



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

# Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland

## Annual Report 2020



[www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie)

## Contents

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
1. HUMAN TRAFFICKING EXPLAINED.....	5
WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?.....	5
WHY DOES IT HAPPEN AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN? .....	6
PEOPLE SMUGGLING VS. HUMAN TRAFFICKING.....	7
2. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN IRELAND .....	8
2020 OVERVIEW .....	8
2016-2020 DATA.....	10
3. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN EUROPE .....	13
4. IRELAND’S RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING .....	15
INTERNATIONAL LAW .....	15
THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN IRELAND .....	15
STATE SUPPORTS FOR VICTIMS .....	16
COMBATTING THE CRIME OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING.....	19
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN.....	20
5. INTERNATIONAL EVALUATIONS AND COOPERATION .....	21
US ‘TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS’ REPORT 2020 .....	21
6. PROGRESS IN 2020 .....	24
PROJECTS UNDER THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN .....	24
AWARENESS RAISING EVENTS.....	25
TRAINING .....	28
RESEARCH.....	29
FUNDING .....	31

## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Justice is pleased to present the twelfth annual report on Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland (2020), which covers the period between 1 January and 31 December 2020.

The report meets Ireland's reporting obligations under Article 19 of the EU Human Trafficking Directive (2011/36/EU)<sup>1</sup>.

The report is structured in the following way:

- Chapter 1 provides a definition of human trafficking and explains its characteristics
- Chapter 2 provides statistics on the victims of human trafficking identified by Ireland in 2020
- Chapter 3 provides an outline of the extent of trafficking in Europe
- Chapter 4 describes Ireland's State and NGO-led response to the crime of trafficking and the provision of care to its victims
- Chapter 5 notes international assessments of Ireland's efforts to combat trafficking and to provide supports to victims
- Chapter 6 describes notable actions and progress made in 2020 in delivering on the objectives of the National Action Plan against human trafficking.

In Ireland, there were 38 victims of human trafficking identified by An Garda Síochána in 2020. 26 of these were victims of sexual exploitation, 10 were victims of labour exploitation and 2 were victims of forced criminality. This represents 4 less than the 42 reported in respect of 2019. As was the case in previous years, in 2020 the vast majority of incidents of human-trafficking reported in Ireland relate to sexual exploitation.

However, the actual number is likely to be significantly higher as many victims remain undetected. A statistical study on trafficking in human beings in the EU was published by the European Commission which showed that 20,532 men, women and children were registered as victims of trafficking in the EU in 2015-2016.

There were no convictions for human trafficking offences in 2020, and the difficulties in securing convictions against traffickers are well understood. An Garda Síochána continue to vigorously pursue a number of cases where action was initiated prior to 2020, and commenced action on a number of new cases during 2020.

Each year the US Department of State evaluates the actions of countries around the world in combatting human trafficking. Ireland was ranked a Tier 2 Watch List rating in the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report which denotes that the Irish government "... do not fully meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards".

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<sup>1</sup> 'Member States shall take the necessary measures to establish national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. The tasks of such mechanisms shall include the carrying out of assessments of trends in trafficking in human beings, the measuring of results of anti-trafficking actions, including the gathering of statistics in close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in this field, and reporting'.

The Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland commits the Department of Justice to ensuring the availability of funding to NGOs who are active in the field of human trafficking. This commitment recognises the role played by NGOs in assisting victims of human trafficking to access necessary supports to aid their recovery from their ordeal. In 2020, funding was provided by the Department to a number of NGOs who are active in the field of human trafficking for the amount of €687,2541, an increase of 51% over the funding allocation for 2019.

In October of 2020, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) were officially designated as Ireland's independent National Rapporteur for Anti-Human Trafficking under article 19 of the EU Human Trafficking Directive. The National Rapporteur's responsibilities will include monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking policy at the national level and playing a key role in data collection on trafficking in human beings at national level.

Work throughout 2020 led to government approval in May 2021 for the creation of a new National Referral Mechanism allowing a fundamental shift to our model of identification of victims, where the identification of victims will not solely be the responsibility of An Garda Síochána and instead more central roles will be given to other State agencies. This holistic approach will encourage more victims to come forward and access the supports and protections available and, in time, build up enough trust and self-confidence to give evidence in criminal prosecutions.

The Department of Justice has established a forum for victims and stakeholders to examine avenues of improvement in relation to human trafficking. The forum consists of State, agency and civil society organisation stakeholders working together to provide supports to victims of human trafficking with expert members to examine subjects such as the National Referral Mechanism, specialised accommodation, enforced labour and other priority issues.

A number of research projects were concluded in 2020, the Project on Perspectives of Trafficking for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation in Ireland, and the Sexual Exploitation Research Project (SERP). Work continued throughout 2020 on the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Project on the Island of Ireland (HTEPII - the Santa Marta project) and the final report was launched in April 2021. These will all inform the Department of Justice policy function and research and data analytics teams.

Launching on EU Anti-Human Trafficking Day, 12 October, Minister McEntee and the International Organisation for Migration Ireland launched an anti-human trafficking public awareness initiative which included awareness raising measures on social media and in key transport hubs, to convey the messages that human trafficking is a crime and that anyone can be exploited, and to empower the public to recognise the signs of human trafficking.

The Department of Justice also funded a number of NGOs and stakeholders in the anti-human

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<sup>1</sup> This is an increase of 51% over 2019

trafficking sector for initiatives focusing on awareness raising and training for frontline staff, state, local authority and civil society with regards to human trafficking - what to watch out for, what to do, where to get help.

The Department continues to maintain the 'Blue Blindfold' website, [www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie), which provides a user-friendly overview of how the crime manifests in Ireland, how members of the public can spot and report the signs of trafficking, and how the State supports these victims once identified. The Blue Blindfold website was updated in 2020 with a new user friendly interface, revised and updated information and contact details. Further contact information for NGO frontline service providers in the domestic and sexual violence sector were also added. This report, and its' predecessors are hosted on the website. The 'Blue Blindfold' motif urges the public not to close their eyes to the signs of human trafficking.

Department of Justice  
May 2021

## 1. HUMAN TRAFFICKING EXPLAINED

### WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human Trafficking is a crime and a human rights violation. For a situation to be one of trafficking, three distinct elements (act, means, and purpose) must be fulfilled:

- The ACT of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons must be done by...
- The MEANS, such as the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments, and it must be for...
- The PURPOSE OF EXPLOITATION i.e. sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced begging, forced criminality or organ removal.

#### **Child trafficking: an important note:**

A child cannot consent to being trafficked, therefore the MEANS element does not apply to children. In the case of a child, the mere ACT of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a child for the PURPOSE of exploitation constitutes trafficking.

Similarly, exploitation of a child in and of itself, without the 'Act' element, while constituting another criminal offence, will rarely amount to human trafficking.



