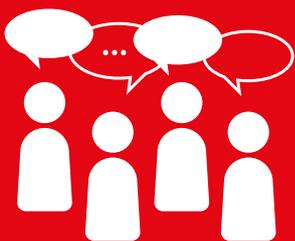


# PART II

## Supporting civil society to strengthen democracy and guarantee human rights and security

The engagement of citizens in public life is vital for any pluralistic democracy to function and to provide long-term social cohesion and security. A vibrant civil society is therefore essential to ensure that democratic principles as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected across the OSCE region. ODIHR builds bridges between national authorities and civil society organizations, fostering constructive dialogue and meaningful engagement to make sure that policymaking is inclusive and that every voice is heard.

The impact stories in this section highlight ODIHR's activities to support a wide range of civil society and security sector actors, from human rights defenders and survivors of human trafficking to law enforcement and prison staff, helping to prevent and address human rights violations, reinforce democratic resilience, and build safe and inclusive societies.



## 2.1

# Diaspora organizations at the heart of Ukraine's post-war recovery



**U**krainian civil society organizations — particularly those led by women — have demonstrated remarkable resilience, flexibility and grassroots leadership ever since the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Across Europe, women-led diaspora organizations have become vital to the humanitarian response as well as to shaping Ukraine's inclusive and democratic recovery. They support displaced communities, maintain close links with civil society efforts in Ukraine and promote human rights and inclusion by involving refugees, including ethnic minorities, LGBTI communities and people with disabilities. Despite their contributions, many of these organizations face mounting challenges, including declining funding, institutional barriers, and limited access to decision-making spaces.

In response, ODIHR supported women-led diaspora organizations through a workshop held in partnership with the Ukrainian House in Warsaw. The workshop brought together Ukrainian women leaders from civil society working in Czechia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, and focused on strengthening their skills in advocacy and inclusive policymaking. Participants addressed structural and psychological challenges, and shared strategies for navigating institutional systems and building stronger support networks to reinforce long-term cooperation and resilience. Feedback showed a positive impact, with 70 per cent of participants planning to adjust their work to use their new knowledge.

The workshop helped to strengthen the role and visibility of women-led diaspora organizations as key actors in Ukraine's recovery. It also encouraged new collaboration between established diaspora organizations, refugee-led

groups and host-country civil society. In addition, discussions highlighted the need for more flexible, long-term funding, greater recognition of diaspora organizations as partners in decision-making, and concrete responses to the structural and psychological pressures faced by frontline leaders. The cross-border, multi-stakeholder network created during the workshop has already led to follow-up activities and ongoing engagement with diaspora communities.

Recognizing the wider regional security implications, this initiative reflects ODIHR's continued commitment to supporting Ukraine. It forms part of ODIHR's programme Supporting the Human Dimension of Security in Ukraine in Times of Crisis (2023-2027), and builds on earlier work, including the 2023 expert report on diaspora engagement and the 2024 joint training course for the Ukrainian diaspora delivered with Warwick University.



Workshop on strengthening the role of women-led diaspora organizations in advancing inclusive reconstruction in Ukraine, Warsaw, Poland, 29–30 May 2025



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**OKSANA DAVYDENKO**  
Head, Skrynina Korysnych Sprav NGO,  
Ukraine

*My organization is constantly looking for different ways to protect and promote women’s rights, and, at the moment, we are trying to motivate more women to get involved in politics. That would be better not only for them, but for the whole society. The event at ODIHR showed me how much I still have to learn. I won’t keep that new knowledge to myself though; I will pass it on to ensure it can help as many people as possible.”*



“

**LUSIENA ZINOVKINA**  
International Affairs Officer, Civilians in  
Captivity, Germany

*The organization I work for is small, but we are working hard to raise awareness about the issue of imprisoned Ukrainian civilians. People just don’t know this problem exists. We invite people, members of the public, to write letters and postcards to the prisoners, so they know they haven’t been forgotten. ODIHR’s workshop was very important to me. It has brought me new contacts, but, above all, it has given me hope, strength and inspiration to continue my work.”*



