

Terms of Reference of the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings

At the 6th Baltic Sea States Summit in Reykjavik on 8 June 2006, the Heads of Government integrated the work of the Nordic Baltic Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings into the CBSS framework. Since 2006, the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings has been an open exchange forum and reference point on human trafficking issues in the Baltic Sea Region. Human trafficking is a cross-border crime of major global concern. It needs to be targeted through a multifaceted approach and regional cooperation. Prevention of trafficking in human beings for all forms of exploitation falls under the CBSS long term priority “Safe and Secure Region” and is incorporated in the Policy Area “Secure” of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

1. The overall objective

The CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter - the TF-THB) shall strengthen, build upon, and improve anti-trafficking policies, preventive and protective work through a coherent and multidisciplinary approach. There should be a possibility to continuously revise the exact objectives and methods of work and activities, considering any developments concerning trafficking in human beings in the region. However, the guiding instruments and the overall objective should be permanent.

2. Structure of the TF-THB work

2.1 Hands-on co-operation between experts

The TF-THB builds on the concrete results achieved and lessons learned during the previous mandate period (2020 – 2025).

Furthermore, the work should give added value to the work that is already carried out by other organisations, e.g., Council of Europe, EU, IOM, Nordic Council of Ministers, OSCE, and UNODC and UN ICAT. The TF-THB should cooperate with these institutions to complement and intensify efforts of these organisations, as well as of other bodies of the CBSS.

The TF-THB should cooperate with other units in the CBSS Secretariat, particularly with the Expert Group on Children at Risk (CAR) on issues pertaining to trafficking in human beings concerning persons under 18 and utilise the complementary expertise of the CAR.

The TF-THB can establish temporary subgroups on specific topics, projects, research or initiatives and invite other countries or organisations to participate in meetings and join the efforts on an ad-hoc basis or at a specific stage.

2.2 Composition of the TF-THB

The TF-THB should be composed of experts from the relevant ministries and state agencies. Member states are encouraged to appoint at least one representative to the TF-THB. The European Commission as a member of the CBSS can also appoint a member to the TF-THB.

2.3 Meeting arrangement

There should be 2 to 3 meetings per CBSS presidency to approve the priorities, and to discuss relevant matters, such as budget, topics, regional cooperation, and progress in achieving concrete results.

TF-THB meetings take place in the presiding Member State. Upon decision of the Presidency, one TF-THB meeting per Presidency may be organised in Stockholm at the CBSS.

Order of the rotating Presidency:

- Estonia 2024-2025
- Poland 2025-2026
- Iceland 2026-2027
- Sweden 2027-2028
- Latvia 2028-2029
- Denmark 2029-2030
- Lithuania 2030-2031
- Norway 2031-2032
- Germany 2032-2033
- Finland 2033-2034

2.4 Decisions

Decisions are to be taken by consensus.

2.5 Role and responsibilities of the CBSS TF-THB Presidency

The TF-THB Presidency rotates among Member States on an annual basis following the CBSS Presidency (from July 1 to June 30). The Presidency upon agreement of the TF-THB:

- sets priorities for the work of the TF-THB;
- suggests and approves agendas of the TF-THB meetings;
- hosts TF-THB meetings; provides venue, catering and facilitates other practical arrangements and agreements of the meetings.

2.6 Role of the TF-THB Unit (“the Unit”) at the Permanent International Secretariat of the CBSS

The Unit provides secretarial and professional support to the TF-THB:

- assists the Member States and presidencies in their efforts, and when relevant, implements projects and other activities that offer clear added value for the Member States and enhance collaborative anti-trafficking efforts in the Baltic Sea Region;
- drafts relevant documents and reports;
- makes proposals and presents initiatives to the TF-THB in order to promote the objectives and implement the priorities decided by the TF-THB;
- develops and implements transnational projects;
- disseminates progress and results of the TF-THB’s work;

- presents the TF-THB at relevant events and in international/regional networks;
- ensures continuity and coordination of the TF-THB's work;
- promotes enhanced dialogue, co-operation and alignment with other regional actors through a regular structured dialogue in the context of existing cooperation formats in the region.

2.7 Role of the members of the TF-THB

The members of the TF-THB are encouraged to:

- consult with and inform the relevant Ministries and relevant state agencies in their home countries about the work and achievements of the TF-THB;
- present relevant country-specific information during the Tour de Table session of each meeting;
- inform the Unit about important issues and assist the Unit in identifying national experts and partners who should be included in projects or in other activities carried out by the TF-THB;
- promote work and expertise of the TF-THB in other national and international arenas.

2.8 Time frame¹

The time frame of the new mandate is from 2025 to 2030.

2.9 Funding and resources

Member States contribute financially to the work of the TF-THB and the Secretariat functions. Funding for the functioning of the Secretariat shall be provided from the regular budget of the Secretariat. The TF-THB explores possibilities to ensure funding for projects in line with the Strategic Plan of the TF-THB through

- external project funding;
- internal project funding (MS funding);
- funding for regional activities of the Member States.

When engaging in fundraising activities, the TF-THB Unit of the CBSS Secretariat acts in accordance with the CBSS Principles and Guidelines for Fundraising.

¹ *Amended by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials taken at their meeting 12 September 2007 in Riga, Latvia

** Amended by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials taken at their meeting in Riga 27-28 March 2008 in Riga, Latvia

*** Amended by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials taken at their meeting 3-4 March 2010 in Vilnius, Lithuania

**** Amended by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials taken at their meeting 3-4 December 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden

***** Amended by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials taken at their meeting 19 June in Reykjavik, Iceland

The presiding Member State hosting the meetings bears the costs of the meetings and other events initiated by the presiding Member State. The members of the TF-THB are responsible for covering their travel and accommodation expenses.

3. Guiding international instruments

Where appropriate, the following legal documents, recommendations and action plans should be taken into consideration at all times:

- the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) and its protocols;
- the following recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member states of the Council of Europe: Recommendation No. R (91) 11 on sexual exploitation, pornography and prostitution of, and trafficking in, children and young adults; Recommendation No. R (97) 13 concerning intimidation of witnesses and the rights of the defence; Recommendation No. R (2000) 11 on action against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation and Recommendation Rec (2001) 16 on the protection of children against sexual exploitation; Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 on the protection of women against violence;
- the following recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: Recommendation 1325 (1997) on traffic in women and forced prostitution in Council of Europe member states; Recommendation 1450 (2000) on violence against women in Europe; Recommendation 1545 (2002) on a campaign against trafficking in women; Recommendation 1610 (2003) on migration connected with trafficking in women and prostitution; Recommendation 1611 (2003) on trafficking in organs in Europe; Recommendation 1663 (2004) Domestic slavery: servitude, au pairs and mail-order brides;
- the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, (CETS nr 197, 2005);
- the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No.210, 2011);
- the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs (CETS No.216, 2015);
- EU Strategy Combating THB 2021-2025
- EU Directive on THB: Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision

2002/629/JHA, amended by Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024

- European Union Council Directive of 29 April 2004 on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities; and the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime of October 25, 2012 (2012/29);
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography;
- the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol thereto to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children with a view to improving the protection which they afford and developing the standards established by them;
- the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930;
- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (2015).
- Action plan of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2017)

4. Activities of the CBSS TF-THB

The TF-THB works in line with the overall strategic objectives and goals for 2025 – 2030. The TF-THB Strategic Plan shall be based on previous, ongoing and emerging work with a clear focus on the added value of the TF-THB in counteracting all forms of trafficking in human beings by means of regional collaboration.