

EUROPOL SUPPORTS THE FIGHT AGAINST MODERN DAY SLAVERY2014-07-30 [Europol press release] Trafficking in human beings (THB) is a global problem and a thriving criminal industry that affects the lives of millions of children, women and men around the world who are trapped in a type of modern day slavery.

Today, Europol supports the first World Day against Trafficking in Persons, when the United Nations calls for the raising of awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for an improved coordination of efforts to bring down the organised criminal groups involved.

Human trafficking is defined as the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person through the use of force, fraud, deception or other means with the aim of exploiting them. It is not to be confused with illegal immigration or people smuggling, where facilitators help people to illegally enter, cross or reside in a country.

While the best-known form of human trafficking is for the purpose of sexual exploitation, many victims are trafficked for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude and more. A major problem in the EU are the growing number of cases involving trafficked adults and children who are forced into committing crimes like burglary and property crime, fraud and swindling, pick-pocketing, shoplifting, metal theft and street begging. Child trafficking is a particularly sensitive crime since it impacts the most vulnerable in society and these children can also endure sexual and labour exploitation. Homeless and orphaned children, or those from violent and abusive families, are at most risk of being trafficked.

The Internet is increasingly used to facilitate the trafficking process, to recruit victims and to advertise the services that the victims will be forced into providing. Criminal groups are reported to exploit young boys in this way on the sex market, offering the victim's services through the Internet.

The majority of victims reported to Europol are European Union citizens that have been trafficked and exploited within the EU. They can fall into the hands of traffickers both in their own countries and abroad. 61% of the victims reported to Europol are women, 26% men and 13% are children.

Europol regularly supports EU law enforcement investigations to take down such criminal groups involved in THB[1] and has seen a constant rise in these cases. This reflects not only an increased awareness of human trafficking, which translates into an increased number of cases, detected and victims identified, but also more extensive use of Europol support services to develop these cases at European level. In 2013, 2542 ongoing THB cases were referred to Europol for their support.

Greater freedom of movement and travel, low cost international transport and global communication links, combined with previously unavailable opportunities to work overseas and low self-confidence, are all contributory factors in the recruitment by traffickers of persons who would not normally be thought of as vulnerable. A common factor with many victims is that they are deceived by the criminal traffickers, usually via the promise of education, employment, good working conditions, a salary that does not exist - in general terms a better quality of life.

Trafficked victims inevitably end up suffering sustained psychological and physical abuse from the start and can experience trauma long after they have been removed from the exploitative conditions.

The global forces of technology, increased human mobility and growing interconnections in the world economy, have brought many benefits to society but also carry a dark side that have caused dislocations in society and inspired new shifts in criminal activity, including human

trafficking.

“Human trafficking is not only a grotesque violation of human rights, it is a lucrative crime for the traffickers,” says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol. “We as law enforcement must better understand the nature of the crime that we are trying to confront – for example, labour exploitation and child trafficking are often undetected due to the lack of a proactive approach to look behind legal and other illegal activities.” He adds: “By working together, leveraging our power and increasing the operational priority given to investigating human trafficking, the police community and civil society can succeed in eradicating modern slavery.”

Europol continues to provide expertise and support to this priority crime area for the EU, and offers a range of operational capabilities to law enforcement authorities to help with their cross-border THB investigations.

Information and intelligence exchange between investigators operating in different countries is a key element in the fight against trafficking networks operating on transnational level. Europol can provide investigators with a secure platform for exchanging this information. However, Europol can provide a service that goes far beyond simple information exchange. Sophisticated intelligence analysis services can see single THB investigations developing beyond borders, to ultimately identify larger and interconnected trafficking networks. These services can also be deployed on the spot, where investigators can benefit from the full range of Europol operational capabilities on their territory.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM EUROPOL TO AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATING THE CRASH OF MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT 17

The Hague, the Netherlands 2014-07-27 [Europol press release] - Europol is continuing its support to disaster victim identification (DVI) operations on the ground in Ukraine following the loss of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 on July 17. Assistance has also been given to the Dutch commander in charge of the second phase of the operation on the ground in Ukraine where the main focus is shifting towards air crash investigation.