“

**KATERYNA PAVLOVA**  
ODIHR trainer and Chief Operating  
Officer at Crisis Simulation for Peace  
(CRISP), Germany

*For Ukraine to keep protecting democracy it is absolutely crucial to support its activists with networking and training. Thank you, ODIHR, for seeing and responding to this need!”*



OSCE / Ignacio Galicia Martinez, Lola Girard

Workshop on strengthening the role of women-led diaspora organizations in advancing inclusive reconstruction in Ukraine, Warsaw, Poland, 29–30 May 2025

## 2.2

# Increasing trust in our democracies by strengthening the right to freedom of peaceful assembly

Over the last 15 years, ODIHR has monitored close to 150 peaceful assemblies in 36 OSCE participating States, helping them meet their human dimension commitments and ensure greater respect for the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, a core right that underpins all democratic societies. The effective facilitation of peaceful assemblies plays an important role in maintaining public order, reducing the risk of escalation and ensuring the safety and security of all involved. The findings from these visits, which include challenges, examples of positive practice and recommendations, have been published in six reports.

Recognizing the need for continuous dialogue at the national level between all stakeholders, in 2025 ODIHR

trained staff from the ombuds offices of Slovakia and Georgia on the use of ODIHR's longstanding assembly monitoring methodology. The training was designed to build the skills of national monitors (from civil society and/or national human rights institutions) to observe peaceful assemblies independently, use the collected data for advocacy purposes and ensure stronger accountability of law enforcement.

Accountability, openness and dialogue between state authorities and civil society organizations are key to ensuring that all people can freely exercise the right to peaceful assembly, and ODIHR's work in the area of assembly monitoring and capacity building responds to the growing understanding of

their important role in ensuring respect for this fundamental right. ODIHR's workshops on assembly monitoring improve knowledge of how assemblies should be facilitated by state authorities and how their observation can help law enforcement, municipal authorities and other relevant stakeholders to meet their obligations and increase the safety of individuals and the security of us all.



### A PARTICIPANT IN THE TRAINING COURSE IN SLOVAKIA

*It was a real pleasure to take part in the training, which we found not only inspiring but also very useful for our future work. We truly appreciated the opportunity to join and to learn from your extensive expertise. The interactive and hands-on approach allowed us to try things out in a way that made the experience even more meaningful. Even today, we heard only positive feedback in the corridors. Your visit clearly left a strong and motivating impression on us all."*



Training on independent monitoring of freedom of peaceful assembly for staff of the Public Defender of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia, 22–23 July 2025

In 2025, ODIHR conducted assembly monitoring visits to Kyrgyzstan and Slovakia. In Kyrgyzstan, ODIHR observed a protest against violence against women, held on the occasion of International Women’s Day in Bishkek. In Bratislava, the team monitored an assembly held in support of democracy in Slovakia. During these visits, ODIHR met local authorities, including law enforcement officials and municipalities, to discuss how peaceful assemblies are facilitated. ODIHR also engaged with local civil society organizations, assembly organizers and NHRIs to hear their views on cooperation with

the local authorities and overall respect for freedom of peaceful assembly in the country.

The findings will be included in the forthcoming 7th peaceful assembly monitoring cycle report, which will include recommendations to state authorities on identified shortcomings.

**This work supports participating States in balancing public order considerations with fundamental freedoms in a way that strengthens democratic security.**



A protest against violence against women, held on the occasion of International Women’s Day, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 8 March 2025

## 2.3

# Advancing human rights in counter-terrorism investigations to increase security for all

**R**espect for human rights is integral to all police operations and is critical to successful counter-terrorism investigations. In response to evolving terrorist threats and broader security risks, effective counter-terrorism action requires approaches that are both operationally sound and fully compliant with human rights. To ensure policing is effective both in the short and long term, it is vital to pay consistent attention to the rights and security needs of everyone in the society a police officer serves.

