

Side Events Programme



26th Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons

20-21 April 2026

DAY 1 - Monday 20 April 2026 - Afternoon

16.45 -
17.45

Bibliotheksaal

Launch of the Study on Trafficking for Forced Criminality in Cyber Scam Operations in the OSCE Region

Co-organizers: OSR/CTHB and UK Delegation to the OSCE

In person and via Zoom; Interpretation ENG & RUS

[Click here to join via Zoom](#); Passcode: 78170555

16.45 -
17.45

Room 533

Identification and non-punishment of victims of human trafficking in complex cases, including in detention settings and financially exploitative schemes

Co-organizers: Council of Europe and CBSS

In person and via Zoom

[Click here to join via Zoom](#); Passcode: 28754836

DAY 2 - Tuesday 21 April 2026 - Morning

09.00 -
10.00

Bibliotheksaal

Launch of the research “The Human Cost of Crime: The Harrowing Link Between Human and Drug Trafficking”

Organizer: OSR/CTHB

In person and via Zoom

[Click here to join via zoom](#); Passcode: 22844511

09.00 -
10.00

Room 532

Strengthening Survivor-Centred Responses to Trafficking for Forced Criminality: ASEAN Experiences and Cross-Regional Lessons

Co-organizers: ASEAN and OHCHR

In person and via Zoom; [Click Here to Register for the Zoom Link](#)

Side Events Programme



26th Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons

20-21 April 2026

DAY 2 - Tuesday 21 April 2026 - Afternoon

13.45 –
14.45

Bibliotheksaal

From Criminalisation to Protection: Strengthening the Non-Punishment Principle in Cases of Forced Criminality

Co-organizers: La Strada International and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

In person and via Zoom

[Click here to join via zoom](#); Passcode: 72805709

13.45 –
14.45

Room 533

Children Trafficked for Criminal Activities: Strengthening Identification and Justice Responses

Co-organizers: Missing Children Europe, Terre des Hommes and HEUNI

In person and via Zoom

[Click here to join via zoom](#); Passcode: 73852301

13.45 –
14.45

Room 532

Beyond the Crime: Mental Health and Psychosocial Impacts of Trafficking for Forced Criminality

Co-organizers: IOM and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In person and via Zoom

[Click here to join via zoom](#); Passcode: 89911426

SIDE EVENT to Launch the Study on Trafficking for Forced Criminality in **Cyber Scam** **Operations in the OSCE Region**



20 April;
16.45-17.45
Bibliotheksaal

Co-organizers: OSR/CTHB and UK Delegation to the OSCE

[Click for Zoom:](#)
Meeting ID: 955 2462 7222
Passcode: 78170555

CONCEPT NOTE


Background

Human trafficking for **forced criminality in cyber scam operations** has expanded significantly both in scale and geographical scope. As the fastest-growing form of trafficking it poses serious threats to cross-regional security. Initially concentrated in Southeast Asia, trafficking for forced scamming has increasingly affected the OSCE region since 2022, including **victims originating from multiple OSCE pS** and emerging cases of **similar modus operandi appearing in the region**.

Victims are often deceived by false job offers and forced to engage in cyber-enabled fraud, including romance scams, investment schemes, and other cybercrimes, frequently facing threats, physical violence, and confiscation of identity documents. In April 2025, INTERPOL data revealed that citizens of 12 OSCE participating States had been trafficked into scam centres, a figure already outdated as the estimate is now at least 19. Nevertheless, there remained a significant lack of systematic data on the phenomenon's impact within the OSCE region, despite several pS reporting cases of their citizens being trafficked into such schemes.

Reports from INTERPOL also reflected the modus operandi on cyber scam operations expanding into the OSCE region. Documented cases in Montenegro and North Macedonia further confirm the presence of organized fraud hubs employing deceptive recruitment practices, confinement or coercion, and exploitation.

In light of this expanding threat and to fill the evidence gap, the OSR/CTHB undertook a research study, examining the digital footprints of trafficking through targeted open-source investigations and inputs from lived experience experts.



