

# GRETA: Annual Report for 2021



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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## News

On 13 July 2022, GRETA published its [annual report for 2021](#). Despite the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the group continued to work with other CoE bodies, other international organisations and civil society to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. It carried out ten country evaluation visits and adopted third round evaluation reports on six countries. In 2021, Israel became the second state, which is not a member of the CoE, to join the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

GRETA President *Helga Gayer* stressed in the report that the Covid-19 pandemic has made children even more vulnerable to trafficking, including online exploitation. This, together with the IT developments used by traffickers, has led to structural changes in the way traffickers operate. Hence, governments must adapt and equip their law enforcement agencies and criminal justice systems with the capabilities to deal with the changing environment; they must increase their cooperation with private companies and other national authorities. As a consequence, all actors need to develop further innovative approaches to protect children.

The report contains the key findings and recommendations of a [study](#) on online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings. It was based on information provided by 40 state parties to the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, 12 NGOs and two IT companies. The study assessed the extent to which technology impacts human trafficking as well as the operational and legal challenges in detecting, investigating and prosecuting online and ICT-facilitated human trafficking offences. Regarding the means adopted by state parties, the study highlighted internet monitoring, web-scraping tools and social network analysis. The involvement and cooperation of a wide range of agencies and knowledge sharing are described as crucial, just as is cross-border cooperation in securing electronic evidence.

The study observed that technology-based tools for identifying victims of human trafficking, e.g., facial recognition and webcrawlers, are valuable for data reduction and handling large volumes of information. However, they raise ethical concerns and should only be used by well-trained operators with knowledge of human trafficking.

Ultimately, the study refers to online self-reporting mechanisms and helplines which allow victims to request assistance and disseminate information to communities at risk. It is recommended developing online confidential reporting mechanisms and working with private companies to create mechanisms for the purpose to report suspicious activities and advertisements. Countries should also develop data-sharing procedures and cooperation protocols with companies that have relevant data.

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