*Victims of trafficking are often invisible to the public eye*

The presence of the three distinct elements is observed in the definition of human trafficking as set out in both the **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** and the **UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime**:

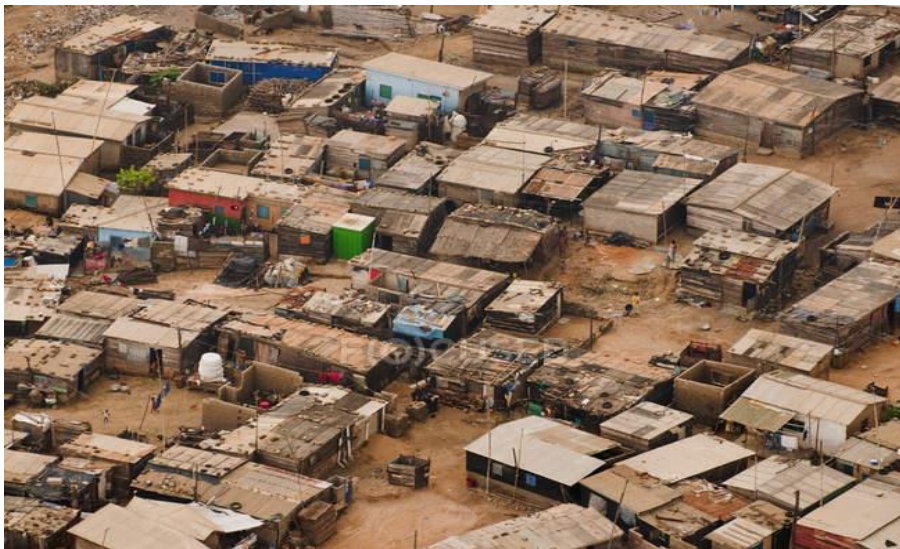
“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

In Ireland, these definitions have been incorporated into the **Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008** and the **Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013**.

## WHY DOES IT HAPPEN AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

Trafficking in human beings is a high profit–low risk crime based upon the principles of supply and demand. Criminal networks or individuals take advantage of a series of what are known as ‘push and pull’ factors, which explain why vulnerable individuals who lack opportunities and seek better living conditions in their own or a foreign country, end up being part of a human trafficking chain. This, in combination with the demand for cheap labour and sexual services, fuels human trafficking.



*Poverty is a risk factor for people becoming victims of trafficking*

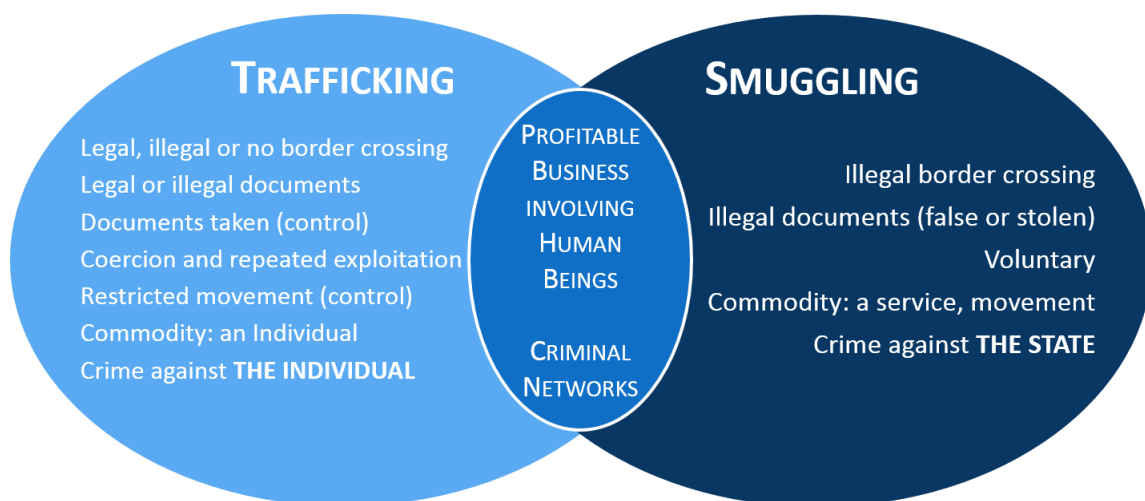
People can be trafficked into different types of work in agriculture, in the manufacturing sector and in the service industry. This can include restaurant and hotel work, domestic work, construction, agriculture and entertainment. They can be trafficked into prostitution, forced begging and forced criminality, sometimes in the form of cultivating or dealing in illegal drugs.

## PEOPLE SMUGGLING VS. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

It is important to note the distinction between people trafficking and people smuggling. The relevant distinction is that being **trafficked is involuntary**, whereas people smuggling involves the consent of the individual being smuggled.

What begins as smuggling may become a trafficking situation when a person who has been smuggled is then subjected to exploitation through force, coercion, deception, etc., during or after the smuggling event.

- People smuggling involves migrants being facilitated with entry into a State through illegal means whereas trafficking must have the threat or use of force, coercion or deception against a (adult) victim.
- People smuggling facilitates an individual’s illegal entry into the State whereas victims of trafficking can enter into the State both legally and illegally.
- People smuggling must take place across international borders but there is no requirement that a person must have crossed a border for trafficking to take place – it can and does take place within national borders.
- People smuggling, while often undertaken in dangerous or degrading conditions, involves migrants who have consented to the smuggling. Trafficking victims, have either never consented or, if they initially consented, that consent has been rendered meaningless by the coercive, deceptive or abusive actions of the traffickers.
- People smuggling ends with the arrival of the migrants at their destination; unlike trafficking it does not involve the ongoing exploitation of victims.





## 2. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN IRELAND

### A note on statistics:

Estimating the prevalence of trafficking is difficult due to the low numbers of identified victims each year, and the characteristics of human trafficking, including its clandestine nature and its overlap with other illegal activities. In addition, due to the relatively small number of victims in a given year, one-off incidents involving large numbers of victims can have a significant impact on the overall figures.

Therefore the statistical reports in this section provide a detailed analysis of the information that is available to authorities, rather than a precise account of the extent of the phenomenon in Ireland.

The 2020 annual report follows the approach to classification from the previous years in relation to victims of crimes prosecuted under section 3(2) of the Child Trafficking & Pornography Act 1998 (as amended by Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008). Based on international best practice, these victims are not counted as victims of trafficking.

### 2020 OVERVIEW

There were 38 victims of human trafficking identified by An Garda Síochána in 2020. 26 of these were victims of sexual exploitation, 10 were victims of labour exploitation, and 2 were victims of forced criminality.