SIDE EVENT to Launch the Study on Trafficking for Forced Criminality in **Cyber Scam** Operations in the **OSCE Region**



20 April;
16.45-17.45

Bibliotheksaal

[Click for Zoom:](#)

Meeting ID: 955 2462 7222

Passcode: 78170555

Co-organizers: OSR/CTHB and UK Delegation to the OSCE

CONCEPT NOTE

The study examines the trafficking of OSCE nationals into scam centres in Southeast Asia, as well as presence of patterns of trafficking for forced criminality into scam operations located in the OSCE region. It analyses victim profiles, recruitment patterns, and the modus operandi of criminal networks and scam centres, maps high-risk platforms, and identifies regional trends across the OSCE region. Informed by an OSINT specialist and survivor leaders, the research addresses key questions on target groups, recruitment tactics, and the use of emerging technologies to groom, control, and coerce victims. It offers a set of evidence-based recommendations to guide prevention efforts, strengthen operational response, and inform policy development of States, regional entities, and the private sector across the OSCE region.

Purpose of the Side Event

The purpose of this side event is to **launch the findings of the OSR/CTHB research on patterns of trafficking in human beings for forced criminality in cyber scam operations in the OSCE region**. The event will present the scope, methodology, and findings of the OSR/CTHB research study and raise awareness of the evolving modus operandi in the OSCE region, including the misuse of social media and AI. The discussion will offer policy and operational recommendations to OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation and identify priority areas for further research, policy development, and operational co-operation.

SIDE EVENT to Launch the Study on Trafficking for Forced Criminality in **Cyber Scam** Operations in the **OSCE Region**



20 April;
16.45-17.45
Bibliotheksaal

Co-organizers: OSR/CTHB and UK Delegation to the OSCE

[Click for Zoom:](#)
Meeting ID: 955 2462 7222
Passcode: 78170555

AGENDA

Interpretation in ENG & RUS

Opening Remarks

- Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
- Mr. James Ford, Charge d'Affaires of the United Kingdom's Delegation to the OSCE

Keynote Speaker

- Mr. Ryan Winch, Programme Manager for Transnational Crime and Technology, Bali Process Regional Support Office

Presentation of Findings

- Ms. Lynn Dudenhoefer, Senior Intelligence & Technology/AI Expert

Panel

Moderator:

- Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Speakers:

- Mr. Saken Kabibulla, Lived Experience Expert, Kazakhstan
- Ms. Aleksandra Chołuj, Head of Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Hate Crimes and for Supporting Actions in the area of EU Internal Security Policy, Department of Public Order, Ministry of Interior and Administration, Poland
- Mr. Abdus Salam, Survivor Advisor of Human Trafficking

Recommendations and Closing Remarks

- Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Identification and non-punishment of victims of human trafficking in complex cases, including in detention settings and financially exploitative schemes

20 April;
16.45-17.45
Room 533

[Click here to join via Zoom;](#)

Meeting ID: 924 4894 3873
Passcode: 28754836

Co-organizers: Council of Europe and CBSS

CONCEPT NOTE

The principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking, enshrined in Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, is an essential element of the human rights-based approach to combating human trafficking. Due to failure to identify victims of trafficking exploited in criminal activities and apply the non-punishment principle, victims are detained in police cells, immigration detention centres and prisons. Prosecuting and punishing victims identifies them as the wrongdoers, rather than as victims of exploitation. The detention of trafficked persons not only contravenes the obligation to protect and assist victims, it also discourages them from co-operating with the investigation and ultimately results in the impunity of traffickers.

Panellists will discuss the importance of early, proactive identification of victims of trafficking exploited in criminal activities and the investigation of those who have abused them. The side-event will also explore the role of National Preventive Mechanisms and other bodies inspecting places of deprivation of liberty in detecting victims of human trafficking and ensuring that victims are referred for identification and assistance. In this regard, the side event will also look into criminal schemes involving human trafficking and benefit fraud. In such schemes, traffickers may recruit or control vulnerable persons and use their identities, personal data or bank accounts to fraudulently claim welfare benefits or other public funds. Victims may be compelled to register for benefits, provide documentation, or allow traffickers to manage applications and financial accounts, while receiving little or none of the proceeds. As a result, trafficked persons may appear to authorities as offenders in cases of benefit fraud, despite having been exploited through coercion, deception or abuse of vulnerability.



