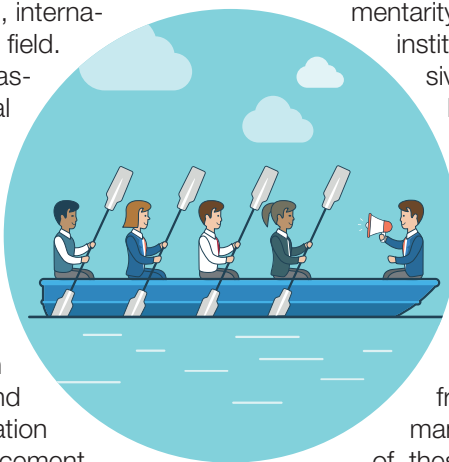


# National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator: A leading role in State's anti-trafficking response

## Issue Brief

Numerous international instruments, including OSCE commitments, emphasize the importance of co-ordination to a country's ability to effectively combat human trafficking. The OSCE Declaration on Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) adopted in Porto (2002)<sup>1</sup> underscored "the need for national strategies in order to unite efforts directed towards combatting trafficking in human beings and to enhance co-ordination among national, international and regional organizations in this field.

This need could be met through measures such as appointing inter-ministerial bodies and national co-ordinators or, as appropriate, other relevant bodies or mechanisms." Furthermore, MC Decision No.14/06<sup>2</sup> urged participating States to appoint National Co-ordinators in order to "promote a comprehensive approach to combating all forms of trafficking in human beings through national, regional and international arrangements, co-operation and co-ordination between law enforcement personnel, labour inspectorates, social protection units, medical institutions, immigration and border service officials, civil society organizations, victim support services, and the business community and any other relevant actors, also including a gender-sensitive approach". Finally, the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>3</sup> recommended "[e]nlarging, where appropriate, multi-disciplinary partnership in the framework of NRMs, such as national co-ordinator/co-ordination mechanisms or other national structures, to facilitate dialogue and co-operation between public authorities, NGOs, trade unions and other relevant institutions".



A National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator is a critical element to ensure the effective development and implementation of a State's policies and measures to combat human trafficking. Together with the multi-agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (task force) and the National Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur they serve as three main pillars of the anti-trafficking architecture, which are designed to bring complementarity and ensure that national anti-trafficking

institutional frameworks are comprehensive, inclusive, transparent, and efficient<sup>4</sup>. By establishing these three mechanisms and providing the necessary means to implement their distinct but related mandates, States can optimize and sustain their anti-trafficking responses.

To date, OSCE participating States have developed their national anti-trafficking frameworks in a variety of manners. While many involve a combination of at least some of these mechanisms, uniform understanding and approaches are yet to be developed. Even States that do purport to have all three mechanisms have sometimes intertwined or merged mandates in a way that can be confusing and counterproductive. Furthermore, the diversity of national approaches makes regional co-operation challenging. In line with its mandate<sup>5</sup>, and based on the promising practices from the OSCE region, the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has developed this issue brief to assist participating States in advancing the role of a National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator and streamlining regional approaches.

1. <https://www.osce.org/mc/40521>

2. <https://www.osce.org/mc/23048>

3. <https://www.osce.org/addendum>

4. <https://cthb.osce.org/cthb/503920>

5. <https://www.osce.org/mc/22762>

# Key Elements to Consider

Effective national co-ordination is vital to combat trafficking in human beings. It ensures that the diverse set of stakeholders working to combat this crime, both inside and outside of government, are doing so in a way that is comprehensive, inclusive, and effective. A unified approach enables the development of coherent national strategies, the formation of strong multi-disciplinary teams, and the implementation of policies that reflect the complexity of trafficking. Moreover, such co-ordination can strengthen necessary dialogue and collaboration between entities working on related issues, such as anti-discrimination and human rights, which can in turn lead to the enhancement of anti-trafficking efforts. A National Co-ordinator serves as the central authority responsible for directing, aligning, and monitoring a State's efforts to combat human trafficking; and there are certain key features that can improve the efficacy of this role.

## High-Level Position within the National Government

The incumbent serving in the position of the National Co-ordinator should have a high-level position within the national government structure to ensure authority, cross-sectoral influence, and sustained political commitment necessary to fulfil the mandate.<sup>6</sup> Such placement will allow the National Co-ordinator to be best suited to convene and lead a unified response to combat all forms of human trafficking, collaborate with various ministries and agencies responsible for specific anti-trafficking efforts, engage directly with decision-makers, advocate for continued funding and action, represent the country at bilateral and multi-lateral fora, and keep a high public and political profile of combating THB at the national and international levels.

## Leads Multi-Agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (Task Force) and Established Separately from the National Rapporteur

As noted above, delineation between the mechanisms of National Co-ordinator, National Rapporteur, and a multi-agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (task force) is critical. Each role has its own functions and mandates, and States should ensure that they remain distinct to maximize effectiveness. The National Co-ordinator should provide leadership for the co-ordination of a country's anti-trafficking efforts and activities, and to foster positive collaboration in the pursuing and achieving of a participating State's anti-trafficking objectives domestically and internationally. One of the most efficient ways to safeguard such co-ordination and collaboration at the national level is to appoint a National Co-ordinator to lead the multi-agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (task force). This set-up will enhance the national strategic and operational framework, enabling joint development of the anti-trafficking policies (for example, National Action Plans and Standard Operating Procedures), design and implementation of coherent and result-oriented prevention, protection, and prosecution measures, systematic engagement

with a broad spectrum of national and local stakeholders, including civil society, as well as periodic monitoring and evaluation of the work to adjust it as needed. Conversely, a National Rapporteur should remain independent of the national government in order to transparently conduct its mandate of situation and responses' analysis and evaluation. By leveraging the strengths of each of these mechanisms, countries can build a robust and sustainable anti-trafficking framework, existing within an effective and transparent system of checks and balances.

