



Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2025

Warsaw Poland, 6 - 17 October 2025

ODIHR SIDE EVENTS: SCHEDULE AND OVERVIEW

Tuesday, 7 October

25 years at the forefront of electoral legal assistance: ODIHR's election legal assistance as a part of its follow-up work

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

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

ODIHR's assistance to participating States includes advice on laws that touch upon human rights issues integral to the conduct of genuine elections, such as the freedoms of assembly, association and expression, as well as legislation on political parties and their financing. These reviews help countries ensure their laws comply with OSCE commitments and international standards and support the conduct of transparent and genuine elections. This side event will showcase how ODIHR conducts systematic reviews and contributes to inclusive and consultative electoral reform processes. Through recent examples, ODIHR will demonstrate how the review process has contributed to improved legal frameworks in participating States. Participants will be able to discuss the main challenges in the legislative process, how civil society involvement can improve the quality of legislation, and the crucial role of early, inclusive legal reviews of draft laws. The event will discuss the benefits of integrating ODIHR's legal assistance into national electoral reform processes and share best practices, raising awareness of how participating States can benefit from follow-up work, particularly legal reviews of legislation, to enhance the quality and integrity of electoral processes around the OSCE region.

Democracy at a crossroads: discussions on responding to democratic governance challenges

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

Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Organized within the framework of *Stronger Democratic Institutions in Eastern Partnership Countries: an ODIHR project supported and funded by the EU*, will offer a forward-looking conversation on democratic developments across the participating States covered by the project. While each context presents unique circumstances, many institutions across the region are navigating common challenges such as political polarization, stalled reforms, and declining public trust.

Panelists will explore how integrity, inclusion, and accountability in democratic processes can be reinforced, particularly in settings marked by instability, reform fatigue, and limited dialogue between public institutions and society. Civic participation and institutional legitimacy will serve as core themes, with a focus on how democratic institutions can remain open, participatory, and responsive to all citizens, especially those historically underrepresented in public life.

The discussion will also reflect on how national developments are shaped by broader regional dynamics, including the impact of war, shifting geopolitical conditions, and evolving policy priorities. Finally, this side event will highlight how the project initiative contributes to reinforcing democratic governance through targeted tools, expert guidance, and context-specific support. Drawing on diverse experiences from the participating States covered by the project, the event will explore practical approaches to strengthening democratic resilience and ensuring that governance reforms are not only enacted, but also trusted and sustained.

Thursday, 9 October

Think Again: Freedom of Thought in the Age of AI — publication launch

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

As governments navigate fast-moving developments in artificial intelligence, a core but often overlooked right demands urgent attention: freedom of thought. Freedom of thought safeguards individuals' ability to think independently, form their own beliefs, make autonomous decisions and contribute with new perspectives, fostering creativity, innovation and resilient pluralistic societies. The right also encompasses the freedom to not reveal one's thoughts, as well as freedom from coercion, from punishment for one's thoughts, and from the impermissible modification of those thoughts through brain alteration or manipulation. States have a duty to create an enabling environment for the full realization of freedom of thought. To support states in this, ODIHR has developed a policy brief on the implications of artificial intelligence for freedom of thought, outlining recommendations for states to uphold this fundamental freedom today. The event will discuss the major implications of AI for our individual autonomy, how we live together, and our democracies.

Securitization under scrutiny: The role of national human rights institutions in strengthening the human rights compliance of counter-terrorism measures

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Counter-terrorism measures have expanded across the OSCE region and beyond, too often at the expense of human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing migration flows and public protests have all prompted governments to introduce restrictive measures in the name of security. This intensifying 'securitization' trend can seriously undermine established human rights standards, the rule of law and democracy. As independent human rights bodies, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) are vital

to safeguard human rights in the context of national security and counter-terrorism measures. Through independent oversight of laws, policies and actions, they help to strengthen the transparency, accountability and human rights-compliance of counter-terrorism efforts. Depending on their mandate, NHRIs can deal with individual cases, engage in litigation, monitor and assess proposed legislation, make recommendations, conduct research and raise awareness. However, NHRIs from the OSCE region need more capacity, knowledge and resources to address the burgeoning securitization issues affecting human rights and democracy. This event aims to raise awareness of the role of NHRIs in protecting human rights in the context of national security and securitization, with a focus on counter-terrorism. It will highlight the importance role of NHRIs in independent oversight and as bridges between society and the state. It will consider experiences, challenges and solutions for addressing human rights concerns, also when authorities and public opinion support securitization rhetoric.