Identification and non-punishment of victims of human trafficking in complex cases, including in detention settings and financially exploitative schemes

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Co-organizers: Council of Europe and CBSS

AGENDA

Moderator:

- **Edi Mujaj, Head of TF-THB Unit, Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)**

Speakers:

- Ms. Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#))
- Ms. Ann Snowden, Head of Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking at HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), United Kingdom
- Dr. Märta Johansson, Associate Professor, Örebro University, Sweden
- Ms. Julie Platou Kvammen, Assistant Chief of Police and Head of the National Police THB Competence Group NCIS, Norway
- Ms. Hollie Nadel, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, 3Strands Global Foundation

Launch of the research “The Human Cost of Crime: The Harrowing Link Between Human and Drug Trafficking”

21 April;
09.00 – 10.00
Bibliotheksaal
[Click here to join
via zoom;](#)

Organizer: OSR/CTHB

Meeting ID: 928 0155 1309
Passcode: 22844511

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Human trafficking for the purpose of criminal exploitation, known as “forced criminality”, has seen a sharp increase in cases across the OSCE region. What was once considered a marginal phenomenon has become one of the fastest-growing trafficking trends; new data from the [2026 OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings \(OSR/CTHB\) Survey](#) shows that forced criminality now accounts for 17% of total reported cases across the OSCE region. Among the types of crime that sees heightened risk of exploitation is trafficking for the purpose of forced drug-related crimes.

The UNODC 2024 Global Report depicted drug cartels trafficking children for exploitation in criminal activities across Western Europe, and the report provided alarming data on how Europe’s criminal networks recruit and exploit youth, children and adults to act as spotters, distribute drugs, or carry out violent attacks during the process in several European states. This data is also supported by the reports issued by several OSCE participating States evincing significant vulnerabilities associated with this form of exploitation. There continues to be a substantial need for evidence-based, whole-of-society approaches to combat human trafficking for this type of exploitation.

Objectives

Against this backdrop, the OSCE OSR/CTHB launched the new research study “[The Human Cost of Crime: The Harrowing Link Between Human and Drug Trafficking](#)” to examine the scope of this phenomenon and offer recommendations for policy and practice to prevent and tackle this exploitative form.

The research discusses policy and legal framework governing the prevention and fight against illicit use of drugs and its patterns and distribution and delivery routes in the OSCE region. It examines the diverse and complex vulnerabilities that are targeted by criminal networks – such as socio-economic conditions, physical and mental disabilities, and age – followed by the actions, means, and purposes that make up the modus operandi of trafficking networks in targeting adults and children for exploitation. It also provides an in-depth discussion of the non-punishment principle for victims of human trafficking whose offences were committed as part or result of being trafficked, before offering concrete policy recommendations in line with the 4Ps approach (prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership) to combat this heinous crime.

The side event, convened on the margins of the [26th Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons](#), will serve as a launch for this new research. It seeks to increase awareness of the phenomenon and its scope and foster collaboration among OSCE participating States, civil society representatives, academia, law enforcement, international organizations, and the broader anti-trafficking community.

Launch of the research “The Human Cost of Crime: The Harrowing Link Between Human and Drug Trafficking”

Organizer: OSR/CTHB

21 April;
09.00 – 10.00
Bibliotheksaal
[Click here to join
via zoom;](#)
Meeting ID: 928 0155 1309
Passcode: 22844511

AGENDA

Opening remarks | 09.00 – 09.05

Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Panel discussion | 09.05 – 09.40

Eugenio Zoffili, Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Sosa Henkoma, Expert by Experience, Member of ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC), CEO of Unique Charity, Mentor, UK

The Human Cost of Crime: The Harrowing Link Between Human and Drug Trafficking: Key findings

Tarana Baghirova, Programme Officer, OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) and **Mark Jackson**, OSCE Expert

Case example: Children’s exploitation for drug trafficking in Albania
Juliana Rexha, National Anti-Trafficking Officer, OSCE Presence in Albania

Q&A | 09.40 – 09.55

The floor opens up for questions from the audience.