For all those working on counter-terrorism, the failure to protect human rights can itself become grounds for further terrorism. Such failures not only harm individuals, but also undermine trust in institutions and can exacerbate security risks. Respecting the human rights of everyone involved — victims, witnesses, terrorism suspects and police officers — is

crucial to ensuring that innocent people are not wrongly suspected and harmed, and that perpetrators are treated fairly, and prosecuted and convicted appropriately. To successfully address the security threats caused by terrorism, compliance with human rights principles is therefore imperative..

ODIHR is mandated to provide technical assistance and advice on ensuring counter-terrorism measures are implemented in line with international human rights obligations. At the request of participating States, ODIHR also conducts training in this area for law enforcement officials. Over the course of two decades, ODIHR has delivered over 60 training courses for security sector actors in the OSCE region, training some 1200 officials across Western and South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia to make their work more effective and our societies safer.

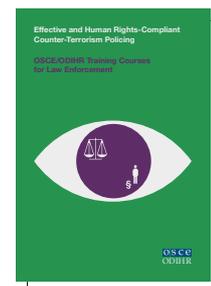


**AMBASSADOR GERARD MCGURK**  
Head of OMIK

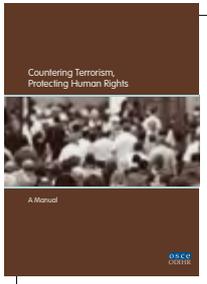
***In the face of terrorism, institutions have the undeniable responsibility to ensure the safety and security of their people. This task requires decisive, timely and effective measures, and such measures must remain firmly rooted in the rule of law, uphold accountability and respect the inherent dignity of every individual.”***



Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Investigations: Advanced training for law enforcement, Pristina, Kosovo, 3 June 2025



ODIHR training curricula are based on two ODIHR publications:



**Countering Terrorism, Protecting Human Rights: A Manual** helps familiarize senior policymaker and security sector actors with the human rights standards anchored in international law that are relevant to combating terrorism and violent extremism. It forms the basis for ODIHR’s foundational training on The Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism Effectively.



**Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Investigations, A Practical Manual for Law Enforcement Officers**, a joint publication by ODIHR and the OSCE Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit (TNTD/SPMU), examines the human rights issues that may arise at different stages of a counter-terrorism investigation as well as the ways in which protection of human rights can increase its effectiveness. It forms the basis for ODIHR’s advanced training on Human Rights in Counter-terrorism Investigations.



Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Investigations: Advanced training for law enforcement, Brussels, Belgium, 19 November 2025



Strengthening human rights compliance of counter-terrorism measures, Warsaw, Poland, 9 October 2025

In 2025, ODIHR was requested to run its advanced course on human rights in counter-terrorism investigations for 15 security sector representatives in Belgium and, jointly with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), for 14 security sector representatives in Kosovo.\* Participants included middle- and senior-level law enforcement officials working on counterterrorism, specialised prosecutors, national crisis management agencies and military intelligence services. Both courses were requested as follow-ups to ODIHR’s standard training on protecting human rights while countering terrorism effectively, that were delivered in 2024.

The highly interactive courses were led by a team of human rights and counter-terrorism policing experts. Participants

learned about the human rights risks surrounding intelligence and information gathering and analysis, special investigation techniques, arrest and detention, searches, and interviewing techniques. Bringing together authorities from different backgrounds, who often have limited opportunities for direct exchanges, also facilitated sharing of experiences and good practices for tackling the human rights challenges that arise in their work.

Participants praised the training for providing practical guidance on how to incorporate human rights considerations systematically into decision-making processes. They also highlighted their improved knowledge and skills, as well their own, greater commitment to protect human rights standards in their counter-terrorism investigations.

\* There is no consensus among OSCE participating States on the status of Kosovo and, as such, the Organization does not have a position on this issue. 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.

**Through this work, ODIHR supports participating States in addressing security threats in a manner that strengthens institutional legitimacy and public confidence.**

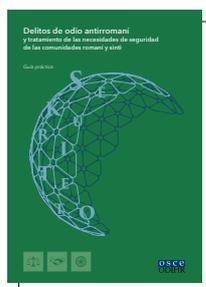
## 2.4

# Addressing the security needs of Roma communities

**V**iolence and threats against Roma and Sinti continue to pose serious risks to the safety and security of these communities, creating a sense of fear and social exclusion. Hate crimes, often following recognizable patterns, not only isolate and alienate Roma and Sinti communities and hinder their economic, social and political progress, but undermine social cohesion and increase the risk of wider societal tensions and violence.

