

# OSCE report on combating trafficking in human beings: UK response, October 2022

Thank you, Special Representative Richie, for preparing this report and for your and your team's work during this particularly challenging time.

I welcome your office's reaction to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine and prioritisation of this most pressing issue and its possible consequences for human trafficking.

As Russia continues its war of aggression against Ukraine we are used at this council to hearing about the terrible price innocent Ukrainian civilians pay for Russia's bloody war. For those living in temporarily Russian-controlled areas life can be unbearable in many ways, but reports that Ukrainian parents are being separated from their children are particularly heart breaking.

The [second Moscow Mechanism report](#) documented large-scale deportations of people to Russia against their will, and cases of orphaned children brought to Russia, whose whereabouts are now unknown.

Ukrainians forced to flee their homes are vulnerable to human trafficking. The UK is helping these people through our [Ukraine Family Visa](#) and [Homes for Ukraine](#) scheme. We recognise that there are organised criminals who would exploit vulnerable refugees entering the UK, which is why our foreign ministry works closely with our visa issuing agency and housing ministry to mitigate these risks.

Dear Val,

Your response to the war in Ukraine was quick and effective. We welcomed the immediate policy responses to enhance anti-trafficking prevention and the specific recommendations for cyber and trafficking police, technology companies, and NGOs working to prevent and combat online exploitation. The existing guidelines for the identification and referral of victims among migrants and refugees was also a useful tool following Russia's invasion.

We share your assessment of the highly gendered and toxic demand for sexual services that resulted from the migration flows, as criminals preyed on the vulnerability of those fleeing. We welcome your gender-sensitive approach. The specific needs of women and children are also factored into our humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine.

The UK is pleased to be able to financially support your office's project to respond to the increasing risk of trafficking as a result of the migration from Ukraine, particularly targeting destination and transit countries.

At the [Alliance conference](#) this year, we were grateful for the conference's specific focus on migration risks from Ukraine and the needs of victims,

especially on methods for identifying victims, the scale of the problem, and the types of support that victims in these cases may require.

Ensuring victims get the support they need and are empowered requires us to better understand drivers and vulnerabilities. This is done by listening to survivors, and having their voices shape the support and protection we can offer, which is why the UK has commissioned independent research through the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre to inform our approach. We look forward to sharing the findings of this research with you all at a later date.

We support your office's efforts to focus on partnerships. Indeed, modern slavery is not an issue that can be fought alone. Earlier this year G7 leaders continued the focus on supply chains from the UK's Presidency in 2021. New commitments included calling on others to align to the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, the ILO Principles, and the OECD Guidelines for responsible business.

In concluding, I was pleased to see you were able to resume travel this year, and completed country visits to Poland, Moldova, Romania and Hungary, working with national and local governments and civil society organisations to raise awareness, offer targeted advice, and develop project proposals.

We look forward to welcoming you and your staff next month for your country visit to the UK, and the helpful and constructive recommendations and findings that we are sure will result.

Thank you again, Val, to you and your team for your tireless work and this report.