Concluding remarks | 09.55 – 10.00

Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Strengthening **Survivor-Centred Responses** to Trafficking for Forced Criminality: ASEAN Experiences and Cross-Regional Lessons

21 April;
09.00 – 10.00
Room 532
[Register for the Zoom Link Here](#)

Co-organised by Australian Counter Trafficking (**ASEAN-ACT**) Program, and The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**)

CONCEPT NOTE


Background

Trafficking in persons for forced criminality is an increasingly visible and complex form of exploitation, where victims are coerced into engaging in criminal activities such as drug smuggling, cyber-scam operations, or other illicit activities. Victims are frequently treated as offenders rather than victims of trafficking, resulting in serious human rights harms and challenges for criminal justice systems and protection services.

In Southeast Asia, the rapid growth of transnational organised crime networks and cyber-enabled criminal activities has intensified the risks of trafficking for forced criminality. Addressing this challenge requires stronger implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle (NPP), improved victim identification mechanisms, and enhanced cooperation between governments, civil society organisations, and survivor advocates.

ASEAN Member States have taken important steps to strengthen regional responses to trafficking in persons, including through the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) which invites Member States to apply the NPP in accordance with domestic legal frameworks. More recently, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) have collaborated to issue the ASEAN Guideline on the NPP. Further work is underway on the development of indicators to better identify trafficking for forced criminality. These initiatives aim to support more consistent and effective victim identification, strengthen rights-based responses, and prevent the criminalisation of victims.

This side event will present emerging policies and lessons from ASEAN, while also highlighting the complexities of trafficking for forced criminality through new research from UN Human Rights (OHCHR) and insights from civil society. The discussion aims to foster cross-regional learning between ASEAN stakeholders, OSCE participating States, international organisations, civil society actors and survivor-leaders working to strengthen rights-based responses to this particularly complex form of trafficking.



Strengthening **Survivor-Centred Responses** to Trafficking for Forced Criminality: ASEAN Experiences and Cross-Regional Lessons

21 April;
09.00 – 10.00
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Co-organised by Australian Counter Trafficking (**ASEAN-ACT**) Program, and The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**)

CONCEPT NOTE

Expected Outcomes

The side event will provide a platform to bridge lessons between OSCE and ASEAN on trafficking for forced criminality as an increasingly prevalent form of trafficking. Participants will gain practical, survivor-informed insights from recent UNOHCHR research, including on behavioural drivers of deceptive recruitment and recommendations for survivor-centred protection responses.

Panelists will discuss the development of the ASEAN Non-Punishment Principle (NPP) Guidelines, including the engagement of survivors and civil society in the process, and share examples from ASEAN of how the guidelines are being integrated into national laws, policies, and practices, offering guidance for cross-regional application.

The discussion will promote survivor-informed and rights-based approaches within national strategies, strengthen cross-regional knowledge exchange, and highlight promising practices to improve victim identification, protection, and non-punishment responses. It will also underscore the role of partners, including Australia, in advancing coordinated responses.



Strengthening **Survivor-Centred Responses** to Trafficking for Forced Criminality: ASEAN Experiences and Cross-Regional Lessons

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AGENDA

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 13:30 | In-person registration
Admitting online participants via Zoom |
| 14:00 | Welcoming remarks from the Australian Government |
| 14:05 | <p>Moderator: Australian Government</p> <p>Expert Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Genevieve Sauberli, Regional Migration Advisor, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Research findings on trafficking into cyber-scam operations (10 minutes) - Online• H.E. Anita Ashvini Wahid, Indonesia Representative to AICHR: ASEAN regional responses to trafficking for forced criminality (10 minutes) - Online• Mr Chuan Yang Chew, Hayat: Civil society perspective on trafficking for drug smuggling (10 minutes) - Online <p>Discussant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Siobhán Mullally, UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Professor of Human Rights Law (10 minutes)
Followed by a moderated discussion (15 minutes) |
| 15:00 | Closing |

From Criminalisation to Protection: Strengthening the Non-Punishment Principle in Cases of Forced Criminality

21 April;

13.45 – 14.45

Bibliotheksaal

[Click here to join](#)

[via zoom;](#)

Meeting ID: 993 6193 4485

Passcode: 72805709

Co-organizers: *La Strada International and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)*

CONCEPT NOTE

Purpose and Relevance

The 26th Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons highlights forced criminality as a growing and under-recognised security blind spot. A central yet insufficiently addressed issue within this context is the inconsistent implementation of the non-punishment principle. Although the principle is recognised in international and regional anti-trafficking frameworks and reflected in OSCE commitments, trafficked persons across the OSCE region continue to be arrested, detained, prosecuted, and convicted for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit. Those most affected include migrants, asylum seekers, children, and individuals in irregular situations.