	No.	% Total
<b>Total Victims Identified</b>	38	100%
<b>Adult</b>	38	100%
<b>Minor</b>	0	0%
<b>Offence occurred in Ireland</b>	29	76%
<b>Offence occurred outside Ireland</b>	9	24%

In relation to victims for whom the crime occurred outside of Ireland, these people were admitted to the system of State supports known as the National Referral Mechanism and provided with the same services as if the crime had occurred within the country.

Table 2 Source Countries	No.	% Total Approx.
Nigeria	11	29%
Romania	6	16%
Zimbabwe	5	13%
Albania	2	5%
Brazil	2	5%
Ghana	2	5%
Sierra Leone	2	5%
Gambia	1	2.5%
Iraq	1	2.5%
Latvia	1	2.5%
Lithuania	1	2.5%
Malawi	1	2.5%
Mexico	1	2.5%
Slovakia	1	2.5%
South Africa	1	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	

Table 3 Trafficking by Exploitation Type	No.	% Total
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	26	68.5%
Trafficking for labour exploitation	10	26.3%
Trafficking for forced criminality	2	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 2016-2020 DATA

The tables that follow outline the number of victims that have been identified in Ireland over the last 5 years, the nature of the exploitation they have been subject to and their region of origin.

### VICTIMS BY YEAR, AGE AND GENDER

Table 4 shows the number of suspected victims of human trafficking identified by An Garda Síochána by year of detection, age and gender. There have been 294 victims detected over the last 5 years with 38 victims identified in 2020.

Year	Age	Female	Male	Transgender	Total
2016	Adult	38	36	-	74
	Minor	1	-	-	1
	Total	39	36	-	75
2017	Adult	42	30	-	72
	Minor	3	-	-	3
	Total	45	30	-	75
2018	Adult	30	29	-	59
	Minor	3	2	-	5
	Total	33	31	-	64
2019	Adult	31	2	-	33
	Minor	7	2	-	9
	Total	38	4	-	42
2020	Adult	33	5	-	38
	Minor	-	-	-	0
	Total	33	5	-	38
Total	Adult	174	102	-	276
	Minor	14	4	-	18
	Total	188	106	-	294

Over the last 4 years there has been a downward trend in the number of victims detected annually. However, given the relatively small numbers of victims detected in Ireland, one off incidents where a large number of victims are detected in one instance can influence any given year.

There was a shift in the gender breakdown of victims of human trafficking in Ireland from 2018 to 2020. In 2018, males accounted for 49% of victims and females accounted for 51% of victims. This drastically changed in 2019 where males accounted for only 6% of victims and females accounted for 94% of victims and in 2020 where males accounted for only 13% of victims and females accounted for 87% of victims.

## VICTIMS BY REGION AND EXPLOITATION TYPE

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the 294 victims of human trafficking by region of origin.

Table 5 Suspected victims by year and region of origin		
Year	Region of Origin	Total
2016	Africa	17
	EEA	47
	South America	4
	Asia	6
	Non-EEA Europe	1
2017	Africa	28
	EEA	22
	South America	4
	Asia	19
	Ireland	2
2018	Africa	35
	EEA	19
	South America	2
	Asia	6
	Non-EEA Europe	1
	Ireland	1
2019	Africa	31
	EEA	8
	South America	1
	Asia	2
2020	Africa	23
	EEA	9
	South America	2
	North America	1
	Middle East	1
	Non-EEA Europe	2
<b>Total</b>	Africa	134
	EEA	105
	South America	13
	North America	1
	Middle East	1
	Asia	33
	Non-EEA Europe	4
	Ireland	3
	<b>Total</b>	294

In the last 5 years, 36% of suspected victims came from the EEA region, with 46% from the Africa region and 11% from the Asia region.

## VICTIMS BY YEAR, EXPLOITATION AND GENDER

The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013 came into effect in August 2013 and expanded the definition of human trafficking to include exploitation of a person for the purpose of forced begging and for forced participation in criminal activities for financial gain. These specific categories of alleged exploitation were previously recorded as ‘uncategorised exploitation’ or ‘labour exploitation’.

Table 6 below illustrates the trend in exploitation type in Ireland.

Table 6 Victims by year, exploitation and gender					
Year	Exploitation	Female	Male	Transgender	Total
2016	Sexual	32	-	-	32
	Labour	6	32	-	38
	Forced Criminality	-	4	-	4
	Sexual & Labour	1	-	-	1
2017	Sexual	28	3	-	31
	Labour	11	24	-	35
	Forced Criminality	5	3	-	8
	Forced Begging	1	-	-	1
2018	Sexual	26	1	-	27
	Labour	7	28	-	35
	Forced Criminality	-	2	-	2
2019	Sexual	33	1	-	34
	Labour	2	1	-	3
	Other*	3	2	-	5
2020	Sexual	24	2	-	26
	Labour	8	2	-	10
	Forced Criminality	1	1	-	2
Total	Sexual	143	7	-	150
	Labour	34	87	-	121
	Forced Criminality	6	10	-	16
	Sexual & Labour	1	-	-	1
	Forced Begging	1	-	-	1
	Other	3	2	-	5

\*Other denotes a mixture of Forced Criminality and Labour and Sexual exploitation

### 3. EXTENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN EUROPE

The latest major statistical study<sup>2</sup> on trafficking in human beings in the EU was published by the European Commission in December 2018. It presents a compilation of statistics at the EU Member State level on trafficking in human beings. This data collection exercise approached all 28-Member States and covers the years 2015 and 2016 and updates the 2014 data collection as relevant.

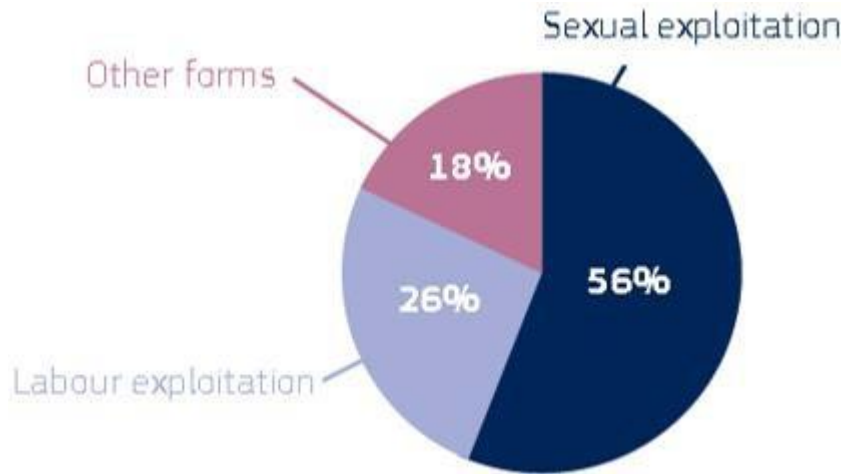
The report showed that 20,532 men, women and children were registered as victims of trafficking in the EU in 2015-2016. However, the actual number is likely to be significantly higher as many victims remain undetected.

