

Modern slavery case solved with Eurojust's support

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□Eurojust helped national authorities from Slovakia, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands to bring down a Slovak organised crime group (OCG) involved in cross-border trafficking in human beings (THB) for labour exploitation and large-scale money laundering. During the action day, which was coordinated by Eurojust, the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit, 5 suspects were arrested, and several properties belonging to the criminals were searched. Thanks to Eurojust's active support, European Arrest Warrants (EAWs) and European Investigation Orders (EIOs) were swiftly issued and executed. The crimes of the gang were committed between 2008 and 2017 in the Slovakian regions of Prešov and Košice and on UK territory.

In 2015, the UK National Desk opened a case at Eurojust to investigate a criminal group, consisting of 5 Slovak nationals, who lived in the UK until 2017 and then moved to Germany. The OCG maintained a hierarchical structure with strict distribution of tasks for the individual members, and systematically and meticulously planned and performed activities.



The Slovak victims of the gang, who were mostly underprivileged people, were recruited in Slovakia and brought to the UK for forced labour. They were permanently employed, with bogus work contracts, in Chinese restaurants and car wash facilities under harsh working conditions: 12 to 14 hours per day, 6 days per week. The victims allegedly received a salary of at least £400 per week. The criminals appropriated most of that amount, arbitrarily claiming reimbursement for transport, accommodation and food that were provided to the victims under dubious financial arrangements. The victims thus ended up receiving only a tiny fraction of their actual salary: approximately £20 per week. The members of the OCG subsequently transferred that illegally obtained income to Slovakia to disguise its origin.

Eurojust set up a joint investigation team (JIT) between Slovakia and the UK to share information on victims and suspects and decide on a common strategy. The JIT, which received funding from Eurojust, helped to speed up the investigations, culminating in the successful action day. The JIT also facilitated the issuance and execution of 2 EIOs before and during the action day on German and Dutch territory, as well as 5 EAWs. Europol also supported the operations by providing funding for two UK officers to travel during the action.

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