50+ stories of change at the anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025

Annex of Outcome Stories harvested

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) Evaluation Unit launched an Outcome Harvesting (OH) exercise to document and analyse significant changes influenced by the OSCE's practical work in the OSCE region over the past two decades. The OH methodology was chosen for its participatory and complexity-aware approach, making it particularly suitable for understanding the Organization's contributions in diverse and dynamic contexts.

All OSCE structures were invited to submit stories of change guided by OH principles. Fifty-four outcome stories harvested are presented in this annex. While not exhaustive or representative of the OSCE's work over the last two decades, these stories reflect a wide range of thematic areas, types of change, forms of OSCE contributions and geographies. In addition to this annex with outcome stories, four separate case study reports explore significant change pathways more in-depth, and a synthesis report identifies patterns across the outcome stories and case studies. The collection of stories in this annex provides an opportunity to examine the nature and breadth of the OSCE's contributions across its three dimensions of security and social actors it influenced over the past 20 years.

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* 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.

All stories were collected through an Outcome Harvesting exercise and were harmonized by OIO – their content reflect the submission by OSCE Executive Structures

Story #	STORY TITLE
Good governance	
17	Uzbekistan's government institutionalized open data for transparent governance
18	Kyrgyzstan's government introduced an e-platform providing e-services to citizens and businesses
Economic activities	
19	Women entrepreneurs in Central Asia scaled their businesses and built stronger networks
	> HUMAN DIMENSION
Human rights	
20	Civil society organizations expanded independent monitoring of peaceful assembly across the OSCE region
21	Government institutions in the western Balkans implemented durable housing solutions for displaced persons
22	Kazakhstan's Ombudsperson expanded its presence through 17 regional offices, strengthening human rights access
23	Serbian authorities reformed the prison system to enhance human rights protections and judicial oversight
24	Albanian 'Authority on Information with Former State Security Files' increased access to historical files for transitional justice
Media freedom and development	
25	Media actors in Kosovo[*] established independent institutions and oversight mechanisms to uphold media ethics and pluralism
26	Montenegro media actors established a collaborative forum for self-regulation
27	Serbian authorities and media actors established a multi-stakeholder system to protect journalists and improve law enforcement responses
28	Governments and civil society in the OSCE region strengthened protection for journalists and media freedom
Democratization	
29	Parliaments and political parties adopted gender equality measures to boost women's representation in politics
30	The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo[*] enhanced institutional accountability for human rights violations
31	Serbia's national assembly transitioned to a digital parliamentary system
Tolerance and non-discrimination	
32	OSCE participating States strengthened policy, law enforcement, and education to address anti-Semitism
33	City authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina established mechanisms for the promotion of social cohesion
34	OSCE participating States enhanced their capacity to identify, record and respond to hate crimes
Roma and Sinti	
35	Roma activists strengthened advocacy and fostered community-led solutions in North Macedonia and Serbia
36	Government of North Macedonia reduced Roma statelessness through legislative and civil registration reforms

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Story #	STORY TITLE
National minority issues	
37	Central Asian governments adopted multilingual education policies to enhance minority inclusion and regional co-operation
38	Government of North Macedonia adopted higher education reform, establishing multilingual university for inclusive access
Elections	
39	Kosovo* institutions took ownership of elections management and oversight
Rule of law	
40	Participating States reformed legislation improving transparency and human rights compliance
> **CROSS-DIMENSIONAL**	
Gender equality	
41	Women of Turkmenistan increased participation in public fora
42	Tajikistan's interior ministry enhanced domestic violence response with Gender-Sensitive Police Units and community referral networks
43	Women's Peace Leadership Programme graduates empowered in peacebuilding for leadership and influence
44	Montenegrin ministries incorporated gender considerations in national strategies
45	Women's Resource Centres established across Tajikistan to strengthen local co-operation on domestic violence response
Combating trafficking in human beings	
46	Participants of the OSCE's simulation-based training courses improved their ability to identify victims and effectively investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking
47	OSCE participating States strengthened anti-trafficking efforts through strategic reforms
48	Survivor leaders recognized as experts shaping anti-trafficking policies across the OSCE region
49	Uzbekistan's government institutionalized a national referral mechanism to strengthen anti-trafficking efforts
Education	
50	Kyrgyzstan's government established the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, a regional hub for higher education in politics, security, economic and human rights studies in Central Asia
51	Serbian university established first multilingual economics department, expanding access for Albanian students
52	University of Tirana established the Research Centre for Justice and Transformation and a Master's programme in transitional justice
Cyber/ICT Security	
53	OSCE participating States strengthened cyber co-operation
Youth	
54	Kyrgyzstan's government institutionalized crime prevention education and reinforced youth participation in policymaking

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Politico-military dimension

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1. Kosovo* Police established Local Public Safety Committees to support inclusive policing efforts

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Mission in Kosovo	
Change types: Capacities, practices, structures		**Geographical focus:** South Eastern Europe	
Social actors: Kosovo Police		**Dimension:** Politico-military	
Start of OSCE involvement: 2005	**Start of change:** 2005	**Thematic area:** Policing, conflict prevention and resolution	
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention/Post-conflict rehabilitation	
Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Standard setting, technical assistance, facilitating co-operation, capacity-building	
		Key external partners: United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Kosovo Emergency Management Agency	

> Outcome description

Since 2005, the Kosovo Police (KP) has established 86 Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs) across Kosovo to enhance community safety and security, particularly for non-majority communities. These committees operate in mixed communities, and provide residents with a structured platform to voice concerns and participate in shaping local policing strategies. LPSCs identify security challenges, propose solutions, and contribute to decision-making processes. Representatives from each LPSC also hold seats in their respective Municipal Community Safety Councils, strengthening their role in local governance.

> Significance and Impact

When the Committees were first established in 2005, Kosovo was in a post-conflict transition and trust between law enforcement and the public remained fragile. The Committees introduced a structured mechanism for community policing, allowing residents to engage directly with law enforcement and shape local safety strategies. This approach has strengthened trust, improved collaboration and contributed to tangible security improvements. The multi-ethnic composition of the Committees has fostered inter-community co-operation and reinforced stability. By bringing together community members, police officers and local institution representatives, the Committees have played a vital role in addressing safety concerns and enhancing the quality of life. Their inclusive structure, reflecting diversity in community, gender, age and religion, has contributed to building social cohesion. Over time, this collaborative engagement has supported a reduction in crime rates in some areas and strengthened inter-community co-operation.

> OSCE contribution

During the initial phase of the initiative, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, in partnership with UNMIK, has played a key role in developing and sustaining the Local Public Safety Committees.

Curriculum development and dissemination of training materials: The Mission in Kosovo worked closely with the Kosovo Police to design and implement comprehensive training and capacity-building programmes for Committee members. These initiatives include community policing training for newly established committees, train-the-trainer sessions, specialized workshops on youth engagement and gender mainstreaming in community safety projects, and regional round tables to co-ordinate fundraising efforts.

Providing equipment: The OSCE has supplied essential equipment and, in collaboration with the Kosovo Emergency Management Agency, conducted training for disaster risk reduction, strengthening community preparedness and response. This has included risk assessments, basic firefighting skills and first aid training to support community resilience initiatives.

Facilitating stakeholder dialogue: the long-term objective of the Local Public Safety Committees programme is to establish 132 Committees, aligning with the number of police sectors across Kosovo. The OSCE continues to support this goal by facilitating collaboration between the Committees, local institutions and law enforcement agencies to ensure sustainable community policing structures.

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Community safety initiatives: Since 2012, the Mission has implemented over 250 community safety initiatives. These initiatives aimed to improve safety, security and quality of life for all communities and vulnerable groups, including young men and women. The Committees identify issues in their communities, which they develop into project ideas as new or existing Local Public Safety Committees, using problem solving skills gained during the OSCE-supported training. These initiatives are developed to complement the current network of Local Public Safety Committees, Kosovo Police, municipal institutions and civil society, with the current focus placed on the northern Kosovo municipalities or other Kosovo Serb majority areas.

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2. The Kosovo[*] Academy for Public Safety developed into an institution-led, internationally accredited training institute

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission in Kosovo
Change types: Norms, practices, structures, capacities	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo Academy for Public Safety (KAPS)	Dimension: Politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 1999	Start of change: 1999	Thematic area: Policing
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building

Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, system change	Contribution types: Standard setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), US Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), European Union Office in Kosovo

> Outcome description

Since its establishment in 1999, the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety (KAPS) has undergone significant institutional changes, evolving from an OSCE-managed training centre into an institutions-governed and internationally accredited public safety academy. The following observed outcomes highlight key milestones in KAPS' transformation, reflecting its growing capacity, expanded mandate and sustained impact on Kosovo's public safety sector:

Establishment of a multi-ethnic police training institution (1999): The institution later expanded its mandate to provide training for all public safety agencies.

Transition to central-level oversight (2007): Kosovo's institutions assumed full control of KAPS after the OSCE transferred management responsibilities, thereby strengthening local ownership over public safety training.

Financial and operational sustainability (since 2011): KAPS operated under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, securing its long-term financial and operational sustainability as an independent public safety training institution.

Introducing higher education in public safety (2014): KAPS launched a higher education programme in public safety sciences, combining academic qualifications with professional training. The programme aligned public safety training with international standards, enhancing the professionalism of law enforcement personnel.

Achieving international accreditation (2018, 2021 and 2024): KAPS became the first law enforcement academy outside the United States to receive accreditation from the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST). KAPS earned IADLEST's highest distinction—the Award of Excellence upon reaccreditation in 2021 and 2024.

Standardizing training and increasing inclusion: KAPS standardized training methodologies across multiple public safety agencies. The Academy improved inter-agency collaboration, fostering a more co-ordinated public safety sector. Targeted initiatives increased representation of women and non-majority communities in law enforcement.

> Significance and Impact

Before these changes, Kosovo lacked a centralized and structured system for public safety training, with no formal higher education pathways for law enforcement professionals. The transition of KAPS to local control established a permanent institution dedicated to training public safety personnel in Kosovo. The introduction of higher education strengthened professional development opportunities, allowing law enforcement officers to attain academic qualifications aligned with international standards. The integration of multiple public safety agencies under a common training framework improved co-ordination during emergency response and law

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enforcement operations. Efforts to increase diversity in public safety agencies have contributed to greater representation of women and non-majority communities, with one in five cadets from the 2024 police graduating class being a woman. The international accreditation of KAPS by IADLEST further reinforced its status as a recognized training institution, demonstrating adherence to international law enforcement training standards. The Academy's institutionalization within the Ministry of Internal Affairs secured long-term sustainability, ensuring continued training and education for Kosovo's law and public safety agencies.

> ## OSCE contribution

Legislative assistance, institutional frameworks-building and transition to local management: The Mission, together with UNMIK, established the Kosovo Police Service School in 1999, designing and implementing training curricula with ICITAP. The Mission contributed to the expansion of the School into the Kosovo Centre for Public Safety Education and Development in 2006, integrating training for multiple public safety agencies. The transition to local control was managed between 2002 and 2007, deploying local instructors and creating an accreditation and certification section. The Mission assisted the Ministry of Internal Affairs in drafting the 2011 Law on KAPS. The Mission and UNMIK transferred full management to Kosovo institutions in 2007.

Training and curriculum development: The Mission supported the creation of a four-year bachelor's degree in public safety (2014) and contributed to curriculum and faculty development. It also assisted the EU twinning projects (2012–2019) to strengthen public safety education and standardize training. It supported internship, mentoring and vocational training programmes for cadets.

Capacity-building and training standardization: Specialized training programmes were developed and accredited for police, corrections, customs and emergency services. These initiatives promoted standardized training across agencies and enhanced diversity in recruitment.

International recognition and accreditation: In 2018, the Mission, alongside ICITAP and the European Union Office in Kosovo, supported the IADLEST accreditation process by contributing to the revision and standardization of curricula for police, the revision of minimum professional standards, and by donating learning and development equipment, which were essential criterial for the obtention of the accreditation. This initial accreditation was followed by reaccreditations in 2021 and 2024, and the earning of the Award of Excellence. Additionally, it facilitated international knowledge exchange and promoted digital learning initiatives.

Ongoing strategic and equipment support: The Mission, as a KAPS non-voting board member, continues to provide policy and technical guidance, as well as infrastructure support, including with IT equipment and training materials. The Mission also assists with strategic planning and training development, ensuring long-term sustainability. Finally, the Mission continues to assist the Academy with capacity-building activities, mainly focusing on enhancing quality assurance in public safety training, as well as the capacity of KAPS curriculum developers.

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3. Montenegro police introduced annual gender-responsive public relations campaigns to increase the number of women in police

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Montenegro Contributing structures: Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit
Change types: Practices	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Ministries of Interior and Education, Police Directorate, Police Academy, Montenegro Women's Police Association	Dimension: Politico-military, cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2020 Start of change: 2021	Thematic area: Policing, gender equality
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	Contribution types: Technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2021, the Montenegrin Police Directorate and Police Academy launched annual gender-responsive public relations and communication campaigns to increase the number of women in the police. These campaigns highlighted female officers' contributions, challenged gender stereotypes, and encouraged more women to pursue policing careers.

> Significance and Impact

Before this initiative, women were significantly underrepresented in Montenegro's police force, comprising only 13.8 per cent of officers in 2021, with even lower representation in operational units. This lack of diversity hindered police effectiveness, particularly in addressing gender-based violence and building community trust. Research consistently shows that a more gender-balanced police force improves conflict de-escalation, enhances investigations—especially in cases involving women, sexual offenses and children—and fosters greater public confidence.

Following the implementation of the campaigns, the percentage of female cadets at the Police Academy increased from 28 per cent in 2020 to 39 per cent in 2021, and overall representation of women in the police rose from 12 per cent in 2020 to 15 per cent in 2024. Public perception of women in policing also improved. OSCE surveys showed that the percentage of respondents who believed women were equally capable of serving in special police units rose from 55.7 per cent in 2020 to 67.5 per cent in 2023. Additionally, the increase in female cadets strengthens the pipeline of qualified women applying for police roles, particularly as a wave of retirements in the Police Directorate in 2025 is expected to create new recruitment needs. The growing number of female applicants has also enabled a better understanding of their career aspirations, allowing for more targeted recruitment and retention strategies.

> OSCE contribution

Research to inform activities: The Mission conducted situational analyses and research on women's participation in the Montenegrin Police, identifying barriers and opportunities for greater inclusion.

Intrastate stakeholder dialogue: Through its convening power, the OSCE was able to bring together key stakeholders—including the Ministries of Interior (Police Directorate) and of Education (Police Academy), as well as the Women's Police Association—to address the underrepresentation of women in policing, and co-ordinate institutional efforts to tackle this issue.

Promotional material development and public outreach: six 30-second videos showcasing policing as an attractive career for women and youth were produced by the OSCE, along with brochures and posters with practical information on education and employment opportunities in law enforcement. Awareness-raising efforts also included designing and distributing educational colouring books for first graders in elementary schools across Montenegro. The Mission also organized conferences, events and training sessions to keep gender equality and women's representation in policing on the public agenda.

Women's Police Association capacity-building: The Mission enhanced the Association's capacity to advocate for women in policing and influence decision-making, as well as provided technical equipment in 2022 and supported the 2024 *Gender World Congress of Women Police Officers*, where participants addressed gender stereotypes in law enforcement.

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4. North Macedonia police established a mentoring programme to support women officers

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Skopje
Change types: Capacities, practices, networks	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Ministry of Internal Affairs, police directorate, women's section in Police Union, women police officers	**Dimensions:** Politico-military, cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2016 **Start of change:** 2017	**Thematic area:** Policing, gender equality
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation
Scope and Degree of change: National, small-scale	**Contribution types:** Capacity-building, advocacy
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2017, the OSCE Mission to Skopje teamed up with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the North Macedonian police to launch a mentoring programme aimed at helping women climb the ranks and boosting female leadership in the police. The Gender Mentoring Programme ran from 2017 to 2024, during which four cohorts of mentors and mentees (178 police officers, including 12 men) were trained. Participants in the programme enhanced their professional skills and their awareness about gender-related obstacles experienced by women in the police. Women participants also gained the self-confidence needed to apply for new positions and develop their career and fostered strong networks of support with other women in the police force, empowering them to navigate challenges and grow within the institution.

> Significance and Impact

Aligned with national gender equality policies, the GMP contributed to increase the percentage of women in managerial roles from 12.5 per cent in 2019 to 17.8 per cent in 2023. This progress marked a significant step in challenging stereotypes and deep-rooted perceptions about the role of women in the police. The programme significantly helped women participants to gain access to career advancement opportunities addressing the historic underrepresentation of women in police leadership.

> OSCE contribution

Between 2017 and 2024, the OSCE played a central role in the design and implementation of the Gender Mentoring Programme. In 2024, the Programme was officially handed over to government authorities for continuation.

Training and mentoring: For each cohort, the OSCE delivered a year-long programme, starting with separate two-and-a-half-day workshops for mentors and mentees and followed by a joint kick-off session to set mentoring goals. Led by external facilitators, the workshops included a half-day session on gender equality, equipping participants with tools to challenge career-limiting stereotypes. Additional sessions built soft skills, such as communication, time management and stress management, alongside tailored training for participants. Seven women participants were trained as trainers, equipping them with the skills to carry the Programme forward independently, which strengthened the Programme's sustainability.

Policy advocacy: The OSCE engaged in different advocacy activities, aiming to secure institutional backing to the Programme from senior leadership and integrate these efforts within broader institutional reform processes. Mission staff became active participants in key Ministry of Internal Affairs' working groups that focused on human resource management, disciplinary proceedings and recruitment processes. These platforms became crucial advocacy spaces where the OSCE could push for systemic reforms that support the development of a more professionalized, representative and democratic police service in North Macedonia.

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5. Serbian authorities modernized police training structures and methodologies with the establishment of the Basic Police Training Centre in Sremska Kamenica

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Serbia
Change types: Norms, practices, structures, capacities, networks	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Ministry of Interior, Police Directorate	**Dimension:** Politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 2001	**Start of change:** 2007	**Thematic area:** Policing
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation

Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
	Key external partners: Council of Europe, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Danish Institute for Human Rights

> Outcome description

In 2007, Serbia established the Basic Police Training Centre in Sremska Kamenica, which introduced a unified and modernized approach to basic police training. The Ministry of Interior created new institutional structures to govern and oversee police education, including the establishment of the Police Education Directorate. This body formalized oversight of training delivery, introduced a standardized competency-based curriculum, and embedded principles such as human rights, ethics and community policing. A nationwide trainer development system was also institutionalized, enabling the Ministry to build and retain internal teaching capacity through a core group of trainers, curriculum designers and training evaluators. Recruitment practices were reformed to ensure accessibility for individuals over 18 (the previous recruitment age was 15) and to promote greater inclusion of women and national minorities in the police force.

> Significance and Impact

In 2001, Serbia's police training system was widely recognized as fragmented and inefficient. Three separate institutions (the Police Secondary School, Police College, and Police Academy) operated independently without resource integration. Their curricula, rooted in outdated, militaristic paradigms, were delivered through rigid, teacher-centred methods that emphasized theoretical instruction over practical skills. This approach proved both costly and poorly aligned with the demands of modern policing and contemporary human rights standards.

By transforming officer training and recruitment, OSCE-supported reforms laid the foundation for a modern, professional and democratic police force that has strengthened public trust and improved citizens' perceptions of law enforcement. OSCE's research shows that Serbian citizens increasingly view the police as a public service—47 per cent in 2023, compared to 29 per cent in 2008—illustrating the significance of the reforms and their capacity to shift away from fragmented, militarized and secondary-school-style police education towards a professional training system based on adult learning and democratic policing principles.

> OSCE contribution

Research: OSCE and Council of Europe experts produced two influential reports that reviewed the state of policing, highlighted a few areas that were in urgent need of internal reform and international support, and provided evidence-based recommendations to address deficiencies, catalysing an ambitious process of police reform. This research provided a solid evidence base and strategic framework for transforming Serbia's police force into a modern public service, including realigning education curricula and priorities.

Training of trainers: In 2003, the Mission to Serbia launched a comprehensive trainer development programme. Between 2003 and 2007, the OSCE trained over 500 police officers as trainers, curriculum developers or training evaluators, equipping them with cutting-edge teaching methodologies, curriculum design techniques and evaluation skills rooted in international best practices.

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Curriculum development: The Mission supported the development of a new standardized basic training curriculum that integrated key principles, such as human and minority rights, police ethics and community policing.

Infrastructure support and resource mobilization: The OSCE played an active role as lead organization, co-ordinating international support to ensure alignment of efforts, avoidance of duplication, and timely, prioritized, sustainable and responsive assistance delivery. Donor support facilitated significant improvements to the Basic Police Training Centre's premises and resources, including the addition of new dormitories, classrooms and a situational training room; the opening of an interactive information centre and library; the launch of a new website; and the installation of a video-shooting system, with some of these enhancements funded by the OSCE Mission. The Council of Europe played a central role in embedding human rights principles into training programmes, while organizations such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance provided critical support throughout the reform process.