Women and girls continue to be most vulnerable to trafficking at 68% while children alone represent 23% of registered victims.



Sexual exploitation is the most common form of exploitation, accounting for over half (56%) of registered victims of trafficking in human beings. Labour exploitation was the purpose of trafficking for around one quarter (26%) of the registered victims. ‘Other’ forms account for 18%.

<sup>2</sup> Full report available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_data-collection-study.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_data-collection-study.pdf) ; factsheet available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204\\_agenda-on-security-factsheet-report-thb\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_agenda-on-security-factsheet-report-thb_en.pdf)



The level of prosecutions and convictions are low, with 5,979 prosecutions and 2,927 convictions reported. Only 18 reported convictions for knowingly using services provided by victims.

The Commission noted that while the judgement of experts was that there were no discernible trends, they did note the continuing stability in some data, e.g.: 95% of the victims of sex exploitation are female and 75% of prosecutions relate to sex trafficking.



## 4. IRELAND'S RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

### INTERNATIONAL LAW

Ireland's national legislation has its foundation in the global and European commitment to fight human trafficking. The key international instruments are:

- The UN **Palermo Protocol** of the year 2000: A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime<sup>3</sup>.
- The **Council of Europe Convention** against Human Trafficking: A 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ratified July 2010<sup>4</sup>.
- **EU Directive 2011/36/EU**

### THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN IRELAND

Ireland's legislation, combined with administrative measures for victim support, fully implements these international treaties.



The key legal instruments in Ireland are:

- The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008<sup>5</sup>. This is the main human trafficking Act which defines the crime and its penalties, with the exception of child sex trafficking. The Act criminalises: the trafficking of adults; child trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation (dealt with by 1998 Act – see below); prostituting a trafficked person; and the payment for sex with a trafficked person.
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998<sup>6</sup>. This Act covers child trafficking, child sex abuse and child pornography. In relation to human trafficking, the legislation criminalises child trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013<sup>7</sup>. The 2013 amending Act modified the definition of Labour Exploitation to bring it into line with ILO definitions of forced labour and gave effect to the EU Directive 2011/36/EU.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/168008371d>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2008/act/8/enacted/en/print.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/22/enacted/en/print.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/24/enacted/en/print.html>



## STATE SUPPORTS FOR VICTIMS

### IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS

A victim of trafficking may access help in a number of ways. They may come forward themselves to An Garda Síochána or another State service. They may be rescued by An Garda Síochána in a police operation. They may approach an NGO (some of which are State-funded), such as Ruhama or the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland. These NGOs also provide ongoing support to victims of human trafficking. Victims may also be encountered by the Health Service Executive, Tusla, the Workplace Relations Commission, embassies and members of the public. The importance of public awareness is crucial to recognising potential victims of trafficking. More information on the indicators of human trafficking may be found on the Blue Blindfold website ([www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie)).

Potential victims are referred to An Garda Síochána to be identified as such, and to enter the National Referral Mechanism, the name given to the State supports.

### NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES FOR SUPPORT

Ireland provides a victim-centred system of State supports for victims of human trafficking that have been identified by An Garda Síochána. These supports are available through the National Referral Mechanism, which is a framework through which the State fulfils its obligations to protect and promote the human rights of trafficking victims, working in partnership with civil society. These include accommodation, medical services, legal aid and advice, amongst other supports.

Where victims of trafficking, or those acting on their behalf, do not wish to engage with An Garda Síochána, they do not enter the National Referral Mechanism and cannot avail of all services provided directly by the State. However, the Department of Justice recognises the reluctance that some victims may have in coming forward, and so provides funding to several NGOs to provide support and services to potential victims outside the National Referral Mechanism.

Progress has been made to improve the access of victims to State supports (the National Referral Mechanism). On 5 May 2021 Government approval was granted for development of a revised National Referral Mechanism for the identification of victims of human trafficking and provision of supports. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6: Progress in 2020 - Projects under the National Action Plan.

At any stage of the process, or if the victim is a non-EEA national without an investigative or personal need to remain in the State, their return home is facilitated by the International Organisation for Migration. The International Organisation for Migration runs assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes. This assistance is available to victims of trafficking regardless of nationality who wish to return home voluntarily but do not have the means,

including the necessary documentation, to do so. The Organisation for Migration has offices in many countries, most of which have developed a strong network of support ranging from housing facilities, to medical assistance, all aiming to support victims in the difficult process of reintegration.

Full details on the National Referral Mechanism may be found at [www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie), where formal written procedures are published to guide public officials in the identification and protection of victims of trafficking such as:

- A Statement of Roles and Responsibilities<sup>8</sup> is in place outlining the roles and responsibilities of State agencies and NGOs. The Statement describes the process of identification, the range of available services and assistance measures, information on access to these services, and the part played by relevant organisations at different stages.
- Administrative Immigration Arrangements<sup>9</sup> are in place to provide a means to remain in the State pending a trafficking investigation for Non-EEA suspected victims of trafficking who do not otherwise have such permission. This temporary protection can evolve into permanent residence.
- A Guide to Procedures for Victims of Trafficking in Ireland<sup>10</sup> provides information to victims of trafficking in relation to their rights.

## PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The close co-operation between stakeholders in the fight against trafficking is recognised internationally as a key element of a successful anti-trafficking strategy. Four dedicated State bodies focus directly on human trafficking and support for victims.

The **Department of Justice** coordinates policy on human trafficking in Ireland and works in collaboration with other Irish government agencies, and non-government organisations.

The **Human Trafficking Investigation & Co-ordination Unit** (HTICU) is part of the **Garda National Protective Services Bureau** (GNPSB) and officers of this Unit have particular expertise in regard to trafficking in human beings.

The **Anti-Human Trafficking Team** (AHTT) of the **Health Service Executive** (HSE) delivers an individual care plan for each victim of human trafficking.

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<http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie/en/BBF/Statement%20of%20Roles%20and%20Responsibilities.pdf/Files/Statement%20of%20Roles%20and%20Responsibilities.pdf>

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<http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie/en/BBF/Administrative%20Immigration%20Arrangements%20for%20the%20Protection%20of%20Victims%20of%20Human%20Trafficking%20-%20March%202011.pdf/Files/Administrative%20Immigration%20Arrangements%20for%20the%20Protection%20of%20Victims%20of%20Human%20Trafficking%20-%20March%202011.pdf>

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<http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie/en/BBF/Guide%20to%20Procedures%20June%202015.pdf/Files/Guide%20to%20Procedures%20June%202015.pdf>

The **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** provide full board accommodation and ancillary services through the **International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS)** for potential and suspected victims of trafficking on the basis of a referral by An Garda Síochána.

