

CHILD TRAFFICKING: WHO ARE THE VICTIMS AND THE CRIMINAL NETWORKS TRAFFICKING THEM IN AND INTO THE EU

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[Press Release](#)

New Europol report on child trafficking provides up-to-date intelligence picture on criminal phenomenon



- One of the most serious aspects of this phenomenon is the role of the family, with Europol receiving regular notifications of children being sold to criminal networks by their families. In some cases they engage directly in the trafficking and exploitation of their own children.
- Female suspects play a key role in the trafficking and exploitation of minors, much more than in criminal networks which are trafficking adult victims.
- Most of the cases reported to Europol involve networks escorting non-EU minor victims across the entire route from their country of origin to the place of exploitation, frequently with the involvement of smuggling networks. Smuggling of minor victims through the external borders and across member states usually entails the use of forged travel documents.
- Criminal profits are mainly redirected to the country of origin of the key suspect, in small amounts via money transfer services and in larger sums using criminal money couriers and mules.
- Children are trafficked from around the world into the EU. The majority of non-EU networks reported to Europol involved Nigerian organised crime groups which are trafficking young girls to be sexually exploited.
- Children in migration and unaccompanied minors are at higher risk of trafficking and exploitation. Although the scale of trafficking of unaccompanied minors remains unknown, a future increase is expected.

These are some of the findings of the [Situation Report on Criminal networks involved in the Trafficking and Exploitation of Underage Victims in the European Union](#), which Europol released today on the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day.

MOST COMPREHENSIVE EVIDENCE-BASED PICTURE TO DATE

For this first time ever on such a scale, this report provides an in-depth picture of the features of criminal networks involved in one of the most ominous crimes of all – the abuse of vulnerable children. For the purpose of the report, operational intelligence from almost 600 contributions involving trafficked underage victims was used, all of which were reported to Europol by the Member States between 2015 and 2017.

In Europe, thousands of minors continue to be trafficked and exploited to generate profits for criminal networks, accounting for over 20% of all identified victims of trafficking [according to UNICEF](#). Europol increasingly receives information on trafficking networks operating across Member States, taking advantage of the vulnerability of children to sexually exploit them and to abuse them in labour exploitation. Other criminal groups place victims on the streets to beg for money, force them to commit various types of crimes, sell them through illegal adoption schemes and defraud the welfare state.

Exploited children in vulnerable situations deserve to be protected more than anyone else. This landmark report draws on months and years of investigation and information exchange between devoted national anti-trafficking units in the Member States and Europol to draw the most up-to-date intelligence picture of this heinous crime”, said Europol’s Executive Director **Catherine De Bolle**. “Together with EU Member States, we will build on the finding of this report to better support future investigative actions at both national and EU-level against trafficking of the weakest social category of all – vulnerable children

"Trafficking of minors is the lowest and most vile crime against those who need our protection most. On EU Anti-Trafficking Day, this report shows once again that we cannot close our eyes to what is happening on EU soil and outside.", commented the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship **Dimitris Avramopoulos**. "Together with Member States and the support of Europol we must continue fighting to eradicate this heinous exploitation and abuse of children."

Released on the occasion of the [EU Anti-Trafficking Day](#) on 18 October, this report is produced in the framework of the EU Policy Cycle for Organised Crime and Serious International Crime.

More details and context can be found in the report itself. [Download the report](#).

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