistan**

For centuries women living in isolated villages of the remote Yaghnob valley of Tajikistan, situated some 2,700 meters above sea level, have endured difficult living and working conditions. Relying mainly on animal manure to ignite fires, boil water and prepare meals for their families, they would spend up to five hours daily tending to their household needs.

“Livestock manure in this region is wet or semi-wet and does not burn quickly,” explains Halima Razakova from the Qul village. “It produces a lot of dirty smoke that makes you suffocate. Some women in the village have fallen ill from prolonged exposure to its dense smoke.”

In September 2023 these dire conditions changed dramatically. Thanks to off-grid clean energy solutions provided by the OCEEA, 21 women from three villages in the valley received solar parabolic cookers and power stations. “Now I cook in half an hour and prepare my tea in ten minutes,” says Halima. Since receiving these clean energy devices, her time spent on these tasks has halved. “This enhances our health, benefits the environment and holds the promise of long-term financial savings for the entire community,” she says.

Clean technologies have changed the way these women and their communities live. The mini solar power stations have also facilitated their access to essential services. Women and their families can now not only light their rooms but also charge their mobile phones and be connected in the most remote locations.

Importantly, the portable solar power stations provided by the OSCE include a flashlight. This feature has proven to be valuable for the safety of these remote communities, especially during evening journeys through and in-between villages, since residents often walk through narrow, snow-covered roads that are inhabited by prairie dogs and wolves. “Now, when I am on the road with my boy, I don’t feel much danger because I have a flashlight with me and can see both the road and the surroundings,” says Bibisoro Kurbanova, from Garmen village in the valley.

Women also use the flashlights at night to attend to their livestock, highlighting the importance of these technologies for the support of local livelihoods. “Our cattle graze in the mountains until night. Sometimes they get lost and we have to go looking for them. If there is no moon at night, the search becomes both difficult and dangerous. We used the flashlight several times for this purpose and we found the cows quickly,” explains Gulnora Sobirova, another Qul resident.

The OCEEA initiative is supported by Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Norway and Poland.

## Combating trafficking in human beings

Special Representative and Co-ordinator: **Andrea Salvoni** (Acting until 30 October 2023), **Kari Johnstone** (since 30 October 2023)

Financial resources: **€1,073,700** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€2,168,186** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **12** international and **5** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

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**The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings** assists the OSCE participating States in their efforts to better prevent human trafficking, investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and protect victims. In 2023, the Office enhanced its core programmes, including combating labour exploitation in supply chains and expanding its flagship live-action simulation training exercise model.

### USING SIMULATED STORIES TO TACKLE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Aslan and his disabled teenage stepsister Rumia live in poverty in 'Exodus', an unstable, corrupt country. They decide to go to 'Dreamland' instead, to earn money and obtain new identity papers. At the border, a man assists them in crossing but forces Rumia to beg on the street, and Aslan to work on a farm used as a secret drug lab.

This was one of the storylines in the first regional simulation-based training exercise conducted in Central Asia in June. More than 100 professionals from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the training in Astana.

For one week, these professionals worked in multi-agency teams, under the guidance of local experts, to investigate fictional cases of sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced criminality—one of the fastest-growing forms of trafficking.

The live-action simulation training aimed at improving the criminal justice response for prosecuting traffickers operating along migration routes, and authorities' ability to identify and protect victims, including women, children and people with disabilities.

Similar training courses were carried out in other parts of the OSCE region in 2023: the office co-organized with the Council of the Baltic Sea States a regional training in Germany in November for Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania and Sweden; facilitated a second national training exercise in Georgia; and supported a first national exercise in Moldova.

### NEW REPORT MAPS ONLINE LANDSCAPE OF SEX TRAFFICKING IN 40 OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

Tattoos or scars on the neck or back, used as 'branding' to mark 'property'. Obscured faces and denigrating poses. Signs of fear or paranoia, or references to the 'new girl in town'. These are just some of the indicators used to identify victims of human trafficking advertised on websites for the sale and purchase of sex. A new, comprehensive [report](#) released in 2023 by the Office researched the risks of human trafficking on sexual services websites across 40 OSCE participating States. The study examined almost 2,900 such websites, containing more than three million advertisements — the most extensive research ever done on the subject. It uncovered and verified that the vast majority of the researched countries have online platforms that enable potential sex trafficking.

The report used a broad list of warning signs, or ‘red flag’ indicators, which helped identify whether advertisements for sexual services may involve a trafficking victim. In addition to physical attributes, the indicators list includes references to the involvement of third parties, unconventional sex acts or the frequent movement across jurisdictions of a person involved in commercial sex. Another red flag includes the use of dehumanizing photos featuring a person in compromising positions or with a blurred face. The combination of several indicators significantly increases the likelihood of a person being a victim of human trafficking.

Understanding and identifying the risks of trafficking is crucial to tackling them effectively. The report is a valuable tool for policymakers to prevent the misuse of technology for exploitative purposes. It is also a valuable resource for law enforcement in identifying victims of crimes facilitated by technology, and bringing their perpetrators to justice.

In 2022–23, the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe:

- conducted eight regional workshops with all OSCE field operations and Institutions (five in 2022, three in 2023);
- put in place 16 local action plans for addressing risks in the OSCE’s supply chains (for all 16 locations in which the OSCE is active, including field operations and institutions);
- assessed more than 60 contracts as potentially high-risk of human trafficking; and planned over 20 engagement activities with local suppliers on labour exploitation.

#### **WALK THE TALK: LEADING BY EXAMPLE IN COMBATING LABOUR EXPLOITATION**

##### **How the OSCE overhauled its supply chain procedures**

“One of our field operations was infamous for being the lowest paying international organization in the country when outsourcing its services,” OSCE procurement officer Boban Jakshikj recalls. “The situation was so severe that prospective staff refused to work for suppliers who were awarded contracts with the office.”

The problem was straightforward, tenders had been awarded based on a ‘least-cost’ principle, without any human rights due diligence. “Many colleagues received complaints of employee exploitation, underpayment and inadequate training or liability insurance. The company owners withheld payments and exploited employees during long working hours,” Boban Jakshikj says.