Inclusive recruitment: To promote the inclusion of national minorities and women, the Mission translated materials into minority languages, produced outreach media and held seminars with underrepresented communities.

Practice exchanges: The OSCE facilitated study visits, regional conferences and institutional partnerships with police academies in other countries, enhancing training quality and fostering regional collaboration.

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6. OSCE participating States disposed of toxic rocket fuel, enhancing environmental and human security

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Conflict Prevention Centre **Contributing structures:** Presence in Albania, Programme Office in Astana, Mission to Montenegro, Programme Office in Bishkek, former Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, former Mission to Georgia, former Mission to Yerevan, former Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus	
Change types: Practices	**Geographical focus:** Multi-regional	
Social actors: Ministries of Defence of Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Ukraine, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan	**Dimension:** Politico-military	
Start of OSCE involvement: 2002	**Start of change:** 2002	**Thematic area:** Arms control
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Technical assistance
		Key external partners: Specialized fuel disposal contractors

> Outcome description

Between 2002 and 2024, several participating States, including Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan, successfully removed and disposed of obsolete toxic rocket fuel components. By 2024, Ukraine alone eliminated 16,000 tonnes of mélange, Belarus disposed of 684 tonnes of mélange, samin, and TM-185, and Kyrgyzstan disposed of 155 tonnes of mélange and over 50 tonnes of samin.

> Significance and Impact

Prior to these removals, obsolete, toxic rocket fuel was stored in the countries posing a significant risk to environment and human security. Kept in old reservoirs, the toxic rocket fuel was often leaking, posing a severe contamination threat to the underground water. In high temperatures, the toxic fumes raised from the tanks seriously threatened the air quality of the nearby residents. The successful disposal of hazardous substances has mitigated these threats, enhancing public health and environmental safety across the affected countries.

OSCE contribution

Technical assessments, project planning and resources: The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre facilitated the assessment, planning and implementation of toxic fuel disposal components' operations in co-operation with participating States, their Ministries of Defence, and specialized contractors. The Organization co-ordinated logistics, secured funding and ensured technical compliance for the safe transport and disposal of toxic rocket fuel. While the OSCE led the process, national governments maintained ownership, providing essential infrastructure and legal frameworks to support these efforts.

7. Young women professionals expanded their roles in security sector and decision-making

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Conflict Prevention Centre
Change types: Capacities, networks	Geographical focus: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Participants of the OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security programme	Dimension: Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2018	Start of change: 2018	Thematic area: Arms control, youth
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention/Post-conflict rehabilitation
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, small scale		Contribution types: Capacity-building
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2018, over 780 young professionals—88 per cent women—have entered and advanced in the security sector after successfully completing the OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security programme. Alumni have assumed roles in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, actively contributing to policymaking, research and international security negotiations. Graduates have increased gender representation in security institutions, bringing diverse perspectives into conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

> Significance and Impact

In the context of the new security challenges and tensions in the OSCE area and beyond, as well as the impact of emerging technologies on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, there is a recognized need for new impetus for enhancement of the politico-military toolbox. In addressing this need, the programme has focused on forming a new generation of leaders, who contribute to the whole conflict cycle, with emphasis on peaceful resolutions of conflicts, that take into account the needs of a whole of society. By addressing the needs and empowering youth in the OSCE area, the programme enhances diverse decision-making and strengthens global peace efforts. Moreover, the security sector has historically been male-dominated, with arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy exhibiting a persistent gender imbalance. The programme continues to tackle one of the key barriers to women's and youth empowerment in confidence- and security-building — the lack of training opportunities in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This progress directly supports the implementation of the UNSC resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and contributes to achieving SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

> OSCE contribution

Providing entry-level training and networking opportunities for female professionals: The OSCE facilitated this change by launching and implementing the Scholarship for Peace and Security programme, which provides young professionals, particularly women, with specialized training in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Through annual training cycles, combining inquiry-based e-learning and real-life scenarios exercises, the programme has built a pipeline of skilled female professionals who now actively shape security policy and practice. The OSCE also fosters post-training career development through networking opportunities, reinforcing the long-term impact of this initiative.

8. Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence expanded national demining capacity

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Dushanbe
Change types: Norms, structures, capacities, practices	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Ministry of Defence, Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre	Dimension: Politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 2003	Start of change: 2010	Thematic area: Arms control
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, systems change		Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
		Key external partners: Swiss Foundation for Demining, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Norwegian People's Aid

> Outcome description

Since 2010, Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence has built national humanitarian demining capacity, shifting from reliance on foreign demining operators to deploying its own operational teams. While Tajikistan continues to receive international financial and technical assistance, it has established key institutional and legal frameworks, creating a more structured national approach to humanitarian demining. In addition, Tajikistan has also become a regional provider of technical training.

Concrete observed outcomes include: i) In 2014, the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre took responsibility for regulating, co-ordinating and managing all mine action activities under the Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law. The Centre oversees both national and international demining operators, ensuring compliance with national mine action standards. ii) The Ministry of Defence Humanitarian Demining Company has built qualified operational demining teams, making it the country's largest demining operator since its creation in 2010. iii) The Regional Explosive Hazards Training Centre, established in 2019, has trained over 1,200 personnel from Central Asia and beyond in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and demining techniques.

> Significance and Impact

For decades, Tajikistan relied entirely on international organizations and foreign expertise for mine clearance, limiting its ability to independently address landmine contamination. The development of national demining capabilities has significantly strengthened Tajikistan's ability to ensure long-term security, protect livelihoods and meet its international obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention).

The impact of these efforts is evident in the 2020 demining season, during which the Ministry, under the Centre's oversight, cleared 430,112 square meters of contaminated land, destroying 2,365 landmines. This included the MM6 minefield, an area previously inaccessible due to landmines blocking a vital water channel. The clearance allowed the rehabilitation of the channel and restored access to 11 hectares of farmland and a one-kilometer road, improving agricultural production, irrigation and the safety and economic well-being of over 1,600 people (250 households).

Between 2004 and 2023, over 33 million square metres of mine-contaminated land has been cleared, and more than 89,000 landmines and unexploded ordnance have been destroyed through the efforts of both national and international actors.

Tajikistan has also emerged as a recognized leader in humanitarian demining in Central Asia. Its Regional Explosive Hazards Training Centre is now a key resource for strengthening regional co-operation and capacity-building in mine action. This marks a significant transformation from a country being a recipient to a provider of demining knowledge and skills.

> OSCE contribution

Since 2003, the OSCE has played a pivotal role in supporting Tajikistan's mine action efforts, strengthening institutional and legislative frameworks, and providing technical training. Partnering with UNDP, Norwegian

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People's Aid, the Swiss Foundation for Demining and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the OSCE has contributed to significant progress. Key contributions include:

Institutional and legislative assistance: The OSCE supported the establishment of the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre in 2014 as Tajikistan's national mine action regulator and contributed to drafting the Humanitarian Mine Action Law (2016), formalizing the country's mine action framework.

Training and equipment: In 2010, the OSCE assisted in creating the Ministry of Defence Humanitarian Demining Company, supporting the formation of qualified demining teams with specialized training, equipment and logistical support.

Institutional development and regional co-operation: In 2019, the Organization helped establish the Regional Explosive Hazards Training Centre, which now trains personnel in demining and explosive ordnance disposal at a regional level. Over 1,200 personnel from Central Asia and beyond have received training, strengthening technical expertise and co-operation.

Standards development: In collaboration with UNDP, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Swiss Foundation for Demining and other partners, the OSCE supported the development of national mine action standards and land-release guidelines aligned with international best practices.

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9. Civil society and government actors in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia expanded their role in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Transnational Threats Department/Action against Terrorism Unit **Contributing structures**: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), all OSCE field operations in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Change types: Practices, capacities, networks	**Geographical focus:** Multi-regional
Social actors: Civil society organizations	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2016 — **Start of change:** 2022	**Thematic area:** Countering terrorism
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, scaled change	**Contribution** types: Civil society engagement, network development, training
	Key external partners: EU Radicalisation Awareness Network, Connect Futures, Finn Church Aid, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, Human Security Collective, Search for Common Ground, Women without Borders

> Outcome description

Between 2018 and 2022, government and civil society actors in South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,[*] Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) expanded their engagement in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT).

Community representatives, youth and women leaders, student groups and education professionals implemented workshops, advocacy campaigns, educational initiatives and media literacy events that broadened community-based approaches to P/CVERLT. Several actors also deepened their involvement by joining regional women's networks and contributing to local and regional P/CVERLT efforts as trainers and resource persons.

> Significance and Impact

Traditionally, P/CVERLT efforts have been state-centric, focusing on law enforcement and security-driven measures, often sidelining civil society's role. The OSCE-led LIVE project strengthened civil society's role and voice in P/CVERLT. It promoted human rights-compliant, gender-sensitive prevention strategies and helped bridge the gap between authorities and community actors. By equipping diverse stakeholders with practical skills and fostering cross-sector collaboration, the project contributed to a more inclusive and sustainable security framework in the OSCE region.

> OSCE contribution

Capacity-building and skill development: The OSCE LIVE project trained 847 participants in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia, equipping them with the tools to design and implement local P/CVERLT initiatives. Training events covered social cohesion, human security, media literacy and gender awareness in a P/CVERLT context. Stakeholder mapping, project design and monitoring and evaluation were also part of the training.

Civil society's capacity strengthening on P/CVERLT: The project enabled civil society actors to take a more active role in P/CVERLT efforts, previously dominated by law enforcement. LIVE graduates organized workshops, advocacy campaigns and educational activities within their communities.

Regional & international networks creation: LIVE facilitated the creation of two regional networks for women P/CVERLT professionals in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Several graduates also joined the OSCE expert roster to train others in P/CVERLT.

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Training curricula development: The OSCE piloted and refined the LIVE curricula based on feedback from participants, OSCE field operations and partner organizations, ensuring applicability across the OSCE region. Additionally, a publicly accessible e-learning course was launched on the OSCE website.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration and knowledge exchange: The project engaged OSCE structures, field operations and international partners (including the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network, Connect Futures, Finn Church Aid, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, the Human Security Collective, Search for Common Ground, and Women without Borders) to provide technical expertise and training support.

10. Uzbekistan's government established multi-stakeholder approach to counter violent extremism

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan **Contributing structures**: Transnational Threats Department/Action against Terrorism Unit, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Norms, practices, networks, capacities, structures	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actors: Uzbekistan's government, law enforcement, media, policymakers and civil society organizations	**Dimension:** Politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 2016	**Start of change:** 2021	**Thematic area:** Countering terrorism
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: Hosts of study visits

> Outcome description

Between 2018 and 2024, Uzbekistan adopted a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism. The government established a multi-agency working group in 2018, introduced multi-stakeholder collaboration and adopted the National Strategy for Countering Extremism and Terrorism (2021–2026) in 2021. As a result, institutional capacity was strengthened, inter-agency co-operation improved and regional collaboration enhanced, ensuring a more comprehensive and sustainable counter-terrorism framework.

> Significance and Impact

Prior to these reforms, Uzbekistan's government-led counter-terrorism efforts were fragmented and lacked structured engagement with civil society. The adoption of the National Strategy marked a pivotal shift by integrating human rights, gender equality and community participation, aligning Uzbekistan's approach with international best practices. Strengthened policy coherence, enhanced regional co-operation and improved reintegration mechanisms contributed to long-term security and stability, advancing the OSCE's mission of preventing violent extremism. In 2022, the President of Uzbekistan proposed the establishment of the Regional Expert Council on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees to enhance expertise in prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts across Central Asia. Structured around an Executive Committee and four working groups, the Council has held two meetings in Tashkent, and in 2024, Kazakhstan assumed its chairpersonship.

OSCE contribution

Policy development and stakeholder engagement: The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan facilitated the multi-agency working group, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to drafting the National Strategy, and provided international expertise to align it with OSCE and UN standards on human rights, gender-equality and community engagement.

Capacity-building and institutional strengthening: The field office organized training sessions, workshops and conferences for law enforcement, civil society, media and policymakers. At least 4,500 national stakeholders participated in more than 100 events dedicated to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT) among vulnerable population groups. These events focused on policy change, media literacy and capacity-building for law enforcement officers to ensure human rights compliance while countering terrorism. Additionally, training seminars for religious leaders were organized to promote community resilience against violent extremist ideologies. Other activities addressed critical infrastructure protection; the rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) of families returning from conflict zones, including support for the Central Asian Expert Council on R&R issues; and countering online radicalization. The events also facilitated knowledge exchange with international experts, fostering best practices and strengthening institutional resilience against violent extremism.

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> **R&R support:** The field office provided vocational training resources to the Production-and-Training Centre for Returnees in Termez. By March 2024, over 2,100 citizens had participated in rehabilitation programmes.
> **International co-operation and knowledge exchange:** Study visits were facilitated by the Project Co-ordinator's office to OSCE participating States (United States, Germany, Spain, Sweden) enabling Uzbekistan's officials to adopt best practices in counter-terrorism.

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11. OSCE participating States expanded legal and operational responses to cultural property crimes

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Transnational Threats Department/Border Security and Management Unit
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities, networks	Geographical focus: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Law enforcement and border management agencies in 48 participating States and seven Partners for Co-operation	Dimension: Politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 2016	Start of change: 2017	Thematic area: Border management, policing
		Conflict cycle: Crisis management
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide, system change		Contribution types: capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2017, an increasing number of OSCE participating States have taken concrete steps to address cultural heritage crime and the trafficking of property by adopting national legislation, developing investigative protocols and introducing specialized training for frontline officers. This shift has been most pronounced in European Union participating States, as well as Canada, the US, Norway and Switzerland, and more recently in Central Asia. A key outcome has been the creation of the OSCE-led Heritage Crime Task Force, the first and only specialized international group of its kind. Comprising over 70 experts from law enforcement, prosecution, museums, academia and international organizations, the Task Force has become a critical mechanism for cross border co-operation, response and capacity-building in culture property crime investigations. In combination, these developments reflect the growing recognition among OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation of the strategic significance of heritage crime as a cultural and security issue, and their enhanced capacity to respond through co-operation and institutionalized frameworks.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2017, heritage crime and trafficking of cultural property were widely under-recognized by governments and law enforcement across the OSCE region. Despite clear links to organized crime, terrorism financing and money laundering, these crimes were not prioritized in national security agendas. Many States lacked legislation criminalizing the illicit trade of cultural items, and existing enforcement mechanisms often excluded heritage crime from operational planning, leaving significant gaps in prevention, investigation and prosecution.

Things have significantly changed. The establishment of the Heritage Crime Task Force has catalysed cross-border collaboration and strengthened investigative capacities, facilitating the seizure of over 1,500 items valued in excess of €10 million. Since its establishment, the Task Force has trained or supported authorities in 48 out of 57 OSCE participating States and seven out of ten Partners for Co-operation. Lessons from Ukraine have shaped broader strategies across the OSCE region, while the programme's expansion into Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean reflects its ongoing impact.

> Contribution

Advocacy, capacity-building and co-operation: Between 2016 and 2020, the OSCE focused on raising awareness of cultural property crime and its links to organized crime and terrorism financing. The programme evolved into an operationally focused initiative in 2021, introducing strategic workshops, technical training across financial, forensic and maritime areas, and the development of regional intelligence networks. Public engagement efforts complemented these technical activities to foster broader awareness and support. Following the outbreak of the war against Ukraine, efforts intensified to support Ukraine and neighbouring States, addressing cultural heritage destruction, looting and trafficking. The OSCE's Transnational Threats Department drew attention to the linkages between cultural trafficking, money

laundering and sanctions evasion. Since 2021, eight regional capacity-building workshops have trained nearly 400 frontline officers coming from 48 participating States. A 2022 scenario-based training curriculum has become a key resource for crisis-affected regions and beyond. Despite necessary adaptations due to geopolitical dynamics, the programme has continued to operate across the OSCE region, including engagements in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.

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12. Chisinau authorities and Tiraspol representatives established vehicle registration in Moldova, enabling cross-border mobility for Transnistrian drivers

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Mission to Moldova
Change types: Norms, practices		**Geographical focus:** Eastern Europe
Social actors: Authorities from the Republic of Moldova, Transdniestrian representatives (Chisinau and Tiraspol), Vehicle Registration Office staff		**Dimension:** Politico-military
Start of OSCE involvement: 2016	**Start of change:** 2018	**Thematic area:** Conflict prevention and resolution, border management
		Conflict cycle: Crisis management
Scope and Degree of change: Local/national, system change		**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

On 24 April 2018, authorities and representatives from Chisinau and Tiraspol signed an agreement enabling vehicles from Transdniestria to participate in international road traffic. This led to the establishment of two Vehicle Registration Offices in Tiraspol and Ribnita, which began issuing neutral-design license plates on 1 September 2018. As a result, Transdniestrian drivers were able to register their cars with these plates, allowing them to travel internationally.

> Significance and Impact

Prior to this agreement, vehicles registered in Transdniestria were confined within the Republic of Moldova's borders, as their number plates were not recognized internationally. This restriction limited the mobility and access to economic and social opportunities abroad. The issuance of neutral-design license plates has contributed to solve this issue, granting some Transdniestrian drivers the ability to move beyond Moldova's borders. Additionally, the implementation of this agreement required co-operation between Chisinau and Tiraspol, fostering trust and strengthening their capacity for future collaboration, contributing to broader efforts towards conflict resolution. The establishment of the two Vehicle Registration Offices was therefore an important milestone to improve people's freedom of movement.

> OSCE contribution

Provision of a mediation platform: The OSCE Mission to Moldova played a pivotal role in this achievement by mediating negotiations between Chisinau and Tiraspol from 2016 to the present. The OSCE actively facilitated dialogue to help both Sides reach a mutually acceptable solution. Following the agreement, the OSCE supported its implementation by equipping and operationalizing the Vehicle Registration Offices in Transdniestria. The Mission also contributed to foster discussions that led to a change of the law governing Vehicle Registration Offices and to expand the number of cars that qualify for the neutral-design plates.

Operational support: The Mission provided financial and logistical support to ensure the Vehicle Registration Offices had the necessary infrastructure to begin issuing neutral-design license plates. Through continuous mediation and advocacy, the OSCE has helped maintain co-operation, ensuring these Offices remain functional and effective.

13. Kosovo* Ministry of Internal Affairs established a police inspectorate enhancing police accountability

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Mission in Kosovo
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities		**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actor: Kosovo Police Inspectorate		**Dimension:** Politico-military
Start of OSCE involvement: 2005	**Start of change:** 2006	**Thematic area:** Reform and co-operation in the security sector, policing
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding
Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, system change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, monitoring
		Key external partners: EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), US Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP)

> ### Outcome description

In 2006, the Ministry of Internal Affairs established and operationalized the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (PIK) as an independent police oversight body. The PIK oversees police structures and their compliance to legal and ethical police standards. Initially, the PIK focused on the audit of police management for efficiency, effectiveness and legal compliance, as well as the investigation of serious misconduct by police staff. In 2010, following a legislative amendment, its mandate expanded to include investigating alleged criminal offences committed by police personnel and directing complaints to the appropriate investigative body.

> ### Significance and Impact

The establishment of the PIK marked a critical shift in police accountability locally. Prior to its creation, internal police units handled complaints and oversight, which raised questions about conflicts of interest and the effectiveness of internal investigations. The independent nature of the PIK has improved police oversight, strengthened adherence to democratic policing standards and increased public trust in law enforcement. These reforms have helped align Kosovo's policing practices with European standards and reinforced the rule of law and respect for human rights.

> ### OSCE contribution

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo played a crucial role in the establishment of the PIK, working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other stakeholders to establish its legal and operational framework.

Legislative and policy assistance: Between 2005 and 2006, the Mission in Kosovo collaborated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to draft and ratify the legal framework governing the PIK, ensuring its alignment with international standards. In addition, the Mission in Kosovo, alongside EULEX and ICITAP, helped the agency review its legislation and enrich their policies.

Standard Operating Procedures development: The Mission provided technical assistance in developing PIK's budget, structuring its organization, creating standard operating procedures and overseeing a rigorous recruitment process to ensure merit-based staff selection.

Capacity-building and training: The Mission designed and implemented a two-phase training programme. The first phase, launched in July 2006, focused on inspection functions, while the second phase, completed in October 2007, prepared PIK personnel for investigative roles. Additional training and practice exchanges, supported by ICITAP, further enhanced the PIK's operational effectiveness.

