

Fact Page on Trafficking in Human Beings

#EUagainstTHB | October 2020

Trafficking in human beings is a violation of fundamental rights and a serious and organised crime. [The Anti-trafficking Directive](#) provides for a two-yearly report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The latest report shows that trafficking in human beings has not diminished, but has rather evolved.

Who are the victims?

14 145 victims of trafficking were registered in the EU for 2017 and 2018. Despite efforts, this represents a higher number than in previous reporting period. It is likely that the actual number of victims is significantly higher, as many victims remain undetected.



Women and girls are the main victims of this serious and organised crime.

72 % of all registered victims were women and girls. Women and girls were the vast majority (92 %) of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the EU.



Children accounted for 22 % of all victims.

Nearly three quarters (74%) of all child victims were EU citizens, the majority of whom (64%) were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The vast majority (78%) of child victims were girls.



Half of the victims are EU citizens.

EU citizens accounted for nearly half (**49 %**) of all victims of trafficking. More than one-third (34 %) of the victims were trafficked in their own EU Member State.

Forms of trafficking

1

Sexual exploitation remains the most common form of trafficking, with 60 % of the registered victims.

Women were the vast majority (92 %) of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the EU. The majority (64%) of registered child victims were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

High-risk environments include: prostitution, escort agencies and services, massage services, bars and nightclubs.

2

Trafficking for labour exploitation affected 15% of all victims.

Labour exploitation predominantly affects men: 68% of all victims were male.

High-risk sectors for labour exploitation include agriculture, construction, car washes, and waste services, but also domestic work, care industry and cleaning.

3

Other forms of trafficking include: forced begging and criminality; forced and sham marriages; and even organ removal.

Particular concerns



Criminal methods used by traffickers have changed due to the extensive use of the internet and social media, and the deployment of **technology** in many stages of the trafficking chain.



An increased risk of trafficking remains **in the context of migration** as trafficking networks continue to abuse vulnerabilities of people and asylum procedures, mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. **Women and unaccompanied minors** are exposed to particular risk of trafficking.



Marginalised communities: vulnerable people, men, women and children, including in marginalized Roma Communities, are particularly at risk of being targeted by traffickers for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced begging, forced criminality, forced sham marriages. Covid-19 increases vulnerabilities and risk of trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.

Culture of impunity

The high number of registered victims within the EU call for a strong response against the impunity of the perpetrators and make the trafficking crime a high- risk low-profit crime.

*Suspected, prosecuted and convicted for trafficking in human beings offences 2017-18.



What are the areas of progress?

Considerable progress has been made in several areas including: transnational cooperation, cross-border law enforcement and judicial operational actions; the setting-up of national and transnational referral mechanisms and developing the knowledge base about trafficking.

Operational cooperation has brought tangible results, notably in the framework of the European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT-THB):

in 2019 this work has resulted in **825** arrests, **8 824** suspects and **1 307** potential victims, including **69** children, identified, **94** organized crime groups, identified or dismantled and **€1.5 million** of assets frozen in bank accounts, companies and web domains. Member States make increasing use of EU Agencies to exchange information, carry out joint action and Joint Investigation Teams to fight trafficking in human beings.

What needs to be done

Gaps and limitations highlighted in the progress report call for:



A better implementation of the [Anti-trafficking Directive](#) in the Member States, and for a better tailored response to the evolving crime.



A new strategic approach towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings.

These actions will be developed in the context of the Agenda on tackling organised crime in relation to the [EU Security Union Strategy](#) and the [Pact on Migration](#).