To fix this, the OSCE Secretariat’s and the field operation’s procurement teams created a new tender strategy that overhauled the traditional ‘least-cost’ selection method for external contracts. The new procedures gave the field operation better insight into, and control of, service expenses, which led to better quality services, higher employee satisfaction and, a dramatically improved reputation among service providers.

“The outcome was intriguing,” Boban says. “Our current provider won the bid with an offer that was nearly 50 per cent more expensive than the previous agreement. But, as we say, ‘If you want to fight exploitation, you need to stop paying for it.’”

Human rights abuses, including trafficking for labour exploitation, are pervasive in the production of common goods and services, and the public sector is not immune. However, contrary to common belief, introducing similar requirements for goods or services does not always result in increased costs, as OSCE procurement teams always ensure value for money is safeguarded. Boban’s success story inspired colleagues in other OSCE offices to replicate the new approach – a tangible example of

how the OSCE is taking a clear stance to prevent and combat the risk of labour exploitation in its supply chains.

In 2017, the Ministerial Council tasked the Secretary General with a review of existing OSCE policies to ensure that no activities of the Organization contribute to trafficking. The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the Department of Management and Finance have worked together to ensure that the OSCE's supply chains do not include labour exploitation. In 2023, the The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings released the second edition of a guidance publication on procurement and held mandatory e-learning courses for all OSCE staff involved in procurement processes.

However, the OSCE's ambitions go further. In 2023, the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was appointed as the **Secretariat** of the multi-agency **UN Task Force for Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Supply Chains**, which works to leverage the UN's extensive procurement power to address forced labour trafficking. To support its participating States, the OSCE has also published Model Guidelines on Government Measures to Prevent Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains, providing guidance on how to develop national legislation on purchasing goods and services free from exploitation.

## Gender equality

Senior Advisor on Gender Issues: **Lara Scarpitta**

Financial resources: **€437,100** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€1,310,076** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **8** international and **2** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/secretariat/gender](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/gender)

**Gender considerations have become a fundamental part of the OSCE's work, as they are crucial for peace and stability. In 2023, the OSCE's work in this field ranged from empowering women peacebuilders to helping Ukrainian women rebuild their careers.**

### **FIRST GROUP OF WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS GRADUATES FROM LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME**

As part of the OSCE's Women's Peace Leadership Programme, 12 women peacebuilders from across the OSCE region and Afghanistan took part in the first edition of a one-year mentoring initiative that many described as transformative. Guided by internationally renowned women leaders, including diplomats, mediators and negotiators in formal peace processes, the participants gained skills in leadership, mediation and dialogue facilitation.

The Programme was designed to support women's agency in peace processes at all levels. It was launched by OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid in December 2021 and is one of the flagship activities of the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators.

"This programme was designed with the goal to support women's leadership and provide women peacebuilders with powerful tools to become leaders in their own communities and to play an active role in peace processes, but also to empower them to make decisions at all levels," the Secretary General said during the closing ceremony of the first edition in October.

The Programme is being implemented under the multi-year and multi-donor extrabudgetary project WIN for Women and Men.

### **SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ONLINE AND IN CONFLICT SETTINGS**

Women's economic empowerment is essential to their meaningful participation in all decision-making settings. In March, at the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women held in New York, the OSCE Gender Issues Programme, together with the Government of Finland and UN Women, organized a side event on *Digital Empowerment of Women in Conflict Settings: Why it Matters*. High-level speakers from international organizations, governments, the private sector and civil society attended and discussed how digital tools can empower women economically and provide them with essential income generation opportunities in volatile conflict settings.

As part of its efforts to support Ukrainian women living in and outside the country, the OSCE entered into partnership with Women Go Tech, a Lithuanian initiative. The implementing partner conducts research on the main obstacles hindering Ukrainian women's participation in the digital world, followed by an extensive capacity-building and mentoring programme to increase the participants' digital skills, providing them with assistance for career requalification or progression.

Both initiatives are also part of the WIN for Women and Men project.

## **BUILDING CAPACITIES OF SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

In June, the Gender Issues Programme held a regional capacity-building event in Tashkent for survivors of gender-based violence in Central Asia. Under the framework of the WIN project, participants learned about international best practices on how to provide safe, accessible support for survivors and address the complexities of working with perpetrators.

The event continued work that began in 2021 by mapping Women's Resources Centres and other integrated service providers for survivors of gender-based violence in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Mongolia. The goal was to map existing gaps and identify where capacity-building and knowledge-sharing is needed.

## **NEW, MANDATORY E-LEARNING TOOL REINFORCES ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

In September, the OSCE launched a new e-learning course on how to prevent and effectively respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and how to report such incidents. The course is mandatory for all staff and replaces a previously used United Nations-based e-learning module with a more robust one that also uses a whole-of-Organization approach. The need for the new course is directly related to the OSCE's adoption of its first policy on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on 15 June 2022.

Stakeholders across the entire OSCE Secretariat participated in the course's development, under the lead of the Gender Issues Programme. The process reflected successful cross-departmental co-operation in enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any form of violence against women and girls.

## Human resources

Director: **Paolo Bernasconi**

Financial resources: **€4,171,600** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€220,255** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **17** international and **26** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

**People are the backbone of the OSCE and the main focus of the Department of Human Resources' work. Supporting the Organization's executive structures, it ensures that staff have a conducive work environment and that the OSCE benefits from a capable and committed workforce that delivers on the priorities of the participating States.**

In 2023, the Department made significant strides in improving the Organization's human resource policies, implementing digitalization, launching new talent management initiatives and helping develop a positive work culture and evidence-based practices.

A key milestone was the comprehensive transformation of the OSCE's internal justice system, which strengthened the foundation for a respectful, equitable and inclusive workplace. This included an informal dispute resolution mechanism that provides confidential and impartial advice and voluntary mediation services to all staff members. The Department also organized specialized training for focal points on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and issued a new staff instruction on whistleblowing and the protection against retaliation. These changes led to a reduction in harassment-related resignations.

The Department continued to push for more staff diversity and better inclusion in all aspects of the Organization's human resource practices. This included several talent outreach initiatives that focused on gender equality and geographical balance of prospective staff, catering particularly to candidates from non-represented and less-represented participating States. Striving continuously for gender parity in the OSCE, the Department marked significant achievements: 50 per cent of all staff in the Organization, and 46 per cent of all international staff, were women in 2023.