“Europol is offering every possible support to the Dutch authorities with the aim to get to the bottom of this horrendous crime. The working conditions for the people on the ground have been extremely difficult, but it is my hope that this will soon change for the better. However, it is clear that any investigation will remain very challenging as the crash site has not been treated as a crime scene by the persons in control of the area.” says Will van Gemert, Deputy Director and head of Operations Department at Europol.

So far daily coordination meetings with liaison officers from the countries who are affected directly by the crash of MH 17 have been held at the Europol headquarters in The Hague. A Europol analyst has been part of the INTERPOL Incident Response Team (IRT) team in Kharkiv which has been on the ground since July 20.

A secure line via the Europol mobile office is in place in Kharkiv, which makes it possible to securely exchange information and to directly have access to the databases at the Europol headquarters. A second mobile office has been deployed to Ukraine. These communication channels also make it possible for the involved countries to exchange information among themselves securely.

Europol has also been involved in assessing the local security and safety situation concerning access to the area in Kharkiv where the DVI team is working. Furthermore Europol has contributed to the first efforts to map the operation area, recording the position of items of interest, for later use in the investigation.

Tomorrow Europol will participate in a meeting hosted by Eurojust in The Hague where judicial aspects of the investigation into the loss of MH 17 will be discussed.

SPANISH LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES ARREST 36 SUSPECTED DRUGS TRAFFICKERS

2014-07-22 [Europol press release] A total of 36 people have been arrested and four others have been charged with belonging to an organised criminal group engaged in drugs trafficking from the Spanish enclave of Melilla into Europe. Among those arrested was the head of the criminal group, a Dutch national with Moroccan origin.

The Spanish Guardia Civil, working with Europol, also seized cannabis resin totalling over half a tonne, EUR 124 000 in cash, a sports boat, a jet ski and 22 luxury vehicles, two of which were equipped with sophisticated concealment systems. In addition computers, extensive documentation, 47 mobile phones, 3 GPS systems and a maritime GPS belonging to the boat were seized. The seizures were a result of searches carried out in houses in Melilla (5), Málaga (2), Almería (4), Madrid (2) and Amsterdam (2), a boat in Almeria and a shop in Madrid.

The investigation began in July 2013, when the Guardia Civil started to pursue an alleged international organised crime group involved in drug trafficking activities. Officers discovered vehicles equipped with false bottoms that were being used to smuggle cannabis resin from Morocco/Spain to different EU countries including the Netherlands and Germany. The vehicles were crossing from Morocco to Spain via Melilla on passenger ferries, often travelling with young children in order to avoid suspicion. The criminal groups used very sophisticated concealment techniques in bottom of the vehicles, making them almost impossible to detect. They also constantly changed vehicles and routes to avoid detection.

In addition to hosting technical meetings and providing operational support, Europol extracted data contained in the seized mobile phones and other electronic storage devices, resulting in 47 separate reports to the investigative team. In addition, Europol experts will cross-check the extracted data and carry out any appropriate intelligence analysis. International support for the operation also came from Eurojust, who coordinated activities at the judicial level including European Arrest Warrants.

INTERNATIONAL GANG OF FRAUDSTERS DISRUPTED

The Hague, the Netherlands 2014-07-22 [Europol press release] In the early morning of 21 July 2014, 32 European Arrests Warrants were executed in Italy, Poland and Switzerland, against suspects thought to be responsible for more than 250 acts of fraud against the elderly - so-called grandchild trick fraud - and more than 20 residential burglaries.

During yesterday's day of action, 150 police officers were deployed in Italy and over 100 in Poland, along with helicopters and specialist teams. 12 of the suspects were arrested (5 in Italy, 6 in Poland and 1 in Switzerland), whilst the others remain at large. Dozens of house searches were conducted in Italy and Poland resulting in the seizure of real estate, cash, mobile phones and SIM cards, precious stones, luxury watches and jewellery.

