NEW TASK FORCE AT EUROPOL TO TARGET THE MOST DANGEROUS CRIMINAL GROUPS INVOLVED IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

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Press Release
On 2 July, the Joint Liaison Task Force Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings (JLT-MS) was launched at Europol. This new operational platform will allow liaison officers from all EU Member States to step up the fight against constantly adapting criminal networks.

An upgrade to tackle the most dangerous groups

The new task force, coordinated by Europol’s European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC), will focus on intelligence-led coordinated action against criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings. Liaison officers from all EU Member States and potentially operational cooperation partners will work even closer together to identify networks, prioritise, prepare and execute cross-border operations.

The JLT-MS will increase the support mechanism already available in the EMSC, including analytical capabilities and tools, such as the Joint Operational Team (JOT) MARE and its Information Clearing House (ICH). The task force will provide a joint platform for direct contact and better coordination and cooperation between law enforcement authorities.

Identify criminals and target the proceeds of crime

The JLT-MS platform will also facilitate the joint development of stronger operational strategies which will help disrupt international criminal networks even more efficiently. The task force will enable the support and investigation of an increased number of high priority cases. JLT-MS operational joint activities will focus on the identification and further investigation of high value targets (HVTs).
Additionally, the new operational platform offers an opportunity to target the proceeds of crime. In addition to the investigation of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, this strengthened coordinated approach will enable considerably the increase and effectiveness of parallel financial investigations, in particular money laundering and asset recovery.

Europol’s Deputy Executive Director Operations, Wil van Gemert said:

“Offering a ‘service’ in high demand, criminal networks of migrant smugglers are not shy about using violence and violating the basic human rights of their ‘clients’. Our experts helped Member States’ law enforcement agencies in tackling criminal networks during 39 Action Days on the ground, leading to more than 600 arrested suspects of migrant smuggling in 2018. The criminal networks are constantly reshaping their business models to avoid law enforcement radars. This is why through this new JLT-MS, EU Member States with the support of Europol will target even more effectively this major threat for human lives posed by criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings.”