The Department revamped its employee onboarding and induction services, focusing on the medical, learning and development, and administrative workstreams. This overhaul significantly increased overall staff satisfaction with the Secretariat's onboarding process, which not only ensured a smooth arrival of new hires but also improved compliance with OSCE regulations and safeguarded operational integrity.

### **INFORMAL RESOLUTION FUNCTION ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE ETHICS SERVICE**

The Secretariat's Ethics Co-ordinator continued to promote an ethical workplace culture in the OSCE. This included independent individual advice to staff and advice to senior managers on workplace ethics, such as questions in relation to the OSCE Code of Conduct and recommendations to the Secretary General on requests for activities needing authorization, and ethics training.

In 2023, at the initiative of the Secretary General of the OSCE the role of the Ethics/Mediation Co-ordinator was increased in the management and promotion of the informal resolution of workplace conflicts. In the summer, two Informal Resolution Officers joined the Organization and the Secretary General approved and circulated the OSCE Guidelines on Informal Resolution of Workplace Conflict. Besides numerous outreach and awareness-raising activities, the Informal Resolution Officers provided informal resolution services and individual conflict coaching in 27 cases across the Organization.

## Management and finance

Director Gelfiya Schienko (January 2023) Acting Director: **John Aguirre** (30 January 2023 onwards)

Financial resources: **€11,445,400** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021), **€159,046** (extrabudgetary actual expenditure)

Staff: **26** international and **69** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

[www.osce.org/secretariat](http://www.osce.org/secretariat)

**Supporting all OSCE executive structures as well as the Organization's participating States, the Department of Management and Finance contributes to security and co-operation in the OSCE region. Backed by strong internal control and risk management, it strives to deliver on its mandate by continuously improving and innovating to achieve a higher level of efficiency.**

The Department's mandate comprises three elements: to provide client-oriented budget and finance, mission support, and information and communications technology services; to develop and maintain the OSCE's Common Regulatory Management System and its supporting policies; and to serve as a 'second line of defence' employing a dedicated risk management and compliance system. All three roles are of equal importance to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the OSCE's mandate.

The OSCE operated both in 2022 and 2023 without an approved budget. Both years were also marked by high rates of inflation. Despite these challenges and the severe financial constraints that accompanied them, the Department provided uninterrupted service, support and advice to both internal stakeholders and the participating States. This included leading departmental and organization-wide initiatives to increase efficiency and effectiveness through business process improvements and revision in policies and procedures. The Department also modernized its financial management organizational structure to better support the integration of budget and extra-budgetary resources, and streamlined its related internal processes.

As a central task of its budget and finance services, the Department prepared and delivered, in a timely fashion, the Organization's Unified Budget documents. It also helped ensure the use of funds in compliance with the OSCE's Common Regulatory Management System, and delivered high-quality accounting, treasury and extrabudgetary contribution management services. As in previous years, the Department submitted the Organization's financial statements on time to the external auditor, who gave it an "unmodified" audit opinion, which signifies that the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, and in accordance with the applicable regulations.

As the OSCE continued to have to operate at the 2021 level of resources, the Secretary General initiated the establishment of an emergency and temporary stop-gap measure called the Repository Programme 'Core Support Mechanism'. This initiative, which was fully operational by the fourth quarter of 2023, served as a framework to accept voluntary contributions to cover the underfunding of essential non-staff core support costs across different OSCE executive structures. The measure was facilitated by the Department of Management and Finance and helped ensure the OSCE's sustainability throughout 2023.

The Department also provided client-focused support in the procurement, assets, logistics, travel and facilities management services to the OSCE executive structures. It continued to further integrate the end-to-end online travel solution introduced in 2022, and reviewed its policies and business processes to better align them with best practices and achieve greater effectiveness and improved compliance.

Another important milestone was the completion of the multi-year migration of all OSCE executive structures to a completely new, secure computing environment. In tandem with this, the Department continued to upgrade its ICT portfolio to prepare for future programmatic and administrative challenges in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

A crucial part of its activities as a ‘second line of defence’, the Department further strengthened risk management and information security procedures and the internal control environment in 2023, by revising and updating the internal control walkthrough process. This process aims to evaluate the effectiveness and design of internal controls. The Department also produced a major risk report for the Secretariat and progressed with revising the enterprise risk management and internal control frameworks. To increase staff awareness about associated risks, it organized several training sessions and webinars on enterprise risk management, working with implementing partners, and information security-related topics.

## Internal Oversight

Director: **Susanne Frueh**

Financial resources: **€1,828,900** (based on Unified Budget adopted in 2021)

Staff: **11** international and **2** local fixed-term staff members (as of 31 December 2023)

<https://www.osce.org/oio/about>

**The OSCE has a three-tier oversight system, also known as the ‘three lines of defence’. The Office of Internal Oversight, an integral part of this system, promotes efficient and effective management practices within the Organization. An external, independent Audit Committee complements and oversees the Office’s work, while external auditors review and give opinions on how accurate the OSCE’s annual financial statements are. The Office’s three core services are: internal audits; investigations; and independent evaluations of operations, activities, outputs and progress towards outcomes.**

### KEY AUDITS STRENGTHEN OSCE’S MANAGEMENT ROLE

In 2023, the Office’s internal auditors continued to provide assurance to the OSCE participating States on the adequacy of the Organization’s governance, risk management and internal control processes. It also identified areas of improvement towards strengthened compliance, efficiency and effectiveness. The Office conducted key audits on four field operations and one major delocalized Secretariat programme. It also ran audits of cross-organizational thematic areas, such as payroll and staff entitlements, and the recovery of common support costs to extra-budgetary initiatives. These activities helped strengthen the Organization’s second line of defence, which covers asset management and the management of external consultants.

As part of its internal audit activities, the Office also continued to help protect the Organization against fraud and corruption by proactively assessing fraud risks and by ensuring that allegations of fraud or other misconduct were addressed in a timely manner through professional investigations.

In addition to these activities, the Office worked on strengthening the Organization’s policy framework and zero tolerance messaging in relation to staff misconduct. The Office’s investigations continuously integrated provisions of the Organization’s revised staff instruction on sexual harassment allegations and other allegations concerning a professional working environment. The Office also worked on a new policy addressing whistle-blowing and the protection of staff against retaliation.

