

# Europol: Report on Internet-Enabled Trafficking in Human Beings



**Cornelia Riehle**

## News

On 18 October 2020, Europol published a [report outlining the challenges of countering human trafficking in the digital era](#). Modern communication technologies have significantly impacted the way in which organised crime groups (OCGs) involved in international trafficking in human beings (THB) operate by broadening their ability to traffic human beings for different types of exploitation. The majority of victims of THB involving an online component are female, and minors are also particularly vulnerable.

Modern technology is used at every stage of exploitation, from recruitment to financial management. The recruitment strategy is based on the online profiling of victims. Active recruitment methods involve posting false job advertisements on trusted job portals and social media marketplaces or setting up fake employment agencies. Passive recruitment methods involve scouting the Internet and social media and replying to announcements posted by job seekers looking for jobs abroad. Victims are often controlled by different forms of blackmail as well as virtual forms of movement restriction and real-time monitoring.

As a result, the entry barrier for human traffickers is much lower. At the same time, technology also serves as a multiplier, enabling the commercialisation and exploitation of victims on a massive scale. Furthermore, traditional structures and divisions of labour within trafficking networks have changed, with more female offenders taking part in Internet-enabled THB.

Looking at the new developments, the report calls for the following:

- Investing in equipment and training, so that law enforcement authorities are empowered to face these technological challenges;
- Amending the existing legislative and policy framework in order to promote information exchange and cooperation between law enforcement and the private sector;
- Further developing international investigations in order to meet the challenges of geographical displacement.

Fighting human trafficking is one of the EU's and Europol's top priorities. The Europol report was released on the 2020 EU Anti-Trafficking Day.

### AUTHOR

**Cornelia Riehle**

Deputy Head of Section  
Academy of European Law

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