The seizure of EUR 1 million in assets has also been executed against the international criminal group, by order of the Public Prosecutor's Office in Novara (Italy), who headed the investigation. Operation Caro Nipote (Dear Nephew) has been run since the end of 2010 by the Carabinieri in Genova (Italy) who were investigating the case in close cooperation with Europol, Eurojust and the Austrian, German, Polish and Swiss authorities.

In the course of the investigation, which has seen the wiretapping of over 100 phones and the

analysis of 1500 itemised billings, nine further cases of fraud were identified which led to the arrest of 10 additional suspects.

Europol provided Italian and Polish authorities with continuous support throughout the investigation by facilitating the development of intelligence, carrying out crime analysis, organising international operational meetings at Europol and deploying staff in Italy and Poland to support the action day.

The operation was preceded by a coordination meeting held in June at Eurojust, which saw the participation of judicial authorities from the countries involved and Europol. During this meeting, the most recent developments in the Italian investigation were presented and discussions took place over the legal aspects of executing simultaneous arrests, judicial requests, seizures and future confiscations. The result of this meeting paved the way for immediate action to tackle the organised criminal group and to deal with their potential future prosecution.

In the words of the Eurojust National Member for Italy, who opened the case at the beginning of 2012: "Once again, positive and constructive cooperation between Eurojust and Europol has allowed us to achieve a very good result in the fight against organised crime. The assistance given to Italian and Polish authorities led to the dismantling of this dangerous criminal network operating against vulnerable citizens. This cooperation shows how effective international and judicial cooperation can be, particularly when using the existing European bodies designed for enhancing such cooperation."

'Grandchild trick fraud' is the name given to a number of slightly varying crimes where criminals defraud the elderly. The most common modus operandi currently used by suspects is when the elderly targets are pre-selected and contacted by phone. Depending on the first words exchanged, the criminal often pretends to be, for example, a grandchild or nephew who is in a particular 'situation'. Using sophisticated psychological skills the offenders get their target to withdraw large amounts of cash and hand it over to an accomplice, who is in fact a member of an organised criminal group, just like the caller.

The elderly targets are most likely to have a 'nest egg', own their home, and/or have excellent credit – all of which make them attractive to fraudsters. They are generally raised to be polite and trusting. Criminal networks exploit these traits, knowing that it is difficult or impossible for these individuals to say 'no' or just hang up the telephone.

Over the years Member States affected by high levels of crimes against the elderly have identified criminal networks that take advantage of the above-mentioned factors and exploit opportunities. However, even though law enforcement agencies have successfully dismantled several criminal groups responsible for such scams, the number of cases remains noteworthy, have transnational dimensions, and represent serious harm to some of the most vulnerable in society.

In addition, it can be very difficult for regional or national police forces to detect the criminal groups due to the groups' extreme mobility. While a local police force is still trying to establish the circumstances of an offence, the group can already be active in a completely different region or country, and the core members of the group are comparatively safe in another country. Added to this, there are a significant number of crimes that are not reported to the police so the number of offences reported to authorities does not reflect the whole picture and the true scale of the problem.

The gap between official police records and the dark (unreported) figures of these crimes is in fact a significant issue, blurring the real figures of crime against the elderly. The reasons behind such a high number of unreported crimes are numerous, for example some elderly are unaware

that they have been victims of fraud and therefore do not report the crimes; some victims hold themselves partly or solely to blame and as a consequence are reluctant to report it. Furthermore, some victims feel embarrassed and do not want family members or others to know about their losses. Moreover, some of the victims no longer have the mental capacity to take care of their own financial affairs and in many cases the elderly victims can be poor witnesses.

EUROPOL SUPPORTS INTERPOL TEAM TO HELP VICTIMS OF MALAYSIAN AIRLINES CRASH

2014-07-19 [Europol press release] At least one Europol expert is to join an INTERPOL team, which includes Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) experts and a responsible from the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). The team is to be deployed shortly in Ukraine to provide on-site assistance.

