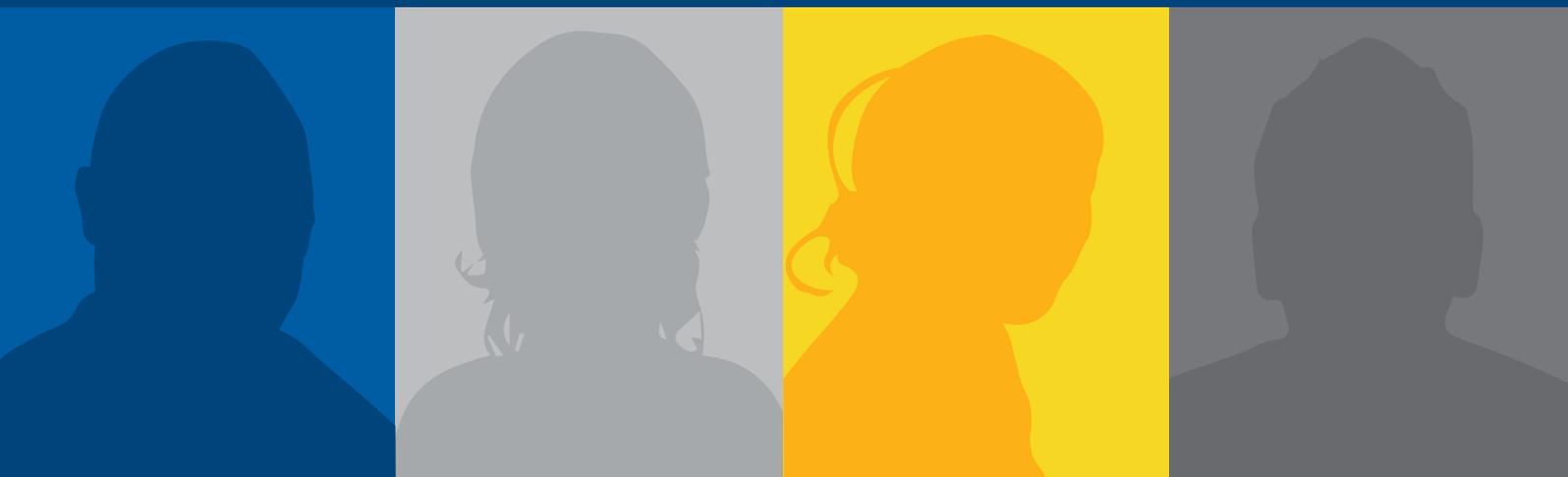


National Referral Mechanisms

JOINING EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF TRAFFICKED PERSONS

