

# Europol Report on Migrant Smuggling



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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**News**

Europol published the [4th Annual Report on its European Migrant Smuggling Centre \(EMSC\)](#), looking at its 2019 activities to counter facilitated illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings. Key findings of the report in the area of migrant smuggling underline that border control measures taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic have had a strong impact on smuggling activities. Smugglers adapted quickly to new *modi operandi* by, for instance, shifting smuggling routes from air to sea and land routes. Furthermore, there has been an increase migrant smuggling activities involving secondary movements, mostly in the Western Balkans region and across the English Channel. Lastly, the report sees an even stronger vulnerability of unaccompanied minors than before the pandemic. Looking ahead, the report expects a resurgence in the movement of irregular migrants, an increased demand for cheap labour, and an increase of visa fraud cases in 2020.

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As regards trafficking in human beings, the report anticipates that ongoing travel restrictions may enhance the demand for trafficked third-country migrants for the purpose of labour exploitation, mainly in the agriculture sector. Sexual exploitation may also rise for various reasons caused by the pandemic, for instance the closure of establishments offering legal sex work. Furthermore, the report also points out an emerging trend towards illegal adoptions across EU Member States as well as stronger involvement of underage victims of THB in forced criminality related to property crimes and drug-related crimes. According to the report, an increase in labour exploitation and further misuse of the Internet as a key crime-enabling factor in the trafficking chain is expected this year.

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