Teams at Europol have been monitoring the situation since immediately after the crash Thursday 17 July and offered all possible assistance to those involved in responding to the incident.

"Europol will actively contribute to the INTERPOL led Incident Response Team. We will do our utmost to support the work that must be done following this horrific incident, where hundreds of families and friends to the innocent victims on board Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 are grieving and left with unanswered questions," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ROMANIAN CYBERCRIMINALS DISMANTLED

The Hague, the Netherlands 2014-07-17 [Europol press release] Yesterday, an international organised cybercrime network, composed mostly of Romanian citizens, was successfully taken down in Romania¹ and France² with the support of the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol.

The cybercrime network is suspected of sophisticated electronic payment crimes including intrusions into international non-cash payment systems (through malware attacks), illegal worldwide financial transactions and money transfers, card data compromising (via skimming attacks), money laundering and drug trafficking. Members of this criminal network were using malware – RAT (Remote Access Tool) with key logger functionality - to take over and gain access to computers used by money transfer services all over Europe (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Norway, UK).

More than 115 individuals were interrogated and 65 detained in coordinated raids by Romanian and French law enforcement and judicial authorities, supported on the spot by the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3). Large sums of money, luxury vehicles, IT equipment and variety of evidence were seized during the raids. Around 450 police officers were deployed to execute 117 house search warrants during the operation.

Losses incurred by the criminals' activities are estimated to be at least two million euros. The proceeds of their crimes were invested in different types of property, deposited in bank accounts or transferred electronically to hide their illicit origin.

The Head of the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3), Troels Oerting, said: "As a direct result of the excellent cooperation and outstanding work by police officers and prosecutors from Romania, France and other European countries, a key criminal network has been successfully taken down this week. EC3's role was to effectively facilitate international cooperation, including the exchange of intelligence, and to provide resources where needed. After many months and a

great effort from all involved, many individuals have now been detained after key locations were identified and targeted by law enforcement. The resounding success of such an operation is not the first and will not be the last, as police officers and prosecutors, alongside EC3, continue in their tireless endeavours to make payment transactions safer for customers throughout Europe and beyond."

Operations such as this one demonstrate the crucial role of exchanging intelligence through Europol channels and the importance of international coordination at different operational stages including the final execution at European level. EC3 organised several operational meetings at Europol headquarters in The Hague, provided analysis, and simultaneously deployed mobile offices and technical support on the spot in the cooperating countries. Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) from Craiova city; Romanian National Police, including the Brigade for Combating Organized Crime from Craiova city, the Service of Intelligence & Internal Protection from Craiova and the National Intelligence Service

Judicial French Police (BFMP DPJ) – Brigade of Combating Payment Fraud in Paris

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RING DISMANTLED IN PORTUGAL

The Hague, The Netherlands - 2014-07-16 [Europol press release] On 14 July 2014, Portuguese law enforcement authorities, with the support of Europol, dismantled an organised criminal group of West African and Portuguese nationals suspected of trafficking young mostly Nigerian women to Portugal and other EU countries in order to exploit them through forced prostitution.

Seven suspects were arrested in Portugal and seven house searches carried out. Mobile phones, computers and tablets and other significant evidentiary material relevant to the investigation were seized including a false passport.

These results are part of the long-running 'Operation NAIRA', an investigation into human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, led by the Portuguese Immigration Service (SEF). The investigation has been focusing on an organised crime network which trafficked young African females, from West Africa, to Portugal, France and Spain where they were forced into prostitution.

The victims of this particular criminal group are generally young Nigerian women from Benin City (Edo State) who are recruited in their places of origin, from where their trips are organised. Members of the criminal network in Portugal take care of logistics such as contacting the victims, providing accommodation and ID documents. The women often travel with forged travel documents or sometimes no documents at all. On arrival at their destinations, most of the women identify themselves verbally as minors originating in Nigeria, Guinea and Mali and claim asylum (as allegedly instructed by their traffickers). They are then placed in shelters from where they later abscond and disappear. Victims are subsequently moved to other EU countries by the criminal group. The trafficking process for these vulnerable victims is characterised by threats against the victims and often includes debt bondage, the use of threats against the victims and/or their relatives, physical and sexual violence, and the use of "voodoo" rituals.

