

Prostitution: Romanian criminal network dismantled

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✘ On 16 January, Swiss and Romanian investigators carried out simultaneous searches and hearings of 23 persons in an operation to dismantle an organised criminal group (OCG) suspected of committing trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and controlling of prostitution.

The operation is part of a joint investigation team concluded in August 2017 between the Prosecution Office of the Canton of Vaud and the Directorate for Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) Pitesti Territorial Office, with the operational and financial support of Eurojust. This JIT was the first JIT was signed with a Swiss cantonal prosecutor's office.

Investigations, conducted both in Vaud and Pitesti, indicate that as of 2016, the members of the OCG recruited young female victims in precarious financial and social situations using the 'loverboy' method. The victims were transported to and intensively exploited in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 2016, one such victim, purchased by three suspects from another suspect, was stabbed to death. Her body was found abandoned in a forest on the French/Swiss border.

The investigation began in early 2016 by the Lausanne municipal police, and the case was opened by the Swiss Liaison Prosecutor at Eurojust in May 2017. The investigation led to the identification of nine suspects and fifteen victims of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in Switzerland and Romania. As a result of the investigations carried out, the criminal activity is estimated at more than EUR 2 million.

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