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**EUROPEAN UNION**

# OSCE Permanent Council No. 1582
# Vienna, 22 October 2026

## Report by the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

1. The European Union and its Member States thank the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for her comprehensive report and for the important work of her Office.
2. As confirmed by discussions at the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, trafficking in human beings remains a persistent and evolving challenge across the OSCE region. It is one of the gravest violations of human rights and a highly profitable form of organised crime, which continues to adapt to new technologies, exploit vulnerabilities and undermine the rule of law. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected.
3. The latest EU data underline both the scale of the challenge and the need for sustained action. In 2023–2024, more than 20,000 victims of trafficking were registered in the EU, an increase of over 16% compared to 2021–2022, while the real number is likely much higher due to under-identification. Sexual exploitation remains the most prevalent form, accounting for 48% of registered cases, while labour exploitation has continued to grow and now represents 38%. Nearly two-thirds of registered victims were non-EU nationals, reflecting the transnational nature of trafficking networks.
4. The new EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, adopted on 16 October 2026 ahead of EU Anti-Trafficking Day, aims to ensure that the EU addresses emerging challenges. Built around prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships, it sets out six priorities: the digital dimension, private sector engagement, organised crime links, migration, crisis preparedness, and the protection of persons vulnerable to trafficking.

Mr Chair,

5. Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine continues to create severe humanitarian consequences and heighten trafficking risks across Europe. Displaced persons, predominantly women and children, face acute risks of sexual exploitation, forced labour and online recruitment by criminal networks. According to the IOM Ukraine

Crisis Response, Russia's latest relentless attacks on energy infrastructure ahead of the winter season, combined with heavily damaged housing, could trigger a new wave of displacement in Ukraine. We remain particularly concerned by the forcible transfer and unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children and demand their immediate, unconditional and safe return. Furthermore, we remain alarmed by transnational networks coercing foreign nationals into military service and war-related exploitation.

Mr. Chair,

6. We welcome the Special Representative's continued support for the implementation of OSCE commitments and her focus on emerging forms of exploitation, including forced criminality, online-facilitated recruitment, benefit fraud, and the misuse of digital technologies and financial flows by traffickers. We also commend the Office's practical work on financial investigations, technology-facilitated trafficking, and simulation-based training, which helps participating States strengthen prevention, victim identification and criminal accountability.
7. A victim-centred, human rights-based, child-sensitive and gender-responsive approach must remain at the heart of all anti-trafficking efforts. This includes full respect for the non-punishment principle, early identification, access to assistance, and meaningful inclusion of victims' and survivors' expertise in policy and practice, as underlined in the report.
8. We encourage the full use of OSCE tools and the strong partnerships across the OSCE with participating States, field operations, autonomous institutions, civil society and other international organisations. We also welcome the excellent co-operation with the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.
9. The EU and its Member States will continue to work closely with the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator and her team to ensure that victims are identified and assisted, perpetrators are held accountable, and prevention is strengthened through co-operation, innovation and full respect for human rights.

*Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.*