## Has a Comprehensive Mandate to Address All Forms of Human Trafficking

A National Co-ordinator should ensure the country's comprehensive approach to combating all forms of human trafficking. Limiting National Co-ordinator's mandate to a specific form of trafficking or splitting it between several mandate-holders with each of them addressing explicit form(s) of exploitation poses a significant risk of overlooking emerging forms of THB and undermines the efficiency and consistency of national anti-trafficking responses. While the diversity of human trafficking forms and manifestations often requires tailored approaches, such approaches should be developed and implemented in a co-ordinated manner by leveraging a comprehensive mandate of a National Co-ordinator.

## Placed Outside of the Criminal Justice System

While States have the authority to determine where the National Co-ordinator position is located within their larger national government framework, it is preferable that the position is established outside of the criminal justice system. Doing so will help ensure a more balanced, rights-based, and cross-sectoral approach to the State's national anti-trafficking response. Placement within the government structures with broad policy mandates is ideal.

## Engagement with Civil Society and Survivor Leaders

National Co-ordinators' primary responsibility is to co-ordinate the government's national anti-trafficking response. However, doing so effectively is only possible if the National Co-ordinator ensures close co-ordination between the government and civil society<sup>7</sup>, including survivor leaders<sup>8</sup>. Civil society organizations and lived experience experts play a critical role in enhancing stakeholders' understanding of human trafficking and its emerging trends, fostering identification of victims and improving assistance to them, and in holding governments accountable. Their insights are critical to the development of sound national policy and action. While the co-operation of States with civil society and survivor leaders can take multiple forms and display various degrees of formalization, fostering their participation in policy-making processes led by the National Co-ordinator, for example devising National Action Plans, will make anti-trafficking policies and measures more responsive to the realities of trafficking.

6. OSCE Summary Report: Meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms (12-13 September 2024): "... participants stressed the importance of elevating the position of a National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator to ensure its unifying and decision-making authority..."

See also: National leadership structures are critical parts of an effective anti-trafficking strategy, say participants at annual anti-trafficking meeting (Press Release, 6 June 2023): "NACs and NARs are critical parts of an effective national anti-trafficking strategy, preferably placed in a high-level position in government and in independent human rights bodies, to better leverage, direct, and harmonize the different instruments of the anti-trafficking efforts and maximize their impact".

7. <https://cthb.osce.org/secretariat/405197>

8. <https://odhr.osce.org/odhr/573983>

# Three Anti-Trafficking Mechanisms

The following chart highlights the differences between each integral mechanisms of National Co-ordinator, National Rapporteur, and multi-agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (task force):

	National Co-ordinator	Multi-Agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (Task Force)	National Rapporteur
<b>Primary Function</b>	Provide strategic leadership and ensure coherent and comprehensive national response.	Facilitate collaboration across the government and between the government, civil society, and survivor leaders.	Provide independent oversight, evaluation, and accountability.
<b>Core Mandate and Scope of Work</b>	<p>Co-ordinate the anti-trafficking activities of State institutions, in partnership with civil society and survivor leaders.</p> <p>Facilitate and lead the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national strategies, policies (including National Action Plans), and measures.</p> <p>Ensure a comprehensive approach to combating all forms of human trafficking.</p> <p>Facilitate public reporting on results of anti-trafficking actions.</p> <p>Ensure anti-trafficking efforts continue to receive adequate resources and funding.</p>	<p>Convene relevant government ministries on a regular basis to co-ordinate anti-trafficking efforts, plan future action, and exchange information.</p> <p>Develop and oversee the implementation of national strategies, policies (including National Action Plans), and measures.</p> <p>Engage civil society and survivor leaders/lived experience experts in the formulation and implementation of anti-trafficking responses.</p> <p>Serve as a platform for co-ordinating activities with the private sector and other actors.</p> <p>Provide guidance and support to and oversee the work by thematic working groups (for example, on prevention of trafficking in supply chains); mechanisms (for example, National Referral Mechanism); and local commissions (task forces).</p>	<p>Produce, analyze, utilize, and report on data needed to improved anti-trafficking efforts.</p> <p>Improve understanding about the nature of the problem within States, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of government policies and actions against trafficking and in support of its victims, and present actionable recommendations for improving policies and practices addressing all forms of trafficking.<sup>9</sup></p>
<b>Placement in Relation to Existing Government Structures</b>	Executive role, placed at a high-level of government.	Collaborative body, chaired by the National Co-ordinator, involving representatives from all relevant government ministries, with opportunity to collaborate with civil society and survivor leaders/lived experience experts.	Independent role, placed outside executive structures (government).

9. <https://cthb.osce.org/cthb/503920>

# Recommendations for States on the implementation of a National Co-ordinator Mandate

## National Co-ordinator should ...

① ... be placed in a high-level position within the national government in order to maintain authority, cross-sectoral influence, and sustained political commitment necessary to fulfil their mandate.

② ... be established separate from a National Rapporteur and lead a multi-agency Anti-Trafficking Commission (task force) to maintain a robust and sustainable national anti-trafficking framework.

③ ... ensure country's comprehensive approach to combating all forms of human trafficking.

④ ... be placed outside of the criminal justice system to ensure a balanced, rights-based and cross-sectoral approach to the State's national anti-trafficking response.

⑤ ... be empowered to co-ordinate closely with civil society and survivor leaders, whose insights are critical to the development of sound anti-trafficking policy and action.