Content

This side event will explore the gap between legal standards and their implementation, focusing on forced criminality cases and barriers to applying the non-punishment principle, presenting findings and recommendations from global and European research and national case law and litigation experience. .

Discussion Focus

Speakers will highlight systemic failures in identifying trafficked persons, analyze barriers to applying the non-punishment principle, share lessons from case representation, and offer recommendations for OSCE States. The discussion aims to foster constructive dialogue between frontline actors, state authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes

This side event aims to raise awareness among OSCE participating States about ongoing protection gaps in forced criminality cases and provide practical recommendations for consistent application of the non-punishment principle. By focusing on accountability in implementation, the event seeks to support OSCE efforts to align anti-trafficking responses with human rights standards and ensure trafficked persons are not punished for crimes they were forced to commit.

From Criminalisation to Protection: Strengthening the Non-Punishment Principle in Cases of Forced Criminality

21 April;

13.45 – 14.45

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Co-organizers: *La Strada International* and the *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)*

AGENDA

Opening by HOST/Moderator

Moderation: Ms. Suzanne Hoff, International Coordinator La Strada International

Panel discussion

- **Professor Conny Rijken, Dutch National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence against Children**, who will reflect on the situation in the Netherlands, based on the new pending legislative change on non-punishment, and Dutch case law.
- **Ms. Daisy-May Carty Cowling, Human Trafficking and Forced Labour Programme Officer of GAATW**, who will pre-launch new global research on trafficking for forced criminality and the impact on women and adolescents. (online)
- **Ms. Kamena Dorling, Director of Policy at Helen Bamber Foundation**. She will present findings from a new report examining the criminalisation of trafficking victims in the United Kingdom, drawing on legal casework and victims testimony.
- **Ms. Tamara Schmidt, Co-director of LEFÖ-IBF** and **Ms Michele Mildwater, Director HopeNow**, will reflect on practical gaps and challenges related to applying the non-punishment principle in practice in Austria and Denmark.

Children Trafficked for Criminal Activities: Strengthening Identification and Justice Responses

21 April;
13.45 – 14.45
Room 533

[Click here to join](#)

[via zoom;](#)

Meeting ID: 940 6904 4373
Passcode: 73852301

Co-organizers: Missing Children Europe, Terre des hommes Foundation, and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI)

CONCEPT NOTE

Rationale and Purpose

Trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality is an increasingly visible form of exploitation affecting children across the OSCE region. Evidence from several European countries highlights cases where children are coerced into organised theft, drug distribution, and other illicit activities. Often, these children are treated as offenders rather than recognised as victims.

Persistent operational gaps exist in victim identification, awareness of trafficking indicators among criminal justice actors, and cross-border cooperation. These gaps result in detention, prosecution, disrupted education, and long-term vulnerability.

The side event will examine trends, identification challenges, and operational responses to child trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality. It will draw on pilot cross-border cooperation initiatives between Albania and France, Albania and Greece, and Albania and the United Kingdom, as well as findings from HEUNI's Nordic scoping study, highlighting practical lessons for prevention, identification, and transnational coordination, while emphasising child-centred approaches and the non-punishment principle.

By bringing together practitioners, prosecutors, and researchers, the session aims to strengthen understanding of indicators of forced criminality, promote improved cross-border case cooperation, and support identification practices.

Children Trafficked for Criminal Activities: Strengthening Identification and Justice Responses

21 April;
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Co-organizers: *Missing Children Europe, Terre des hommes Foundation, and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI)*

AGENDA

Opening and Context Setting (5 minutes)

Alyona Samar, Senior Programmes Officer, Missing Children Europe (facilitation)

- Brief framing of the topic and emerging trends in child trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality followed by introduction of the speakers.

