



Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland

16th Warsaw Human Rights Seminar Human Rights and the Legal and Geopolitical Contexts of Migration and Asylum 17 November 2025

(Hotel The Westin Warsaw, Al. Jana Pawła II 21, Warsaw)

Concept Note

Continuing a long-standing tradition of convening high-level conferences devoted to the most pertinent human rights issues in Europe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland is organizing the 16th edition of the Warsaw Human Rights Seminar. The event is scheduled to take place on 17 November 2025 at The Westin Warsaw hotel.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, will join the Seminar, delivering a keynote address.

This year's edition of the Seminar will concern human rights and the legal and geopolitical contexts of migration and asylum. Our intention is to create a forum for the exchange of expert views and constructive discussions on these topics, taking into account the importance, complexity and diversity of challenges in this field. These include the instrumentalization of migrants by third countries that encourage or facilitate irregular migration with the aim of destabilising European States. People smuggling is another major issue, being a profitable criminal activity that has been increasingly linked to deaths and serious human rights violations, undermining the rights of migrants and corroding the integrity of migration and asylum policies. Human trafficking, organised crime, and growing anti-immigrant sentiment and integration challenges further illustrate the multifaceted nature of such concerns.

We proceed on the assumption that, confronted with such challenges, the real test lies in striking the right balance between State's essential functions – such as maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security – and protecting human rights, not just in theory but in practice. In this context, there is a need to explore and (re)conceptualize existing and potential solutions, as well as to foster a better mutual understanding of national perspectives on specific migration and asylum issues. It is our hope that the Seminar will facilitate these efforts.

The Seminar programme includes various formats for exchanging expert views, among them three panels. The first such discussion will address the legal and geopolitical challenges related to migration and asylum, and will be conducted from various national and international perspectives. The second panel will be devoted to the safe third country concept and recent developments in its interpretation and application in the Council of Europe and the European Union. The third panel will adopt a subject-oriented perspective, focusing on pressing issues related to the protection of specific categories of persons, including vulnerable groups, in the context of migration and asylum.

Besides these panels, the Seminar will also feature a dialogue with the participation of the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, entitled "*In*

Conversation - from the impact of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 on the freedom of movement to current migration challenges in the OSCE area".

Other agenda highlights include two dedicated presentations (*Insights*) by international experts in human rights, migration, and refugee law. These contributions are conceived as "spotlights", providing concise and focused expert reflections illuminating specific legal and geopolitical issues related to migration and asylum.

The Seminar is addressed to diplomats, members of the Polish and international academic community, practitioners engaged with human rights, migration and asylum, as well as civil society representatives.

A bilingual digital publication is planned after the Seminar.