Potential and suspected victims who are in the asylum process remain in IPAS accommodation while a determination is being made in relation to their claim for asylum or associated processes (e.g. application for Leave to Remain or Subsidiary Protection).

Solicitors of the **Legal Aid Board** provide legal aid and advice to trafficking victims.

**Ruhama** is a Dublin-based NGO which works on a national level with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Ruhama provides a service to women who are currently involved in on-street and off-street prostitution, women who are exiting prostitution, women who are victims of sex trafficking and women who have a history of prostitution.

**Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)** is a national organisation working to promote justice, empowerment and equality for migrant workers and their families. The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland provides information, advocacy and legal support to migrants and their families all over Ireland. The organisation works to identify and support victims of trafficking for labour exploitation and supports the growth and development of a number of action groups that enable vulnerable migrant workers to work together and improve working conditions in specific sectors.

Other organisations active in the provision of services to victims of trafficking include:

**Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)** works to secure improvements in the rights and protections of migrants and their families in Ireland through working on policy and awareness on issues of migration, integration and human trafficking. The Immigrant Council of Ireland has an independent law centre and operates a helpline for immigration queries.

**Sexual Violence Centre Cork (SVCC)** is a Cork-based organisation working towards the elimination of sexual violence in society by raising awareness about the prevalence, incidence and dynamics of interpersonal violence within society. Its services include crisis support counselling, advocacy, a telephone helpline and a Sexual Assault Treatment Service (SATS).

**Doras Luimní** is an organisation that works to support and promote the rights of migrants living in Limerick and the wider Mid-West region. The organisation provides specialised direct support to victims of human trafficking and to women engaged in, or exiting from prostitution.

The **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** is an international organisation whose primary responsibility lies in assisting persons in returning to their country of origin if they so wish. Assistance is provided to both EU and non-EU nationals alike.

## COMBATting THE CRIME OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

There were no convictions for human trafficking offences in 2020, and the difficulties in securing convictions against traffickers are well understood. Despite best efforts, each of the prosecutions initiated in recent years have collapsed because of issues related to witnesses. An Garda Síochána continue to vigorously pursue a number of cases where action was initiated prior to 2020, and commenced action in 2020 in a number of new cases.

Due to the international nature of this crime, An Garda Síochána also participate in international actions against trafficking and significant activity in this sphere is noted below.

### EUROPEAN MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PLATFORM AGAINST CRIMINAL THREATS (EMPACT)

In 2018 An Garda Síochána joined the EU Cycle 2018–2021 EMPACT Group for Human Trafficking. The EMPACT Group meets at Europol in The Hague and is the Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats. It is part of an intelligence-led policing approach to tackling organised crime and human trafficking is one of its priority areas. Ireland is also a member of the EMPACT group ETUTU, which focuses on human trafficking from Nigeria into the European Union.

As part of the EMPACT Joint Action Days 2020, Ireland participated in 2 National Action Days.

The first of the two aforementioned Joint Day of Action, in which both An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) participated, was held in February 2020 and was designed to target human trafficking involving labour exploitation. The Day of Action involved a particular focus on the car wash industry due to suspicion that labour exploitation is a feature of the industry.

The second of the two aforementioned joint Days of Action, held in March 2020, was undertaken for the purpose of targeting human trafficking involving sexual exploitation and the associated demand for the purchase of sexual services and also involved participation by both An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Other international activities in 2020 included regular exchanges of information through the



Interpol Channel with other Interpol members in the field of human trafficking, and co-operation with the Police Service of Northern Ireland in a number of investigations into human trafficking and organised prostitution.

## THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION PROJECT ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND (HTEPII)

In 2019, a research project, undertaken by Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, commenced in-depth research relating to matters pertaining to human trafficking, with regard to the island of Ireland. The project is aimed at identifying high-quality data sets that exist in Ireland pertaining to human trafficking; enhancing existing information; collaborating with NGOs; analysing human trafficking and slavery information data; holding workshops to disseminate awareness-raising information to bodies such as schools and institutions and delivering a report and handbook. The research project is allied to the objectives of the Santa Marta Group in raising awareness of the nature and scale of trafficking in human beings in Ireland. The project also aligns with the objectives of the Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland.

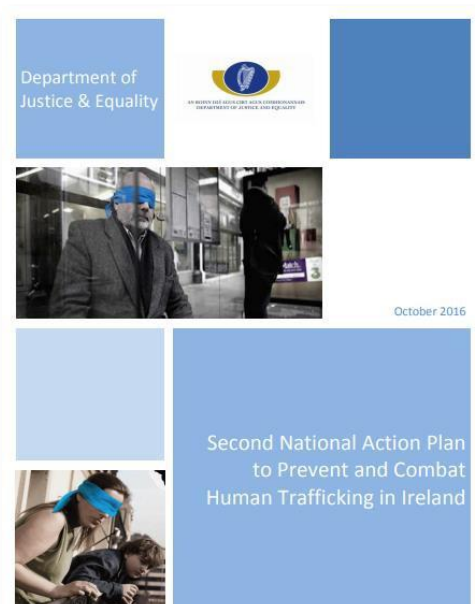
Work continued throughout 2020 and the final report was launched in April 2021. Much of the new data presented in the report was provided by NGOs and victim support organisations in both jurisdictions with recommendations relating to the National Referral Mechanism, all island data collection, training for professionals engaging with victims of human trafficking and awareness raising campaigns.

## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

A Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland was published in October 2016 and identified 65 separate actions to combat trafficking and assist victims. These actions were built on the response delivered under the First National Action Plan and on international and domestic experience to date and provides for new initiatives in order to address human trafficking in all its forms.

This National Action Plan complements our commitments under Ireland's Second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security and those set out in the Working Outline of the National Plan on Business and Human Rights.

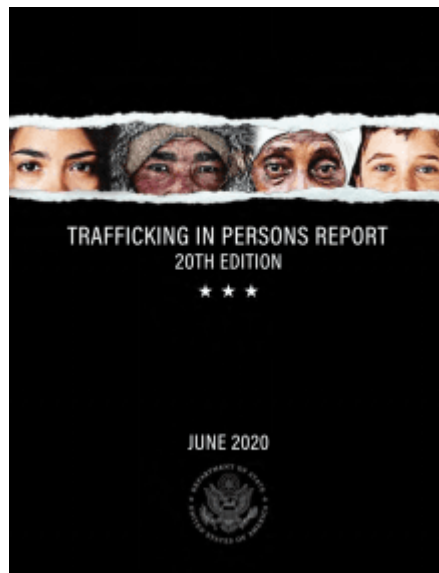
Work continues to proceed on the implementation of the plan. Many of the actions have been delivered, work to complete others is underway and new policy instruments are continually reviewed and introduced.



