



ONLINE PROMOTION AND FACILITATION OF ILLICIT TRAVEL FOR TRANSPLANTATION

POSITION PAPER OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN ORGANS (SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA CONVENTION)

Strasbourg, 10 June 2026

Following the [statement](#) issued by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the occasion of the European Day for Organ, Tissue and Cell Donation (11 October 2025), the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs expresses its deep concern over the growing phenomenon of online platforms promoting and facilitating international travel for illicit organ transplantation. These platforms offer unauthorised transplant packages, often exploiting vulnerable organ donors and bypassing established ethical and legal standards. Such practices endanger human rights, public health and undermine the integrity of legitimate transplantation systems while evading oversight through digital means.

Transplantation must always be based on transparency, equity and full respect for human rights. Trafficking in human organs and trafficking in human beings for organ removal are unethical and unlawful. They endanger donors and recipients and enable exploitation. Key principles such as informed consent and the prohibition of financial gain are enshrined in the [Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs](#) (CETS No. 216), the [Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine](#) (Oviedo Convention, CETS No. 164) and its relevant [additional Protocol](#) (CETS No. 186), the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and are reflected in the [WHO Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation](#) and the [Declaration of Istanbul on organ trafficking and transplant tourism](#).

The Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs provides a robust and appropriate legal framework to address these challenges. It criminalises the removal of organs without free and informed consent, the use of such organs and the conduct of intermediaries acting for financial gain or comparable advantage, including those operating through digital interfaces. As such, the Convention applies directly to websites and online facilitators that enable or promote illegal transplant procedures. The Convention also aims to protect the rights of victims of the offences established in accordance with it.

The Committee recalls that States Parties are legally obliged to establish jurisdiction over these offences, to investigate and prosecute perpetrators and to ensure effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions. It further urges States Parties to take proactive

enforcement measures, including: strengthening cross-border cooperation among judicial, law enforcement and health authorities; training on the applicability of the Convention; and dismantling the financial infrastructure supporting organ trafficking networks.

The Committee of the Parties strongly encourages all Council of Europe member States and other countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, and to actively engage in the global effort to combat organ trafficking. Only through coordinated national and international action can we effectively prevent and combat organ trafficking, protect the health and dignity of donors and recipients, uphold ethical standards in transplantation and preserve the integrity and trust essential to our healthcare systems.

See also: [Position paper](#) of the European Committee on organ transplantation of the Council of Europe (CD-P-TO) and its Network of National Focal Points on Travel for Transplantation (NETTA)