Ongoing monitoring and oversight: Even after the PIK became operational, the OSCE continued to monitor its performance, offer strategic guidance and provide advanced training until 2012. In line with the PIK's continuous need to enhance the capacities of its staff with new skills and knowledge, the Mission revisited its support to the PIK in 2017. It continues to provide this institution with many strategic, inter-operability and capacity-building support, ensuring its sustainability.

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Economic and environmental dimension

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14. Authorities in Albania, Kosovo*, and North Macedonia collaborated to strengthen fire risk management in the Shar/Šara mountains

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Office of the Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities **Contributing structures:** Mission in Kosovo, Mission to Skopje, Presence in Albania
Change types: Capacities, practices, networks	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Park management authorities, municipal/civil emergency response units	**Dimension:** Economic and environmental
Start of OSCE involvement: 2020 — **Start of change:** 2022	**Thematic area:** Environmental activities
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, System change	**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: adelphi (think tank), Global Fire Monitoring Center, Regional Fire Monitoring Center

> Outcome description

Since 2022, park management authorities, civil emergency response units and regional authorities from the four protected areas of Korab-Koritnik, Mavrovo, Shar Mountain and Sharri/Šara in the Shar/Šara Mountains and Korab Massif area have been collaborating to enhance their capacity to address forest fires, one of the region's key climate-related security risks. This cross-border collaboration, supported by the OSCE, led to the development of joint strategies for fire risk reduction and management, comprehensive joint training sessions, and the use of common state-of-the-art fire suppression equipment.

> Significance and Impact

The Shar/Šara Mountains and Korab Massif area is one of Europe's largest contiguous protected areas, extending into southern Kosovo, north-western North Macedonia and north-eastern Albania. Covering over 240,000 acres, the landscape supports vital ecosystems and livelihoods for over 100,000 people. However, climate-related security threats—such as forest fires, deforestation and illegal logging—jeopardize regional stability, biodiversity and economic resilience. Strengthening collaboration between park authorities, municipal emergency response units, and regional and global stakeholders is essential for building climate resilience, safeguarding communities and fostering regional security and co-operation in the region. These efforts align with the OSCE's broader objectives of promoting good governance, environmental sustainability and cross-border collaboration as outlined in its 2021 Ministerial Council Decision on climate change.

> OSCE contribution

Research/technical assessment, facilitation of regional dialogue on shared strategy and co-operation structures: Building on findings from a 2021 Regional Assessment report by OSCE-adelphi, which identified the Shar/Šara Mountains and Korab Massif area as a climate-security hotspot, the OSCE facilitated the dialogue between co-operation structures (Regional Fire Monitoring Centre for South Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre). Through these efforts, the OSCE established a platform for regional dialogue, co-operation and action to mitigate shared climate-related risks while fostering trust and stability across borders. It conducted expert-led workshops—such as the 2022 Mavrovo workshop with over 70 stakeholders—to develop a shared co-operation/adaptation strategy and an implementation plan for addressing climate-security risks collaboratively.

Fire preparedness training: The OSCE organized training sessions for over 40 participants in 2023 on fire preparedness, response and early warning systems.

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Capacity-building, equipment provision and resource standardization: Five park management authorities were equipped with firefighting gear between April and June 2024, ensuring tools are standardized to enhance co-ordination and response efforts. In 2024–2025, the OCEEA also facilitated the development of online fire risk maps tailored to the needs of local stakeholders, providing critical data for landscape fire management and risk reduction.

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15. Kazakhstan's government revised its legislative code to institutionalize public participation in environmental decision-making

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Astana
Change types: Norms, practices, structures	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actors: Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, local executive bodies	**Dimension:** Economic and environmental

Start of OSCE involvement: 2018	Year of change: 2021	Thematic area: Environmental activities, good governance
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention

Scope and Degree of change: National, System change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance
	Key external partners: Association of Ecological Organizations in Kazakhstan

> Outcome description

In July 2021, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources institutionalized public participation in environmental decision-making through a revised Environmental Code. The new provisions mandated public hearings at all project planning stages and required state officials and local executive bodies to facilitate community engagement. Previously, public consultation occurred late in the process, limiting meaningful input. The launch of the Unified Environmental Portal (ecoportal.kz) further enhanced public access to environmental project information, reinforcing Kazakhstan's commitments under the Aarhus Convention.

> Significance and Impact

Before these reforms, public participation in environmental decision-making was inconsistent, with restricted access to information and limited influence over development projects. Communities were often excluded from discussions on industrial projects impacting air, water and land use, contributing to environmental crises such as the black snow pollution in Temirtau (2018) and mass fish die-offs in Atyrau (2018-2019). The 2021 launch of the Environmental Code and digital participation tools have led to:

- **Increased accountability:** State bodies and local executive bodies are now legally required to support public engagement and can be held liable for non-compliance.
- **Higher public engagement:** Since 2021, 7,729 public hearings have been announced on ecoportal.kz, with an average of 21,000 users per month accessing environmental project information.
- **Climate adaptation planning:** Public participation is now a legal requirement for regional environmental protection action plans, which are developed in a three-year cycle.
- **Expanded legal rights:** Citizens and non-governmental organizations can now formally challenge environmental decisions if their participation rights are violated.

Examples of community involvement include the public hearings held in Atyrau in February 2024 on ethane and propane pipelines, which led to adjustments in construction plans by incorporating advanced safety valves and improved water management strategies based on local feedback. Similarly, in Karaganda, a European Union-funded project engaged over 5,000 community members in shaping a regional low-carbon development plan, ensuring that local priorities were integrated. These reforms align Kazakhstan with its international obligations under the Aarhus Convention and strengthen its transition toward sustainable environmental governance.

> OSCE contribution

Legislative assistance: Since 2018, the OSCE Programme Office in Astana has supported the development and implementation of Kazakhstan's Environmental Code. It facilitated multi-stakeholder round tables, ensuring inclusivity in drafting the Code. The Office provided technical assistance and advisory inputs for by-laws to operationalize the Code.

Technical inputs and financing of an IT platform: The Office contributed to the development of the Unified Environmental Portal, providing citizens with access to project information, public hearings and feedback mechanisms.

16. Women-led households in remote villages in Tajikistan adopted clean energy

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Contributing structures: Programme Office in Dushanbe
Change types: Practices, capacities	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Community members	Dimension: Economic and environmental
Start of OSCE involvement: 2023 / Start of change: 2023	Thematic area: Environmental activities, gender equality
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: Local, Small-scale	Contribution types: Technical assistance, capacity-building
	Key external partners: Local municipalities, non-governmental organization Nerui Toza

> Outcome description

In August 2023, 21 women-led households in three remote villages in the Yaghnob Valley, Tajikistan, adopted modern, clean energy solutions, including parabolic solar cookers and mini solar power stations.

> Significance and Impact

Before this intervention, the villages of Gharmen, Khishortob and Qul in the Yaghnob Valley (2,700m altitude) had no access to modern energy, relying on firewood and manure for cooking and heating. Women, as primary energy users, spent seven to eight hours daily collecting fuel and cooking, limiting their participation in economic activities, education and healthcare while exposing them to harmful smoke from biomass fuels.

With solar parabolic cookers and mini solar power stations, these tasks now take 2.5 hours daily, freeing up 4.5 hours for rest, income generation and community leadership roles. Reduced reliance on firewood has lowered exposure to smoke, improving respiratory health and reducing illness. The portable solar power stations have also enhanced community safety, as built-in flashlights improve night-time visibility for travel and livestock care.

These changes not only reduce household costs over time but also position women as leaders in sustainable energy use, strengthening energy security and resilience in the region.

> OSCE contribution

Needs assessment: The OSCE conducted a needs assessment in May 2023 to identify the 21 women-led households in three remote villages as beneficiaries.

Distribution of clean energy equipment and technical training: In partnership with the non-governmental organization Nerui Toza, the OSCE distributed solar cookers and mini solar power stations in August 2023. From August to October 2023, the OSCE also delivered five training sessions on renewable energy principles, technical device operation and maintenance, and agency-building, to enhance women's confidence and leadership skills. Through this approach, the programme ensured women could take ownership of clean energy solutions and promote their adoption within their communities.

17. Uzbekistan's government institutionalized open data for transparent governance

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan
Change types: Norms, practices, structures, capacities	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Uzbekistan's Ministry of Digital Technologies, statistics and anti-corruption agencies, IT entrepreneurs/businesses	Dimension: Economic and environmental
Start of OSCE involvement: 2019 / Start of change: 2021	Thematic area: Good governance
	Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, advocacy
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2021, the government of Uzbekistan officially adopted the International Open Data Charter, committing to international standards for open data governance. This contributed to improving transparency and accountability in governance through open data initiatives. The Statistics Agency and the Anti-Corruption Agency of Uzbekistan have since led efforts to implement public data publication standards, making Uzbekistan the third country globally to implement the Open Up Guide to Combat Corruption. In 2022, the government introduced the National Openness Index, an automated system monitoring transparency across 86 state institutions, and in 2023, Uzbekistan's Open Data Inventory ranking improved by 15 positions, reflecting progress in open data accessibility. The country also integrated open data into anti-corruption training, with the OSCE Handbook on Combatting Corruption translated into Uzbek language for use by the Law Enforcement Academy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Additionally, Uzbekistan expanded citizen participation in governance transparency, strengthening it via the annual Open Data Challenge hackathon organized since 2019 and launching gender data transparency initiatives in 2024 to improve policy inclusivity.

> Significance and Impact

Before these reforms, Uzbekistan lacked a structured open data framework, limiting public oversight and transparency. Governance data was inconsistently published, restricting civil society and businesses from monitoring public institutions effectively. The institutionalization of open data policies, the creation of real-time transparency monitoring tools and the increased accessibility of governance data have significantly strengthened accountability mechanisms. The National Openness Index now provides measurable transparency benchmarks, while the Open Data Inventory ranking improvement signals Uzbekistan's alignment with international best practices. Expanded public engagement through hackathons has encouraged data-driven solutions for governance challenges, while the integration of open data in anti-corruption training has strengthened institutional capacity. These reforms foster trust between government institutions and civil society, support anti-corruption objectives and position Uzbekistan as a leader in regional transparency reforms.

> OSCE contribution

Policy and procedural support: The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan facilitated Uzbekistan's adoption of the international open data charter by providing expert guidance and policy recommendations. It assisted with designing the public data publication standards, ensuring alignment with international transparency frameworks. The OSCE also supported the development of the National Openness Index, offering technical expertise in data assessment methodologies and automation systems, and provided policy advice on gender-sensitive open data governance, leading to an increased emphasis on gender-disaggregated data collection and reporting.

Capacity-building and practice exchanges: The OSCE organized study visits to Estonia, Finland, Ukraine, Canada and the United States for officials from Uzbekistan to learn about good practice in open data governance and anti-corruption strategies. It facilitated training for government institutions on data transparency, enhancing the capacity of state officials to implement open data reforms. The Programme Co-

ordinator also led the translation and adaptation of the *OSCE Handbook on Combatting Corruption*, integrating localized case studies into the training curriculum of the Law Enforcement Academy.

Civil society engagement and digital innovation: The OSCE contributed to the Open Data Challenge hackathon, providing technical mentorship, workshops and networking opportunities to foster innovation in open data solutions. The Organization supported civil society, media and businesses in utilizing open government data for accountability and evidence-based decision-making, and organized events to promote gender data transparency, strengthening data-driven policymaking in collaboration with the Statistics Agency.

All stories were collected through an Outcome Harvesting exercise and were harmonized by OIO – their content reflect the submission by OSCE Executive Structures

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18. Kyrgyzstan's government introduced an e-platform providing e-services to citizens and businesses

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Bishkek
Change types: Practices, structures	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actors: Government of Kyrgyzstan, Ministry of Digital Development of Kyrgyzstan	**Dimension:** Economic and environmental
Start of OSCE involvement: 2017 / **Start of change:** 2018	**Thematic area:** Good governance
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, advocacy
	Key external partners: Estonian government

> Outcome description

In 2018 the government of Kyrgyzstan introduced Tunduk, a government-operated platform through which citizens and businesses can access government services digitally and in real-time.

> Significance and Impact

According to a number of international indices, including Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and the World Bank's Control of Corruption, Kyrgyzstan has been facing serious issues of corruption. The introduction of the Tunduk system in Kyrgyzstan has addressed such issues as corruption risks and a lack of transparency in public services.

Since its introduction in 2018, the Tunduk system has processed more than three billion data exchanges among state agencies and commercial entities. It now provides 170 e-services, including a mobile application, resulting in substantial benefits, saving users 2.07 billion soms (€27,3 million) and close to 26,6 million working hours. The changes brought about by the Tunduk platform have been experienced by various groups, including individuals (increasing fairness through online access to public services and documents), businesses (filing taxes online, online transactions) and government organizations (efficiency and reduction in corruption risks through elimination of physical contact between citizens and civil servants), as also noted in the 2023 Independent Evaluation of the OSCE's Anti-Corruption Assistance. Furthermore, the Tunduk platform has improved the way Kyrgyzstan's government interacts with its citizen and has catalysed a mindset shift, instilling confidence in the government's ability to adapt to modern challenges and serve its citizens effectively. By reducing direct interactions and enabling online transactions, Tunduk minimizes opportunities for corruption, fostering a culture of accountability and trust towards public institutions in Kyrgyzstan.

> OSCE contribution

The history of the Tunduk system goes back to 2015 when the Estonian government donated to Kyrgyzstan an open-source software and eco-system solution that provides for a unified and secure data exchange between private and public sector organizations. Kyrgyzstan introduced a customized state-wide electronic interoperability layer in 2016. It took several more years for Tunduk to be accepted, customized and internalized. The Programme Office helped with customizing and expanding the IT platform to enable a digital document exchange among different state bodies.

Hardware, business intelligence and expert support: The Programme Office supported the development of Tunduk by procuring additional servers and by hiring IT experts and business analysts. The Programme Office continues to provide technical and expert support for the maintenance of Tunduk.

Institutional and policy developments: The Programme Office facilitated the establishment of Tunduk as a separate state enterprise under the Ministry of Digital Development. It also spearheaded advocacy work that led to the legal recognition in 2023 of the use of e-documents for administrative procedures.

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19. Women entrepreneurs in Central Asia scaled their businesses and built stronger networks

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Contributing structures: Programme Office in Astana, Programme Office in Bishkek, Programme Office in Dushanbe, Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan
Change types: Capacities, networks	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: 21 women entrepreneurs	Dimension: Economic and environmental
Start of OSCE involvement: 2024 Start of change: 2024	Thematic area: Economic activities, gender equality
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: Regional, small scale	Contribution types: Capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: InkubasiaLAB (business accelerator / start-up)

> Outcome description

Between February and July 2024, 21 women entrepreneurs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan began to apply modern digital marketing techniques, financial tools, and structured business strategies such as the Business Canvas Model. They expanded their businesses' digital presence, improved financial planning, and developed strategic business models to enhance operations. Additionally, they built cross-regional networks collaborating with fellow entrepreneurs to exchange knowledge and resources.

These changes were observed through increased digital engagement, expanded customer bases, and business growth. For example, one entrepreneur in Uzbekistan leveraged digital marketing to scale up her bakery, while another in Kazakhstan transitioned from an online-only business to opening one of the country's first zero-waste stores. Similarly, an entrepreneur in Tajikistan became the first florist to serve a remote mountainous region, expanding access to floral and food arrangements. Many others strengthened financial management, refined business strategies, and developed cross-regional networks, which enabled them to expand their customer reach and sustain long-term business growth.

> Significance and Impact

Many women entrepreneurs in Central Asia lack access to modern digital tools, business planning methods, and structured mentorship, with female participation in entrepreneurship low and limited opportunities for peer learning and structured support. The OSCE-led programme is addressing these structural gaps, equipping women with practical digital skills that improve business sustainability and foster long-term economic participation. Individual success stories, such as the expansion of a bakery through enhanced digital marketing and the launch of Kazakhstan's first zero-waste store, illustrate broader economic and social benefits.

> OSCE contribution

Technical training and individual mentoring: The Office of the Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities led the Central Asian Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, providing targeted workshops, peer mentoring and expert-led training in digital transformation, business management and financial literacy. The programme, implemented in collaboration with InkubasiaLAB (a Kyrgyzstan-based business accelerator, bootcamp and professional development programme developer) provided seven weeks of structured learning, including twice-weekly two-hour training sessions. Participants received individual mentoring and developed structured business plans, culminating in a final evaluation and award ceremony in Almaty. This long-term support enabled participants to scale their businesses sustainably through digital upskilling.

Creation of regional networks: Through this programme, the OSCE facilitated knowledge-sharing, skills development and cross-regional networking.

Human dimension

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20. Civil society organizations expanded independent monitoring of peaceful assembly across the OSCE region

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Practices, networks, capacities	**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Civil society organizations (CSOs) working on independent monitoring of freedom of peaceful assembly	**Dimension:** Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2015	**Start of change:** 2015	**Thematic area:** Human rights
		Conflict cycle: Early warning

Scope and Degree of change: Multi country, scaled change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Between 2015 and 2025, civil society organizations (CSOs) across the OSCE region expanded their engagement for the independent monitoring of the freedom of peaceful assembly. At least 17 organizations within ODIHR's CSO Peaceful Assembly Monitoring Network systematically observed assemblies, documented human rights violations, and produced reports advocating for stronger protection of this right. Their monitoring contributed to increased police accountability and reinforced the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in various participating States.

> Significance and Impact

In recent years, many OSCE participating States have witnessed a crackdown on CSOs, further restricting their ability to monitor peaceful assemblies. Before the establishment of an independent monitoring framework, monitoring of freedom of peaceful assembly was weaker in a number of participating States and many violations went undocumented, hindering accountability. While the situation has improved with the expansion of CSO monitoring—enhancing transparency, identifying human rights challenges and influencing law enforcement practices—significant challenges remain. The state bears primary responsibility for protecting this right, but CSOs continue to play a crucial oversight role. This progress has strengthened human rights protections, encouraged greater government compliance with international human rights commitments, and provided a platform for advocacy and policy reform. However, many CSOs still encounter legal and administrative barriers. ODIHR remains committed to helping them overcome these challenges so they can fully exercise their oversight role, with CSO network meetings playing a key role in co-ordinating efforts and documenting human rights violations.

> OSCE contribution

Creation, publication and dissemination of monitoring resources: Since 2007, ODIHR has supported the promotion of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly through key publications, including the *Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Guidelines,* the *Handbook on Monitoring the Freedom of Peaceful Assembly* (2011, updated in 2020), and *the Guide on Law Enforcement Equipment* (2021). These resources have provided structured guidance on independent assembly monitoring, equipping CSOs with tools for systematic observation and reporting.

Capacity-building activities: ODIHR has delivered training, hands-on monitoring exercises and knowledge-sharing sessions for CSOs and OSCE field operations, supporting them in developing independent monitoring methodologies. In 2024, ODIHR launched an e-learning course expanding access to capacity-building resources for a wider network of monitors.

Strengthening networks for best practice exchange: Since 2014, ODIHR has facilitated collaboration among CSOs through Peaceful Assembly Monitoring Network meetings, providing a platform for organizations to exchange experiences, discuss emerging challenges and co-ordinate responses to restrictions on assembly rights.

These sustained efforts have contributed to a growing number of CSOs engaged in assembly monitoring, enhancing their advocacy efforts and supporting stronger protections for the right to peaceful assembly across the OSCE region.

21. Government institutions in the western Balkans implemented durable housing solutions for displaced persons

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Conflict Prevention Centre Contributing structures: Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mission to Montenegro, Mission to Serbia
Change types: Norms, networks, practices	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: State ministries, authorities of refugees and migration, social welfare	Dimension: Human, cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2012 / Start of change: 2023	Thematic area: Human rights
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, systems change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: Council of Europe Development Bank, European Commission, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

> Outcome description

By December 2023, government institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia successfully implemented durable housing policies and programmes, supported by legal frameworks that provided durable housing solutions by providing 11,300 housing units for approximately 36,000 vulnerable refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (1991–1995). Through the Regional Housing Programme (RHP), national ministries responsible for refugees and housing—such as Serbia's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, Croatia's State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care, Montenegro's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees—adapted their housing policies, co-ordinated cross-border efforts, and institutionalized mechanisms for the transparent selection of beneficiaries, based on vulnerability criteria. These institutions, in collaboration with local municipalities, strengthened their capacities to deliver housing solutions, uphold property and human rights, and integrate displaced persons into their communities.

> Significance and Impact

Before the RHP, an estimated 74,000 displaced persons across the four countries lived in inadequate, substandard conditions, often without legal property rights or access to basic services. Many had remained in collective centres or informal settlements for decades due to unresolved legal and administrative barriers, reinforcing cycles of vulnerability and exclusion. The RHP represented the first large-scale, post-war joint initiative between these four governments, transforming national refugee policies into a co-ordinated regional approach to durable solutions. By securing housing and property ownership for displaced persons, the programme contributed to long-term stability, reconciliation and economic inclusion. Beyond providing homes, the initiative strengthened state institutions' ability to manage social housing and build trust between governments, and laid the foundation for future cross-border co-operation in social policy, infrastructure and human security. The programme also serves as a replicable model for addressing displacement crises elsewhere.

