

New policies needed to combat trafficking in the internet era, according to OSCE study

VIENNA, 15 February 2022 – Trafficking in human beings has dramatically changed since it was first recognized as a crime 20 years ago. Today technology is a centerpiece of the human trafficking business model and 75% of sex trafficking victims are advertised online. However, legislation addressing trafficking has not kept pace. Addressing this gap is at the heart of a new study [a new OSCE study](#) on policy responses to technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings, which was presented at a virtual launch event held today.

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid stated at the opening of the event that “the success of States’ efforts to eradicate human trafficking will largely depend on how prepared they are to tackle technology-facilitated trafficking. The OSCE today shows it has unique expertise to offer on the policies needed to effectively do that.”

Technology is misused in a variety of ways, including to groom and recruit children and vulnerable adults, luring them into exploitative situations, and to exercise power and coercion over victims, controlling or blackmailing them into compliance. The misuse of technology is also a massive facilitator of sexual exploitation through advertising trafficking victims for sexual services, sharing depictions of exploited adults and children, live streaming and forced pornography.

Some companies have developed measures or tools to respond to this problem on their platforms, but overall self-regulation has resulted in fragmented and inadequate adoption of safety measures, inconsistent and slow reporting to authorities, lack of redress for victims and impunity for traffickers.

In short, self-regulation is not working and the explosion of technology-facilitated trafficking requires strong policy and legislative action by governments.

“The current system is broken and not up to the task”, said the OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking Val Richey. “States need to adopt new laws and policies to ensure Internet becomes a safe space and not a safe haven for traffickers and perpetrators.”

The new OSCE study offers policy recommendations to establish strong prevention measures, promote harmonized approaches, and encourage tech industry compliance. The recommendations also include mandating websites to verify the age of people depicted in explicit material, to have a clear “content removal” request button, and to conduct due diligence and proactive monitoring to identify risks on their platforms.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit: <https://www.osce.org/cthb/512281>