### NEW POLICY GIVES IMPETUS TO FURTHER INTEGRATION OF EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Using the momentum of the adoption of a new evaluation policy by the OSCE in November 2022, the Office continued to build a culture of evaluation and learning in the Organization. All its activities aimed at contributing to the strengthening of accountability, learning and informed decision-making across the OSCE.

The Office completed four reports in 2023: an evaluation synthesis of decentralized evaluation conducted between 2020 and 2022; an evaluation of the OSCE’s programmatic work on media freedom and freedom of expression; an evaluation of the implementation of the 2004 *OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality* between the years 2018 and 2022; and an evaluation of the Organization’s anti-corruption assistance between 2011 and 2021. In parallel, it continued supporting the OSCE’s offices in addressing the requirements of the new evaluation policy, by

offering advisory and helpdesk services and by delivering a comprehensive certification training to some 40 project managers from across the Organization.

In October, the Office organized the Evaluation Network Annual Meeting in Belgrade, bringing together some 40 network members and external experts to discuss the added value of OSCE evaluations to organizational learning and decision-making processes. The meeting gave practitioners in this field a space to reflect and discuss evaluation standards and how to incorporate the gender aspect in evaluations, and also provided them with dedicated training.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Recognizing that there is an inseparable link between the security in the OSCE region and that of neighbouring regions, the Organization actively promotes international partnerships and works towards strengthening them through dialogue and the sharing of commitments, resources and expertise. These partnerships include relations with 11 Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and an extensive network of co-operative relationships with many international and regional organizations.

## **ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand

Chair, OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group: **Poland**

## **ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION GROUP**

In 2023, the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group (APCG) – originally known as OSCE Asian Contact Group until its name change in 2019 – celebrated its 20th anniversary. Poland, APCG Chair in 2023, focused its programme on an enhanced and open dialogue and building stronger relationships between the OSCE and its Asian partners, based on their joint priorities. The Group held four meetings in Vienna, at which participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation engaged in discussions on key security issues. In addition, an APCG Chairpersonship conference was organized together with Australia.

The priorities of the 2023 Chair mirrored the Asian Partners' common interests in achieving comprehensive security. In line with this, four thematic areas of special interest were singled out: climate and security; women, peace and security; cyber security in the OSCE and the Asian partner region; and the role of civil society in strengthening co-operation between the OSCE and Asian Partners. As in the previous year, the war against Ukraine remained high on the agenda of all the Group's meetings.

### **APCG MEETINGS IN 2023**

In May, the Polish APCG Chair convened a special meeting on ensuring women's participation in political and public life in times of crisis, which particularly featured the challenging situation for women in Afghanistan.

The second APCG meeting, co-organized with Thailand and held in July, dealt with *Ensuring Human Security through Promoting Humanitarian Responses in Cross-border Conflicts and Emergencies*.

In September, the Polish Chair and Japan held a third APCG meeting, which focused on *Approaches to Peacebuilding – efforts in Asia towards sustaining peace*.

The fourth and last APCG meeting of the year was organized by Poland and Korea and took place in November under the title *Perspectives on Enhancing Stability and Prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and Trans-regional Co-operation*.

### **JOINT KOREA-OSCE INTER-REGIONAL CONFERENCE GATHERS OVER 120 ATTENDEES**

On 31 May, more than 120 policy-makers and representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations participated in the Inter-Regional Conference on the Impact of Emerging Technologies on International Security and Democracy in Vienna. The event, which was organized by Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OSCE Secretariat, has been held since 2017 and laid the groundwork for the continuously evolving co-operation between the Euro-Atlantic region and Asia.

## **APCG CHAIR CONFERENCE: ADDRESSING COMMON CHALLENGES IN A GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

Poland and Australia hosted an APCG Chairpersonship conference in July that focused on enhancing dialogue and collaboration between Europe and Asia to address common security concerns. OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Bujar Osmani underscored the close and inseparable link between security in the OSCE region and the security of its neighbours, and highlighted shared challenges and opportunities in today's globalized world.

Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs Zbigniew Rau underlined the unique value of the OSCE-Asian partnership and underscored its unique value as a platform for collective discussion. Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, emphasized the enduring importance of agreed rules and norms, advocating for collaboration on issues that cannot be addressed alone, including cyber security, climate security and human rights. OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid highlighted the particular value of the co-operation between the Organization and its partners, to tackle shared challenges and common concerns.

## **MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION**

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia

Chair, OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group: **Finland**

## **MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION GROUP**

Since a decision on the OSCE Chairpersonship for 2024 was pending until late in the year, Finland exceptionally joined the OSCE Troika and stepped in as Chair of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group (MPCG) in 2023. Taking into account the preferences expressed by the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and the evolving security landscape in the OSCE and the Mediterranean region, Finland selected specific topics of interest for the year and focused on asset recovery as a potential area of dialogue and co-operation, as well as on promoting the participation of youth in confidence- and security-building measures.

A first MPCG meeting took place in May under the title *Enforcing Rule of Law and Combating Corruption in an action-oriented approach, focusing on Asset Recovery*. The event aimed at illustrating past and ongoing activities and best practices across the OSCE and the Mediterranean region to prevent and counter transnational organized crime and corruption by targeting illicit financial flows and strengthening asset recovery processes. It also showcased how effective asset recovery initiatives contributed to the wider goals of justice, rule of law and accountability. The event highlighted the persistent threat of organized crime and included a thematic session that centred on multi-stakeholder approaches to asset recovery, featuring insights from experts and concluding with discussions. The second part of the meeting outlined OSCE activities in asset recovery, emphasizing regional co-operation and information exchange.

Another MPCG meeting took place in December to discuss how to promote the participation of youth in confidence and security building measures.

Finland expressed its commitment to keep Mediterranean issues high on the OSCE agenda in 2024. In light of the approaching 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025, and its dedicated Mediterranean Chapter, Finland highlighted the opportunity to take a fresh look at the patterns of interdependence that have always existed between the OSCE and the Mediterranean region.