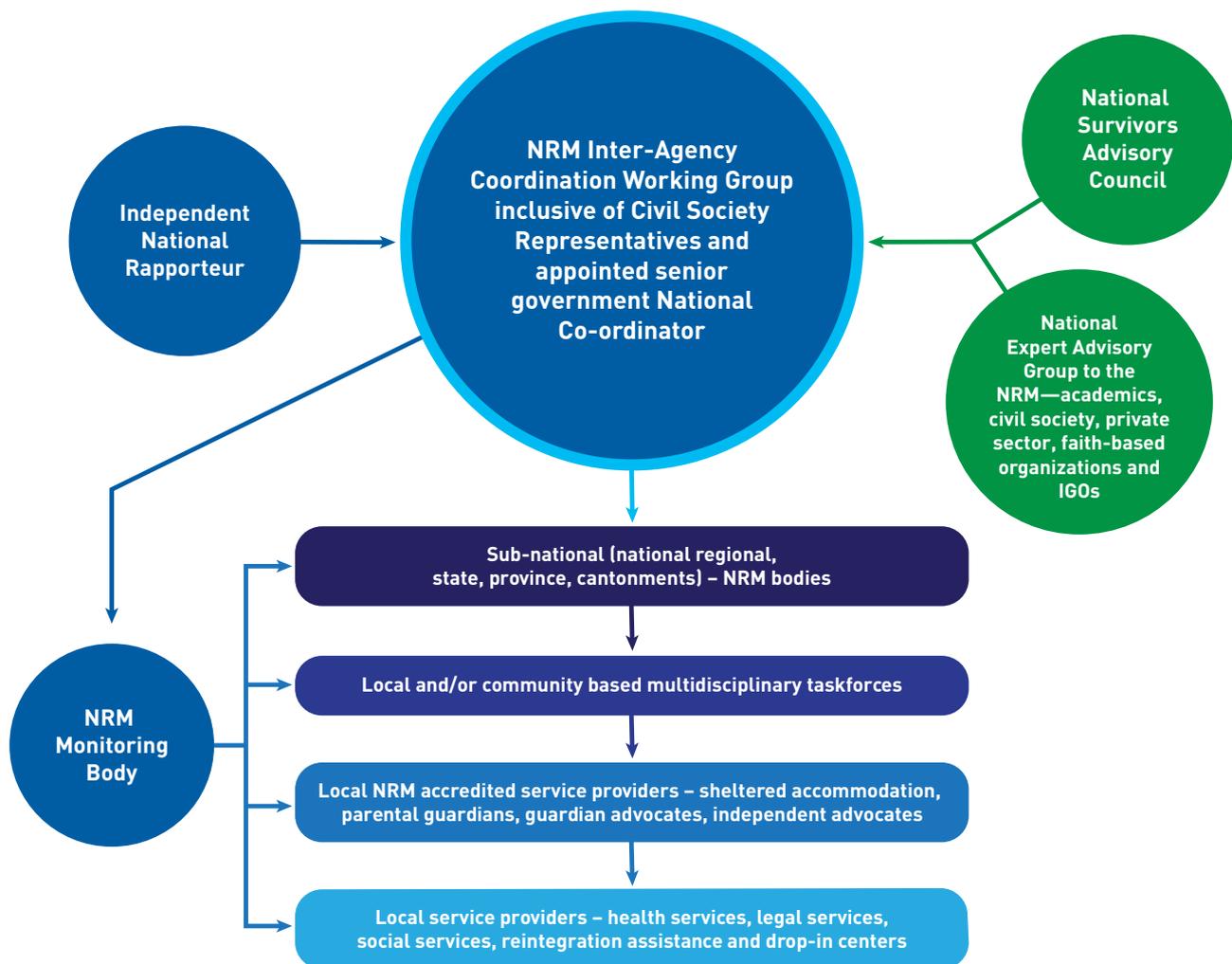


This factsheet summarises the second edition of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Handbook **“National Referral Mechanisms - Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons”**. The publication offers a practical guide for all professionals who are working in relation to National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs).

WHAT IS A NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM?

An NRM is a co-operative, national framework through which governments fulfil their obligations to protect and promote the human rights of victims of trafficking. It enables the co-ordination of their efforts in a strategic partnership with civil society organizations, the private sector, survivor leaders and other actors working in the field.

NRMs should be established in all countries of trafficking origin, transit and destination, to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive system of support which is targeted at, and accessible for all victims of trafficking. NRMs ensure that all presumed or identified victims of trafficking within the jurisdiction of a state are entitled to human rights regardless of their background, nationality, activities they may have been involved in, or their willingness to co-operate with law enforcement authorities. This includes those who are trafficked domestically (within the borders of one country) as well as transnationally (across international borders) and online (cyber-trafficking within the borders of one country or across international borders).



WHAT DOES THE HANDBOOK PROVIDE?

The updated NRM Handbook provides a guidance model which all OSCE participating States, and other nations can adapt and apply within their own national systems. Its purpose is to provide essential 'know-how' of the working methods, procedures and services that are required in order to fulfil the objectives of NRMs. Building on the experience and lessons learned over the past fifteen years since States have begun to adopt NRMs, it explains the specific and individual *needs and risks* of adults and children who are victims of trafficking, centring all communications and actions on the protection of victims and the overall prevention of human trafficking.