> OSCE contribution

The European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank played a leading role in ensuring the success and sustainability of the programme. The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, the Mission to Serbia, the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Mission to Montenegro worked jointly with UNHCR on beneficiary selection success and sustainability of the programme through:

Beneficiary selection management: The OSCE conducted field assessments and oversight in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, through a leading role in transparent beneficiary selection and ensuring accountability, adherence to human rights principles and equitable distribution of housing solutions, targeting the most vulnerable among the applicants.

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Sustainability assurance: The Organization supported governments in integrating housing solutions into national frameworks, ensuring that state institutions could continue to manage post-conflict rehabilitation needs beyond the programme's duration, including on social housing, education and health care policies.

Institutional capacity-strengthening: The OSCE advised national ministries and implementation units on sustainable housing policies and legal compliance.

Regional co-operation: By brokering dialogue between government agencies, donors and civil society, the OSCE fostered an unprecedented level of collaboration among the four countries—who are also former adversaries—in the area of human displacement.

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22. Kazakhstan's Ombudsperson expanded its presence through 17 regional offices, strengthening human rights access

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Programme Office in Astana
Change types: Structures, practices	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actor: Ombudsperson's Office of Kazakhstan	**Dimension:** Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2021	**Start of change:** 2022	**Thematic area:** Human rights, democratization
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention

	Contribution types: Capacity-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Key external partners:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), KIMEP University, international non-governmental organization Winrock International, non-governmental organization Dignity

> Outcome description

On 5 November 2022, the Ombudsperson's Office of Kazakhstan established 17 regional representative offices, increasing accessibility to human rights resources across the country. As a result, the institution's operational capacity significantly increased, with staff numbers rising from 12 civil servants to 105.

> Significance and Impact

Before this expansion, civil society reports highlighted limited access to human rights mechanisms, especially in remote regions. The establishment of regional representatives ensured that individuals across Kazakhstan, particularly in underserved areas, could access both national and international human rights protection frameworks. The expansion bridged the gap between national human rights mechanisms and local needs, strengthening human rights advocacy nationwide. By decentralizing human rights services and reinforcing legal governance reforms, the initiative also improved engagement between State officials and civil society. This contributed to a rise in torture convictions, from 36 cases (2020–2022) to 47 in 2023, reflecting stronger compliance with international human rights standards.

> OSCE contribution

Specialized training on human rights mechanisms: The OSCE Programme Office in Astana played a pivotal role in enhancing the Ombudsperson's institutional capacity through a multi-year initiative. In collaboration with UNDP, OHCHR, KIMEP University, Winrock International and the non-governmental organization Dignity, the Programme Office provided advisory support and specialized training programmes. To support decentralization, the Programme Office organized a two-day training seminar in Astana for newly appointed regional representatives, focusing on compliance with international human rights mechanisms and improving co-operation between state officials and civil society.

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23. Serbian authorities reformed the prison system to enhance human rights protections and judicial oversight

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Serbia
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: National Assembly, Government of Serbia, Ministry of Interior, Directorate for Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions, Judiciary, Ombudsman institutions, prison staff and administration	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2001 / **Start of change:** 2014	**Thematic area:** Human rights
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, advocacy, capacity-building
	Key external partners: Council of Europe, civil society organizations

> Outcome description

Between 2005 and 2014, Serbia restructured its prison system, introducing legal and institutional reforms to align with international human rights standards. A key milestone was the adoption of the 2006 Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions and its revision in 2014, which introduced enforcement judges to provide judicial oversight over prisoners' rights. Additional reforms established structured training for prison staff, alternative sentencing mechanisms, and systems for prisoner complaints and external monitoring.

> Significance and Impact

A 2001 joint OSCE-Council of Europe assessment identified serious deficiencies in Serbia's prison system, including an outdated legal framework (1997's Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions), absence of prisoner complaint mechanisms, lack of external oversight, and no structured training for prison staff. Overcrowding and limited human rights protections contributed to violent prison riots, creating security risks for detainees and staff.

The introduction of enforcement judges in 2014 strengthened judicial oversight over prison conditions, ensuring legal protection of detainees' rights in accordance with international human rights standards, including the UN Convention Against Torture. The National Preventive Mechanism, alongside the Protector of Citizens, enhanced external monitoring of detention facilities. These reforms increased transparency, strengthened protections against ill-treatment, and enhanced prison security, as confirmed by independent monitoring bodies, including the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Alternative sentencing helped ease overcrowding and improve reintegration conditions for offenders. These measures contributed to a reduction in the number of convicted persons sentenced to imprisonment and enabled courts to impose alternative sentences for less severe crimes, reducing negative exposure to prison environments (from six cases in 2007 to 1,415 in 2016, two years after the revision of the Law).

> OSCE contribution

Legislative assistance: The OSCE Mission to Serbia supported the drafting and revision of the Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions in 2006 and 2014, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards. It provided expertise in developing the Law on Special Imprisonment Regime (2009) to regulate the treatment of high-risk detainees while maintaining human rights protections. The Organization advocated for the establishment of the National Preventive Mechanism under the Serbian Ombudsman, aligning with the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture, and facilitated the development of alternative sentencing laws (2014), reducing the number of convicted persons sentenced to imprisonment and promoting rehabilitative justice.

Capacity-building for oversight and prison staff: More than 2,000 prison staff, enforcement judges and civil society organizations on international human rights standards in detention facilities were trained. A Training

Centre for Prison Staff (2005) was established, ensuring the institutionalization of continuous professional development. The Mission also designed and implemented a comprehensive training programme for enforcement judges (2014), including guidelines, prison visits and workshops on international prisoner rights standards.

Enhanced transparency and inclusion of affected communities: The Mission supported the Directorate for the Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions to publish annual reports (2005–2010), making prison system data publicly available for the first time. Additionally, it translated key laws, by-laws and leaflets on prisoners' rights into minority languages and distributed them across prisons, ensuring access to legal rights for all detainees. The Mission also contributed to strengthening civil society involvement in prison monitoring, supporting the creation of the Network of Organizations for Post-Penal Support to Prisoners.

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24. Albanian 'Authority on Information with Former State Security Files' increased access to historical files for transitional justice

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Presence in Albania
Change types: Practices, structures		**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Authority on Information with Former State Security Files		**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2015	**Start of change:** 2016	**Thematic areas:** Human rights
		Conflict cycle: Post conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, advocacy, facilitating co-operation
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2016, the Authority on Information with Former State Security Files improved public access to state archives and historical records, enabling journalists, researchers and the public to engage more actively in investigating Albania's communist past. The Authority also developed guidelines for journalists and enhanced historical documentation efforts.

> Significance and Impact

For over 30 years, Albania has struggled to confront the legacy of its authoritarian past, with thousands of families still seeking truth, justice and recognition for human rights violations. Despite previous transitional justice initiatives, an OSCE-commissioned public perception survey exposed gaps in historical knowledge, revealing that nearly half of Albanians held positive views of communism, while younger generations demonstrated limited awareness of past human rights abuses. The efforts of the Authority to improve access to historical files has laid a critical foundation for historical accountability, informed policy engagement and long-term public awareness. Recent legal declassification measures have further strengthened journalistic investigations and public engagement with Albania's communist past. The Authority also assisted in drafting a decision by the Council of Ministers on the identification and recovery of missing persons, which is currently under review by the Ministry of Justice. This contribution is particularly important, as the whereabouts of the remains of approximately 6,000 Albanians remain unknown.

> OSCE contribution

Survey and awareness-raising: In 2015 and 2016, the OSCE commissioned a public perception survey involving 995 respondents, which revealed significant gaps in historical knowledge. In response, the OSCE launched awareness-raising activities, with a particular focus on engaging youth in Albania.

Consolidating legal and operational framework of the Authority: Since 2016, the OSCE Presence in Albania contributed to the consolidation of the legal and operational framework of the Authority, ensuring greater transparency, public access to historical records and support for researchers and journalists. Specifically, the Presence supported the development of guidelines to serve as a roadmap for journalists, explaining the process of access to the files, the basis of the work of the Authority, and guidance on the reading of files and on the publication and use of the documents accessed.

Training: The Presence trained Authority members and administrative staff on citizen awareness or the efforts of Albanian institutions to set up the legal and institutional framework for the identification and recovery of the remains of persons who went missing during the communist regime.

Providing a platform for dialogue: The Presence provided a platform for discussion of all relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Interior, General Prosecutor's Office, the Authority State Police, Forensics Institute and the International Commission on Missing Persons, to engage in a dialogue regarding the identification and recovery of the bodies of the missing. Numerous working group meetings and the exchange of experience with Croatian counterparts enabled the working group to reach consensus on a draft sublegal act on the identification and recovery of the remains of missing persons.

25. Media actors in Kosovo* established independent institutions and oversight mechanisms to uphold media ethics and pluralism

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Mission in Kosovo **Contributing structures**: Representative on Freedom of the Media
Change types: Norms, capacities, practices, structures	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Kosovo Radio Television, Independent Media Commission, Kosovo Press Council	**Dimension:** Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 1999	**Start of change:** 2005	**Thematic area:** Media freedom and development
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, system change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Japan International Cooperation Agency, European Union, European Broadcasting Union, Council of Europe, Swedish Helsinki Committee, Swiss Development Agency

> Outcome description

In 2005, the Independent Media Commission in Kosovo introduced a regulatory framework that promoted ethical journalism and media pluralism, and formalized licensing procedures for broadcasters. In the same year, the Kosovo Press Council was established, providing a self-regulatory mechanism for print and online media, including a Press Code and a platform for public complaints. These changes contributed to a more transparent, accountable and independent media landscape. Earlier in 1999, Radio Television Kosovo (RTK) was established as an independent public service broadcaster, setting the foundation for independent, non-partisan reporting and enhancing journalistic standards.

> Significance and Impact

Before 1999, Kosovo's media landscape was fragmented, exposed to political influence, and lacked independent oversight, limiting public trust and reinforcing inter-community divisions. The 2005 creation of the Independent Media Commission and Press Council of Kosovo introduced regulatory and self-regulatory systems that enhanced media ethics, transparency and pluralism, enabling a more balanced and accountable media environment. These reforms empowered journalists to uphold editorial independence and contributed to reconciliation efforts through more inclusive and reliable reporting. However, challenges such as political interference, financial insecurity and legal uncertainty—particularly the review of media laws by the Constitutional Court that are continuing at the time of print raise concerns about the sustainability of these gains.

> OSCE contribution

Legislative assistance and advocacy for media reform: The Mission played a key role in promoting legal reforms to safeguard media freedom and encourage the development of non-partisan editorial policies. Working with local and international partners, the Mission helped ensure Kosovo's media regulations aligned with democratic principles and international standards.

Radio Television Kosovo creation and institutionalization: In 1999, the OSCE facilitated the establishment of RTK in partnership with the European Broadcasting Union, helping to secure its legal and operational independence. With technical assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, RTK was equipped to expand its reach. The OSCE later supported the launch of RTK2 in 2013 to increase representation for non-majority communities.

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.

All stories were collected through an Outcome Harvesting exercise and were harmonized by OIO – their content reflect the submission by OSCE Executive Structures

Media training and ethical journalism: The OSCE delivered extensive training to RTK journalists in ethical, conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive reporting, while also facilitating workshops on editorial independence and professional media practices. These efforts aimed to raise journalistic standards and promote public trust.

RTK infrastructure development: The OSCE equipped RTK with technology to reach a broad audience and fulfil its public mandate.

Regulatory assistance and Independent Media Commission development: In 2005, the OSCE supported the establishment of the Independent Media Commission, working with the European Union and the Council of Europe to provide legal expertise and define licensing and ethical broadcasting standards for audio-visual media.

Press Council of Kosovo development: That same year, the OSCE helped establish the Press Council of Kosovo, co-drafting the Press Code and supporting self-regulation mechanisms. In co-operation with the Swedish Helsinki Committee and the Swiss Development Agency, the OSCE built the Council's institutional capacity, enabling it to join the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe and thereby connecting it with broader international media accountability networks.

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26. Montenegro media actors established a collaborative forum for self-regulation

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Mission to Montenegro **Contributing structures**: Representative on Freedom of the Media
Change types: Practices, networks, norms	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actor: Media Council for Self-Regulation, ombudspersons from major media outlets	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2014	Year of change: 2017	**Thematic area:** Media freedom and development
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Facilitating co-operation, technical assistance, capacity-building
		Key external partners: Council of Europe, Damar Research Institute, Media Trade Union

> Outcome description

In 2017, the Technical Working Group for Self-Regulation of the Media was established under the auspices of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, facilitating collaboration among the Media Council for Self-Regulation and ombudspersons from major media outlets. It became the first inclusive forum for dialogue among previously isolated self-regulatory actors.

Since its inception, the Group has collectively developed key documents to strengthen media self-regulation, including the Memorandum of Understanding *Co-ordination of the Implementation of Code of Ethics' Provisions* (2016); a manual on moderating online comments (2019); research on inappropriate, defamatory and hate speech in media content (2019); a manual on how to responsibly report on hate speech (2022); a manual on effective media reporting during election campaigns (2023); and a framework for addressing information disorder in media reporting (2024).

> Significance and Impact

Montenegro's fragmented media self-regulation landscape, characterized by limited co-operation, historically hindered adherence to professional journalism standards. Prior to the establishment of the Group, two separate self-regulatory mechanism operated in isolation, with a general lack of trust and willingness to co-operate. The Media Council for Self-Regulation represented 19 major outlets, handling citizen complaints and advocating for its members, while four key media—Vijesti, Dan, Monitor and RTCG—managed complaints internally via independent ombudspersons.

The Technical Working Group bridged this divide, fostering trust and collaboration, and enhancing the credibility of self-regulation through widely accepted guidelines on hate speech, misinformation and electoral reporting. The guidelines established shared ethical reporting standards across Montenegro's media landscape. The adoption of Montenegro's new Media Law (2024) further supported self-regulation by encouraging media participation in co-ordinated oversight mechanisms.

> Contribution

Facilitating civil society dialogue and co-operation: Since 2015, and with increased engagement from 2017 onwards, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro has facilitated regular Technical Working Group meetings, providing a platform for structured dialogue among self-regulatory actors.

Legislative assistance: The Group has collaboratively tackled key challenges, leading to the drafting of annotations to the Code of Ethics for Journalists. This initiative built upon earlier amendments to the Code, supported by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Council of Europe (2014–2015).

Research and practice exchanges: In 2024, the OSCE Mission commissioned research, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Media and the Damar Research Institute, to assess public awareness of media self-regulation, revealing that 74 per cent of respondents were unfamiliar with the concept, while media professionals expressed awareness but limited trust in the system.

In response to concerns raised by journalists regarding their psychological well-being, the OSCE Mission, at the request of the Media Trade Union, organized a workshop on psychological support for media workers (2024), leading to the development of a *Handbook on Psychological Well-being*. Additionally, to strengthen self-regulation frameworks, the Mission facilitated an international study visit to Amsterdam in 2024 for Montenegro's media self-regulatory bodies to exchange best practices.

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27. Serbian authorities and media actors established a multi-stakeholder system to protect journalists and improve law enforcement responses

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Mission to Serbia **Contributing structure**: Representative on Freedom of the Media
Change types: Practices, norms, networks, capacities	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Supreme Public Prosecution, Ministry of Interior, journalist and media associations	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2017	**Start of change:** 2017	**Thematic area:** Media freedom and development, rule of law
		Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, monitoring, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partner: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2017, Serbian authorities and media organizations institutionalized a multi-stakeholder approach to journalist safety, establishing structured co-operation between law enforcement and the media. The Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists, which brought together the Supreme Public Prosecution, the Ministry of Interior and seven media and journalist associations, enabled journalists' active participation in defining and shaping protection measures and ensuring their concerns informed institutional responses.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2017, Serbia lacked any structured dialogue between authorities and media organizations, despite a rising number of attacks on journalists and high levels of impunity. Journalists faced significant barriers in reporting threats, while law enforcement agencies had no formal co-ordination mechanism to address cases effectively. The collaborative framework of the Permanent Working Group led to procedural and operational changes that improved protection mechanisms. In 2020, the Supreme Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Interior issued binding instructions for prosecutors and police officers on handling crimes against journalists. The establishment of the Permanent Working Group created a trusted platform for information exchange, and institutionalized a Contact Points System, designating 115 prosecutors and 54 police officers as 24/7 points of contact for journalists under threat to report and seek protection. As a result of these reforms, journalist safety cases were processed at an unprecedented rate: out of 587 reported assaults on journalists between January 2016 and December 2024, 350 cases (59.63 per cent) were resolved by the first instance or final decision—a success rate not seen in any other criminal category. The Permanent Working Group model has gained local and international recognition, inspiring similar initiatives in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Netherlands.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional framework-building: The OSCE Mission to Serbia drafted the Permanent Working Group's internal Rules of Procedure and three Action Plans (2018–2019, 2021–2022, 2023–2025), shaping its framework for multi-stakeholder co-operation. In 2018, the Mission mediated a crisis when media and journalist associations withdrew from the Permanent Working Group, facilitating their return and continued dialogue.

Capacity-building and research: The Mission trained over 300 prosecutors, police officers and journalists through 50 activities on journalist protection, legal frameworks and risk assessment. It produced analytical reports on journalist safety, media risks and legal protections to inform policy decisions. It organized 16 local

community visits (seven in 2023 and nine in 2024) to assess regional threats and strengthen co-operation between law enforcement and journalists.

Response mechanisms: The Mission supported the launch of a 24/7 Hotline to provide legal aid to journalists facing threats. It helped establish a national network of contact points in prosecution offices and policy departments, ensuring clear channels for journalists to report threats and request protection.

Practice exchanges: The Mission facilitated study visits to the Netherlands (2022) and Norway (2023), connecting Serbian stakeholders with international experts on journalist safety.

Monitoring, results reporting and policy alignment: Between 2017 and 2024, the Mission produced the Permanent Working Group's annual reports, documenting progress and promoting transparency. It ensured compliance with OSCE commitments, including the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 3/18 on Safety of Journalists, and the 2023 OSCE *Joint Statement on Safety of Women Journalists,* while integrating gender-disaggregated data into official case reporting by the Supreme Public Prosecution on journalist attacks. The Mission also facilitated a survey on journalist mental health. The findings compiled in the publication *Analysis: Mental Health of Journalists* provided a data-driven assessment of stressors affecting journalists in Serbia and included recommendations to improve their psychological well-being and workplace protections.

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28. Governments and civil society in the OSCE region strengthened protection for journalists and media freedom

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Representative on Freedom of the Media **Contributing structures:** Programme Office in Astana, Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Change types: Networks, capacities	**Geographical focus:** Multi-regional
Social actors: Civil society organizations, media, governmental authorities	**Dimension:** Multi-regional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2021 **Start of change:** 2023	**Thematic area:** Media freedom and development
	Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: Multi country, scaled change	**Contribution types:** Facilitating co-operation, advocacy, capacity-building
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2023, several governments and civil society organizations in the OSCE region strengthened the protection of journalists as well as media freedom, for instance:

In 2023, in Kazakhstan, civil society organizations significantly increased their involvement in shaping internet governance policies, actively contributing policy recommendations to the national legislative process.

In November 2023, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina established a nationwide rapid response mechanism to enhance journalists' safety. This mechanism includes a network of contact points within police and prosecutors' offices, offering prompt assistance to journalists and other media professionals in the event of an attack on their safety. Additionally, a national registry was created to monitor and document reported attacks against media professionals.

> Significance and Impact

Media freedom and access to pluralistic information are fundamental to democratic governance and central to OSCE commitments, including the Helsinki Final Act. Across the OSCE region, journalists face censorship, harassment, and physical threats, while digital governance remains fragmented and non-inclusive. Addressing these challenges requires sustained policy engagement and institutional reforms. The outcomes observed in Kazakhstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina represent key advances in realising OSCE commitments.

In Kazakhstan, strengthened civil society participation in internet governance fosters greater transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in legislative processes. Previously, their engagement in this area was limited. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the establishment of a national journalist protection network improves institutional responses to threats against media professionals, reducing impunity and reinforcing freedom of expression protections. In the long-term, these changes contribute to greater democratic resilience by ensuring more inclusive policymaking in digital rights and improved institutional safeguards for journalists' safety. Previously, the lack of a formal coordination framework often resulted in attacks and threats against journalists being underreported and addressed ineffectively. This new institutional structure strengthens state accountability in investigating and preventing attacks on media professionals, aligning with OSCE commitments, in particular the MC Decision 3/18 on Safety of Journalists.