Ukraine Monitoring Initiative

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, ODIHR's Ukraine Monitoring Initiative (UMI) has interviewed more than 600 witnesses and survivors of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The UMI works with local experts on the ground in Ukraine to identify potential witnesses, verifying their suitability for interview to ensure that their testimony is relevant to the scope of the UMI and, crucially, that the interview will not harm them. Interviews are conducted by international monitors from different, often multi-disciplinary backgrounds. All are experienced in interviewing displaced people, victims of crimes or members of vulnerable groups. Operating in a two-person team, with a lead interviewer and second interviewer/note taker, together with an interpreter, they conduct two interviews per day, using a trauma-informed approach.

The event intends to explain the work of UMI experts and monitors and, through their perspectives, provide insight on the experiences of witnesses. Discussion points will include the work of experts in identifying witnesses; witnesses' motivations for interview; challenges in identifying witnesses; the interview process and methodology; how we engage with witnesses before, during and after interviews; accountability; and the work of the UMI from their perspective.

Friday, 10 October

Beyond the Hague: the OSCE and current challenges in securing justice for victims of war crimes

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; OSCE Mission in Kosovo; OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Working language: English

Domestic trials are essential to ensuring accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. They bring proceedings closer to victims and help rebuild the national institutions necessary for lasting reconciliation and sustainable peace. The number of domestic war crimes trials in the OSCE region has risen in the past 20 years, particularly in South Eastern Europe as cases have been transferred from international tribunals to domestic or hybrid courts. Meanwhile, in Ukraine war crimes-related trials are beginning even as the war continues. OSCE monitoring highlights that domestic courts in jurisdictions affected by conflict face various challenges in securing accountability and redress for victims, including backlogs, limited judicial and prosecutorial capacities, difficulties in investigating and prosecuting cases where perpetrators are not present, and legal and institutional difficulties in protecting victims, including guaranteeing the rights of victims and using witness and victim testimony. These challenges have led to alternative approaches, such as in absentia trials and transitional justice mechanisms. Understanding this experience is of significant value to current and future efforts to seek accountability for international crimes through domestic justice systems. This event will discuss the OSCE's work on domestic war crimes cases, map obstacles to securing justice for victims, and identify how the OSCE and civil society partners can help improve the processing of domestic war crime cases.

Trial monitoring — an effective tool for supporting justice reform and judicial accountability

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English, Ukrainian

Trial monitoring is an effective tool for supporting justice reform, safeguarding fair trial rights and promoting transparency and accountability within the judicial system. This event will discuss experiences of trial monitoring conducted by ODIHR, some OSCE Field Offices and civil society organizations, raising awareness of ODIHR's trial monitoring methodology and promoting trial monitoring as a tool for building public trust in the judiciary, enhancing respect for fair trial rights, and strengthening accountability mechanisms.

The event will provide a short introduction to ODIHR's trial monitoring methodology and an overview of ODIHR's work in this area, with examples from ODIHR's most recent trial monitoring initiatives, alongside ongoing monitoring by CSOs in Ukraine. The event will consider how trial monitoring can

be effective in extraordinary situations or high-profile cases, identifying both strengths and systemic weaknesses within the criminal justice system. It will also highlight the OSCE's extensive experience in monitoring war crime cases and how trial monitoring can contribute to promoting accountability, upholding the rule of law and ensuring respect for fair trial rights in conflict-related cases, recognizing the crucial role of CSOs in this field, including their efforts in monitoring war crime cases.

Human rights infrastructure as a foundational element in countering backsliding on gender equality

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 – Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

This event will raise awareness about the importance of collaboration and networking for effective responses to backsliding on gender equality, particularly with human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). The event will explore how the systems, institution and legal frameworks that support and protect human rights contribute to addressing and reversing backsliding on gender equality. There will be contributions from HRDs, CSOs, national human rights institutions and representatives of international organizations. Participants will be invited to complete a short survey on suggestions for collaboration on the topic. The results will be discussed during the session alongside other ideas and examples of using human rights infrastructure in this context.