## **INTENSIVE STUDY PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG DIPLOMATS FROM ASIAN AND MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS**

As in previous years, the OSCE Secretariat's External Co-operation Section invited young diplomats from Asian and Mediterranean partner countries to participate in a two-week study programme. The five participants from Australia, Egypt, Jordan, Thailand and Tunisia were given a unique opportunity to obtain an in-depth look at the OSCE's mandate and activities, learning about OSCE values, principles, commitments and competencies. Briefings by OSCE delegations and staff on the history and structure of the Organization, as well as meetings with representatives from different OSCE institutions, were part of the programme, as were presentations on activities in the areas of gender equality, youth, economic and environmental issues, transnational threats and the fight against human trafficking. A highlight for the young diplomats was the participation in the 2023 Prague Forum on the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE.

The participants from the Mediterranean region expressed strong interest in the OSCE's work and in developing ideas on how to develop the relations further and bring them closer. The Permanent Missions of Finland and Poland co-hosted a networking event for the young diplomats in the premises of the Finnish delegation, with the presence of Partners for Co-operation and participating States delegations.

## CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

**To amplify its efforts to strengthen stability and security across its region and beyond, the OSCE works with a large network of international and regional organizations and institutions. This co-operation allows for political dialogue, information exchange and the sharing of good practices. Working on an operational level with other international and regional bodies also creates synergies, maximizing the OSCE's impact while avoiding duplication.**

### UN-OSCE CO-OPERATION MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

2023 marked the 30th anniversary of the institutional relations between the OSCE and the United Nations, a co-operation that has been instrumental in fostering peace and stability across Europe and Eurasia. OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Bujar Osmani addressed the UN Security Council on 4 May to reflect on this co-operation, and said: "The UN and the OSCE have built a significant relationship and co-ordinated very closely in operational terms. We need to tighten those relations even more now."

During the high-level segment of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the Secretary General engaged with high-level officials from the UN, OSCE participating States and various other international organizations. The primary aim was to foster collaboration and bolster multilateral efforts in addressing security challenges across the OSCE region.

In March, the Secretary General visited UN offices based in Geneva and met the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk. They delved into pertinent issues of mutual concern for both organizations, reflecting a commitment to meaningful dialogue, also in light of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Human Rights Declaration in 2023. In October, the Secretary General supported for the first time the OSCE's participation and engagement at the tenth Geneva Peace Week, underscored a proactive approach to promote partnership and co-operation.

On the operational level, both organizations continued their collaborative efforts in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in formulating and supporting global counter-terrorism strategies and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The OSCE has actively contributed to the UN Secretary-General's initiative of a new agenda for peace and, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, supported strengthening the role of regional organizations.

### STRENGTHENED CO-OPERATION WITH EU

The OSCE and the European Union continued working closely together in areas of common concern and across a wide range of portfolios, both in Vienna and in the field. In the format of the OSCE-EU Working Group, experts from both bodies discussed opportunities for strengthened joint efforts in line with the EU Strategic Compass and the new EU Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact, titled *Towards more effective civilian missions*. In July, the OSCE's Programme for Gender Issues, together with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the EU, held a training for Civilian CSDP focal points, and in September, OSCE and EU experts jointly discussed the impact of Civilian CSDP missions.

A key milestone of the year was the OSCE-EU High-Level Meeting on 13 October, co-chaired by the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Stefano Sannino. At the meeting, the OSCE Secretary General highlighted the importance of the Council of the EU's conclusions on *EU priorities at the OSCE* of 20 March 2023, which expresses the Council's commitment to safeguard the OSCE as one of the pillars of the European security order.

In June, a working level delegation from the EU's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) visited the OSCE Secretariat to hold annual enlargement package consultations, which for the first time included consultations on Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

#### **CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH ORGANIZATIONS EAST AND WEST OF VIENNA**

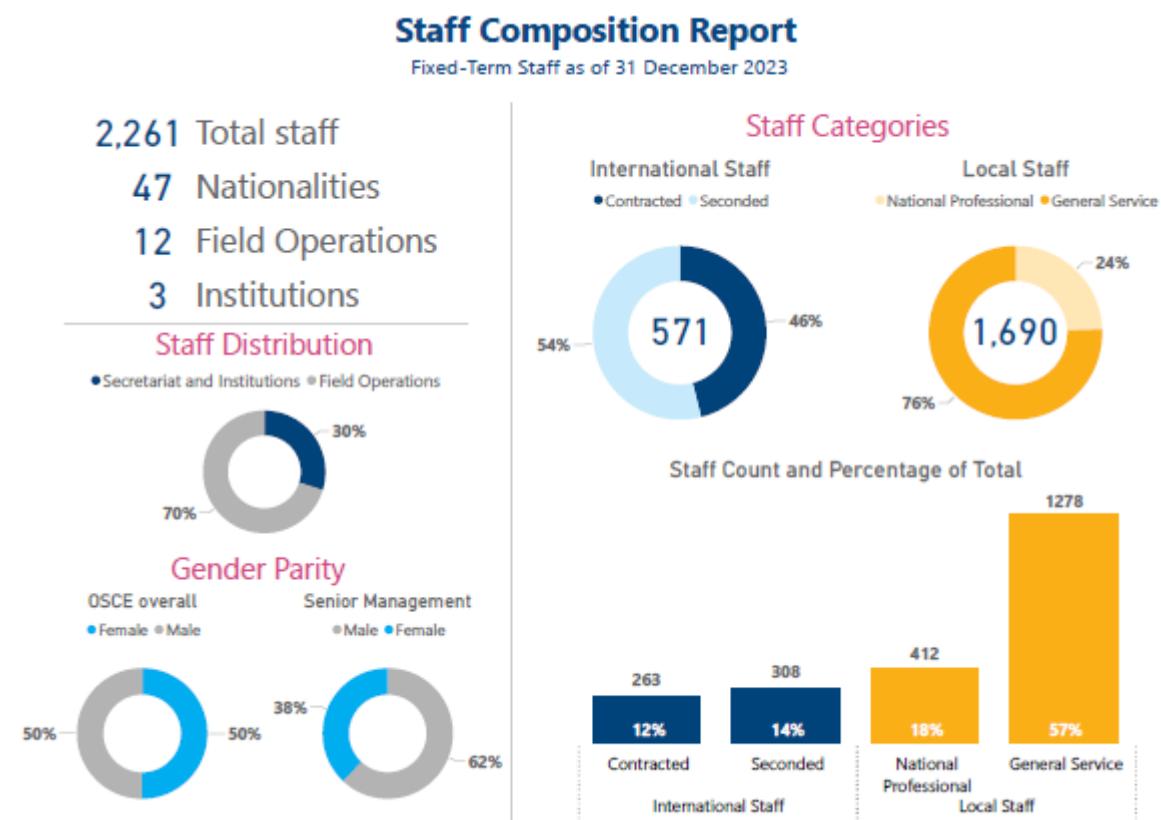
As part of the OSCE's efforts to serve as a vital link between organizations from both East and West, the Secretary General participated in several high-level events, including the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe held in Reykjavik, Iceland on 16 and 17 May, together with the Chairperson-in-Office.