> OSCE contribution

Multi-Stakeholder dialogue facilitation: Since their inception two decades ago, the Regional Media Conferences (RMCs) have been instrumental in catalysing policy engagement and institutional reforms across Central Asia, the South Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe. For instance, the outcome in Kazakhstan was influenced by insights gained from the *Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression (SAIFE)* initiative, introduced during an RMC. The RMCs provide a platform for government officials, civil society representatives, journalists and legal experts to discuss pressing media freedom challenges and solutions.

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Capacity-building and technical expertise: The Representative on Freedom of the Media's SAIFE masterclasses on Artificial Intelligence governance and media freedom during regional media conferences in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe served as catalysts for subsequent national-level capacity-building efforts. Through the RMCs and such targeted initiatives as the SAIFE initiative, the Representative facilitated best practices-sharing on internet governance and journalist safety frameworks. These resources enabled local stakeholders to develop informed, rights-based policy recommendations and institutional mechanisms that align with international commitments.

Advocacy for institutional change: The Representative engaged policymakers and law enforcement officials, advocating for stronger protections for journalists and a free media environment. By reinforcing OSCE principles on media freedom and journalist safety, the Representative advocated for national-level reforms in the countries of Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to align with regional and international standards. This advocacy contributed to the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's national contact point network and increased civil society participation in internet governance in Kazakhstan.

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29. Parliaments and political parties adopted gender equality measures to boost women's representation in politics

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) **Contributing structures:** OSCE field operations
Change types: Norms, practices, structures	**Geographical focus**: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Parliaments and political parties	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2004 — **Start of change:** 2005	**Thematic area:** Democratization, gender equality
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, system change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building
	Key external partners: N/A

> ### Outcome description

Over the past two decades, political institutions across the OSCE region, including **parliaments and** political parties, have institutionalized gender-sensitive policies and mechanisms to remove systemic barriers to women's political representation. These institutions have introduced voluntary gender quotas, gender action plans, gender audits, and the establishment of gender equality bodies to create more inclusive and representative political structures.

> ### Significance and Impact

Historically, structural barriers within political institutions significantly limited women's participation in decision-making, reinforcing gender imbalances in governance. Political systems often lacked mechanisms to ensure equal access and representation, leaving women underrepresented in parliaments, governments and political party leadership. These gaps not only restricted women's influence in policymaking but also hindered democratic inclusivity and the responsiveness of governance structures. By integrating gender quotas, parliamentary action plans and accountability mechanisms, political institutions have strengthened pathways for women's access to decision-making roles. These measures have contributed to a rise in women's parliamentary representation from 18.9 per cent in 2005 to 25.4 per cent in 2015, reaching a record 31.6 per cent by the end of 2024. Beyond numerical gains, these reforms have institutionalized gender-sensitive governance, making political institutions more accountable for addressing structural inequalities. Gender audits and dedicated equality bodies now systematically assess and respond to biases, embedding gender-sensitive policymaking as a core function rather than a temporary initiative. By integrating these frameworks into political parties and parliaments, OSCE institutions are ensuring that inclusive and representative governance structures endure, independent of electoral cycles or political leadership changes.

> ### OSCE contribution

ODIHR has played a critical role in influencing and helping political institutions shift from ad hoc gender initiatives to comprehensive, embedded gender-sensitive governance. Its work includes:

Providing technical assistance and advisory services: ODIHR has conducted assessments and assisted parliaments in 11 participating States to conduct gender audits. The institution has also collaborated with over 45 political parties to develop targeted policies and gender action plans. Additionally, it has provided support to parliaments in countries such as Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Malta, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan and Slovenia.

Framework development: Introduction of voluntary gender quotas and gender-sensitive policy frameworks within political parties. ODIHR worked with political parties in Montenegro, Denmark, Serbia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

Publishing key resources and action-oriented guides: ODIHR has released over ten technical guides and a number of research publications, targeting mainly the democratic institutions of the OSCE space, e.g., *Gender*

Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan (2011), a guide that puts forward a six-steps theory of change for OSCE States.

Training and capacity-building: The Organization provided technical assistance to institutionalize gender-sensitive legislative and oversight practices in over 20 OSCE participating States.

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30. The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* enhanced institutional accountability for human rights violations

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission in Kosovo
Change types: Norms, practices, structures	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actor: Kosovo Ombudsperson institution	**Dimension:** Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2000	**Start of change:** 2000	**Thematic area:** Democratization, human rights
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, system change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
		Key external partners: Civil society organizations working on disability

> Outcome description

In 2000, the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK) was established, with support of the OSCE, as an independent human rights protection mechanism. Since then, the OIK has actively investigated complaints, issued recommendations to government institutions and strengthened institutional accountability for human rights violations. In recent years, the OIK has intensified its outreach to marginalized communities. This marked a critical step in strengthening democratic governance and ensuring accountability for human rights violations. Since its inception, the OIK has served as an independent institution dedicated to addressing human rights concerns, fostering trust among citizens and advocating for institutional responsiveness to human rights issues.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2000, Kosovo lacked an independent human rights body capable of investigating complaints and holding institutions accountable, leaving many human rights violations unaddressed. The establishment of the OIK provided an essential mechanism for legal redress, enabling citizens to file complaints and seek institutional accountability.

Over time, the OIK has become one of the most trusted institutions in Kosovo, as reflected in surveys such as the *Balkan Barometer*. It has played a crucial role in shaping human rights policies, securing justice for marginalized communities and ensuring greater institutional responsiveness. Through its investigations and recommendations, the OIK has contributed to a more transparent and accountable governance system.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional support and capacity-building: The OSCE provided technical and legal expertise to support the establishment of the OIK in 2000, ensuring its independence and alignment with international human rights standards. It has continued to assist in refining the OIK's mandate and operational framework, as well as strengthening its institutional capacity.

Facilitating public engagement and awareness: In recent years, the OSCE has focused its engagement with the OIK by organizing regional round tables aimed at explaining its mandate to Kosovo residents and strengthening its relationship with local communities. These forums have significantly improved public awareness of the OIK's role, resulting in a significant and measurable increase in human rights complaints by residents, particularly by those from non-majority communities.

Strengthening institutional co-operation: The OSCE has facilitated dialogue and co-operation between the OIK and governmental institutions, encouraging them to address the OIK's recommendations promptly.

Enhancing access for marginalized groups: To improve outreach, the OSCE supported targeted initiatives to engage non-majority communities, including Kosovo Serbs, Kosovo Bosniaks, Kosovo Turks, Kosovo Gorani, Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians. Through community engagement activities, the OSCE

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.

played a key role in ensuring that these distinct communities understood their rights and ways to access the OIK's complaint mechanisms.

Advancing disability rights: In 2021, the Mission supported discussions on local television channels with the representatives of civil society organizations working on disability rights and Kosovo's Ombudsperson, thereby creating momentum for the alignment of Kosovo's legislative framework with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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31. Serbia's national assembly transitioned to a digital parliamentary system

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Mission to Serbia
Change types: Practices, structures		**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actor: National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, parliamentarians, government agencies		**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2010	**Start of change:** 2013	**Thematic area:** Democratization, good governance
		Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change		**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, capacity-building
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2013, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (NA) introduced the e-Parliament system, replacing paper-based parliamentary procedures with a modern digital platform tailored to its *Rules of Procedure* and the *Law on the NA*. Since its implementation, members of parliament (MPs), parliamentary staff and government agencies have accessed legislative documents digitally, reducing reliance on printed materials and expediting information retrieval. By 2019, parliamentary sessions and legislative drafting processes were fully integrated into the digital system, significantly reducing printing costs and session delays. The e-Parliament system remains in use today, supporting real-time access to legislative documents and improving co-ordination between the legislature and executive institutions.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2013, Serbia's legislative and oversight activities were entirely paper-based, resulting in high costs and inefficiencies. A single parliamentary session cost approximately €10,000, while access to legislative documents was limited, making retrieval slow and cumbersome for MPs, staff, governmental agencies and journalists. The transition to a digital system significantly improved operational efficiency by enabling faster and more accurate information-sharing, reducing costs and supporting real-time collaboration across government institutions. The system also strengthened public access to legislative processes, allowing MPs, civil society organizations and the media to engage more effectively. By fostering greater transparency and accountability, the e-Parliament system contributed to more inclusive and responsive governance in Serbia. Its continued use underscores its sustainability and long-term impact in modernizing parliamentary democracy.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional and policy developments: Between 2010 and 2013, the OSCE Mission to Serbia collaborated with the NA under a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and implement the e-Parliament system, ensuring alignment with new democratic standards introduced by the 2010 amendments to the Law on the NA and its Rules of Procedure. The OSCE co-ordinated the work of six contractors to design, develop and implement the system, ensuring it met institutional needs.

Technical training for MPs and parliamentary staff: The OSCE engaged multiple experts to organize and implement comprehensive training programmes for MPs and parliamentary staff, building their capacity to effectively use the new system. To ensure long-term sustainability, the Mission helped establish a training centre within the NA, allowing for ongoing capacity-building efforts to maintain staff proficiency and ensure the system's continued effective use.

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32. OSCE participating States strengthened policy, law enforcement, and education to address anti-Semitism

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Contributing structure: Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities	Geographical focus: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Law enforcement, education systems, civil society	Dimension: Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2004 / Start of change: 2004	Thematic area: Tolerance and non-discrimination
	Conflict cycle: Early warning, conflict prevention, and crisis management
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, system change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, advocacy
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2004, leaders across the OSCE region have increasingly recognized the need for a robust response to anti-Semitic attacks and implemented relevant changes in policies, law enforcement practices and education. Policymakers and lawmakers have strengthened the criminal justice response by training police and prosecutors to identify, investigate and prosecute anti-Semitic hate crimes. Law enforcement agencies have improved their ability to recognize and address anti-Semitic incidents, treating victims with greater sensitivity and prioritizing Jewish communities' security needs. Jewish communities and civil society organizations have enhanced co-ordination with police, improving communication on security concerns and collaboration on responses. Additionally, education authorities in Italy have institutionalized anti-Semitism prevention by incorporating relevant teaching materials into official teacher guidance.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2004, the unique threats faced by Jewish communities were largely unrecognized and anti-Semitism was not systematically addressed as a security concern within OSCE States. The high-level Berlin conference that year catalysed government action, drawing attention to the issue and securing commitments for change. Strengthening law enforcement's capacity to prevent and respond to anti-Semitic hate crime has improved reporting and justice outcomes for victims. Ensuring Jewish communities are active partners in their security has increased trust and reduced their vulnerability to hate crimes. The inclusion of relevant teaching materials in teacher guidance and educational materials ensures that future generations are equipped to challenge anti-Semitism effectively.

> OSCE contribution

High-level awareness and policy influence: The OSCE played a pivotal role in bringing international attention to anti-Semitism through the 2004 Berlin conference, which secured political commitments from participating States to address the issue. This recognition laid the foundation for continued work on anti-Semitism within the OSCE's broader efforts to combat intolerance.

Publication of guidelines and community involvement: ODIHR's *Security Guide* has been implemented in more than 20 States, enhancing co-operation between police and Jewish communities to prevent and respond to anti-Semitic attacks. In Serbia, police now conduct risk assessments in consultation with Jewish communities, ensuring that security measures can only change with their consent.

Educational reform and capacity-building: ODIHR has developed and disseminated teaching materials in up to ten languages to counter anti-Semitism in and through education. Its educational resources continue to shape future generations' understanding of anti-Semitism, while OSCE support remains vital to ensuring that States sustain and expand these efforts.

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33. City authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina established mechanisms for the promotion of social cohesion

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Change types: Norms, practices, networks	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Trebinje city authorities (later Bileća and Nevesinje), Coalition Against Hate members (CSOs, police)	Dimension: Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2013	Start of change: 2018	Thematic area: Tolerance and non-discrimination
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building

Scope and Degree of change: Local, small scale	Contribution types: Standard-setting, capacity-building, technical assistance, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
	Key external partners: Local non-governmental and civil society organizations

> ### Outcome description

In 2018, the city of Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in collaboration with the Coalition Against Hate, adopted its first Community Cohesion Action Plan for 2019. Trebinje institutionalized the development and implementation of such Action Plans. It adopted a second plan in 2019 (for 2020–2022) and a third in 2023 (for 2023–2025), incorporating social cohesion measures into local governance.

> ### Significance and Impact

Before 2018, Trebinje had no formal framework for responding to bias-motivated incidents or promoting tolerance. Although the city was largely mono-ethnic with few reported incidents, the absence of a structured approach meant that responses were ad hoc and inconsistent. The adoption and sustained implementation of Community Cohesion Action Plans introduced formal mechanisms for addressing these issues, enabling authorities and civil society to systematically respond to discrimination and promote inclusion. This approach has not only enhanced social cohesion in Trebinje but also served as a model for neighbouring communities aiming to institutionalize tolerance and civic engagement. Inspired by Trebinje's approach, the municipalities of Bileća and Nevesinje have taken steps to strengthen their own local mechanisms for fostering social cohesion.

> ### OSCE contribution

Since 2013, the OSCE has contributed to the institutionalization of social cohesion efforts in Trebinje through four key intervention areas:

Intra-state stakeholder dialogue and development of Standard Operating Procedures: The OSCE supported the creation and formalization of the Coalitions Against Hate in Trebinje, Bileća and Nevesinje, fostering collaboration between civil society organizations, police and local authorities to prevent bias-motivated incidents. The OSCE further engaged local authorities to commit to bias-prevention protocols, ensuring that responses to incidents became institutionalized rather than ad hoc.

Technical training: The OSCE provided training to civil society actors and local authorities on social cohesion monitoring, advocacy, research and media communication. This enabled stronger partnerships between civil society and local governance structures, reinforcing their role in shaping and implementing the Community Cohesion Action Plan.

Public participation: The Mission facilitated high-visibility initiatives, including cultural events (such as concerts, short films, photo exhibitions etc.), study visits and knowledge-exchange forums, fostering a broader regional dialogue on inclusion and tolerance. These efforts not only raised awareness but also contributed to shaping local narratives and attitudes toward diversity.

Institutional framework-building: The Mission supported the design and implementation of Community Cohesion Action Plans, ensuring they included clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and resource allocation. By embedding these mechanisms within municipal frameworks, the plans became integral to governance practices, influencing policy decisions in Trebinje and, later, in neighbouring communities.

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34. OSCE participating States enhanced their capacity to identify, record and respond to hate crimes

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Practices, capacities	Geographical focus: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Ministries of interior and justice, police and judiciary training authorities	Dimension: Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2003	Start of change: 2005	Thematic area: Tolerance and non-discrimination
		Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, scaled change		Contribution types: Standard-setting, capacity-building
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2005, OSCE participating States have improved law enforcement officers' capacity to identify, record, and respond to hate crimes through the integration of specific training into law enforcement and criminal justice curricula. Several governments have also developed in-service training courses to enhance the investigative and prosecutorial responses to hate crime incidents.

> Significance and Impact

Before the introduction of hate crime training, many law enforcement and judicial authorities lacked standard procedures to identify, record and prosecute hate crimes. Inconsistent case classification and underreporting weakened legal responses and limited victim protection. Since introducing specialized training, justice sector actors use clearer guidelines and investigative tools to recognize, investigate and prosecute hate crimes. By integrating hate crime training into national curricula, OSCE participating States reinforced accountability, improved victim support and aligned enforcement with legal frameworks.

Improved data collection and case classification may have contributed to higher police-recorded hate crime numbers across multiple OSCE participating States. Between 2009 and 2023, police-recorded hate crimes:

- more than doubled in the United Kingdom, from 58,692 to 148,735;
- more than quadrupled in Germany (4,583 to 17,007) and Poland (194 to 893); and
- increased greatly in Georgia (41 to 1,824) and Austria (62 to 5,668).

Multiple factors affect recorded hate crimes, including shifts in reporting behaviour, legal definitions and law enforcement priorities. However, expanding hate crime training has helped law enforcement agencies refine victim reporting processes, strengthen investigative procedures and improve institutional responses.

> OSCE contribution

Development and delivery of training programmes: Since 2005, ODIHR has strengthened the capacity of OSCE participating States to combat hate crimes through specialized training programmes. Delivered primarily on a train-the-trainer basis, these programmes ensure sustainable knowledge transfer by integrating training materials into national education systems for law enforcement and prosecutors.

- The TAHCLE (Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement) programme trains police officers to recognize, investigate and respond to hate crimes. Since its launch in 2012 (building on an earlier OSCE initiative from 2005), approximately 700 national trainers across 19 OSCE countries have been trained, reaching nearly 300,000 officers.
- The PAHCT (Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training) programme, launched in 2014, equips prosecutors with the skills to identify and prosecute hate crimes effectively. It has prepared over 200 national trainers from 16 OSCE countries.

Institutional integration of training components into national curricula: By signing Memoranda of Understanding with partners, developing national implementation plans and ensuring ongoing support, ODIHR has facilitated the full integration of these training programmes into national education curricula for criminal justice professionals. To date, hate crime training based on OSCE materials has been fully integrated into pre-service and in-service curricula in five OSCE countries.

35. Roma activists strengthened advocacy and fostered community-led solutions in North Macedonia and Serbia

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Contributing structures: Mission to Skopje, Mission to Serbia
Change types: Capacities, practices	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Roma civil society organizations and activists	Dimension: Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2020 / Start of change: 2021	Thematic area: Roma and Sinti
	Conflict cycle: N/A
Scope and Degree of change: National, small-scale change	Contribution types: Capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2021, Roma civil society organizations and activists in North Macedonia and Serbia engaged in structured public participation, community mobilization, and advocacy following their participation in a capacity-building programme. In Berovo (North Macedonia), young Roma established a safe space to discuss community issues and develop initiatives. In North Macedonia, another group raised awareness of affirmative action policies in higher education, highlighting gaps in implementation and advocating for systematic change. In Krushevac and Kraljevo (Serbia), young Roma activists spoke to elementary school pupils about the importance of education, while another team in Niš (Serbia) organized Roma Citizens' Forums to facilitate dialogue between the Roma community and local authorities. These efforts increased community mobilization, improved engagement with policymakers, and enhanced advocacy efforts at the local level.

> Significance and Impact

Before this intervention, Roma civil society organizations and activists in North Macedonia and Serbia had limited opportunities for structured public participation, civic engagement and advocacy. Dialogue with local authorities was weak, and Roma youth had few channels to voice concerns or advocate for their rights. Barriers to higher education, political participation and community mobilization further restricted their influence in shaping policies. The observed changes are significant because they enabled Roma activists and organizations to engage in sustainable advocacy and influence local decision-making. Establishing community forums and engaging directly with policymakers marked a foundational shift in Roma participation, reducing barriers to political and social inclusion. Additionally, youth-led initiatives to promote affirmative action policies and higher education awareness contribute to systemic change.

> OSCE contribution

Training and capacity-building for Roma activists: In May and June 2021, ODIHR conducted two rounds of online training on human rights, public participation and community mobilization, reaching 26 participants (12 men, 14 women).

Coaching, mentorship, local action support: Beyond training, 15 selected participants (six men, nine women) received tailored coaching and direct mentoring to develop and implement local action plans addressing key community concerns. ODIHR facilitated direct engagement with experienced mentors and senior experts, strengthening participants' advocacy skills. Through ODIHR support, participants initiated local advocacy efforts, including community forums, higher education awareness campaigns and school engagement initiatives.

Grassroots advocacy and policy engagement: ODIHR supported participants in implementing local action plans focused on education, affirmative action policies and community dialogue with local authorities. These efforts led to the establishment of Roma Citizens' community forums, awareness campaigns on higher education access and engagement with primary school students to promote the importance of education.

Peer learning and strategic collaboration: In November 2021, ODIHR held an online workshop, offering participants a platform to present their projects, highlight their impact, share diverse approaches and gain insights from different country contexts. This event reinforced the importance of strategic partnerships between Roma civil society organizations and local stakeholders in fostering sustainable change.

Strengthening civic engagement and institutional partnerships: Throughout the programme, ODIHR collaborated closely with local Roma civil society organizations and experts, ensuring that advocacy efforts were contextually relevant and community-driven. These partnerships contributed to increased visibility of Roma civic engagement efforts and strengthened networks for sustained advocacy work.

