

# Victims of sexual abuse saved through Eurojust's intervention

□6 June 2019

With the active support of Eurojust, the Italian and Romanian national authorities brought down an organised crime group involved in trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. In a joint action day, coordinated by Eurojust, 8 suspects were placed under preventive measures, 18 house searches were carried out and more than €70 000 in assets and cash were seized. Another three people were deported to Romania. It was the first time that two National Members at Eurojust submitted to the Italian and Romanian competent authorities a formal Joint Request that triggered the initiation of an investigation and the setting up of a joint investigation team.

The members of the organised crime group (OCG), mainly composed of Romanian nationals, coerced women and minors into prostitution, initially in the Romanian Pascani district and at a later stage, in the area of Bergamo in Italy. The victims typically stemmed from poor rural areas and precarious family backgrounds, and had a low level of education. The OCG members promised to the victims lawful jobs and a better future in Italy and occasionally recruited them via job centres. The victims were forced to pay to the criminals €100 per day, and an additional amount for accommodation and transportation. The OCG members are suspected of having committed the crime of trafficking in human beings (THB) with the purpose of enslavement, prostitution and sexual exploitation.

To target the OCG more efficiently, the National Members for Italy and Romania at Eurojust took the initiative in April 2018 and convinced the Italian Public Prosecutor's Office of Brescia to open an investigation into the OCG and form a joint investigation team (JIT) with the Romanian Territorial Office of the Directorate for Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism of Iași. The Italian National Antimafia Directorate was also involved in triggering the investigation. Eurojust supported the JIT financially and logistically and held two coordination meetings at its premises in The Hague to further facilitate the judicial cooperation between the authorities involved, and help them advance their criminal investigations. The successful outcome of the operation was mainly due to this unique Joint Request, which is based on the special powers granted to National Members by the Council Decision setting up Eurojust as the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit.. [[Click here](#) or on image to view video]

## ✘ Joint Requests

Eurojust Joint Requests are issued in accordance with Article 6 of the Council Decision 2002/187/JHA setting up Eurojust, as amended by Council Decision 2009/426/JHA. Based on this legal provision, Eurojust National Members can ask the competent national judicial authorities to perform a variety of activities, including: undertake an investigation, coordinate

their actions, set up a JIT, take special investigative measures (e.g. controlled deliveries). This power of request can be exercised individually by one National Member, but also jointly, which is a recent practice that reinforces the advisory and persuasive role of Eurojust. Historically, joint requests have been used to address conflicts of jurisdiction by requesting the competent authorities to accept that one of them is in a better position to prosecute.