In order to implement comprehensive NRMs, the Handbook defines the roles and remits of all NRM stakeholders to ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of victims and survivors of trafficking in all circumstances. It specifically promotes robust systems of individual support with the allocation of independent advocates for adults and guardian-advocates for children.

The Handbook seeks to establish a harmonized and comprehensive system of identification, protection, individual support, access to services and social inclusion, so that every adult and child who has suffered human trafficking can establish a safe and fulfilling life. It emphasizes the right of all victims of trafficking to access criminal justice and redress without pressure or condition and encourages changes that will increase the global conviction rates of human traffickers. It advocates for a victim- and survivor-centred, human rights-based, gender sensitive and trauma-informed approach from all stakeholders at every stage of their work with victims and survivors. The best interests of the child must be firmly at the heart of NRMs.

The NRM Handbook goes hand in hand with OSCE States' commitment to consistent, long-term funding and resources to create strategic international and national partnerships to combat human trafficking.

THE NRM HANDBOOK PROVIDES:

- **Twelve Principles that guide the creation and implementation of National Referral Mechanisms**
- **An NRM Protocol for all professionals who work with survivors of trafficking**
- **A Practical Guide on the health needs of survivors of trafficking**
- **Four NRM Pillars, which need to be equally accessible to all victims and survivors:**



- **Sixty Recommended Standards, which provide a measurable framework for implementation of the four NRM Pillars**

A SERIES OF ONLINE TOOLS AND RESOURCES ACCOMPANIES THE NRM HANDBOOK:

- **Assessment guides for use and adaptation:**
 - Best Interests Assessment (BIC) and Safety and Care Plan for Children
 - Needs and Risks Assessment and Safety and Support Plan for Adults
- **Additional guides relating to combating trafficking in human beings:**
 - A practical guide on preventing trafficking
 - Trauma informed methods of working with survivors
 - Legal instruments and political commitments
- **Promising Practices** in OSCE participating States relating to the development and strengthening of anti-trafficking responses and NRMs

The NRM Handbook was informed by an international advisory panel convened by ODIHR to ensure multi-disciplinary input of anti-trafficking experts. Consultations included survivor leaders, government representatives, national rapporteurs, academics, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, law enforcement authorities, child specialists,

mental and physical healthcare specialists, IGO and NGO anti-trafficking experts and practitioners. The expertise of international survivor leaders was central to the Handbook, and included ODIHR's **International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC)**, established in December 2020.

ODIHR'S ROLE AND MANDATE RELATING TO NRMs

OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 1 on Enhancing the OSCE's Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2000):

"Reaffirms that trafficking in human beings is an abhorrent human rights abuse and a serious crime that demands a more comprehensive and co-ordinated response from participating States and the international community, as well as a more coherent and co-operative approach among countries, in particular those of origin, transit and destination"

OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2003):

"Enhancing the activities of the OSCE, especially the ODIHR, in assisting participating States, upon their request, in establishing the NRM."

"As part of its assistance in the development of National Referral Mechanisms the ODIHR will continue to promote and encourage co-operation between law enforcement and civil society."

The **OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)** has been active in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings since 1999. It has the mandate to assist OSCE participating States in establishing National Referral Mechanisms, and to monitor and report on the progression of NRMs in the region. ODIHR assesses risk gaps and challenges faced by victims and survivors in order to provide specific recommendations to strengthen and support NRM frameworks and partnerships. It conducts reviews of national anti-trafficking legislation and makes policy recommendations, as well as providing technical assistance and support for capacity building.

ODIHR's approach is based on human rights, the rule of law, and non-discrimination. It promotes victim- and survivor-centred, gender sensitive and trauma-informed methods to assist victims and survivors of human trafficking.



More Information

For detailed information about ODIHR's activities, or to read any of ODIHR's publications and reports, please visit www.osce.org/odihr, or contact ODIHR at:

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