## 5. INTERNATIONAL EVALUATIONS AND COOPERATION

### US ‘TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS’ REPORT 2020

Each year the US Department of State evaluates the actions of countries around the world in combatting human trafficking. The US places each country into one of four tiers. The placement is based on the extent of governments’ efforts to meet the standards set by the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act for the elimination of human trafficking, which are generally consistent with the Palermo Protocol. Tier 1 is the highest ranking, the other tiers being Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 3.



The 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report<sup>2</sup> saw Ireland ranked on the Tier 2 Watch List rating. The Tier 2 Watch List denotes that the Irish government “... do not fully meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards”. This ranking reflects the difficulties that Ireland (along with other countries) face when attempting to secure convictions in relation to trafficking. Other international monitors are less critical on this point, reflecting an understanding of the difficulties which arise in relation to prosecutions outside the particular environment of the US.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

## SANTA MARTA GROUP

The Santa Marta Group was established in 2014 and is an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society to eradicate human trafficking and modern day slavery. Within the Santa Marta Group, Ireland leads the North Atlantic Maritime Project, in which the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal, also participate. This project relates to human trafficking in the maritime industry in the North Atlantic.

## CROSS BORDER CO-OPERATION

The Irish authorities are working closely with law enforcement colleagues in Northern Ireland to ensure that we have a whole of island approach to organised criminal activity and there is a commitment to progress cross border investigations and cross agency training.

A number of operations which have a cross-border dimension are currently being undertaken by An Garda Síochána, involving participation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The relevant investigations involve both Police organisations targeting Organised Crime Groups with strong links to organised prostitution and human trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, operating on the island of Ireland.

## INTERPOL TASK FORCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING (ITHT)

Ireland continues to participate in an Interpol Task Force on Human Trafficking. This is an international working group for law enforcement specialists dedicated to preventing trafficking in human beings at a global level. Through shared intelligence, research, education and learning, the Task Force seeks to progress and improve investigative methods in relation to human trafficking.

The Task force also makes recommendations, resolutions and presentations to Interpol's regional conferences and its General Assembly. Ireland continues to work with Interpol including through use of its '24/7' Databases, to share information and intelligence relating to particular cases and to assist other law enforcement entities, at an international level.

## EU NETWORK OF NATIONAL RAPORTEURS OR EQUIVALENT MECHANISMS ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Senior officials of the Department of Justice attended meetings of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms (NREM) in February, June and October 2020. The NREMs' carry out the assessments of trends in trafficking in human beings, the measuring of results of anti-trafficking actions, including the gathering of statistics in close cooperation with relevant civil society organisations active in this field, and reporting. The network seeks to develop

a new EU strategic approach against trafficking in human beings through a comprehensive approach from prevention through protection of victims to prosecution and conviction of traffickers. Measures discussed on a European level to better support the implementation of the Anti-trafficking Directive in Member States, in particular in cross border context, included:

- The support and protection of victims;
- Law enforcement and judicial action and cooperation against the crime;
- Preventing the crime from happening

Other matters discussed included reducing the demand that fosters trafficking, effectiveness of current legislation, breaking the criminal model to supply victims of trafficking for exploitation and protecting and empowering the victims, especially of women and children.

## NATIONAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING CO-ORDINATORS AND RAPPOREURS

A member of the Department of Justice virtually attended the annual meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-coordinators and Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms which is co-organised by the Council of Europe and OSCE in November 2020. These meetings are a platform to strengthen cross-border collaboration and build meaningful partnerships and play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of national anti-trafficking responses.

## EUROPEAN NETWORK ON VICTIMS' RIGHTS (ENVR)

Between 16 November and 16 December 2020 members of Department of Justice attended multiple European Network on Victims' Rights (ENVR) virtual workshops covering a broad scope of victim centred topics. The ENVR is a cooperation between Member State experts working under the control of competent government authorities responsible for victims' rights, from all Member States of the EU. The basic aim of the ENVR is to develop sustainable knowledge base especially for professionals and policy makers acting in the field of supporting and protecting crime victims including victims of trafficking.



## PROGRESS IN 2020 - PROJECTS UNDER THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

### ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL RAPPORTEUR FOR ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In October 2020, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was officially designated as Ireland's independent National Rapporteur for Anti-Human Trafficking under article 19 of the EU Human Trafficking Directive. The National Rapporteur's responsibilities include monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking policy at the national level and playing a key role in data collection on trafficking in human beings at national level.

### VICTIM IDENTIFICATION PROCESS - A NEW NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

The current process for victim identification requires victims to liaise with An Garda Síochána before receiving access to State-delivered supports, which is thought may deter possible victims from coming forward to seek identification.

Throughout 2020, the Department of Justice led a cross-departmental and NGO collaborative effort to examine how best to introduce a more integrated and victim centred National Referral Mechanism. On 5 May Government approval was granted for a fundamental shift to the current approach by introducing a new model of identification, and entry to the National Referral Mechanism, where the identification of victims will not solely be the responsibility of An Garda Síochána and instead more central roles will be given to other State agencies. The Department of Justice are now undergoing significant work to bring about this new model by developing the operational procedures and introducing legislative requirements.

### DIVISIONAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE UNITS

Divisional Protective Service Units (DPSUs) are expert Garda units who engage with especially vulnerable victims in specialised crime types, including human trafficking, child abuse, sexual crime and domestic abuse. DPSUs work hand in hand with the Garda Human Trafficking Investigation & Co-ordination Unit and with their final roll-out in 2020, DPSUs are now available in every Garda Division throughout the country.

### HIGH LEVEL WORKING GROUP ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In November 2019 the Department of Justice, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and An Garda Síochána established a High Level group to keep all issues relevant to the

legislative and operational framework for investigation and prosecution of cases that involve human trafficking under review, and to recommend any necessary improvements, including to the legislation, and to the training of investigating personnel. Training recommendations made by the group began their first phase in 2020, with a series of workshops for Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions legal staff and the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) and have resulted in better communications where regional Gardaí now seek the specialist advice of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in carrying out their investigations and preparing files for prosecution.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The Department of Justice established a forum for victims and stakeholders in 2020 to examine avenues of improvement in relation to human trafficking. The forum consists of State, agency and civil society organisation stakeholders working together to provide supports to victims of human trafficking. To complement the work of the forum, a number of sub-groups have been established with expert members to examine subjects such as the National Referral Mechanism, specialised accommodation, a review of the current National Action Plan and other priority issues.

## PROVISION OF SPECIALISED ACCOMMODATION

At present, it is the practice that victims of trafficking are placed in full board accommodation and ancillary services delivered by the International Protection Accommodation Services. While this accommodation is flexible, secure, and works well with other state actors, it is recognised that best practice thinking is to place victims in specialist centres where they may receive specialist care and support each other.

