



OSCE Human Dimension Seminar

Warsaw, 11–12 October 2017

Working group II: Trafficking in children

Contribution of the Council of Europe

- The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which entered into force on 1 February 2008, currently has 47 States Parties.
- A child-sensitive approach is reflected throughout the Convention. Several of its provisions contain specific measures concerning children, for example, that:
 - Parties shall reduce children’s vulnerability to trafficking by creating a protective environment for them.
 - Parties shall adopt preventive measures in order to discourage demand that fosters all forms of exploitation, especially of women and children.
 - As soon as an unaccompanied child is identified as a victim, each Party must provide for representation of the child by a legal guardian, organisation or authority which acts in the best interests of that child.
 - When the age of the victim is uncertain and there are reasons to believe that the victim is a child, he/she shall be presumed to be a child.
 - When services are provided to victims of trafficking, due account has to be taken of the special needs of persons in a vulnerable situation and the rights of children in terms of accommodation, education and appropriate health care.
 - A child victim has to be afforded special protection measures taking into account the best interests of the child, including during judicial proceedings.
- The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which monitors the implementation of the Convention, pays particular attention to measures taken by States Parties to address the vulnerability of children to trafficking. GRETA has dedicated a thematic section of its 6th General Report, which was published in March 2017, to the issue of child trafficking.
- According to available data, on average in Europe, children represent a quarter of identified victims of trafficking. Children are subjected to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced marriage and increasingly forced criminality.

- Several of GRETA's recent country evaluation reports highlight serious shortcomings in the response of States to the protection of children at risk of being trafficked and the provision of assistance to child victims of human trafficking. In Europe today, children are living in transit zones, at borders and in camps, often with little or no protection or assistance, and limited opportunities to integrate into new communities. Delays in the appointment of guardians, increased restrictions on family reunification in many countries, and sometimes hostile responses to child migrants and refugees, create further difficulties for children seeking to escape the reaches of trafficking networks.
- GRETA has stressed that in order to meet their obligations to prevent human trafficking and reduce children's vulnerability to exploitation, States should provide adequate resourcing of child protection systems, including for migrant and refugee children.
- GRETA's monitoring work contributes to the Council of Europe efforts to protect the rights of children in the implementation of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child and the new Action Plan on refugees and migrant children.