

Human trafficking ring targeted in the UK and Romania

15 November 2019



In a synchronised joint action by law enforcement officers from the UK and Romania, 17 suspects were taken into custody in the UK and one suspect was taken into custody in Romania. The suspects from the UK are alleged to have participated in modern slavery, controlling prostitution, and committing drug and firearm offences. The Romanian suspect is alleged to have participated in trafficking in persons, ongoing pimping and money laundering. Sixteen searches were carried out in the UK and four in Romania, yielding cash, luxury cars and cocaine. A total of 29 potential victims, aged between 20 and 40 years, were recovered in London and brought to safety.

Two of the leaders of the group, detained in London, were also under investigation, on the basis of European Arrest Warrants issued by the Romanian authorities, for attempted murder.

Authorities suspect that an organised criminal group (OCG) was formed in Romania in 2013 for the express purpose of committing the crimes of human trafficking, ongoing pimping and money laundering. The OCG recruited more than 60 vulnerable young women in Romania, promising them significant amounts of money and legitimate work, and then trafficked them to the UK for the purpose of sexually exploiting them in London. The victims lived and worked, under threat of violence and blackmail, in houses provided by the OCG. The victims were promised a share of their earnings, but in reality received very little, and thus were kept completely dependent on the OCG.

Eurojust held one coordination meeting to facilitate the setting up of the joint investigation team (JIT). Eurojust also provided financial and logistic support for the JIT among the UK, Romania, Eurojust and Europol. Europol also held an operational meeting.

National authorities:

- **UK:** Metropolitan Police Central Specialist Crime – Vulnerability Investigations Team; Crown Prosecution Service
- **RO:** Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) – Iasi Territorial Service; Organised Crime-fighting Brigade; Romanian National Police; Special Operations Directorate; B.C.C.O. Constanța and B.C.C.O. Bacău

[Link to DIICOT and Romanian Police video](#)