Monday, 13 October

Hate crime training for police and prosecutors across the OSCE region – lessons from 20 years of ODIHR practice and publication of ODIHR training materials

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

OSCE participating States have recognized that hate crimes pose a threat to security, which, if not properly addressed, may give rise to conflict and violence on a wider scale. To address this threat, they have committed to strengthen the criminal justice response, including professional training and capacity-building for police, prosecutors and the judiciary. To support these efforts, ODIHR developed its flagship *Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement* (TAHCLE) and *Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training* (PAHCT), which are designed to improve responses to hate crimes by law enforcement and prosecutors to identify, investigate and prosecute hate crimes. Since launching in 2012 the TAHCLE Programme has been delivered in almost 20 countries, while PAHCT, introduced in 2014, has been delivered in full or in part in 15 countries. Drawing on 20 years of work with practitioners in the field, ODIHR has now updated the trainer's manuals for both programmes, and will make them available. This will enable broader access and encourage the development of national training programmes on hate crime, while ODIHR continues to provide direct assistance and support to participating States. This side event will highlight ODIHR's updated programmes and showcase national experiences from across the OSCE region, offering lessons learned.

Exploring the achievements and challenges of the past and present: the future of Roma and Sinti human rights in the OSCE area

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

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Over the past decade, the space for Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations (CSOs) working on human rights monitoring and advocacy has significantly diminished. Organizations that once played a crucial watchdog role, documenting violations, litigating discrimination cases and holding institutions accountable, have increasingly shifted to service provision or have suspended operations. This is closely linked to insufficient and short-term funding, bureaucratic barriers, lack of political will and a lack of recognition and support for rights-based approaches. In light of this, ODIHR commissioned research to examine the state of Roma and Sinti human rights work across the OSCE area. The subsequent report outlines how broader democratic backsliding, coupled with persistent anti-Roma racism and the rise of far-right populism, continues to erode human rights protection for Roma and Sinti communities, including women and youth. This event will present and discuss the main findings, including the

normalization of anti-Roma rhetoric, the weakening of Roma civil society and the need to rebuild the human rights infrastructure underpinning Roma advocacy. It will also explore concrete ideas for revitalizing rights-based Roma and Sinti activism, strengthening intersectional and grassroots responses and encouraging sustained donor and institutional engagement.

OSCE retrospective: from commitments to action: addressing hate crimes in South-Eastern Europe through cooperation: 15 years of good practice from the field missions

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

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Skopje, Serbia, OSCE Mission in Kosovo and OSCE Presence in Albania

Working language: English

Hate crimes continue to be a concern across the South East Europe (SEE) region, threatening the security and safety of individuals and societal cohesion. This is particularly true in post conflict/transitional societies such as in SEE. Throughout the region there are common patterns in hate crime incidents, including against majority and minority ethnic groups, religious communities and sexual and gender minorities. These patterns are often influenced by cross-border narratives, nationalist rhetoric and regional political tensions. While individual SEE OSCE Field Operations (FOs) have made significant strides in addressing hate crimes within their respective jurisdictions, the cross-border nature of such crimes calls for a more coordinated and strategic regional response. Regional cooperation over the last 15 years has enabled ODIHR and the OSCE field offices to better understand and address these influences.

The event will showcase key developments, highlight areas of regional cooperation and identify achievements and positive practices in responding to hate crimes. It will also show how joint activities and cross-border dialogue facilitated by the OSCE encouraged national authorities to engage in collaborative efforts and regional forums, enhancing trust and the political will to combat hate crimes. The event will underscore the OSCE's central role as a platform for advancing dialogue, coordination and joint efforts in addressing hate crimes.