In response to a request from the Spanish authorities, ODIHR translated its guide *Understanding Anti-Roma Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Roma and Sinti Communities* into Spanish. The publication was launched in Madrid together with the Spanish Ministry of Interior's National Office for Combating Hate Crimes and took place during the Spanish Government's 2025 Year of the Roma People that marked the 600th anniversary of the Roma community's arrival on the Iberian Peninsula. This support contributes to community-focused security approaches that build trust and help prevent escalation.

The launch event brought together representatives of national security sector institutions and civil society to discuss challenges and best practices in identifying, investigating and responding to anti-Roma hate crimes in Spain. Discussions addressed the barriers to reporting hate-motivated incidents and explored strategies for recognizing, recording and prosecuting incidents with a bias motivation.



ODIHR presented the guide's nine practical steps for authorities to better address anti-Roma bias and meet the security needs of Roma and Sinti communities. The guide gives practical guidance for police, prosecutors and other authorities on building trust with Roma and Sinti communities, improving communication, ensuring respectful and bias-free interactions, and engaging with community representatives and support services for conflict prevention. It aims to strengthen the capacity of criminal justice institutions to deliver more effective hate-crime responses, victim-centred protection and community-focused security measures.

Participants highlighted the relevance of the publication for shaping future policies to combat intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes against Roma and Sinti. Partner institutions reaffirmed their commitment to distribute the guide to all regional prosecutors, integrate its content into law enforcement training and make the publication available through institutional websites.



**PILAR MUNIESA TOMÁS** responsible for the Statistical and Victim Attention System of the Directorate General for Coordination and Studies, Secretariat of State for Security, Ministry of Interior of Spain

***Working with ODIHR on this initiative showed the value of shared expertise. This event also underlined Spain's commitment to combating hate crimes and anti-Roma racism, thus strengthening democratic resilience. By making the Roma Security Guide accessible in Spanish, we have equipped our institutions and security forces with the tools to respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of Roma communities.***



**ISMAEL CORTÉS GÓMEZ**

scholar and policy analyst, former member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain

*The launch of the Roma Security Guide in Madrid, as we marked 600 years since the arrival of Roma people in Spain, was both symbolic and timely. Bringing together experts, Roma leaders and law enforcement is essential to tackling under-reported 'anti-gypsyism', improving the real security of Roma communities in times of misinformation and building trust in the mechanisms designed to protect them."*



Addressing the security needs of Roma communities in Spain, Madrid, Spain, 15 September 2025

## 2.5

# Amplifying the work of civil society and victim communities to improve the response to hate crime

**T**argeted simply because of who they are, hate crime victims experience trauma that can force them to conceal their identity and avoid situations that may expose them to further violence. At the same time, the impact of hate crimes quickly spreads through communities, leading to greater fear and insecurity and risking wider conflict between communities.

To restore victims' sense of agency and strengthen social cohesion, ODIHR works closely with civil society, community representatives and criminal justice practitioners to respond to victims' specific needs while facilitating their active engagement in hate crime responses. By amplifying the voices of civil society and victims, ODIHR helps participating States ensure the meaningful and inclusive participation of hate crime victims and their communities.

In 2025, ODIHR developed *Implementing Restorative Justice*

*for Hate Incidents and Hate Crimes*, an innovative new resource aimed at restorative justice practitioners navigating the complexities of incidents motivated by bias. Through guided dialogue and accountability, restorative justice can provide both victims and offenders with the opportunity to repair the harm done and, at the same time, improve relations between different communities. Civil society and community organizations play a vital role in these processes, and ODIHR's guide explores the ways in which they can support successful restorative justice outcomes.

While restorative justice can enable meaningful recovery for victims and communities affected by hate crime, it is not intended to replace formal justice system proceedings or victim support. Therefore, in 2025 ODIHR continued to strengthen the capacity of police and civil society to coordinate and communicate on facilitating effective referrals for hate crime victims.