Throughout 2020, the Department of Justice and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth have been engaging with NGOs to see if an NGO-led solution to the accommodation issue is practical, in particular for female victims of sexual exploitation, a particularly vulnerable group. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is now taking this forward in the context of the wider review of Direct Provision and it is hoped a solution will be available in the near future.

## AWARENESS RAISING EVENTS

### EU ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING DAY

On 12 October 2020 Minister McEntee and the International Organisation for Migration Ireland announced the launch of an anti-human trafficking public awareness initiative. This initiative included awareness raising measures on social media and in key transport hubs, to convey the messages that human trafficking is a crime and that anyone can be exploited, and to empower the public to recognise the signs of human trafficking. It was undertaken with the support of a number of other state agencies and non-state organisations. The “#Anyone can be exploited campaign” communicated the message that human trafficking is a crime, that it is happening

everywhere, including in Ireland, and that we must all become familiar with the signs of trafficking;

A new website, [www.anyonetrafficked.com](http://www.anyonetrafficked.com), was launched, in conjunction with this initiative, to highlight the availability of supports and services for victims from the state as well as community and voluntary organisations active in this sector. A public webinar hosted by International Organisation for Migration Ireland and the Department of Justice was held on 1 October to discuss and address the importance of effective national referral mechanisms for victims of trafficking which served as a good introduction for the Campaign.

The campaign was visible on social media platforms from 9th October and continued in the run-up to European Anti-human Trafficking Day on 18th October, an important awareness raising day in the calendar and seeks to increase the exchange of information, knowledge and best practices among actors working in the field of Human Trafficking. The Campaign also launched poster adverts at Dublin Airport, ports, and other transport hubs from 19th October which continued for the rest of the month.

#### WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

On 30 July 2020 the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD marked World Day against Trafficking in Persons with a media press release highlighting Irish efforts in combatting human trafficking domestically and with partners abroad. The Minister stressed that the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána work collaboratively with a wide range of partners across the public service to provide care and practical support to trafficking victims including the HSE, the Legal Aid Board, the Immigration Service and Tusla and that the Department provides funding to NGOs for their work to provide support to victims of trafficking. Ireland would continue to work jointly with our partners who are active on this issue in international fora including the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union, and maintain a close working relationship, in particular, with the UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) who participate in our Human Trafficking Victims Forum.

#### RUHAMA AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN INTO THE CRIMINALISATION OF THE PURCHASE OF SEX

Part 4 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 provides for two new offences of paying for sexual activity with a prostitute and paying for sexual activity with a trafficked person. These measures and others introduced by Part 4 of the 2017 Act are part of the Government's efforts to target the demand for prostitution and are reinforced through awareness-raising efforts and well-publicised Garda operations.

In 2019 the Department of Justice funded the sum of €96,050 to Ruhama to carry out an awareness raising campaign into the criminalisation of the purchase of sex. This campaign ran until 23 June 2020. Ruhama are an NGO who work with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation including victims of sex trafficking and those who have a past experience of prostitution/sex trafficking. Ruhama is the only specialist, frontline NGO in Ireland working specifically to support anyone with these experiences on a nationwide basis.

Ruhama also works to change public attitudes, practices and policies that allow the exploitation of women through trafficking and prostitution to continue.

This national awareness raising campaign enhanced public awareness and understanding of the exploitation inherent in the sex trade and the vulnerabilities of those exploited within it, whilst specifically highlighting the fact that it is now a crime to purchase sex. The campaign built on the successes of the original 'We Don't Buy It' (WDBI) campaign, which was commissioned by Ruhama and the Department of Justice with their partners in 2015. This campaign was developed in conjunction with the Men's Development Network, SPACE International and the Sexual Violence Centre Cork.

#### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FUNDED AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGNS

In August 2020 the Department of Justice sent out a call to NGOs and stakeholders in the anti-human trafficking sector for applications for financial support for initiatives focusing on awareness raising and training for frontline staff, state, local authority, civil society with regards to human trafficking - what to watch out for, what to do, where to get help.

**The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland** were approved €28,754 to develop information resources and training on awareness of Human Trafficking for labour exploitation. This includes delivery of training to frontline staff and volunteers including those in Citizens Information Centres, NGOs, Community Groups and Trade Unions. The funding also provides for employment of an additional project worker.

**The Immigrant Council of Ireland** were approved €35,000 for development and delivery of introductory and advanced online training modules on awareness raising of human trafficking in Ireland. These modules are delivered to frontline practitioners who directly or indirectly encounter potential victims of trafficking.

**MECPATHS** were approved €20,398 for development and delivery of online education and awareness raising of human trafficking in Ireland to frontline professionals and students within the hospitality and services sectors. Following initial success this is now to be introduced the Aviation sector.

**DORAS** were approved €23,552 for development and delivery of training and information resources on awareness raising of human trafficking aimed at frontline staff and volunteers to build capacity. The funding also provides for employment of an anti-trafficking coordinator to oversee the implementation of the project which will target those based in the mid-west region.

#### BLUE BLINDFOLD WEBSITE

On 6 April 2018 the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, launched a revamp of the 'Blue Blindfold' website, [www.blueblindfold.gov.ie](http://www.blueblindfold.gov.ie). The Blue Blindfold website, blueblindfold.gov.ie, highlights the crime of human trafficking providing a user-friendly overview of how the crime manifests in Ireland, how members of the public can spot and report the signs of trafficking, and how the State supports these victims once identified. The Blue Blindfold

website also raises public awareness of what human trafficking is, to discourage demand for the services of victims of sexual and labour exploitation and to help to establish the actual incidence of human trafficking in Ireland.

The 'Blue Blindfold' motif urges the public not to close their eyes to the signs of human trafficking. The website hosts awareness raising material and merchandise using the Blue Blindfold logo which is available on request to the Department of Justice. Requests for such materials generally come from education institutions and regional awareness raising groups.

The Blue Blindfold website encourages people to report suspicions relating to prostitution, brothels and suspected victims of human trafficking and links to a Garda supported email address, **blueblindfold@garda.ie**, which is treated anonymously and with strict confidentiality. The Blue Blindfold website is maintained by the Department of Justice who have primary responsibility for the coordination and development of the Government's response to the crime of human trafficking.

The Blue Blindfold website was updated in 2020 with a new user friendly interface, revised and updated information and contact details. Further contact information for NGO frontline service providers in the domestic and sexual violence sector were also added.

## TRAINING

### TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Ireland endeavours to achieve best practice in its victim-centred approach to combating human trafficking. For this purpose, the relevant authorities in Ireland fund and deliver a variety of specialised anti-human trafficking training to State officials. Particular emphasis in this training is placed on the identification and provision of appropriate assistance to suspected victims of human trafficking. An Garda Síochána plays a leading role in this process.