Launch of ODIHR's publication Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide

Time: **18:30-19:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working languages: English, Russian

This event will launch *Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide*, which forms part of a series of ODIHR Guides that promote a comprehensive approach to addressing religion-related hate crimes. Anti-Christian hate crimes, which are criminal offences motivated by bias against Christians, continue to pose a serious concern across the OSCE region. Attacks against Christians, their places of worship, cemeteries and other sites of historical and religious significance inflict lasting trauma on victims, their families and their communities. By sending a message that Christian communities are not tolerated in society, such crimes stoke fear and division, undermine social cohesion and pose a serious security concern across the region.

Film screening and panel discussion: “*That Boy*” a conversation about hate and healing

Time: **18:30-20:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in co-operation with Fundacja Jaw Dikh, Poland

Working language: English

Roma and Sinti communities remain among the most vulnerable minorities in the OSCE region, continuing to face high levels of deprivation, marginalization and discrimination.

The anti-Roma violence that erupted in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall remains an underexplored chapter in Europe’s history of racism. From the 1990s onward, waves of violent attacks against Roma communities swept through several OSCE participating States, perpetrated by both local rioters and organized neo-Nazi and far-right groups. These events significantly shaped the far-right movements that persist today, with some former perpetrators now in prominent positions. The rise of exclusionary politics, the mainstreaming of far-right ideologies and the increasing diversity of societies due to migration make it crucial to revisit these historical patterns to offer solutions for the contemporary rise of the far-right.

“*That Boy*” documents the journey of Toby, a former Roma refugee, and his encounter with Mirek, a former neo-Nazi. It captures their raw conversation about the roots of hate, its impact and the potential for reconciliation, offering a powerful lesson on the long-lasting effects of hate and the potential for transformation, reconciliation and justice.

Tuesday, 14 October

SPECIAL EVENT: Women's Power Breakfast: 50/50 gender parity in politics – why it is important and how to make it happen?

Time: **08:00 breakfast, 8:30-09:45 event**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Gender equality in politics has been a core focus of efforts to promote women's rights around the world. The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) established the duty to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life. In the intervening decades, these commitments have been deepened and expanded at the global and European levels. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action identified women in power and decision-making as one of its twelve strategic objectives. The global framework was strengthened with the 2024 CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 40, which clarifies that 50/50 parity is not just a target but a human rights obligation. Parity should not only be a core principle of governance, but also a leading force for transformative change; women should have an equal say, on a par with men, in all decision-making systems.

Currently, only one OSCE participating State has achieved gender parity in its national parliament, and while women's parliamentary representation has increased overall, the growth of women's representation has been stagnating over the last five years. In parallel, the OSCE region is witnessing unprecedented mobilization against gender equality, with a significant impact on women's political participation. At the 2025 Women's Power Breakfast, we will host Nicole Ameline, former Chair of the CEDAW Committee and former French Minister for Parity and Equality, and discuss how we can counter these developments, why equal participation is important today and what OSCE states can do to achieve gender parity.

Challenges and opportunities in integrating gender perspectives and promoting human rights-based approaches through democratic oversight of the security sector: the role of ombuds institutions

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Secretariat; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Security sector institutions play a central role in providing security to all segments of society. However, at times, security sector institutions are the ones perpetrating violations, including torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, with particularly severe consequences for the most

vulnerable. These human rights violations are more likely to occur where the security sector lacks oversight, accountability and good governance. Ombuds institutions are essential for preventing these violations and addressing their causes. Through independent investigation of complaints, monitoring human rights compliance and promoting accountability and transparency within security forces, they ensure security providers operate under the rule of law and a framework of democratic oversight. By integrating gender perspectives and advocating for inclusive policies, they also strengthen human rights protection and enhance public confidence in security institutions. In countries such as Moldova and Ukraine, they have played a key role in promoting accountability, supporting gender-sensitive policies and advancing reforms that strengthen the overall governance of the security sector. This event will highlight Eastern European experiences, examining the challenges and opportunities faced by ombuds institutions in preventing torture and enhancing accountability. The discussion will explore OSCE support, lessons learned from Moldova and Ukraine, and ways to reinforce rights-based, accountable security sector governance across the region.