Strengthening Cross-Border Action to Protect Children: Lessons from Albania's Pilot Cooperations (10 minutes)

Olsi Dudumi, Regional Innovation & Youth Empowerment Advisor, Terre des hommes

Presentation of findings from pilot cooperation initiatives between **Albania and France, Albania and Greece**, both implemented with the support of Permanent Representation of France to the United Nations and international organizations in Vienna (PP UN Vienna), and **Albania and the United Kingdom supported by UK International Development of the British Government**. The presentation will highlight:

- How transnational criminal networks exploit children for criminal activities
- Challenges in recognising indicators of trafficking among children involved in crime
- Gaps in cross-border information exchange and victim referral mechanisms

Representative of the Albanian Prosecutor's Office (online – tbc) (5 min)

Reflections on lessons learned from these initiatives and practical considerations for improving transnational cooperation and case coordination, including approaches to applying the non-punishment principle in cases involving children coerced into criminal activities.

Children Trafficked for Criminal Activities: Strengthening Identification and Justice Responses

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AGENDA

Exploring the Links Between Youth Criminal Exploitation and Trafficking: Nordic Perspectives (15 minutes)

Anniina Jokinen, Senior Programme Officer, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI)

- Presentation of findings from “Between Victimhood and Offending: A Nordic Scoping Study on the Links Between Youth Criminal Exploitation and Trafficking.” The study highlights the growing recruitment of children into organised crime, the exploitation of vulnerabilities, and the risks of misidentifying exploited children as offenders, which can lead to criminal records and increased vulnerability to re-victimisation. The presentation will emphasise how applying a trafficking lens can improve identification and protection of offending children.

Identifying Child Trafficking in Cases of Forced Criminality in the Context of War (10 min)

Julia Sachenko, Founder and Head of Libera

- This intervention will highlight an emerging and under-recognised form of trafficking in the context of the war against Ukraine, where children are recruited through digital platforms into criminal and violent activities, including acts of sabotage. Drawing on field experience and research prepared for GRETA, it will show how such cases are often treated primarily as national security threats, leading to children being prosecuted as offenders rather than identified as potential victims of trafficking. It will underline how this trend reflects broader shifts in forced criminality across the OSCE region, particularly in conflict settings, and will examine gaps in the application of the non-punishment principle, proposing elements of a more balanced, child-centred approach that addresses both protection and security concerns.

Discussion (15 minutes)

Moderated discussion and Q&A

Beyond the Crime: **Mental Health and Psychosocial Impacts** of Trafficking for Forced Criminality

21 April;
13.45 – 14.45
Room 532

[Click here to join via zoom;](#)

Meeting ID: 940 8116 7609
Passcode: 89911426

Co-organizers: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, the **Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum**

CONCEPT NOTE

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities is increasingly recognized as a significant and rapidly evolving form of exploitation. Victims may be compelled to engage in a wide range of criminal activities, including forced online fraud operations, drug cultivation and distribution, forced theft and shoplifting, document fraud, cybercrime, smuggling, the sale of illicit goods such as illegal cigarettes, and other illicit acts. These activities are frequently carried out under coercion, violence, deception, debt bondage, or threats against victims and their families. Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable to this form of exploitation.

While policy discussions often focus on criminal justice responses and the non-punishment principle, less attention has been given to the profound mental health and psychosocial impacts experienced by victims of trafficking for forced criminality.

Many survivors experience deep shame, guilt, and confusion related to the crimes they were forced to commit. These experiences can significantly affect their self-perception, their willingness to seek help, and their ability to recognize themselves as victims of human trafficking who deserve protection and support. Survivors may internalize responsibility for acts committed under coercion, resulting in self-stigma, fear of authorities, and reluctance to disclose exploitation.

At the same time, significant external barriers hinder the identification of victims trafficked for forced criminality. Legal and procedural frameworks often fail to adequately capture this form of exploitation, resulting in inconsistent or delayed identification. Institutional perceptions of victimhood frequently prioritize more visible forms of exploitation, such as sexual exploitation, while individuals apprehended for criminal activity are more likely to be treated as offenders rather than presumed victims of trafficking. This challenge is further compounded by the structural intersection between law enforcement and protection systems: victims are often first identified through arrest or investigation, which can limit timely referral to protection mechanisms. As a result, many victims remain unidentified or are criminalized for acts they were compelled to commit, with significant implications for their recovery and reintegration.