Europol actively supported this human trafficking operation and provided operational analytical support throughout the investigation to the countries involved. This included facilitating information exchange and analysis, organising an operational meeting at Europol and delivering real-time cross-checks of all data gathered in the course of the field action through the deployment of a Europol mobile office and an Europol analyst in Portugal.

GLOBAL ACTION TARGETING SHYLOCK MALWARE

2014-07-10 [Europol press release] On 8 and 9 July 2014, an alliance of law enforcement and industry undertook measures against the Internet domains and servers that form the core of an advanced cybercriminal infrastructure attacking online banking systems around the globe using the Shylock Trojan.

Law enforcement agencies took action to disrupt the system which Shylock depends on to operate effectively. This comprised the seizure of servers which form the command and control system for the Trojan, as well as taking control of the domains Shylock uses for communication between infected computers.

The operation, coordinated by the UK National Crime Agency (NCA), brought together partners from the law enforcement and private sectors, including Europol, the FBI, BAE Systems Applied Intelligence, Dell SecureWorks, Kaspersky Lab and the UK's GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) to jointly combat the threat.

Investigative actions were undertaken from the operational centre at the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol in The Hague. Investigators from the NCA, the FBI, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey gathered to coordinate action in their respective countries, in concert with counterparts in Germany, France and Poland. Coordination through Europol was instrumental to taking down the servers that form the core of the botnets, malware and Shylock infrastructure. The CERT-EU (EU Computer Emergency Response Team) participated in the take down and distributed information on the malicious domains to their peers.

During the action several previously unknown parts of the infrastructure were discovered and follow-up actions could be initiated immediately/be set-up and coordinated from the operational centre in The Hague.

Shylock – so-called because its code contains excerpts from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice - has infected at least 30 000 computers running Microsoft Windows worldwide.

Intelligence suggests that Shylock targets the UK more than any other country, nevertheless the US, Italy and Turkey are also being targeted hard by the malicious code. It is thought that the suspected developers are based elsewhere.

Victims are typically infected by clicking on malicious links, and then persuaded to download and run the malware. Shylock will then seek to access funds held in business or personal bank accounts, and transfer them to the criminal controllers.

Troels Oerting, head of the European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol, said: "The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) is very happy about this operation against sophisticated malware, playing a crucial role in the work to take down the criminal infrastructure. EC3 has provided a unique platform and operational rooms equipped with state-of-the-art technical infrastructure and secure communication means, as well as cyber analysts and cyber experts". "In this way we have been able to support frontline cyber investigators, coordinated by the UK's NCA, and working with the physical presence of the United States' FBI and colleagues from Italy, Turkey and the Netherlands, with virtual links to cyber units in Germany, France and Poland."

"It has been a pleasure for me to see the international cooperation between police officers and prosecutors from many countries, and we have again tested our improved ability to rapidly react to cyber threats in or outside the EU. It's another step in the right direction for law enforcement and prosecutors in the EU and I thank all involved for their huge commitment and dedication. A specific thanks goes to Kaspersky Lab who have contributed significantly to the successful

outcome of the operation - and our cooperation continues to grow in this and future cases" Andy Archibald, Deputy Director of the NCA's National Cyber Crime Unit in the UK, said:"The NCA is coordinating an international response to a cybercrime threat to businesses and individuals around the world. This phase of activity is intended to have a significant effect on the Shylock infrastructure, and demonstrates how we are using partnerships across sectors and across national boundaries to cut cybercrime".

SEVERE SENTENCES FOR CRIMINAL GANG BEHIND FORCED PROSTITUTION IN THE UK

The Hague, the Netherlands - 2014-07-03 [Europol press release] On 1 July 2014, five defendants were found guilty of being part of an organised crime group involved in trafficking human beings into the United Kingdom, and were convicted by a UK court to a total of over 75 years' imprisonment.