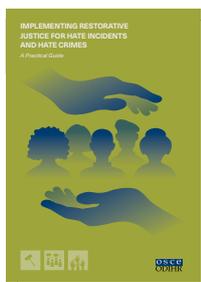
**DANUTĖ JAKUBKIENĖ**

Head of the 1st Activities Division of the Šiauliai City and District Police Commissariat, Lithuania

*The people who come to me when I'm on duty are under stress and they are unable to express themselves well. This event provided a safe and informal space where hate crime victims can be more forthcoming, making it easier for me to understand their struggles. After this event, I want to be more empathetic towards victims. I may not be able to understand them, but I can support them better."*

### **Restorative justice: Empowering victims and strengthening community cohesion**

Developed as part of the STARS initiative, this publication provides a ten-step guide to applying restorative justice approaches to hate crime cases. By bringing victims, offenders and specialized facilitators together in meetings grounded in dialogue and accountability, restorative justice can be a powerful tool for achieving recognition of the harm done while restoring agency to victims and affected communities and improving social cohesion overall.





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**TERESA BURGUESA**  
Lithuanian Gay League

*The ‘Human Library’ activity was the best part of the event for me. I felt heard, and it was important for me to be able to share my hate crime experience with the police in an informal and safe setting.”*

At two joint training events, police and civil society actors in Romania and Lithuania developed strategies to overcome barriers to their cooperation, ensuring that victims receive support and protection tailored to their specific needs. During ‘Human Library’ sessions, participants learned from the lived experiences of victimized groups, as well as the perspectives of frontline responders, putting into practice the recommendations set out in ODIHR’s 2024 guide on *Including the voices of hate crime victims in policymaking and policy implementation*.

ODIHR also continued to strengthen its engagement with civil society and community representatives through its annual Hate Crime Report, delivering webinars on monitoring hate incidents and analysing civil society-monitored hate incidents.

**By strengthening responses to hate crime, ODIHR contributes to safer, more cohesive societies and to stability across the OSCE region.**



Augustas Didzgalvis



Augustas Didzgalvis



OSCE/Eceaur Uyanik

Joint training event on supporting hate crime victims, Vilnius, Lithuania, 11 December 2025

### ODIHR Hate Crime Report

ODIHR’s latest annual Hate Crime Report contained 12,714 hate incidents reported by civil society, including 5,370 descriptive summaries. All these incidents can be browsed and filtered by bias motivation, type of incident and country. By sharing each victim’s story, ODIHR helps to demonstrate the impact of hate crimes as well as identify key contexts and reporting trends. These qualitative insights are available on each of the site’s 57 country pages.



## 2.6

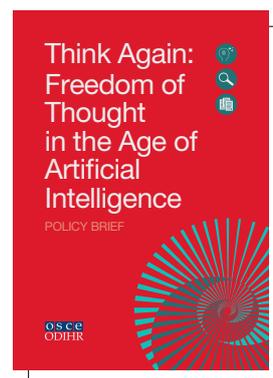
# Freedom of thought and artificial intelligence

**F**reedom of thought is linked to human dignity and autonomy. It underpins many other human rights and is one of the few human rights that is absolute and cannot be suspended for any reason. In an increasingly complex information and security environment, safeguarding mental autonomy is essential to democratic resilience and social stability.

However, while this right has long been considered inherently protected, ODIHR's policy brief *Think again: freedom of thought in the age of artificial intelligence* examines how the new information ecosystem and AI-based neurotechnologies are affecting individual mental

autonomy. The brief also outlines recommendations for states to consider in upholding freedom of thought in the digital age. It concludes that innovation failing to consider and protect human rights from the outset will undermine the goals that should guide all ethical, scientific and technological progress, namely to benefit humankind. At the end of 2025, ODIHR organized a workshop to examine the impact of AI on this and other human rights.

**ODIHR's work in this area supports participating States in addressing emerging technological risks while protecting the foundations of secure and democratic societies.**



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