The Human Trafficking Investigation & Co-ordination Unit provides human trafficking related training to probationer members of An Garda Síochána as part of the core training curriculum which is delivered to them at the Garda Training College in Templemore, Co. Tipperary. The purpose is to create awareness among Probationer Gardaí regarding the importance of recognising the vulnerability of persons involved in the sex trade and the appropriate manner in which to engage with them.

By the end of 2019, a total of four thousand, nine hundred and sixty-three (4,963) members of An Garda Síochána had been provided with core curriculum human trafficking related training. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic an initial decision was made to deploy a large number of trainees and instructors who were located at An Garda Síochána Training College to frontline duties as part of the national policing plan to support the public health guidelines to suppress the spread of COVID-19.

Changes introduced to the training regime involved new recruits undertaking most of their education from their homes on an e-learning platform before gaining practical experience in

frontline policing, thus, minimising the risk of infection spreading in the An Garda Síochána Training College and allowing An Garda Síochána ensure the availability of additional personnel on the frontline.

The human trafficking related training delivered addresses such issues as victim identification, awareness-raising, relevant legislation and responsibilities placed on An Garda Síochána in the Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland.

Beyond core curriculum human trafficking related training, specialised human trafficking training is also provided and as of the end of 2019, one thousand, four hundred and eighty-nine (1,489) members of An Garda Síochána and others have been provided with this specialised human trafficking training to further empower frontline and operational personnel to identify human trafficking and undertake relevant investigations. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, this specialised training was also impacted and could not be provided to new members in 2020.

The Human Trafficking Investigation & Co-ordination Unit also participate in continuous professional development courses and, since its establishment in 2015, Human Trafficking Investigation & Co-ordination Unit members have received specialist training from Europol, Interpol, CEPOL, the European Commission and the FBI, as well as partaking in joint human trafficking training activities with the UK authorities and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

In November 2020, the Office of the Director for Public Prosecutions partnered with the U.S. Embassy for a number of Human Trafficking Webinars hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit. On the 12th the webinar was designed to address issues related to Department of Justice officials and NGOs in the anti-human trafficking sector while the on the 13th the webinar was designed for Department of Justice officials and other agencies in the criminal justice system only (prosecutors, investigators, An Garda Síochána). The training webinar included an overview of recent trends in human trafficking, a discussion on coordinating among different agencies and a session on following the money to identify the perpetrators of trafficking. The sessions also featured a Q&A session on best practices.

In addition, members of the Legal Aid Board attended a number of human trafficking seminars and webinars throughout 2020 while Ruhama, a Dublin-based NGO that works on a national level with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, provided sex trafficking and prostitution online training to members of the Department of Justice focusing on the identifiers and supports necessary when working with persons who have been exploited through sex trafficking and prostitution. The training provided an understanding of the issues faced by victims of sex trafficking and prostitution and how to respond appropriately.

## RESEARCH

### HTEPII PROJECT

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Project on the Island of Ireland (HTEPII - the Santa Marta

project) began in June of 2018, led by Mary Immaculate College of Education. This research project was part-funded by An Garda Síochána and supported by the Department of Justice.

The project aimed at identifying high-quality data sets that exist in Ireland on human trafficking; enhancing existing information; collaborating with NGOs; analysing human trafficking and slavery information data; holding workshops to disseminate awareness-raising information to bodies such as schools and institutions; and delivering a report and handbook.

Work continued throughout 2020 and the final report was launched in April 2021. Much of the new data presented in the report was provided by NGOs and victim support organisations in both jurisdictions with recommendations relating to the National Referral Mechanism, all island data collection, training for professionals engaging with victims of human trafficking and awareness raising campaigns.

## VICTIM PERSPECTIVES OF TRAFFICKING FOR THE PURPOSES OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN IRELAND

In August 2020 Maynooth University completed a research project to examine the victim's perspectives of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Ireland, their view and understanding of the judicial system and Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 and to map the legal, policy and theoretical context of sex trafficking in Ireland.

## GOSHH (GENDER, ORIENTATION, SEXUAL HEALTH AND HIV)

GOSHH (Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health and HIV) and the University of Limerick carried out a project to explore the current levels of awareness and "know-how" about the criminalization of purchasing sex legislation among survival sex workers which was completed in May 2020.

## SEXUAL EXPLOITATION RESEARCH PROJECT (SERP)

The Sexual Exploitation Research Project (SERP) was published in November 2020 and was undertaken by the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin. The project provided empirical data on the experience of women in the commercial sex trade and the response of the criminal justice system in the context of the new law. The agreement for this project was signed in June 2019 and ran for a year. This project drew significantly on information held by the Health Service Executive Anti Human Trafficking Team and work already done under an earlier joint Health Service Executive/Department of Justice research project during 2018.

## REVIEW OF THE CRIMINAL LAW (SEXUAL OFFENCES) ACT 2017

Work continued throughout 2020 on the review of Section 25 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, which created the offence of the purchase of sexual services. The review will assess the impact and effectiveness of this provision. Prostitution in Ireland is inextricably linked with the exploitation of vulnerable women and children and there will be express conditions to explore the link between prostitution and human trafficking. One of the purposes of these measures was to provide additional protection to persons involved in prostitution, especially vulnerable persons and victims of human trafficking. These measures allow persons working in prostitution to provide information to the Gardaí on, for example, violence towards them by

clients, without risking prosecution for selling sexual services.

## FUNDING

### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FUNDING

The Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland commits the Department to ensuring the availability of funding to NGOs who are active in the field of human trafficking. This commitment recognises the role played by NGOs in assisting victims of human trafficking to access necessary supports to aid their recovery from their ordeal.

Funding is available on an annual basis to organisations that:

- Operate a structured process for assessment, preliminary identification of potential victims and referral to the National Referral Mechanism
- Assist individuals from exiting trafficking situations
- Provide support to victims to access compensation, housing, health, and crisis supports
- Carry out case management and supervision, including reporting to the Department of Justice on a scheduled basis
- Deliver other relevant activities

In 2020 a total of €687,2543 was provide by the Department of Justice to NGOs who are active in the field of human trafficking, an increase of 51% over the funding allocation for 2019.

In 2020 funding was provided by the Department to the following NGOs:

Organisation	Funding Allocated
Ruhama	€350,000
Ruhama COVID-19 Additional Funding	€19,000
Ruhama Awareness Raising Project	€96,050

<sup>3</sup> This is an increase of 51% over 2019



Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	€84,500
Migrant Rights Centre Awareness Raising Project	€28,754
Immigrant Council of Ireland Awareness Raising Project	€35,000
MECPATHS Awareness Raising Project	€20,398
DORAS Awareness Raising Project	€23,552
IOM Anyone awareness raising campaign	€30,000 (for awareness campaign only)
Total funding awarded in 2020	€687,2544