36. Government of North Macedonia reduced Roma statelessness through legislative and civil registration reforms

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Mission to Skopje Contributing structures: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Norms, practices		Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Parliament, Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs		Dimension: Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2019	Start of change: 2023	Thematic area: Roma and Sinti, Policing
		Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change		Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
		Key external partners: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

> Outcome description

Between 2023 and 2024, the government of North Macedonia reduced the number of stateless Roma adults from over 700 in 2022 to fewer than 50. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs implemented legal amendments to the Law on Civil Registry, Law on Identity Cards, and Law on Residence, enabling the late registration of unregistered persons. As a result, previously undocumented Roma individuals obtained legal identity documents, allowing them access to public healthcare, education, and formal employment.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2023, stateless Roma in North Macedonia faced systemic discrimination due to lack of legal identity. By reducing the number of stateless Roma to fewer than 50, the government took a major step toward securing their human rights and aligning national policies with international commitments to end statelessness. Enshrining these rights in law ensures sustainable inclusion, as future cases of statelessness can be prevented through birth registration awareness campaigns and streamlined legal procedures.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional framework-building and legislative assistance: Between 2019 and 2023, the OSCE Mission to Skopje funded the development of the National Action Plan on Civil Registration and partnered with UNHCR and government ministries to draft amendments to the Law on Civil Registry, enabling the late registration of unregistered persons in North Macedonia. The OSCE facilitated consultations with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Parliament, leading to the adoption of legislative amendments in June 2023.

Training and capacity-building: The OSCE conducted multiple training sessions and round tables for administrative staff and civil society organizations to support the implementation of these laws.

Municipal-community dialogue facilitation and trust-building: The Mission collaborated with the Bitola Task Force to foster dialogue between Roma communities and local authorities on civil registration issues, reducing tensions between Roma and state institutions and building trust that encouraged individuals to participate in the registration process.

37. Central Asian governments adopted multilingual education policies to enhance minority inclusion and regional co-operation

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structures:** High Commissioner on National Minorities
Change types: Norms, practices	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actors: Ministries of Education and Science	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2001	Start of change: 2023	**Thematic area:** Education, national minority issues
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Multi-country, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: UNICEF

> Outcome description

In 2023, the Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan government developed national frameworks on multilingual education (MLE) and strengthened institutional and school-level capacities, leading to increased enrolment of minority youth, particularly women and girls, in secondary and higher education institutions from schools implementing MLE.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education and Science in Kyrgyzstan demonstrated local ownership of this strategy by organizing the 'Month of MLE', during which parliamentarians, policymakers and education practitioners engaged with national minority schools to exchange knowledge and experiences on MLE. This initiative led to plans for further institutionalizing MLE within the ongoing 12-year school reform.

> Significance and Impact

Since 1999, schools and local communities in Central Asia have sought to develop methodologies, material and capacities for MLE to improve university entrance exam success rates. The OSCE leveraged these local initiatives to inform a systematic approach for integrating MLE into national curricula.

From 2001 in Kazakhstan and 2004 in Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities supported the respective Ministries of Education and Science in piloting MLE programmes in selected national minority schools, enabling students from Uzbek, Uighur and Tajik communities to receive education in both their mother tongue and state language. These efforts have enhanced access to education for national minorities, expanded their participation in socio-economic and public life, and contributed to social cohesion, minority inclusion and regional co-operation despite policy and financial constraints.

Education access: MLE programmes have reduced linguistic barriers, improving minority student access to secondary and higher education and expanding their career prospects by increasing their proficiency in state languages.

Social cohesion: The multilingual-language approach has strengthened cultural identity while fostering greater inclusion within national education systems and broader society.

Gender inclusion: Expanding MLE programmes has created more educational opportunities for minority women and girls, increasing their participation in higher education and the workforce.

Regional co-operation: MLE initiatives have facilitated cross-border co-operation, enabling Central Asian States to share best practices and align their minority language education policies.

> OSCE contribution

Capacity-building: The High Commissioner has provided regional workshops, expert consultations and technical assistance to strengthen local education institutions' ability to design and implement multilingual education models.

Regional dialogue facilitation: Since 2008, the High Commissioner has organized forums, multilingual education schools and policy dialogues, promoting collaboration between governments, educators and minority communities. Events, such as the 10th Anniversary Regional School on MLE in Almaty, have facilitated knowledge exchange and strengthened multilingual education frameworks across Central Asia.

Policy advisory: The High Commissioner has provided strategic guidance to help governments address legislative and financial challenges that could hinder the implementation of MLE programmes and their sustainability, ensuring resilience despite policy shifts.

Policy advocacy and integration into national frameworks: Working with national governments and in partnership with UNICEF, the High Commissioner has advocated for MLE integration into broader education reforms, ensuring that pilot school experiences inform national policy adoption and institutional implementation.

38. Government of North Macedonia adopted higher education reform, establishing multilingual university for inclusive access

Observed change—summary information	Managing structures: High Commissioner on National Minorities
Change types: Norms, practices, structures	Geographical focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actor: Ministry of Education, national parliament, local and national political leaders	Dimension: Cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 1995 / Start of change: 2001	Thematic area: Education
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, advocacy
	Key external partners: Higher education experts

> Outcome description

On 20 November 2001, the South East European University (SEEU) officially opened in Tetovo, North Macedonia, following the adoption of a new Law on Higher Education in 2000 that allowed for the establishment of private universities in minority languages. The SEEU started with 800 students across five faculties and has since expanded to include six faculties and a Skopje campus. The university offers multilingual education in Albanian, Macedonian, English and other European languages, and remains open to all students, regardless of ethnicity.

> Significance and Impact

Before the establishment of the SEEU, ethnic Albanian citizens in North Macedonia did not have access to legally-accredited higher education in their mother tongue, due to existing language policies in higher education. The introduction of the SEEU provided a legal pathway for higher education in multiple languages. Since its inception, the SEEU has enrolled over 30,000 students, with more than 16,350 graduates entering various sectors of the economy. The university operates as a multilingual institution, offering programmes in Albanian, Macedonian and English, and follows a financial model supported by student tuition fees and state subsidies, which increased from €500,000 in 2015 to €1.2 million in recent years. 2023 data on alumni outcomes indicate that 54.5 per cent of SEEU graduates are employed within a year of graduation, with an adjusted unemployment rate of 26.5 per cent when excluding those who are voluntarily unemployed. Additionally, 96 per cent of employed graduates secure jobs within six months of graduation, with 57 per cent finding employment before completing their studies. A 2023 alumni survey found that 98.5 per cent of respondents would recommend the SEEU to prospective students.

> OSCE contribution

Policy advocacy and planning: Facing tensions over higher education access for ethnic Albanians in North Macedonia, the High Commissioner led efforts to secure legislative reform. The High Commissioner worked with international education experts and the Macedonian Ministry of Education to develop recommendations that led to the adoption of the Higher Education Law in July 2000, allowing private universities to offer instruction in minority languages. This reform enabled the establishment of the SEEU. After the Law's passage, the High Commissioner led university planning, ensuring its academic structure, multilingual model and governance framework met international higher education standards.

Resource mobilization: The High Commissioner secured financial and logistical support for the SEEU's establishment, led fundraising efforts and mobilized €33 million from OSCE participating States.

39. Kosovo* institutions took ownership of elections management and oversight

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission in Kosovo
Change types: Norms, practices, structures, capacities	**Geographical** focus: South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Central Election Commission, Election Complaints and Appeals Panel	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 1995	**Start of change:** 2007	**Thematic area:** Elections
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: Jurisdictional/national, system change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building
		Key external partners: IOM, UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

> Outcome description

Between 2000 and 2007, the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) in Kosovo transitioned from being OSCE-run to independently managing electoral processes. By 2003, the CEC Secretariat was established, assuming operational responsibilities previously handled by the OSCE. In 2007, ECAP was formally recognized as an independent electoral dispute resolution body, further strengthening electoral integrity. These developments culminated in locally managed, sustainable electoral institutions, capable of organizing and overseeing elections without external supervision.

> Significance and Impact

Before this transition, Kosovo's electoral institutions depended on international support to organize and supervise elections, ensuring credibility in a post-conflict setting. The establishment of the CEC and ECAP enabled Kosovo's institutions to take the lead in election management, which marked a shift toward self-sufficiency.

From 2007 onwards, both institutions began to operate independently, administering elections without direct international oversight. As a result, the OSCE transitioned to an advisory role, supporting the professionalism of the newly established institutions, compliance with international standards, and the long-term sustainability of electoral processes.

Since 2000, Kosovo has held nine parliamentary elections, with the CEC managing six (2010, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2025), alongside other local elections. International observer missions, including from the European Union, have regularly assessed these elections as peaceful, competitive and aligned with democratic principles, while providing recommendations to further support democratic consolidation.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional framework-building: In 2000, the Mission in Kosovo, together with UNMIK, helped establish the Joint Registration Task Force to facilitate voter registration, and supported the creation of the CEC, Kosovo's first local election institution, assisting with its legal and operational development. In 2007, the OSCE, in collaboration with UNMIK, strengthened the ECAP, which became an independent electoral dispute resolution body in 2007.

Election management assistance: The OSCE organized Kosovo's first municipal elections in 2000, first Assembly elections in 2001, and second municipal elections in 2002, laying the foundation for democratic structures in Kosovo. In 2004 and 2007, the Mission co-facilitated elections, enabling local institutions to take on key electoral responsibilities. Between 2013 and 2019, the OSCE supported elections in four northern municipalities under an EU-facilitated agreement between Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade, contributing to regional stability.

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.

Legislative assistance: The OSCE assisted in drafting and refining electoral laws to align with international standards. The Mission also facilitated electoral reform discussions, leading to the 2023 Law on General Elections.

Capacity-building: Following its transition to an advisory role after 2004, the Mission continued to provide technical and legal assistance to Kosovo's electoral institutions, as well as supporting capacity-building for the CEC Secretariat and other electoral bodies.

Process modernization/equipment: In 2000, the OSCE, alongside IOM, facilitated the establishment of the Out-of-Kosovo Registration and Voting Programme, allowing eligible Kosovars living abroad to register and vote in municipal elections. Additionally, the OSCE supported the development of an integrated election software and server system between 2023 and 2025, to digitalize vote counting and result tabulation.

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40. Participating States reformed legislation improving transparency and human rights compliance

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Norms, practices, structures	**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Legislators	**Dimension:** Human
Start of OSCE involvement: 2004 / **Start of change:** 2004	**Thematic area:** Rule of law, human rights
	Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, system change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Since 2004, OSCE participating States have undertaken legal reforms to strengthen human rights-compliant legislation and legislative processes, aligning their legal frameworks with OSCE human dimension commitments. Governments, national human rights institutions and other national stakeholders have:

- amended legislation to promote judicial independence and the rule of law (Poland, Moldova, Georgia, Mongolia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan);
- revised or halted the adoption of restrictive laws that curbed civic space or limited freedoms of association and peaceful assembly (Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Armenia, Moldova, Uzbekistan);
- established or strengthened national human rights institutions in line with the UN Paris Principles (Bulgaria, Iceland, Switzerland, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden, Montenegro, Kazakhstan);
- strengthened legal frameworks to prevent and combat violence against women (20 OSCE participating States);
- implemented reforms, including electoral and political party reforms (22 participating States, including in the Western Balkans) and reforms in anti-corruption and public integrity laws in Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Ukraine; and
- improved legislative procedures in nine OSCE participating States.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2004, legislative processes in many OSCE participating States lacked structured human rights assessments, and national laws were not systematically aligned with OSCE commitments and international standards. Governments increasingly seek external legal expertise to inform reforms, as demonstrated by a 50 per cent rise in requests for ODIHR's assistance between 2022 and 2023. These reforms have fostered greater legal certainty and enhanced transparency, accountability and public participation in the lawmaking process, bringing national legal frameworks closer to international human rights standards.

> OSCE contribution

While legal reforms are influenced by multiple factors, ODIHR has provided technical assistance and expert analysis that has contributed to participating States' reform efforts, and ODIHR's legal reviews have been referenced in high-level policy discussions. ODIHR has developed a holistic methodology to assess the entire legislative cycle, from policy-drafting and parliamentary scrutiny to implementation and enforcement.

Legislative assistance: Since 2004, ODIHR has conducted over 500 legal reviews for nearly 40 OSCE participating States, offering technical assessments of legislation against international human rights standards and OSCE commitments. ODIHR has also carried out 14 assessments of lawmaking processes and published nine legislative guidelines, supporting governments in modifying laws related to judicial independence, civic space, freedom of assembly, electoral processes, gender equality and anti-corruption measures.

Stakeholder dialogue on legislative reforms: ODIHR has convened and participated in consultations and expert meetings with lawmakers, civil society organizations and legal professionals to discuss legislative proposals and ensure human rights considerations are integrated in lawmaking.

Legislative guidelines development and dissemination: In 2024, ODIHR published the *Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws*, promoting principles of transparency, accountability and participation in legislative processes. ODIHR has distributed these guidelines to national lawmaking bodies and provided training sessions to support their application in legislative drafting, review and implementation.

Integration of gender and diversity considerations in legislative reforms: ODIHR has advised legislation drafters on incorporating gender and diversity perspectives into laws, promoting non-discriminatory legal frameworks that enhance women's political participation, legal protection against gender-based violence, and equality and diversity in the security sector and other policy areas.

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Cross-Dimensional

41. Women of Turkmenistan increased participation in public fora

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Centre in Ashgabat
Change types: Practices		Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Public institutions, civil society organizations, women		Dimension: Cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2021	Start of change: 2024	Thematic area: Gender equality
		Conflict cycle: All stages of the conflict cycle
Scope and Degree of change: National, small-scale change		Contribution types: Standard-setting, advocacy
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

Between 2021 and 2024, women in Turkmenistan increasingly participated in OSCE Centre events, driving a rise in female representation from 22 per cent in 2020 to 49 per cent in 2024—nearly reaching gender parity for the first time in the Centre's history. This increase reflects both a behavioural shift among government and civil society actors in how they nominate participants, and a growing readiness among women to engage in public forums when actively encouraged and supported. The change marks a significant step towards more inclusive participation in OSCE project activities and events.

> Significance and Impact

This change is significant in a national context where women have historically represented just 10–25 per cent of participants in public events—often lower in male-dominated sectors. By nearly achieving gender parity, the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat transformed the reach and inclusiveness of its project activities, ensuring more balanced participation across genders. The change was not incidental but the result of deliberate, consistent messaging and institutional commitment by the Centre's staff, who embedded expectations for gender-balanced participation into every interaction. This approach not only advanced OSCE commitments under the 2004 Gender Action Plan but also modelled how persistent internal action can drive behavioural change among partners. The sustained rise in female attendance demonstrates that systemic inclusion is possible when organizations lead by example. The Centre's achievement offers a durable and replicable model for promoting gender equality through practical action in similarly restrictive or traditional settings.

> OSCE contribution

Strategic prioritization and internal practice change: In 2021, the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat introduced a renewed strategic focus on gender equality, elevating women's participation in OSCE activities as a core institutional priority. This leadership direction aligned with the OSCE's 2004 Gender Action Plan and translated into a clear internal commitment. The Centre operationalized this commitment by embedding gender balance into the design and delivery of all project activities. Participation data was tracked annually, creating a feedback loop that reinforced accountability and allowed for ongoing adjustments. Achieving gender balance became a standard performance expectation—internally recognized as a measure of programme quality and reach.

Communication and practice advocacy: Centre staff were fully aligned with the gender inclusion objective and ensured that the 50/50 participation goal was clearly and consistently communicated to all external stakeholders. The Centre revised official event notifications to include a standardized statement explicitly encouraging the nomination of female participants. Informal and follow-up communications consistently reinforced this expectation. The message was not occasional but unwavering—delivered in every interaction, without exception. This sustained and unified communication approach was widely seen as the most effective driver of behavioural change among partner institutions.

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42. Tajikistan's interior ministry enhanced domestic violence response with Gender-Sensitive Police Units and community referral networks

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Dushanbe Contributing structures: Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Norms, practices, networks, resources, capacities	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Gender-Sensitive Police Units, Victim Support Centres	Dimensions: Cross-dimensional, human, politico-military

Start of OSCE involvement: 2010	Start of change: 2018	Thematic areas: Gender equality, policing
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention
Scope and degree of change: National, system change		Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
		Key external partners: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Swiss Cooperation Office

> Outcome description

Between 2010 and 2018, Tajikistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs established 19 Gender-Sensitive Police Units (GSPUs) across 19 districts to enhance police response to domestic violence (DV) cases, aligning with international standards. These units adopted victim-centred approaches, developed referral mechanisms with local victim support centres and institutionalized their work following the adoption of the Law on the Prevention of Violence in Family (2013). To further strengthen case management and survivor protection, a DV case management system was introduced within GSPUs to standardize responses and improve tracking of DV cases. In parallel, a platform for continuous dialogue between the Ministry and civil society was established to address challenges in police response, facilitate policy improvements and expand the reach of GSPUs, particularly in underserved communities. Building on this progress, the Ministry of Internal Affairs continues to expand the model, with two additional GSPUs opened in 2024.

> Significance and Impact

DV is a pervasive issue in Tajikistan, disproportionately affecting women and children. Before the establishment of GSPUs, there was no formalized role for law enforcement in DV response, as Tajikistan lacked a normative framework to guide police intervention until the adoption of the 2013 Law on the Prevention of Violence in Family. Even after the law was enacted, deeply ingrained gender stereotypes among police officers contributed to hesitation in issuing protection orders, investigating DV cases and apprehending perpetrators. These challenges were particularly acute in rural areas, where survivors faced significant barriers to accessing justice and protection due to the absence of trained officers and limited awareness of available support services. The establishment of GSPUs directly addressed these systemic weaknesses by introducing victim-centred policing practices and ensuring that specially trained officers were available to respond to DV cases. As a result, survivors—particularly in previously underserved areas—gained greater access to protective services and a more skilled police response. An indicator of this shift is the increase in the issuance of protection orders for survivors. In 2023, GSPUs issued protection orders in 88 per cent of DV cases they registered, compared to just 54 per cent issued by regular police units.

> OSCE contribution

The OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe played a pivotal role in supporting the establishment and operationalization of GSPUs through technical assistance, training and resource provision.
Capacity-building and training: The Office has supported the establishment of 14 GSPUs between 2010 and 2018 and has continued capacity-building efforts for all 19 units through 2025. Training on victim-centred policing, gender-sensitive approaches and referral mechanisms to improve law enforcement responses to DV cases was provided by the Office, in co-operation with UNDP and the Swiss Cooperation Office.

Technical support and equipment: The Office, alongside UNDP, supplied technical services for the DV case management system and provided equipment for GSPU daily operations.

State-civil society co-ordination and public outreach: The Programme Office in Dushanbe facilitated the partnerships between GSPUs and Office-supported victim support centres, supporting joint outreach efforts to increase public awareness and improve survivor support networks.

Policy advocacy and reform: Since 2011, the Office has supported efforts to address systemic challenges in police responses to DV, including by co-ordinating the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Police Reform. This platform brings together law enforcement agencies, Tajikistan's Committee on Women and Family Affairs, GSPUs, victim support centres and international organizations to enhance policies and institutional responses.

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43. Women's Peace Leadership Programme graduates empowered in peacebuilding for leadership and influence

Observed change—summary information		Managing structure: Gender Issues Programme	
Change types: Networks		**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach	
Social actors: Female participants		**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional	
Start of OSCE involvement: 2021	**Start of change:** 2022	**Thematic area:** Gender equality, conflict prevention and resolution	
		Conflict cycle: All stages of the conflict cycle	
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, Small-scale		**Contribution types:** Capacity-building, facilitating co-operation	
		Key external partners: Mentors of the programme	

> Outcome description

Since the inception of the OSCE's Women's Peace Leadership Programme (WPLP) in 2022, several women peacebuilders from the OSCE region and Afghanistan who participated in the programme have assumed leadership roles in peacebuilding organizations, influencing mediation and policy dialogues at national and regional levels. Graduates of the programme have actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts, facilitated community dialogues and contributed to reconciliation efforts in their respective countries. Some have led or participated in high-level discussions, including within the OSCE framework, shaping gender-responsive peace initiatives. Through the structured alumni network, they continue to collaborate and share resources, further strengthening their impact on peacebuilding across the region.

> Significance and Impact

Women peacebuilders face barriers to leadership and recognition in mediation and peace processes. Their exclusion from formal peace processes limits their ability to shape policies and influence decision-making. By participating in the WPLP, which has supported them to take on leadership roles and actively contribute to peacebuilding initiatives, these women are addressing systemic gaps in representation, advancing the OSCE's Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Their increased visibility and professional influence contribute to more inclusive and sustainable peace agreements.

> OSCE contribution

The OSCE, through its Gender Issues Programme and the WIN ('Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality') project, implemented the WPLP in 2022, 2023 and 2025. It provided intensive skill-building sessions on mediation, leadership and peacebuilding, including:

Technical training events on mediation: The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre delivered a four-day intensive training on mediation and dialogue facilitation. Several resilience workshops and training on complexity leadership, trauma-informed peacebuilding and communication took place.

Mentorship and expert guidance: The WPLP provided structured peer exchanges and one-on-one mentoring with senior women mediators, diplomats and conflict resolution experts, fostering leadership development and practical knowledge-sharing in-person and online.