Earlier in the year, the Secretary General had met Iceland's Foreign Minister and Chairperson-in-Office of the Council of Europe (CoE), Þórdís Kolbrún R. Gylfadóttir, during her visit to Vienna on 19 January to address the OSCE Permanent Council and to discuss OSCE participation and contribution to the Summit's programme. Consultations followed with CoE Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić in Vienna on 20 April. As a result, a high-level OSCE-CoE meeting was held on the margins of the Summit with participation of both Secretary Generals and Chairpersonships to reiterate the strengthened co-operation between both organizations.

The OSCE Secretary General also continued to engage with representatives from several other international organizations, including NATO, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the Organization of Turkic Countries (OTS). In March, the Secretary General met OTS Secretary General Kubanychbek Omuraliyev to discuss, among other issues, energy security related issues.

## ANNEXES

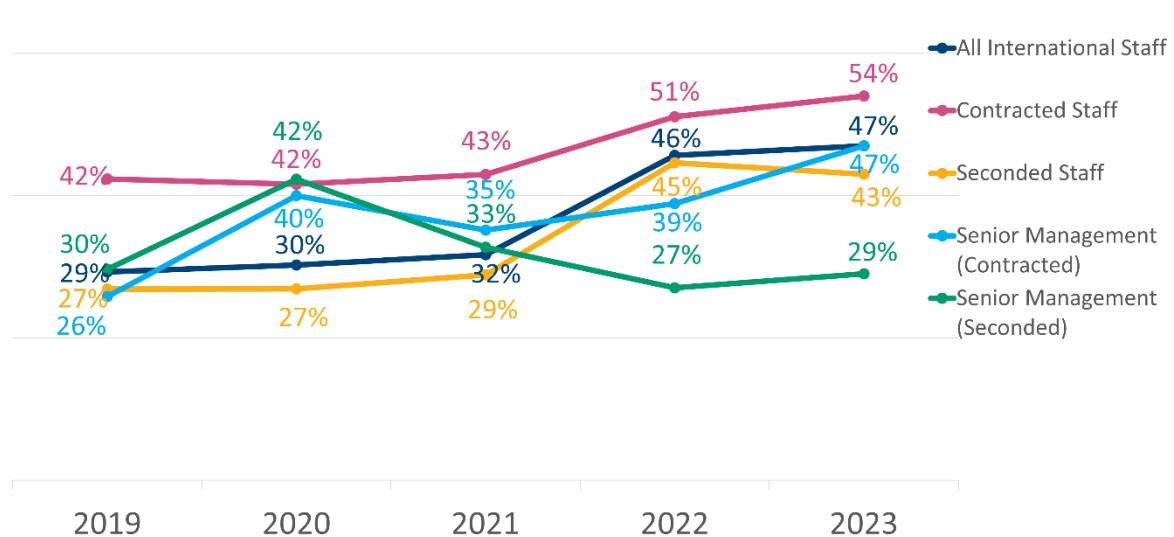
### OSCE Staff Composition Report



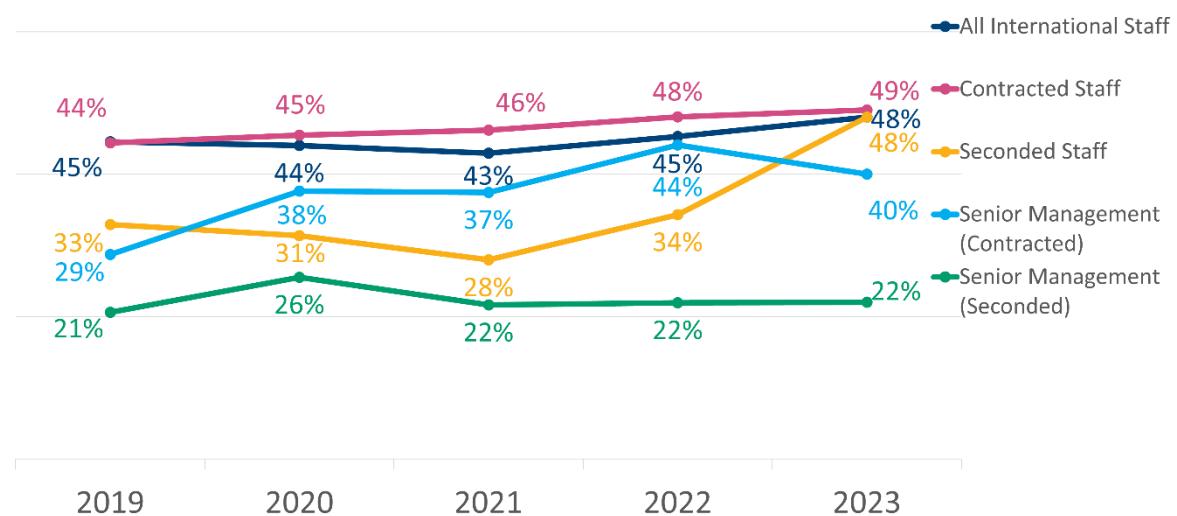
## PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER PARITY

Attracting, hiring and retaining more women is a high priority for the OSCE.