Their conviction is the result of a UK-led cross-border investigation, code-named 'Birkhill', run by the London Metropolitan Police Service and supported by Hungary and Europol, which has led to the dismantling of the organised crime group engaged in trafficking Hungarian victims into the UK to exploit them through forced prostitution. Police believe the group was responsible for trafficking over 120 women into the UK.

The investigation started in 2012 and looked at a criminal network deeply involved in the large-scale trafficking of Hungarian women to the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The targeted criminal group had a hierarchical structure and was composed of Hungarian and British nationals who had their 'centres of gravity' in the EU countries mentioned. The long-term investigation showed that the criminal group mainly recruited women in Hungary through adverts on the Internet - the women applied online for what they believed were administrative, cleaning and babysitting jobs. Victims were then flown to London where they were forced or coerced into prostitution across the city. Some were made to have sex with up to 20 men a day. While the trafficking victims were prostituted, their earnings were taken by the members of the criminal group. The gang controlled the women with threats of violence and intimidation, including threatening to harm or tell their families that they were prostitutes. The gang would retain the victims' passports to exert further control over them.

The gang managed the victims from a make-shift call centre and used over 40 mobile phones to organise bookings on a commercial scale. Police discovered that each phone had details of the victims' working names, fees and brothel locations taped to them. They charged clients between £30 and £100 per hour.

The Metropolitan Police Service's Trafficking & Kidnap Unit arrested four main targets on 30 January 2013, following an intelligence-led investigation. Other suspects were arrested a few months later, including one suspect who was the subject of a European Arrest Warrant, and was arrested in Hungary and then extradited to the UK.

Europol actively supported this cross-border human trafficking operation from the start and provided operational analytical support throughout the investigation to the countries involved. This included facilitating information exchange and analysis, and participating in coordination meetings.

EUROPOL CELEBRATES ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY AS THE EUROPEAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

1 lug 2014 - [Europol press release] Today marks the 15th anniversary of the establishment of

Europol – the European Union's law enforcement agency.

Since it became fully operational on 1 July 1999, Europol has grown to establish itself as the EU's criminal information hub and centre for intelligence and expertise.

Over 850 staff based at state-of-the-art headquarters in The Hague now provide multilingual and multinational expertise to law enforcement authorities across the EU and beyond, to support over 18 000 complex cross-border organised crime and terrorism cases each year. This figure is 15 times larger than the number of cases supported in 1999. A fitting present for Europol's 15th birthday: A 15-fold increase in business.

The opening of its new high-tech and highly secure headquarters by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands on 1 July 2011 marked Europol's establishment as one of the world's leading law enforcement agencies and a symbol for the whole of European law enforcement cooperation.

"I am proud of how Europol has managed to expand its role, responsibilities and importance in the European law enforcement environment. It is rewarding to see how, with our support, law enforcement colleagues are able to make Europe a safer place," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

Praise is also given from Cecilia Malmström, EU Home Affairs Commissioner.

"With Europol playing a key role, police cooperation in Europe is better and more effective than ever. Only in the past few years, numerous large-scale cross border operations have been carried out to fight organised crime. Children have been saved from exploitation and sexual abuse, and large organised crime groups dealing in human beings, cybercrime and drugs have been dismantled," says Commissioner Malmström.

Over time, and partly due to its reformed legal framework, Europol has gained increased trust from its Member States by focusing on the security of intelligence and data entrusted in it, and the delivery of quality products and services required by its partners. The more information Europol receives, the more complete the crime picture across the EU becomes, and the more Europol can share this information with its law enforcement partners, to directly challenge the biggest organised crime groups active in the European Union.

The development of international trade routes and the increased flexibility of organised criminals, driven by technological advances and the Internet, have led to an exponential growth in organised crime over these last 15 years. However, Europol's main purpose remains the same now as it was in 1999: to support the European Union's two million law enforcement officers in Making Europe Safer.