

Victims of human trafficking in three countries brought to safety

12 December 2019

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✘ A criminal network allegedly trafficking women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as pimping and drug trafficking, was dismantled with the assistance of Eurojust and Europol. The alleged offenders were active in Romania, Spain, the Czech Republic and other countries. Fourteen suspects were arrested, 11 house searches were conducted and assets were seized. Nine young women who practiced prostitution for the benefit of the criminal network were located during the action day and brought to a place of safety. More than 50 young women are believed to have been exploited in the past years.

Eurojust offered a platform for the competent national authorities to take prompt, decisive action against the alleged offenders, as well as to respond swiftly to developments on the ground. To this end, a coordination centre was set up at Eurojust on 11 December to help coordinate the arrests, searches, seizures and hearings carried out in Romania, Spain and the Czech Republic.

Women were recruited by the criminal network in Romania, often drugged, threatened or physically abused, and many times trafficked into other countries to work as prostitutes. The women were regularly moved, making detection difficult.

Criminal proceedings were opened in Romania by the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) in Constanta and by the Investigating Court number 5 in Valencia in coordination with the Valencia Provincial Prosecutor's Office in Spain, as well as national police authorities.¹

Since 2018, Eurojust has assisted in the coordination of investigations, and helped to prepare and execute the joint action day. Eurojust held three coordination meetings with national judicial authorities, with the participation of investigators from police bodies from the involved countries. Further coordination will be necessary to tackle jurisdictional issues.

Europol's teams on trafficking in human beings and money laundering provided continuous support to the investigations, enabling police cooperation, providing analytical support, and joining during the action day.

¹

National authorities:

Spain: Policia Nacional

Romania: Criminal Investigation Office Constanta (BIC), Brigade for Special Operations Constanta (BOS) and Directorate for Special Operations (DOS), Bucharest

Czech Republic: Police of the Czech Republic, National Headquarters Against

Organised Crime, Department of Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration

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