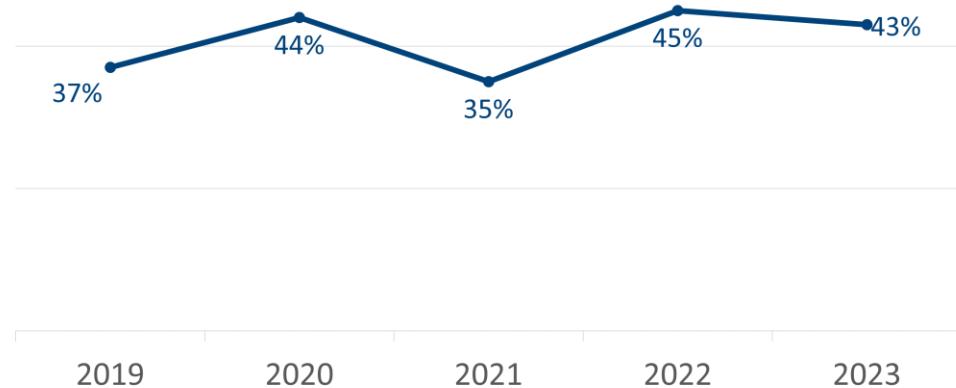
### Share of women among active staff



### Share of women among applicants



### Share of women among new hires



International staff: staff holding a post in the professional and higher categories

Contracted staff: staff appointed on a direct contractual basis, grades P1 to P4

Seconded staff: staff members nominated for an assignment by or through an OSCE participating State, grades S to S3

Senior Management: Grades S4, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Mission, P5, Director, Head of Institution, Secretary General

More information on employment by the OSCE and staff categories is available at [jobs.osce.org](http://jobs.osce.org).

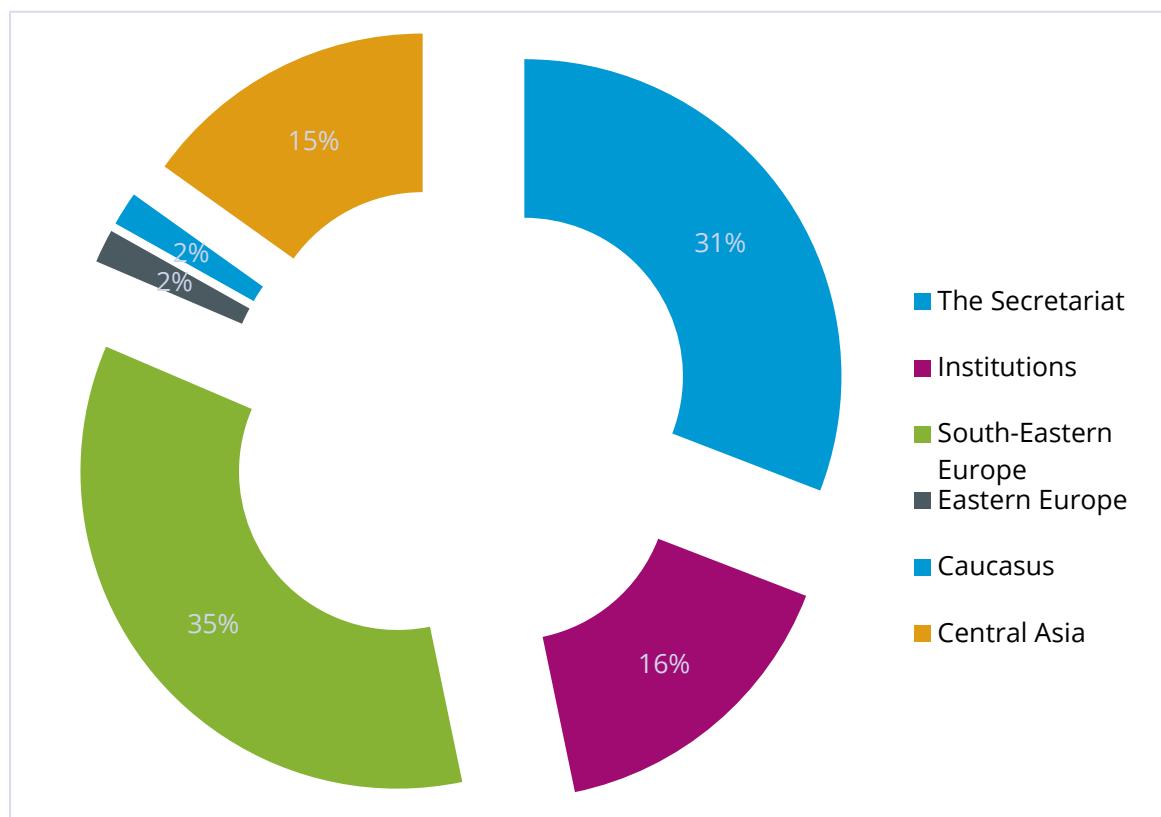
2023 OSCE Expenditure Report by Executive Structure\*

	2023 Provisional Expenditure Authorization	2023 Expenditure	% of total
<b>THE SECRETARIAT AND INSTITUTIONS</b>			
The Secretariat	41,831,800	41,539,969	31%
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	16,394,000	16,373,768	12%
High Commissioner on National Minorities	3,504,000	3,503,886	3%
Representative on Freedom of the Media	1,608,800	1,603,089	1%
<b>TOTAL FOR THE SECRETARIAT AND INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>63,338,600</b>	<b>63,020,711</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>OSCE FIELD OPERATIONS</b>			
<b>South-Eastern Europe</b>			
Mission in Kosovo	17,462,600	17,462,081	13%
Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina	11,682,000	11,678,526	9%
Mission to Serbia	6,258,600	6,258,385	5%
Presence in Albania	2,981,200	2,962,545	2%
Mission to Skopje	6,506,100	6,454,639	5%
Mission to Montenegro	2,152,100	2,102,509	2%
<b>Total for South-Eastern Europe</b>	<b>47,042,600</b>	<b>46,918,685</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Eastern Europe</b>			
Mission to Moldova	2,302,700	2,284,524	2%
Representative to the Latvian-Russian Joint Commission on Military Pensioners**	5,500	111	0.004%
<b>Total for Eastern Europe</b>	<b>2,308,200</b>	<b>2,217,509</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Caucasus</b>			
High-Level Planning Group	247,600	184,883	0.2%
The Minsk Process	911,200	0	1%
Personal Representative of the CiO on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference	1,179,700	927,296	1%
<b>Total for Caucasus</b>	<b>2,338,500</b>	<b>1,112,179</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Central Asia</b>			
Programme Office in Astana	2,232,700	2,226,099	2%
Centre in Ashgabat	1,661,200	1,656,417	1%
Programme Office in Bishkek	6,811,000	6,810,161	5%
Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan	2,499,200	2,437,106	2%
Programme Office in Dushanbe	7,311,600	7,116,911	5%
<b>Total for Central Asia</b>	<b>20,515,700</b>	<b>20,246,694</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>TOTAL FOR OSCE FIELD OPERATIONS</b>	<b>72,205,000</b>	<b>70,495,066</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>135,543,600</b>	<b>133,515,778</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* The table reflects utilization of resources against the 2023 total provisional expenditure authorization in line with Financial Regulation 3.04 and PC decision PC.DEC/1462.

