INCREASED FOCUS ON THE LINK BETWEEN THE INTERNET AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

06 Jun 2014
Press Release

On 4-5 June 2014 Europol organised an expert meeting on human trafficking to put the spotlight on two specific areas of human trafficking that require greater attention by the law enforcement community and Europol.

The first day was dedicated to the link between the Internet and human trafficking. The Internet and e-commerce were identified in the 2013 EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) as key crime enablers, with trafficking in human beings (THB) specifically identified as a vulnerable crime area in relation to this. The link between the use of the Internet, cybercrime and THB criminal activities is now stronger than ever before, as human trafficking networks increasingly exploit ‘online market places’ to their benefit, for example in the recruitment of victims.

"Organised crime groups’ increasing use of the Internet is a serious challenge for law enforcement agencies in their efforts to disrupt human trafficking networks. In order to succeed, they must make effective use of cross-border cooperation tools such as those offered by Europol, to complement their national efforts. It is also important to synchronise ‘traditional’ THB investigations and specialised cybercrime investigations," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

On the second day, experts focused on the trafficking in children. The SOCTA identified child trafficking as one of the principal threats and is clearly considered by Europol as an intelligence gap to be addressed by the law enforcement community. Child trafficking is a significant element of intra-EU human trafficking, but often remains unreported when affected children are not identified as victims.

"Child trafficking is a particularly sensitive crime since it impacts on the most vulnerable members of society. It requires robust engagement from law enforcement and other stakeholders who are operating on the frontline to combat human trafficking," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

Europol’s expert meeting gathered law enforcement officers from 27 countries as well as experts from international and non-governmental organisations active in the field of human trafficking.