Children trafficked for forced criminality experience particularly profound mental health and psychosocial impacts. Being compelled to engage in criminal activities—such as drug distribution, theft, or online fraud, or the sale of illicit goods—can disrupt their developing sense of identity, morality, and self-worth. Many children internalize feelings of guilt, shame, and responsibility for the acts they were forced to carry out, which can make it difficult for them to recognize themselves as victims or to seek help. When authorities encounter these children primarily as offenders rather than as victims of exploitation, experiences such as arrest or detention may reinforce stigma and deepen mistrust toward institutions. Without child-sensitive identification and trauma-informed support, these experiences can have long-lasting impacts for their mental health, social reintegration, and future life opportunities.

Beyond the Crime: **Mental Health and Psychosocial Impacts** of Trafficking for Forced Criminality

21 April;
13.45 – 14.45
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Co-organizers: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, the **Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum**

CONCEPT NOTE

In this context, the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection through its National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM) plays a key role in the protection of unaccompanied minors who may be suspected as victims of forced criminality. NERM is mandated to identify, trace and provide protection to UAMs who are homeless or living in precarious conditions in Greece, and are therefore at heightened risk of human trafficking, particularly for exploitation in criminal activities.

In practice, within the framework of its operations, NERM has contributed to the identification of both children and adults who were victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality. In such cases and following close coordination with the competent law enforcement and judicial authorities, identified victims were rescued and subsequently received appropriate protection and support services. Notably, this marked one of the first cases in Greece to be formally pursued with the characteristics of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, demonstrating in practice the importance of effective collaboration between NERM, victims, law enforcement, and judicial authorities.

Drawing on lived experience, case histories and field experience, this side event will examine how trafficking for forced criminality affects survivors' mental health and psychosocial well-being. Attention will be given to emerging forms of exploitation such as online scam compounds in Southeast Asia, where trafficked persons are forced to conduct large-scale digital fraud schemes targeting victims worldwide, and the specific impacts of trafficking for forced criminality on children.

The discussion will explore how these experiences shape survivors' recovery trajectories and what this means for professionals working with victims of trafficking, including law enforcement, prosecutors, social protection services, and civil society organizations.

The event will highlight key operational lessons, including:

- The psychological consequences of forced criminality for survivors
- Internal barriers to disclosure linked to shame, guilt and self-blame
- External barriers to identification linked to attitudes, beliefs, and law enforcement practices
- Operational lessons from Greece, including the role of NERM in early identification, multi-agency coordination, and referral of victims of human trafficking for forced criminality to protection services
- The challenges in the effective implication of the non-punishment principle
- The importance of trauma-informed and MHPSS-sensitive approaches in victim identification, protection, and recovery for children and adults
- The added value of survivor-informed perspectives in strengthening policy and practice

By bringing together practitioners, policymakers, and survivor advocates, the side event aims to strengthen understanding of the human impact of forced criminality and identify practical ways to improve victim-centred responses across the OSCE region.



Beyond the Crime: **Mental Health and Psychosocial Impacts** of Trafficking for Forced Criminality

21 April;
13.45 – 14.45
Room 532

[Click here to join
via zoom;](#)

Meeting ID: 940 8116 7609
Passcode: 89911426

Co-organizers: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, the **Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum**

AGENDA

Opening Remarks

Heracles MOSKOFF, Secretary General for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Panel

- **Moderator: Jean-Benoit MANHES**, Deputy Co-ordinator, OSR/CTHB
- **Speakers:**
 - **Petya NESTOROVA**, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
 - **Peppi Tuulikki KIVINIEMI-SIDDIQ**, IOM Protection Specialist for Asia and the Pacific
 - **Guglielmo SCHININA**, IOM MHPSS expert (online)
 - **Chara PAPAGEORGIU**, Protection Assistant, NERM, General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum (EUUA embedded staff)
 - **Sosa HENKOMA**, Expert by Experience, Advocate for Change