Professional networks and visibility expansion: The programme facilitated participant engagement in global forums, including the Munich Security Conference, OSCE-hosted panels and other high-level events, enhancing their influence on policy discussions; and created opportunities for direct interactions with OSCE leadership and ambassadors, elevating participants' professional profiles and strengthening their integration into global peacebuilding networks.

Community and alumni network development: Community of practice sessions are organized monthly, offering a secure space for participants to exchange experiences, address challenges and deepen relationships. The Organization established the WPLP Alumni Network in 2024, ensuring continued collaboration, resource-sharing and ongoing support for programme graduates across multiple cohorts. Through this multi-faceted approach, the OSCE has positioned WPLP participants as key actors in peace and security, leveraging its networks and convening power to provide lasting opportunities for visibility, professional growth and impact on peace processes.

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44. Montenegrin ministries incorporated gender considerations in national strategies

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Mission to Montenegro
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Ministries of Human and Minority Rights, Education, Science, and Innovation, the General Secretariat of the Government and the Human Resource Management Authority of Montenegro	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2020	Start of change: 2023	Thematic area: Gender equality, good governance
		Conflict cycle: N/A

Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	Contribution types: Standard setting, technical assistance, capacity-building
	Key external partners: UNICEF

> Outcome description

In 2023, nearly 50 per cent of national strategies of all line ministries in Montenegro were gender mainstreamed, a significant increase from only eight per cent in 2021. National strategies were revised to include the integration of gender-sensitive goals, activities, indicators and budgets.

> Significance and Impact

Previously, Montenegro's public administration struggled to fulfil its legal obligations under the Law on Gender Equality, with 73.2 per cent of national strategies failing to incorporate gender considerations. The lack of gender-sensitive frameworks limited equitable resource allocation and hindered efforts to address systemic gender disparities. The adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach in nearly half of all strategies has enhanced the inclusiveness of public policies, improved compliance with international human rights standards and contributed to transformative social change.

> OSCE contribution

Policy design: The OSCE Mission to Montenegro played a key role in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming by embedding it in strategy formulation, which in turn prompted the revision of various ministries' policies to ensure alignment with national gender equality objectives. This methodology, applied across all line ministries, has made gender mainstreaming a mandatory component of policy development. Working with the General Secretariat of the Government, the Mission identified gaps in gender integration and developed a structured gender mainstreaming instrument.

Curriculum development and technical training: To ensure effective implementation, the Mission designed and delivered targeted training for civil servants and integrated the methodology into the public education system. The Mission also partnered with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation to review elementary school curricula for gender bias, supporting long-term education reform efforts. These structural changes are now self-sustaining, with national institutions independently implementing gender-responsive policies without further OSCE support.

Gender-responsive Standard Operating Procedures: Additionally, the Mission collaborated with the Ministry of Finance to introduce gender-responsive budgeting guidelines into its budget management information system. In 2023, the Mission mentored officials in applying gender analysis to the state budget, contributing to an increase in gender-sensitive expenditures from three per cent in 2022 to ten per cent in 2024.

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45. Women's Resource Centres established across Tajikistan to strengthen local co-operation on domestic violence response

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Dushanbe
Change types: Practices, networks, structures, capacities	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Women's Resource Centres, Multi-Disciplinary Working Groups Combating Domestic Violence, Ministry of Internal Affairs	Dimension: Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2004	Start of change: 2011	Thematic area: Gender equality, human rights
		Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention

Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: Gesellschaft für Organisation, Planung und Ausbildung mbH

> ### Outcome description

Since 2011, Women's Resource Centres (WRCs), operated by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as implementing partners, have been established and managed in 14 remote districts of Tajikistan, providing essential legal, psychosocial and vocational services to survivors of domestic violence (DV) in the country's most remote areas.

Since 2015, WRCs have co-ordinated with Multidisciplinary Working Groups Combatting Domestic Violence (MDWGs) to support and protect domestic violence survivors using a referral mechanism and a multidisciplinary approach. MDWGs include state and local government agencies, NGOs and key institutions such as the Ministries of Interior, Health, Social Protection, Labour, Migration, Justice, and Youth Affairs. Other members include local administrations, women's and child rights committees, self-governing authorities, support and rehabilitation centres, the Prosecutor General's Office, and media and religious committees.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has actively participated in these reforms, collaborating in the establishment and institutionalization of MDWGs, integrating gender-sensitive approaches into police practices, and co-developing victim-centred procedures in 2018/19. These reforms have been further embedded through Memoranda of Understanding, which clarified stakeholder roles and improved co-ordination among state and non-state actors.

> ### Significance and Impact

Prior to these interventions, survivors of DV in Tajikistan faced significant challenges in accessing justice and support services. Patriarchal norms contributed to DV being perceived as a private matter, while limited institutional protections persisted even after the 2013 Law on Prevention of Violence in the Family and the 2014–2023 State Programme and Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women highlighted systemic barriers, such as weak awareness of rights, insufficient legal safeguards and underdeveloped support services.

The establishment of WRCs and MDWGs has played a crucial role in strengthening the DV response framework. Legal and psychosocial support have reached more survivors, with WRCs assisting approximately 1,300 survivors annually and providing over 4,000 legal and 3,700 psychosocial consultations. Vocational training—totalling 110 courses each year—has enabled over 1,400 women to pursue economic independence, with 30 per cent engaging in income-generating activities. Public outreach initiatives reached over 16,000 people annually, raising awareness of gender equality and domestic violence prevention. These efforts have contributed to shifting societal attitudes, fostering greater recognition of domestic violence as a societal issue.

> ### OSCE contribution

Training and institutional capacity-building: Since 2011, the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe has supported the operation of 14 WRCs, facilitating free legal consultations, psychosocial counselling and vocational training for DV survivors. The OSCE provided continuous capacity-building to WRC staff and relevant professionals from government agencies, including through annual educational and networking events. These

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initiatives improved co-ordination between civil society and state actors, increased service provision quality and built lasting institutional capacity.

Furthermore, the OSCE supported the establishment of MDWGs in several districts—sometimes in collaboration with the Gesellschaft für Organisation, Planung und Ausbildung mbH—and facilitated the development of Memoranda of Understanding and Action Plans. These efforts formalized co-ordination among involved entities, aligned district-level responses with national strategies and enhanced protection mechanisms for survivors. Targeted training for MDWG members strengthened their ability to apply survivor-centred and co-ordinated approaches to DV cases.

Technical assessment: Between 2016 and 2021, the OSCE assessed the effectiveness of multidisciplinary approaches in pilot regions and informed improvements to implementation.

DV case management and state-civil society referral process development: In 2021, the OSCE developed and introduced a case management system tailored to DV cases, which was presented to key government and civil society actors during a national round table. WRC representatives shared experiences of using the system, and MDWG members expressed commitment to adopting it in practice.

Peer networking: To support sustained learning and co-ordination, the Programme Office in Dushanbe initiated a WhatsApp group for MDWG practitioners to share experiences and network.

Resource mobilization capacity: The OSCE worked to enhance the long-term sustainability of the WRCs and their services by supporting the development of social entrepreneurship models and building the WRCs' capacity to generate income and reduce reliance on external funding.

Gender-sensitive policing: In collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the OSCE integrated gender sensitivity into police reform efforts, particularly through support for the establishment of MDWGs. In 2018 and 2019, the OSCE provided technical support and capacity-building on gender-responsive policing and victim-centred approaches, contributing to improved collaboration between police and service providers in domestic violence response.

All stories were collected through an Outcome Harvesting exercise and were harmonized by OIO – their content reflect the submission by OSCE Executive Structures

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46. Participants of the OSCE's simulation-based training courses improved their ability to identify victims and effectively investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
Change types: Capacities, networks, practices	**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Anti-trafficking practitioners, including law enforcement officers, prosecutors, lawyers, social workers, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, labour inspectors, financial investigators, migration authorities	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2016 / **Start of change:** 2016	**Thematic area:** Combating trafficking in human beings
	Conflict cycle: Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Rehabilitation & Peacebuilding
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide, Scaled change	**Contribution types:** Technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: National anti-trafficking co-ordinators and institutions, relevant ministries, other international and regional organizations, OSCE field operations

> Outcome description

Participants of the OSCE's simulation-based training exercises from over 58 countries enhanced their ability to engage in victim-centred, trauma-informed collaborative anti-trafficking efforts since 2016. Participants—ranging from law enforcement officials and prosecutors to social services providers—report increased confidence and capacity to apply inter-agency and cross-border collaboration, resulting in a more coherent and rights-based response to combating trafficking in human beings.

> Significance and Impact

Simulation-based training exercises on combating trafficking in human beings were initially developed as an urgent and strategic response to the rise in human trafficking along migration routes, particularly following the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The fragmented legal frameworks and lack of effective co-operation among OSCE participating States had created significant gaps in victim protection and prosecution efforts, gaps that traffickers were quick to exploit. Traditional training approaches struggled to keep pace with the complex, cross-border nature of trafficking, being often marked by limited understanding of perpetrator profiles, evidentiary challenges and insufficient use of financial investigation tools and technology. To address these shortcomings, the OSCE's simulation-based training exercises were designed to bring together a broad range of frontline actors, including law enforcement, social workers, NGOs, legal professionals, migration authorities, financial investigators, prosecutors and labour inspectors. It has helped build national and regional anti-trafficking networks, improved victim identification and assistance efforts, and enhanced cross-border investigative co-operation. Since its launch in 2016, the initiative has shown tangible impact. Concrete examples include the rescue of Uzbek migrant workers from labour exploitation in 2019; new criminal investigations launched in Kyrgyzstan in 2021; and the largest anti-trafficking operation in Iceland, initiated by a participant of the training. The increasing demand for these training exercises, including replications by several OSCE participating States, underscores their long-term value in closing policy gaps, strengthening collaboration and building sustainable anti-trafficking capacities.

> OSCE Contributions

Development of a training methodology: The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings pioneered anti-trafficking simulation-based training exercises in 2016 to immerse practitioners in live-action, simulated scenarios, allowing them to investigate and identify

trafficking cases in a safe environment without putting at risk real victims or ongoing prosecutions. Experts create a fictional world with country-specific laws and profiles of perpetrators and victims, enabling participants to engage in 'learning by doing' and receive feedback. A key feature is the emphasis on multi-agency collaboration, bringing together diverse anti-trafficking stakeholders. This hands-on approach fosters trauma-informed, victim-centred practices throughout investigation, protection and assistance efforts. Participants develop practical skills, such as trauma-informed interviewing, collaborative decision-making and technical expertise in recognizing online exploitation, tracking illicit financial flows and identifying non-stereotypical victim and perpetrator profiles.

Training exercises implemented at different scales: Since 2016, the Special Representative's Office has worked with 55 participating States and eight Partners for Co-operation in the design and conduct of simulation-based training exercises, including i) six international exercises in English and Russian, ii) three regional exercises for Central Asia, the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea region, and iii) over 15 national exercises, training over 1,000 practitioners from a total of 68 countries.

Building national capacity to design and conduct exercises: The Special Representative's Office has actively worked to build the capacity of participating States to design and replicate simulation-based training, regularly inviting national anti-trafficking body representatives to observe training exercises and gain first-hand understanding of the logistical, operational and technical aspects involved. To further strengthen their expertise, the Special Representative's Office encouraged participants to take part in multiple training exercises, each time assuming different roles to build a versatile, well-rounded experience. This approach is designed to create a critical mass of professionals with the skills and confidence to independently conceptualize and implement simulation-based training exercises on combating trafficking in human beings within their own national context.

Additionally, in 2019, the Special Representative's Office published *A Practical Handbook on How to Conduct Simulation-Based Training Exercises to Combat Human Trafficking*, offering a structured, step-by-step guide to support replication of this training methodology. The handbook was made publicly available to help ensure the long-term sustainability and wider adoption of simulation-based training exercises on combating trafficking in human beings across the OSCE region and beyond.

All stories were collected through an Outcome Harvesting exercise and were harmonized by OIO – their content reflect the submission by OSCE Executive Structures

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47. OSCE participating States strengthened anti-trafficking efforts through strategic reforms	
Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings **Contributing structures**: Programme Office in Astana, Programme Office in Bishkek, Mission to Serbia, Presence in Albania, Mission in Kosovo, Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, Mission to Montenegro, Mission to Skopje, Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Change types: Norms, practices, capacities, network, resources	**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Legislative bodies and anti-trafficking authorities of several participating States	**Dimension:** Cross-Dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2003	**Start of change:** 2017	**Thematic area:** Combatting trafficking in human beings, human rights
		Conflict cycle: All stages
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, system change		**Contribution types:** Legislative and structural reviews, research and technical guidance, facilitating dialogue, training and awareness initiatives
		Key external partners: Leading anti-trafficking civil society organizations, international experts

> Outcome description

Between 2017 and 2024, OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation enacted legislative and institutional reforms to strengthen their responses to trafficking in human beings (THB).
Governments:

- **Expanded national anti-trafficking co-ordination mechanisms**, increasing the number of appointed National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs from 30 in 2017 to 61 in 2024, with new appointments in Kyrgyzstan (2022), Germany (2023) and Lithuania (2024).
- **Passed comprehensive THB laws**, including in Ukraine (2011) and Kazakhstan (2024), alongside new government regulations on victim identification, National Referral Mechanisms and anti-trafficking co-ordination.
- **Updated National Action Plans** against THB in Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Scotland and Switzerland to address evolving challenges.
- **Integrated victim-centred and human rights-based identification and assistance models**, such as the 'social path' model in Serbia (2003–2004), Ukraine (2011–2012) and Greece (2018–2019), with ongoing implementation in Bulgaria, Hungary and Latvia.

Additionally, governments have adopted policies to address emerging THB threats and:

- **Amended criminal codes** in five participating States following OSCE-led policy discussions.
- **Drafted policies** in four participating States requiring online platforms to prevent technology-facilitated THB.
- **Developed financial investigation protocols**, with Cyprus increasing its trafficking-related Financial Intelligence Unit's reports by 64 per cent in 2023, and Switzerland adopting its first guidelines for financial services.
- **Developed partnerships between the public and financial sectors**, with the first partnership-model in Switzerland and Cyprus, and launching such models in Lithuania and Montenegro.
- **Strengthened non-punishment policies for trafficking victims**, with Scotland's Lord Advocate re-issuing Instructions in 2024.

These reforms have strengthened national co-ordination, enforcement and victim protection, aligning policies with OSCE commitments and international human rights standards.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2017, many OSCE participating States lacked structured co-ordination mechanisms and comprehensive policies to address THB. Governments often managed cases individually, resulting in inconsistent victim protections, limited enforcement capacity and gaps in cross-border co-operation. By establishing permanent co-ordination structures and targeted legislation, governments have strengthened the whole-of-society approach in combating THB, the prevention of all forms of human trafficking, victim identification and assistance, improved law enforcement co-ordination and enhanced legal accountability. These institutional changes aim to integrate anti-trafficking efforts into national governance structures, reducing dependence on temporary initiatives. By adopting long-term policy mechanisms and strengthening international co-operation, OSCE participating States have aligned national policies with OSCE commitments and improved their capacity to combat trafficking sustainably.

> Contribution

The OSCE has played a crucial role in advancing anti-trafficking reforms by engaging in high-level policy dialogue, providing expert guidance and delivering sustained capacity-building efforts. The Organization has helped participating States strengthen their legislative, operational and enforcement responses to trafficking in human beings through:

Research and exchange of good practices: The OSCE has conducted country visits and research assessments to identify promising practices and gaps and provide targeted recommendations. By developing guidance tools and tailored policy responses, the OSCE has helped governments align institutional frameworks and institutional mechanisms with OSCE commitments and international best practices. These efforts supported the establishment of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator and Rapporteur functions, strengthened National Referral Mechanisms and enhanced victim identification and assistance procedures across multiple participating States.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue: The OSCE convened expert discussions, legislative consultations and inter-agency forums, ensuring that governments, law enforcement agencies, social service providers and civil society organizations collaborated effectively on anti-trafficking initiatives. Through platforms, such as the network of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs, the High-Level Conferences of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, the Alliance Expert Co-ordination Team, the Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and the Combating Trafficking in Human Beings focal points network, the OSCE promoted knowledge-sharing, encouraged cross-border co-operation and facilitated the adoption of best practices.

Technical training development and delivery: The Organization trained policymakers and frontline responders (law enforcement, social worker, lawyers, non-governmental organization representatives), as well as representatives from the criminal justice system (prosecutors, judges), to strengthen their capacity to implement newly adopted anti-trafficking laws and policies. Through national and regional workshops, scenario-based training and simulation exercises, the OSCE helped governments apply trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, victim-centred and human rights-based approaches in identification, referral and assistance to victims, as well as prosecution of traffickers.

Awareness-raising initiatives: The OSCE-led awareness-raising initiatives increased public and institutional understanding of emerging trafficking threats, including technology-facilitated exploitation.

Framework development for anti-trafficking mechanisms: Beyond legislative support, the OSCE assessed the effectiveness of national anti-trafficking structures and enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that legal frameworks translated into operational impact. The OSCE worked with governments to analyse national anti-trafficking action plans and strategies, improve financial investigation protocols and strengthen co-ordination among social service providers and law enforcement agencies. Through these efforts, the OSCE helped participating States move beyond policy commitments to fully functioning anti-trafficking systems capable of sustainable enforcement and victim protection.

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48. Survivor leaders recognized as experts shaping anti-trafficking policies across the OSCE region

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) **Contributing structure:** Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
Change types: Practices, networks	**Geographical focus:** OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: Trafficking survivors-experts, International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC)	**Dimension:** Human

Start of OSCE involvement: 2019	**Start of change:** 2021	**Thematic area:** Combating trafficking in human beings, reform and co-operation in the security sector
		Conflict cycle: All stages of the conflict cycle

Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, scaled change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, advocacy
	Key external partner: Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)

> Outcome description

Since its establishment in 2021 by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), survivor leaders within the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC) have progressively been recognized as experts shaping anti-trafficking policies in the OSCE and beyond.

ISTAC members have played a crucial role in shaping technical guidance and policy recommendations. Their contributions include *ODIHR's updated Practical Handbook on National Referral Mechanisms*, as well as the *Code of Practice for Ensuring the Rights of Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking*. They have also provided guidance on National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils and developed survivor-informed indicators for the identification of trafficking victims. Through this engagement, survivor leaders have provided expertise for advancing ethical survivor inclusion, strengthening trauma-informed approaches and informed national referral mechanisms in OSCE participating States.

> Significance and Impact

Before ISTAC, survivor involvement in formal policy-making was rather limited as governments and intergovernmental organizations relied on other, more traditional anti-trafficking stakeholders (service providers and law enforcement) to shape anti-trafficking responses. With ISTAC, this dynamic shifted by fostering a more inclusive environment that empowered survivors of trafficking to have an equal seat at the table and contribute their expertise in co-developing policies, recommendations and programmes, rather than only sharing their stories.

As a result, ISTAC members have played a direct role in developing standards and ensuring that OSCE States adopt victim and survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches.

The recognition of survivor expertise has extended beyond the OSCE, influencing international organizations such as UN Women, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Organization of American States, all of which have acknowledged and integrated to different extents survivor perspectives into their practices. ODIHR's advocacy on survivor inclusion towards the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)—a UN General Assembly-mandated co-ordination mechanism comprising of 31 UN and other international and regional organizations—resulted in a joint ICAT submission for the appraisal of the progress achieved in the implementation of the 2010 Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons by the UN General Assembly in 2021. As a result, the role of survivors as agents of change and the need for their inclusion was recognized in the related Political Declaration stemming from this process, adopted by the UN Member States. ODIHR's model has thus influenced a policy shift on the issue of ethical survivor inclusion, which, in turn, has enabled related discussions to kick off at the national level as well. Currently, several OSCE participating States are taking steps to formalize survivor inclusion in their practices, including through the establishment of National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils, such as the United Kingdom, Cyprus,

Malta, Greece and Romania. In several of these participating States, ISTAC members were engaged directly to provide support and guidance towards these processes.

Establishment of ISTAC: ODIHR provided a formal mechanism for survivor leadership within OSCE anti-trafficking interventions.

Capacity-building for ISTAC members: Members were equipped with the skills to engage as equal stakeholders in policy discussions.

Development of survivor-informed technical guidance: ODIHR worked towards ensuring that policies reflect the realities and expertise of trafficking survivors.

Advocacy for national survivor councils: The Organization advocated for OSCE States to influence the institutionalization of survivor expertise in their national anti-trafficking frameworks.