\*\*No appointment to this position took place in 2023.

The Secretariat	41,831,800	31%
Institutions	21,506,800	16%
South-Eastern Europe	47,042,600	35%
Eastern Europe	2,308,200	2%
Caucasus	2,338,500	2%
Central Asia	20,515,700	15%
	<b>135,543,600</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Contributions by participating States

PARTICIPATING STATE	PROVISIONAL 2023 FINANCIAL RESOURCES (€)	% OF TOTAL
Albania	91,053	0.07
Andorra	91,053	0.07
Armenia	45,759	0.03
Austria	3,189,241	2.31
Azerbaijan	45,759	0.03
Belarus	200,223	0.14
Belgium	4,600,338	3.33
Bosnia and Herzegovina	91,053	0.07
Bulgaria	369,426	0.27
Canada	7,494,844	5.42
Croatia	200,338	0.14
Cyprus	199,734	0.14
Czech Republic	671,046	0.49
Denmark	2,855,088	2.07
Estonia	129,704	0.09
Finland	2,646,701	1.92
France	14,277,462	10.33
Georgia	45,759	0.03
Germany	15,030,786	10.88
Greece	1,158,663	0.84
Holy See	91,053	0.07
Hungary	656,831	0.48
Iceland	184,776	0.13
Ireland	1,067,656	0.77
Italy	14,241,703	10.30
Kazakhstan	264,099	0.19
Kyrgyzstan	45,759	0.03
Latvia	133,594	0.10
Liechtenstein	91,053	0.07
Lithuania	133,594	0.10
Luxembourg	478,373	0.35
Malta	94,943	0.07
Moldova	45,759	0.03
Monaco	91,053	0.07
Mongolia	45,759	0.03
Montenegro	45,759	0.03
Netherlands	5,403,215	3.91
North Macedonia	91,053	0.07
Norway	2,848,746	2.06
Poland	1,632,320	1.18
Portugal	1,027,590	0.74
Romania	455,728	0.33
Russian Federation	5,568,830	4.03
San Marino	91,053	0.07
Serbia	100,112	0.07
Slovak Republic	285,816	0.21
Slovenia	268,430	0.19

Spain	6,657,417	4.82
Sweden	4,596,099	3.33
Switzerland	3,813,505	2.76
Tajikistan	45,759	0.03
Türkiye	1,193,551	0.86
Turkmenistan	45,759	0.03
Ukraine	519,604	0.38
United Kingdom	14,276,010	10.33
United States of America	17,838,769	12.91
Uzbekistan	250,279	0.18
Gap in Scales	48,673	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>138,204,100</b>	100.00

### Extrabudgetary pledges and voluntary contributions

Donor	Pledge amount (€)
Albania	10,000
Andorra	26,235
Australia	13,390
Austria	433,367
Belgium	777,557
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,000
Bulgaria	43,268
Canada	835,368
Croatia	25,112
Cyprus	104,092
Czech Republic	306,506
Denmark	7,153
Estonia	53,902
European Union	1,425,672
Finland	2,583,176
France	3,623,038
Georgia	706
Germany	21,635,949
Greece	190,183
Holy See	7,639
Hungary	73,176
Iceland	27,020
Ireland	819,668
Italy	1,036,000
Japan	402,967
Kazakhstan	8,922
Latvia	18,135
Liechtenstein	227,731
Lithuania	55,195
Luxembourg	283,416
Malta	88,931
Monaco	18,073
Montenegro	20,847
Netherlands	800,516
Norway	584,990
Poland	26,018
Portugal	50,000
Romania	498,999
Slovakia	21,742
Slovenia	7,000
South Korea	67,306
Spain	626,414
Sweden	1,893,996
Switzerland	2,744,858
Thailand	4,000
Türkiye	5,000
United Kingdom	1,482,116
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	285,432
United States	8,159,030
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>52,390,809</b>

Executive Structure	Pledge amount (€)
Secretariat	36,406,775
Secretariat Unallocated Funds*	2,008,289
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	6,380,787
High Commissioner on National Minorities	229,160
Representative on Freedom of the Media	1,211,980
Mission in Kosovo	30,000
Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina	564,779
Mission to Serbia	105,041
Presence in Albania	1,917,041
Mission to Skopje	360,000
Mission to Montenegro	35,000
Mission to Moldova	559,640
Programme Office in Bishkek	1,527,467
Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan	15,000
Programme Office in Dushanbe	1,039,850
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>52,390,809</b>

\*Unallocated extrabudgetary contributions are funds provided by donors to the OSCE without allocating contributions to a specific extrabudgetary project at the time of acceptance.

### Extrabudgetary expenditures\*

Executive structure	Actual expenditures (€)
Secretariat	21,608,281
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	8,432,033
High Commissioner on National Minorities	885,479
Representative on Freedom of the Media	885,524
Mission in Kosovo	745,993
Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,573,689
Mission to Serbia	1,286,837
Presence in Albania	1,317,868
Mission to Skopje	2,854,064
Mission to Montenegro	424,731
Mission to Moldova	471,612
Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine**	529,379
Programme Office in Astana	231,315
Centre in Ashgabat	478,824
Programme Office in Bishkek	1,502,547
Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan	124,495
Programme Office in Dushanbe	3,238,934
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,591,605</b>

\*Actual expenditure figures do not include obligations. This applies to all actual expenditure figures throughout this document.

\*\*Actual disbursements related to donations for humanitarian aid made against the unliquidated obligations raised before the mandate expiration on 31 October 2022.