

Human Rights Due Diligence: Building Ethical Supply Chains to Combat Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation

Regional Conference

**16-17 September 2024
Hotel Budva, Budva, Montenegro**

CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

The international debate on business and human rights has significantly evolved since the adoption of the [UN Guiding Principles](#) (UNGPs) by the Human Rights Council in 2011. These principles outline the responsibilities of governments and enterprises in protecting, respecting, and remediating adverse human rights impacts. Today, the global community advocates for a mix of voluntary and mandatory measures to address these issues. Approximately 30 countries have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) based on the UNGPs. Additionally, several countries, including Germany, France, and Norway, have enacted legislation on human rights due diligence, while others like the US and Canada have imposed import restrictions, and the UK and Australia have established non-financial reporting requirements.

Trafficking in human beings (THB) in supply chains is a complex and pervasive issue, intensified by the complex and multilayered nature of modern procurement processes. This global problem necessitates robust preventive measures and policies rooted in corporate human rights due diligence, requiring businesses to actively assess and mitigate THB risks in their operations and supply chains. The urgency for such due diligence is underscored by recent legislative advancements, including the [EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive \(CSDDD\)](#), which impacts both EU and non-EU countries.

Over the past decade, the OSCE under the leadership of the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) has been at the forefront of efforts to understand and combat THB for labour exploitation. The OSCE has adopted several Ministerial Council Decisions on THB urging participating States to develop targeted prevention policies, enhance public procurement practices, and ensure transparency and human rights compliance in supply chains. The OSR/CTHB's project on the "Prevention of Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains" (currently in its third phase from 2024-2028), has organized several conferences and workshops to raise awareness, build capacity, and share best practices. This included a national conference on the prevention of human trafficking for labour exploitation in supply chains in Montenegro in 2022, and a regional conference in North Macedonia for all Balkan countries in 2023.

The OSCE has issued several tools to assist participating States in their efforts to advance human rights in their supply chains, such as the [Model Guidelines on Government Measures to Prevent Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains](#). To set a credible example for governments and businesses on the issue of THB, the OSCE is also striving to eliminate THB from its own supply chains. To this end, the OSCE conducted an independent evaluation of the THB risks within its direct suppliers. Additionally, the OSCE has developed a comprehensive [Procurement Guidance](#), a [handout](#) detailing the role of public procurement in THB in supply chains, and a free [e-learning course](#) on the topic.

The OSCE Mission to Montenegro closely cooperates with the Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Montenegrin Ministry of Interior (MoI), which coordinates the implementation of the 2019-2024 Strategy for the Fight Against Human Trafficking. A key measure within this strategy focuses on the “Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking” and includes the operational objective to “Improve the Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking and the Quality of Protection and Assistance During Their Social Reintegration”. This measure emphasizes the need to enhance the identification of victims among vulnerable groups. Consequently, annual activities are conducted to implement inspection supervision aimed at suppressing illegal work and human trafficking for labour exploitation, thereby improving prevention and detection methods.

The action plan for the final year of the Strategy for the Fight Against Human Trafficking underscores the need to improve the response to human trafficking for labour exploitation. In this regard, the MoI plans to conduct a rapid assessment of the current situation in combating labour exploitation. As part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness about labour exploitation, the MoI, in conjunction with the Mission and supported by OSR/CTHB, will organize this regional conference in Budva.

Objectives:

The conference aims to gather and update relevant stakeholders and officials on the latest developments in integrating human rights due diligence into legal and regulatory frameworks in the EU and globally (e.g., Germany, Norway), and its implications for the private sector also beyond EU borders.

It follows up on the national conference held on 10-11 May 2022 in Budva, Montenegro, and the regional conference held on 11 May 2023 in Skopje, North Macedonia.

The conference aims to:

- Raise awareness and continue the dialogue on the importance of developing and implementing policies and practices aimed at the prevention of THB in supply chains;
- Map the current state of play in the Balkan region and take stock of best practises and experiences from other countries and regions like Germany, Norway, and the EU in enhancing the institutional response;
- Strengthen co-operation between the state institutions and private sector in ensuring the respect of human rights in business operations and procurement processes, with a special emphasis on the role of Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro;
- Present guidelines and recommendations developed by the OSCE and other experts and discuss the most feasible ways of translating them into legal and policy framework best suited to the local context.

During the conference, representatives from the OSCE, Montenegro and other participating States from the region will share their experiences and vision on how current international and EU developments might be reflected and practically implemented in the local context. The conference will offer a platform for dialogue on the legal framework and policies against THB in supply chains in the region, aiming to formulate conclusions towards the development or appropriate adjustments of policy and implementation. Practical tools will also be presented.

Hosts:

The conference will be hosted by OSR/CTHB and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro in collaboration with the Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro.

Format:

The event will consist of a one-and-a-half-day conference on 16 and 17 September 2024. Simultaneous interpretation services in English and Montenegrin will be provided.

Participants:

The event will gather representatives from Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, chamber of commerce, trade unions, public procurement agencies, associations of employers, national human rights institutions, state institutions, academia, labour inspectors, civil society organizations, businesses, business and human rights experts, and other private and public stakeholders in the prevention and suppression of THB for the purposes of labour exploitation in supply chains.

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¹ 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.