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49. Uzbekistan's government institutionalized a national referral mechanism to strengthen anti-trafficking efforts

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structure:** Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan **Contributing structure:** Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Change types: Norms, practices, networks	**Geographical focus:** Central Asia
Social actors: Cabinet of Ministers, National Commission on Issues of Combating Human Trafficking and Decent Work, Anti-Trafficking Commission, judiciary	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2008	**Start of change:** 2022	**Thematic area:** Combating trafficking in human beings
		Conflict cycle: Early warning

	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, capacity-building, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
Scope and Degree of change: National, system change	**Key external partners:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Labour Organization (ILO), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), anti-trafficking civil society organizations

> Outcome description

Between 2008 and 2022, the government of Uzbekistan institutionalized a comprehensive, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of human trafficking. This transformation marked a shift from previous government denial of trafficking issues to recognizing and prioritizing anti-trafficking efforts at the state policy level.

Key outcomes included:

2008–2022: institutionalization of the NRM: The National Commission on Issues of Combating Human Trafficking and Decent Work, alongside law enforcement, the judiciary, the National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations and the business community, played a critical role in shaping and operationalizing the NRM.

2019–2022: adoption of the government decree: In 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the NRM resolution, defining the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and social service providers in identifying, referring and protecting trafficking victims while ensuring confidentiality.

2019–2023: integration into state policy: The government of Uzbekistan elevated the fight against trafficking in human beings to a state policy priority and developed an Anti-Trafficking Commission chaired by the Chairperson of the Senate to more efficiently co-ordinate counter-trafficking efforts.

2020–2023: strengthening the legal framework and data collection: The government introduced national action plans on business and human rights, established a national crime database on human trafficking, and adopted monitoring mechanisms to track trends and improve inter-agency co-ordination.

2018–2023: strengthening multi-actor collaboration: The National Labour Inspectorate, civil society organizations and international partners (ILO) worked together to eliminate forced labour and child exploitation, ensuring compliance with international anti-trafficking commitments.

> Significance and Impact

Before 2008, Uzbekistan lacked a special legal framework and structured mechanism to identify and assist victims of human trafficking, and the issue was not recognized as a strategic policy priority. Victims faced limited protection and inter-agency co-ordination was not strong. The criminalization of human trafficking and the institutionalization of the NRM between 2007 and 2022 represents a significant policy shift. By embedding anti-trafficking efforts into state policy and national and international legal frameworks, Uzbekistan has demonstrated strong political will to combat human trafficking. The adoption of a National Action Plan on

countering human trafficking and creation of a national crime database led to strengthened data-driven decision-making and law enforcement responses to this phenomenon. Furthermore, the establishment of the National Anti-Trafficking Commission has enhanced inter-agency co-ordination amongst law enforcement and other governmental structures, improved victim referral and protection mechanisms and contributed to the eradication of forced and child labour. These measures have also aligned Uzbekistan's anti-trafficking policies with international human rights standards, ensuring sustainable progress in the fight against human trafficking.

> OSCE contribution

Technical training and Standard Operating Procedures development: The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan trained law enforcement, judiciary and prosecutors on modern recruitment tactics, links between trafficking and related crimes, and gender-sensitive approaches. Collaborating with the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ombudsperson on Child's Rights, the OSCE developed Standard Operating Procedures for handling minors affected by trafficking and internet safety guidelines to prevent and combat online exploitation.

Technical advisory and stakeholder engagement: The Organization provided expertise on human rights due diligence and transparency in supply chains, ensuring Uzbekistan's national action plan on business and human rights are aligned with international frameworks. It facilitated the multi-agency working group, ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach in the development of counter-trafficking policies.

Engagement with private sector and civil society: The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan led discussions with hospitality and tourism sector stakeholders to address vulnerabilities linked to human trafficking. The OSCE also supported small projects from grass root organizations aimed at assisting survivors and vulnerable groups at risk of trafficking and promoted their right to adequate legal protection, access to justice and ensuring effective remedies, including compensation. Thanks to its support, the first anti-trafficking simulation exercise took place; the Organization also participated in the regional simulation-based training on enhancing cross-border co-operation in Central Asia.

Regional and international co-operation: The OSCE worked with the National Anti-Trafficking Commission, UNODC and USAID to enhance cross-border co-operation and policy harmonization. In 2024, OSCE convened a regional forum with state institutions and civil society representatives from Central Asia to share best practices on NRMs and improve their effectiveness in victim protection.

Through these partnerships and efforts, the Project Co-ordinator has significantly contributed to the transformation of Uzbekistan's anti-trafficking legal framework, institutional capacity and operational co-ordination.

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50. Kyrgyzstan's government established the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, a regional hub for higher education in politics, security, economic and human rights studies in Central Asia

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Programme Office in Bishkek Contributing structure: Conflict Prevention Centre
Change types: Capacities, practices, networks, structures	Geographical focus: Central Asia
Social actors: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, academia, students	Dimension: Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2002	Start of change: 2004	Thematic area: Education, good governance
		Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building

Scope and Degree of change: Regional, system change	Contribution types: Standard-setting, technical assistance, advocacy, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In 2002 the OSCE Academy in Bishkek was established through an agreement between the OSCE and the government of Kyrgyzstan to serve as a small, elite institution—regionally inclusive and merit based—to provide post graduate education and training to a new generation of professionals in governance, security and regional cooperation in Central Asia. Its core programmes include:

Masters and Bachelor programmes

- In 2004, the Academy launched its flagship Master of Arts in Politics and Security, an 18-month programme with a focus on issues relevant to Central Asia.
- In 2011, a Master of Arts in Economic Governance and Development was launched. The 18-month programme covers economics, public policy, and development.
- In 2022, a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Economics programme was launched, aiming to enrol 20 students annually. The first cohort will graduate in 2026.
- In 2023, a Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences with specialization in Human Rights and Sustainability Programme was established. It provides a transdisciplinary programme, spanning international law, social sciences, and humanities. A first cohort completed the programme in the spring of 2025.

Professional training, conferences and workshops

Each year the Academy hosts conferences, public lectures, book launches and workshops. It also provides certificate-level trainings for young and mid-career professionals from across Central Asia and beyond on topics including peace and conflict, conflict-sensitive journalism, disinformation and cybersecurity.

Research

The Academy supports research projects on relevant Central Asian issues in the fields of political science, regional studies, sustainable development and human rights and since 2017 has hosted Associate Research Fellows and secured third-party funding for research collaborations.

> Significance and Impact

Before the OSCE Academy was established, Central Asian higher education faced significant challenges related to limited academic freedom, quality of education and a lack of regional co-operation. There were few opportunities for independent research, critical thinking or exposure to international academic standards. The Academy introduced a new model of academically rigorous, ethics-driven and regionally focused higher education. The Academy joined the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions and developed a strong alumni base exceeding 700 graduates, over half of whom are women. According to the Academy's 2024 alumni survey, alumni predominantly reside in Central Asia with 66 per cent working in their home region. Of those remaining in the region, 33 per cent reside in Kyrgyzstan, 13.7 per cent in Tajikistan, 9 per cent in Kazakhstan, 7 per cent in Uzbekistan. and around 1 percent each in Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Mongolia. Thirty-nine per cent work in international organisations, 26 per cent in the private sector, 19 per cent in education and research, 9 per cent in public service, and 7 per cent in NGOs; and 36 per cent of alumni hold

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senior positions such as directors, CEOs, and department heads in government, academia, and international organizations, contributing to policy-making, security reforms, and regional development.

The Academy's graduates and researchers produce applied research used by governmental and intergovernmental bodies to inform decision-making on regional security and governance.

Collaboration has enhanced regional co-operation and conflict prevention, aligning with the OSCE's mission to promote peace and stability in the region.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional framework-building: The OSCE Academy was established in 2002 as a direct initiative of the OSCE and the government of Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE coordinated with the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg and the Centre for OSCE Research to shape the Academy's initial concept, structure, and curriculum. Convening a technical steering committee to guide institutional development prior to the formation of a permanent board of trustees.

Governance and strategic oversight: From the outset, the OSCE has played a pivotal governance role. The Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek chairs the Academy's Board of Trustees, which also includes representatives from the OSCE Chairpersonship and the Conflict Prevention Centre. The Programme Office and OSCE officials on the Board liaise closely with Kyrgyzstan's ministries and have supported diplomatic engagement processes such as institutional re-registration.

Financing and resource mobilization: Since its establishment, the OSCE has financed operations through both Unified Budget (UB) and Extra-Budgetary (ExB) contributions. The OSCE Secretariat coordinates outreach and resource mobilization with participating States, with support from the Programme Office managing financial and administrative operations

Internships and Alumni Network support: Internships are a core pillar of the OSCE's support. Each year Academy students intern with OSCE structures including the Secretariat, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and field operations. The OSCE has also contributed to efforts in fostering the Academy's alumni network, through support to alumni chapters, reunions, and mentoring, the OSCE helps maintain connections among graduates across borders.

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51. Serbian university established first multilingual department, expanding access for Albanian students

Observed change—summary information	Managing structures: Mission to Serbia, High Commissioner on National Minorities
Change type: Capacities, structures	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
Social actors: Serbia's Ministry of Education, University of Novi Sad	**Dimension:** Cross-dimensional
Start of OSCE involvement: 2009 — **Start of change:** 2011	**Thematic area:** Education, national minority issues
	Conflict cycle: Post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, small scale	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, technical assistance, facilitating co-operation, advocacy
	Key external partners: EU Delegation, Municipality of Bujanovac, Albania's National Minority Council

> Outcome description

In October 2011, the Bujanovac department of the Subotica faculty of economics at Novi Sad university was established as the first public higher education institution in Serbia to offer instruction in both Serbian and Albanian. This department, located in Bujanovac, southern Serbia, provides a four-year academic programme in economics, enrolling approximately 90 students per year from both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Serb communities. Between 2011 and 2024, 1,239 students enrolled in BA programmes and 175 in MA programmes (offered since 2017), with 368 graduates at the BA level and 129 at the MA level.

> Significance and Impact

Prior to 2011, no public higher education institution in Serbia provided instruction in Albanian, limiting university access for approximately 60,000–70,000 ethnic Albanians in southern Serbia. This exclusion hindered their representation in public institutions and the labour market, while also contributing to segregated educational experiences between ethnic communities. The department was established in response to longstanding requests from local Albanian leaders, with support from the state and local authorities and aiming to improve bilingual education access, labour market competitiveness and interethnic co-operation. By 2015, a European PROGRES/UNOPS (UN Office for Project Services) survey found that two-thirds of students were interested in learning each other's languages, demonstrating a measurable shift in interethnic engagement. The department has since sustained stable student enrolment and remains a model for multilingual and multi-ethnic higher education in Serbia, fostering interethnic academic collaboration in a historically divided region.

> OSCE contribution

The Bujanovac Department was a joint initiative of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Co-ordination Body for the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa. They worked together towards:

Institutional framework-building and intrastate stakeholder dialogue: The High Commissioner played a pivotal role in securing government and institutional support, facilitating high-level political dialogue among the Serbian government, university leadership and local stakeholders. Efforts started in the early 2000s with a pilot project in Medveđa, and lessons learned from this experience informed a 2010 feasibility study and subsequent negotiations, which laid the groundwork for defining goals and common interests among stakeholders. The High Commissioner also chaired the Stakeholders' Committee from 2013, bringing together key decision-makers, including the Minister of Education, university representatives and the EU Delegation to Serbia, to ensure the sustainability and quality of education at the Department.

Policy advocacy and communication: The OSCE Mission to Serbia lobbied state and local institutions from 2009 to 2011, as well as negotiated agreements with Serbian universities (including the Subotica Faculty of economics) so that this project could be established. The Mission also co-ordinated enrolment campaigns in

collaboration with the Albanian National Minority Council and co-chaired stakeholder committee meetings to oversee implementation.

Equipment allocation: The Mission provided technical and logistical support, including technical equipment. The Co-ordination Body for the Municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa facilitated local political engagement and supported logistical aspects of the Department's establishment.

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52. University of Tirana established the Research Centre for Justice and Transformation and a Master's programme in transitional justice

Observed change—summary information	
Change types: Practices, structures	**Managing structure:** Presence in Albania
Social actors: University of Tirana	**Geographical focus:** South-Eastern Europe
	Dimension: Cross-dimensional

Start of OSCE involvement: 2015	**Start of change:** 2020	**Thematic area:** Education, Youth
		Conflict cycle: Post conflict rehabilitation and peace-building
Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change		**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, advocacy, capacity-building
		Key external partners: N/A

> Outcome description

In November 2020, the University of Tirana launched the Centre for Justice and Transformation, a pioneering research centre focused on transitional justice, human rights and democratization. Located within the University's Faculty of social sciences, the Centre provides an interdisciplinary space where law, history and social sciences converge to enhance research, academic debate and policy engagement on Albania's communist past. Building on this foundation, the University established a Master's Programme in Transitional Justice in 2021—the first of its kind in Albania and unique to the Balkans. The two-year programme equips students with theoretical and practical expertise on justice, reconciliation and historical accountability mechanisms.

> Significance and Impact

Transitional justice remains a critical yet sensitive issue in Albania, a country emerging from a repressive communist regime. The regime's legacy includes thousands of imprisoned, executed or forcibly disappeared people, and a society still grappling with trauma, fragmentation and contested narratives of the past. Despite multiple transitional justice initiatives since 1991, efforts have often been fragmented, politicized, and lacking sustained institutional support.

The Centre for Justice and Transformation and the Master's Programme mark a significant step toward integrating a holistic, victim-centred approach into academic research and national policy discussions. By training scholars and future practitioners, these programmes ensure that transitional justice remains central to Albania's legal, historical and political discourse. Students benefit from a rigorous curriculum that includes internships and research collaborations with key institutions, such as the State Authority on Information of Former State Security Files, the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes, and the Institute for Democracy, Media, and Culture. Through these partnerships, students gain hands-on professional experience in researching, analysing and documenting transitional justice issues. Their work contributes directly to national and global discussions on historical accountability and justice. Since its inception, 26 graduates have completed the programme.

> OSCE contribution

The OSCE Presence in Albania has played a distinctive role in advancing transitional justice, widely regarded as a neutral, consistent and trusted partner in an otherwise politically sensitive and fragmented space. Its long-standing engagement has bridged gaps between state institutions, academia, civil society and survivors, often providing platforms and support that would otherwise be absent. The Presence's contributions to the Centre for Justice and Transformation and the Master's Programme in Transitional Justice reflect this convening power and sustained commitment. Specific contributions include:

Curriculum development and faculty training: The Presence offered international expertise for the drafting of the programme's curricula and facilitated consultations with national and international institutions, aligning the programme with global standards in transitional justice education. The Presence organized a one-month intensive training for university faculty with four international experts to ensure a high-quality academic foundation.

Financial support, scholarships and accreditation: The Presence secured funding from the German and Swiss governments, ensuring the programme's long-term sustainability. The Presence additionally assisted with accreditation with the Ministry of Education and institutional integration, solidifying the Master's Programme as a permanent academic offering.

Public outreach and communication: The Presence provided ongoing support for the establishment of the Centre for Justice and Transformation as a sustainable research hub, fostering academic inquiry and policy discussions. Through support for research on transitional justice, the Presence also helped elevate Albania's role in regional and global transitional justice debates.

53. OSCE participating States strengthened cyber co-operation

Observed change—summary information	Managing structure: Transnational Threats Department
Change type: Networks, practices	Geographical focus: OSCE-wide reach
Social actors: 56 participating States	Dimension: Politico-military
Start of OSCE involvement: 2012 / Start of change: 2012	Thematic area: Cyber/ICT Security
	Conflict cycle: Conflict prevention
Scope and Degree of change: OSCE-wide reach, scaled change	Contribution types: Capacity-building, facilitating co-operation
	Key external partners: UN Global Cyber Points of Contact Directory

> Outcome description

Since 2012, OSCE participating States significantly increased their engagement in implementing cyber Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), particularly the CBM 8 Points of Contact (PoC) Network. This network evolved from a static name repository into an active and operational community of cyber diplomats, policymakers and technical experts. To date, 56 out of 57 participating States have designated a national PoC, a substantial increase from 61 per cent in 2015, demonstrating a broad commitment to international cyber co-operation. Furthermore, participating States leveraged their experiences from the OSCE's PoC Network to inform and shape the development of the UN's Global Cyber PoC Directory, expanding structured cyber diplomacy efforts to a global scale.

> Significance and Impact

Cyber CBMs serve as essential mechanisms to prevent cyber-related conflicts by establishing direct communication channels between states, reducing misperceptions and enabling co-ordinated responses to cyber incidents. The transformation of the CBM 8 PoC Network into an engaged expert community represents a critical advancement in international cybersecurity co-operation. By facilitating real-time information exchange and collaboration, the network has strengthened collective resilience, enhanced trust between states, and contributed to the safeguarding of critical infrastructure.

The CBM 8 PoC network is the most widely implemented CBM in the OSCE region, with 56 participating States actively maintaining contact points. Through regular communication checks and joint exercises, the network ensures that OSCE participating States are prepared for rapid crisis response and co-ordinated action in the event of cyber incidents. This proactive approach has further positioned the OSCE as a leader in cyber diplomacy, influencing global efforts—including the establishment of the UN's Global Cyber PoC Directory, which enhances international co-operation and enables swift cyber threat mitigation.

> OSCE contribution

Institutional support and capacity-building: Since 2016, the OSCE has operationalized the CBM 8 PoC Network, offering capacity-building through online expert sessions and study visits to equip national PoCs with cyber diplomacy skills.

Communication and crisis preparedness facilitation: The OSCE conducts regular communication checks, updating PoC contact details and ensuring functionality during crises. These exercises simulate cyber incidents, testing responsiveness and strengthening co-ordination between States.

Multilateral and bilateral co-operation: The Organization hosts annual CBM 8 PoC meetings in Vienna, fostering discussions, best practice exchanges and diplomatic trust. It also facilitates bilateral and multilateral study visits to enhance engagement between States with limited prior collaboration.

Global influence and policy leadership: Collaborative work between regional organizations and UN bodies is facilitated by the OSCE to share best practices and directly shape the Global Cyber PoC Directory.

54. Kyrgyzstan's government institutionalized crime prevention education and reinforced youth participation in policymaking

Observed change—summary information	**Managing structures:** Transnational Threats Department, Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities **Contributing structures:** Programme Office in Bishkek
Change types: Norms, practices	**Geographical focus**: Central Asia
Social actors: Ministry of Education and Science	**Dimensions:** Cross-dimensional, economic and environmental, politico-military
Start of OSCE involvement: 2022 **Start of change:** 2024	**Thematic area:** Youth, education, good governance, policing
	Conflict cycle: Early warning
Scope and Degree of change: National, scaled change	**Contribution types:** Standard-setting, capacity-building, advocacy
	Key external partners: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

> Outcome description

During the 2023/2024 academic year, Kyrgyzstan formally integrated the *Crime Prevention and Culture of Lawfulness* curriculum into its national education system, reaching over 800,000 students. This marked a shift in government policy towards embedding crime prevention education as a core component of youth development. Additionally, the government supported the expansion of public awareness efforts through the #KolubuzdanKelet ('We can do it!') campaign, which reached 1.5 million young people.

> Significance and Impact

Before this change, Kyrgyzstan lacked a systematic, nationwide approach to educating youth on crime prevention, corruption and drug use. Young people are one of the most vulnerable groups to these threats, with socio-economic pressures—exacerbated by the pandemic—making them more susceptible to recruitment by criminal networks, corruption risks and substance abuse. Globally, the number of young people is at an all-time high (1.8 billion), increasing the urgency of prevention efforts.

By integrating crime prevention education into the national curriculum and launching a targeted awareness campaign, Kyrgyzstan has taken a proactive, long-term approach to building societal resilience. The initiative aligns with broader OSCE efforts to foster a culture of lawfulness, equipping youth with the values and knowledge necessary to reduce their vulnerabilities—whether as potential victims or offenders. This institutional change reflects the government's commitment to early intervention as a cost-effective and sustainable crime prevention strategy.

> OSCE contribution

Since 2021, the OSCE has supported Kyrgyzstan's government in strengthening crime prevention under a Memorandum of Understanding (April 2022) to assist authorities in implementing their national commitments, specifically the Youth State Policy and the State Anti-Corruption and Drug Control Strategies, which emphasize youth education and awareness on rule of law and integrity. The OSCE contributed to:

Curriculum development: In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science and UNODC, the OSCE provided technical and policy support to develop and implement the curriculum, ensuring alignment with international best practices.

Social media campaigns targeting youth: The Organization also launched the #KolubuzdanKelet campaign, enlisting influencers, activists and athletes to reinforce key messages on legal awareness.

Youth participation in policy-making: In 2023, the OSCE held a regional Youth Dialogue Forum in Central Asia, giving youth a platform to contribute to security and rule-of-law discussions. Interactive discussions resulted in concrete policy recommendations and initiatives presented to OSCE participating States and the broader international community to strengthen youth crime prevention efforts across Central Asia.