Wednesday, 15 October

Truth over fear: countering attacks on migrant and refugee rights

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Across the OSCE region, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are increasingly targeted by anti-migrant rhetoric, disinformation and smear campaigns. These narratives, often amplified in political debates and public discourse, undermine solidarity, distort facts and erode respect for fundamental human rights. The initial reception of Ukrainian refugees has demonstrated that welcoming people in need is not only necessary and possible, but also enriches and strengthens host societies and even boosts economic growth. This experience offers powerful lessons for protecting rights, building inclusive communities and countering fear-based narratives. At the same time, those who stand up for the rights of people on the move — human rights defenders, NGOs, and even local communities — face significant challenges, including harassment or criminal sanctions. This event will explore how international organizations, national and local actors and human rights defenders can work together to take a stand against hostility, promote rights-based approaches and safeguard democratic values.

The event will discuss the need to protect refugee and migrant rights; identify effective strategies to counter smear campaigns and anti-migrant narratives; highlight successful cooperation between international organizations, NGOs and human rights defenders; and showcase ODIHR's work in this area.

A long road to recovery: sharing good practices on victim identification and long-term support for survivors of human trafficking

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Victims of human trafficking often remain hidden in our societies. Due to high levels of manipulation and emotional and physical coercion by traffickers, only a fraction of victims is ever detected and identified. Even after identification, survivors often face complex and systemic challenges that go far beyond issues of immediate support. Addressing these challenges requires more than reactive measures – it demands a comprehensive, human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and gender-sensitive response. To help ensure recovery, victims need tailored, individualized services that enable effective rehabilitation and reintegration into society. This event will share good practices in identifying victims of human trafficking and providing needs-based assistance for victims and survivors of human trafficking within National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs); promote the implementation of survivor-informed standards that facilitate proactive identification; advocate for the need for long-term rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of human trafficking, including through the roles of independent advocates; and facilitate dialogue and enhance coordinated, cross-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders involved in identifying and supporting victims. Along with members of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC), ODIHR will discuss practical tools and approaches and present ODIHR's recently published *Survivor-Informed Indicators*.

Thursday, 16 October

Strengthening the resilience of national human rights institutions to promote and protect human rights

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)

Working language: English

National human rights institutions (NHRIs) are key elements of national and international human rights protection systems and a bridge between civil society and participating States. Due to their broad mandate covering all human rights, NHRIs are well placed to provide independent expertise to state authorities, including on the human rights implications of law, policy and state practice. In this context, meaningful cooperation of NHRIs with state authorities has great potential to advance human rights protection on the ground. OSCE participating States committed to facilitating the establishment and strengthening of independent NHRIs. At the same time, the deteriorating environment and shrinking civic space in the OSCE region are hindering NHRIs from fulfilling their human rights mandate. NHRIs are also facing growing challenges to their effectiveness and operations, including insufficient resources,

limited follow-up on recommendations and even threats and attacks. This event will highlight the importance of strong and independent NHRIs and state authorities' cooperation with NHRIs, their added value and the need to strengthen an enabling space for them as a pillar of the rule of law and democracy in the OSCE region. It will raise awareness of the challenges and possible solutions, and will make recommendations on how to meaningfully engage with NHRIs and how states can better support their work. Moderated by ODIHR, speakers will include a member of the ENNHRI Expert Group and representatives of selected NHRIs from OSCE participating States.

Human rights defenders in exile: prospects for stronger EU protection

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Araminta

Working language: English

The legitimate and important role that human rights defenders play in our societies makes it essential that they can operate in a free and safe environment. This is equally true when human rights defenders are forced to leave their home countries. As the crackdown on civil society intensifies in many parts of the world, a dramatically increasing number of human rights defenders are seeking safety in exile, where they hope to continue their work freely and openly. However, they face urgent personal, legal and organizational challenges associated with relocation, and many encounter long-term barriers linked to legal insecurity, restricted mobility and limited opportunities to continue their work.

This event will explore the lived experiences of human rights defenders in exile and reflect on how a Directive could address the most pressing gaps. Drawing on both institutional perspectives and lived experience, the discussion will allow critical reflection on how international mechanisms, the European Union, and national governments can better respond to the urgent needs of displaced human rights defenders. Moderated by ODIHR, participants will include representatives of Araminta and human rights defenders living in exile in various countries.