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# FIGHTING CHILD TRAFFICKING: A MAIN PRIORITY FOR EU LAW ENFORCEMENT

15 Oct 2014

## [Press Release](#)

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups targeted by the organised criminal groups involved in trafficking human beings (THB). Europol, in cooperation with EU law enforcement authorities and its other partners, are therefore raising awareness on the trafficking of children used for sexual and labour exploitation. EU law enforcement sees crimes against vulnerable children as one of their main priorities in combating serious and organised crime.

Trafficked children are typically exploited by forcing them into committing criminal activities and begging for money in public places. These children are often falsely identified as petty criminals and not victims of trafficking, and cases are therefore under-reported in the EU. Organised crime groups target children for trafficking as they can be easily recruited and controlled by the traffickers.

As one of the main priorities in the fight against organised crime, Europol is committed to further strengthening the fight against this form of crime against children. Europol has recently issued an [intelligence notification](#) to EU law enforcement authorities, outlining the situation and trends in this crime area. Europol analysts and experts continue to support EU Member States in combating trafficking in human beings, including children, by facilitating the exchange of intelligence and analysing information shared by the Member States.

The problem of child trafficking will also be addressed during today's conference 'Child alerting in the EU: Saving the lives of endangered missing children' at the European Parliament. During this conference AMBER Alert Europe will share its vision about an EU-wide system for child abduction alerts.

## Who are these children?

The children falling prey to trafficking in human beings typically come from difficult socio-economic backgrounds. Trafficking networks specifically target economically deprived families and use complicit money lenders to push them into debt. Extremely high interest rates prevent the families from paying off their debts and traffickers force them to surrender their children as payment for their debts. In some cases, children are sold by their families to the traffickers. Pregnant women are also sometimes recruited and forced to sell their children.

## How are trafficked children exploited?

Victims are forced to engage in a wide range of criminal activities by their exploiters. This includes dealing in drugs, different forms of property crime including burglaries, pick-pocketing, shoplifting and organised begging. Victims are often forced to commit various types of crime at the same time. To enforce obedience, traffickers keep the children under constant supervision and intimidate them using threats of violence, depriving them of food and other using coercive measures.

### Why is child trafficking under-reported?

Identifying the victims of trafficking is a challenge in general. Many victims are unaware of their intended exploitation or hesitate in cooperating with law enforcement. This leaves the children at risk of disappearing or being re-trafficked if they are handed back to their exploiters. Identifying victims of child trafficking is even more difficult as they are often seen as offenders and not victims. Like many adult victims of trafficking, children often do not consider themselves as victims of exploitation and see their situation as normal.



EN [Intelligence Notification](#) [182.39 KB]

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CRIME AREAS [Trafficking in Human Beings](#) · [Cybercrime](#) · [Child Sexual Exploitation](#)  
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ENTITIES [European Cybercrime Center \(EC3\)](#)

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