CEPOL
EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR
LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Operational Training Needs Analysis
Trafficking in human beings
Stay ahead of crime

CEPOL is an agency
of the European Union

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OPERATIONAL TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS - TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS (2024)

DISCLAIMER
This is a CEPOL document. Its contents do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of CEPOL concerning the training needs listed and elaborated in this document. It reflects the opinions of law enforcement experts from the Member States and EU entities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The assistance of those who contributed to this document is hereby acknowledged with gratitude.

More information on the European Union is available on the internet (http://europa.eu).

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List of abbreviations

AT	Austria
BG	Bulgaria
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CKC	CEPOL Knowledge Centre
CNU	CEPOL National Unit
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
EC	European Commission
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EL	Greece
EMCDDA[1]	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
ES	Spain
EU	European Union
EU-STNA	European Union Strategic Training Needs Assessment
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FI	Finland
FR	France
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
ISF	Internal Security Fund
IT	Italy
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
LE	Law Enforcement
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MB	Management Board
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NL	The Netherlands
OTNA	Operational Training Need Analysis
OSINT	Open-Source Intelligence
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings

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[1] On Tuesday 2 July 2024, the EMCDDA became the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA).

Executive Summary

Trafficking in human beings (THB) is a growing concern across the European Union (EU), demanding a coordinated and comprehensive response from law enforcement (LE). The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) identified **THB as the fourth most urgent training priority** in its Strategic Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA) 2022-2025[2], underscoring the urgency for a unified effort to combat THB. In response, **CEPOL launched an Operational Training Needs Analysis (OTNA)** in December 2023 to identify the most pressing training needs for LE professionals across the EU.

23	88%	11 450	9	58%	1.29M
Responding countries	Response rate	Professionals represented	Relevant topics	Moderate urgency	High volume of participants

The OTNA survey on THB received responses from **23 EU Member States (MS)[3]**, representing **88% of the countries** to which the CEPOL Regulation[4] applies. This high response reflects the views of approximately **11 450 LE professionals** engaged in combatting THB.
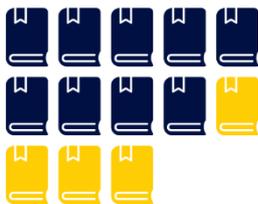
9 topics

Nine of the 13 **topics** presented in the survey were identified as highly relevant with moderate urgency, and include **modi operandi and business models of human trafficking, detection of labour exploitation, trafficking for sexual exploitation, and national and international cooperation and information exchange**. Other main topics referred to as relevant by more than half of the responding MS

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[2] Mid-term review of the EU-STNA 2022-2025, Nov. 2023, https://www.cepol.europa.eu/documents/mid-term-review-eu-stna-2022-2025: 'Trafficking in human beings reduced its priority by two rank steps. The review process suggests that the war dimension to human trafficking should be considered as a part of training on the topic, resulting in one new training need on the list (See Annex 1). As a result of the re-prioritisation, some training needs changed their priority ranking, but in terms of content, other training needs remain as initially established in the EU-STNA 2022-2025. Further introducing the use of SIS in relevant training activities targeted to LE practitioners investigating human trafficking could be beneficial in tackling this type of criminal activity.'

[3] Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

[4] Regulation (EU) 2015/2219 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) and replacing and repealing Council Decision 2005/681/JHA

included **child trafficking, links between criminal finances and money laundering, other forms of exploitation, investigation techniques, and the multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach**. While all these topics were considered important, the **average urgency of them was rated as moderate, as seen below:**

Topic	Urgency	%
Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking	Urgent	78%
Detection of labour exploitation	Moderately urgent	78%
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	Moderately urgent	78%
National and international cooperation and information exchange	Moderately urgent	74%
Links to criminal finances and money laundering	Moderately urgent	65%
Child trafficking	Moderately urgent	65%
Other forms of exploitation	Moderately urgent	65%
Investigation techniques	Moderately urgent	61%
Multi-disciplinary and victim-centred approach	Urgent	57%
Vulnerable groups	Moderately urgent	43%
Prevention of human trafficking	Moderately urgent	39%
Document fraud	Moderately urgent	26%
Forensics	Urgent	26%

Moderate urgency[5] indicates that while delivering training on these topics within the next year would be welcomed, it would provide **incremental improvements to operational capabilities** rather than significant, immediate performance gains. Some topics, such as the **modi operandi and business models of human trafficking**, were identified as having a **higher urgency**, whereby training was deemed **essential** and should be prioritised within the next year to ensure **more substantial performance improvements**.

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[5] Responses indicated urgency levels ranging from 73% to 47%. Full details can be found in Table 4**.**

100+ sub-topics

The OTNA findings revealed a **high demand for training** on a wide range of specific themes and topics, with respondents considering **100 subtopics relevant.** This highlights the **strong consensus** on the need for **comprehensive training** across various aspects of THB. While each subtopic is unlikely to be addressed as a separate training, the **nine highest-ranking topics** encapsulate the most critical focus areas. These themes span **operational strategies, investigative techniques,** and **victim-centred approaches**, demonstrating the **complexity** of addressing THB effectively.

The **OTNA results** emphasise several vital areas for training, such as the **detection of labour exploitation** and **trafficking for sexual exploitation**, where a **multi-agency approach**, **international cooperation**, and the use of **open-source intelligence** (OSINT) are prioritised. The need for better **early victim identification** and improvements in **tools, methods, and protocols**, particularly in **online environments**, also emerged as urgent areas for development.

The increasing use of **digital technology** by traffickers and **non-coercive measures** to exploit victims highlight the need for **modern digital investigative techniques**. In terms of **investigative techniques**, there is a growing emphasis on using **digital tools** such as communication platforms, **mobile forensics**, and the **Darknet**. Similarly, **victim-centred approaches** were highly rated, focusing on **interviewing victims, understanding trauma**, and providing **tailored support** throughout the investigative process.

The OTNA findings also pointed to the significant need for training on **child trafficking**, particularly in recognising **risk indicators** and understanding links to **child sexual exploitation**, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to protect vulnerable children. THB is increasingly intertwined with other forms of organised crime, such as **drug trafficking** and **document fraud**, requiring LE to take a broader perspective when investigating trafficking networks.

Additionally, **forensic techniques**, such as **forensic accounting** and **audio/video surveillance analysis**, were identified as critical tools for tracking the financial and logistical operations of trafficking networks. Lastly, **financial investigations** were identified as essential, particularly in cases involving **cryptocurrencies** and **informal value-transfer systems**, which demand **specialised training** and increased cooperation with financial institutions to combat trafficking networks effectively.

154 500
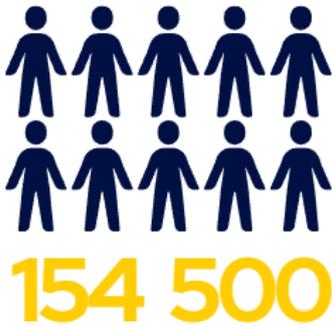
These findings suggest the need for a **holistic and multifaceted approach to training**, covering operational techniques, victim support, and financial investigation techniques. No single area can be addressed in isolation; an **integrated strategy** is required across all fields of expertise to combat THB effectively. The **need for training across the EU is high**, and the responding MS indicated that a total of **154 500 professionals** would need general training and **73 534** law enforcement officials would need training in **prioritised topics** found relevant by at least 50% of the Member States.

The highest demand for training is for **awareness-raising**, with the responding MS indicating a need for awareness training for **120 289 professionals**. The demand can be split into practitioner-level and advanced practitioner-level training, and significant demand was shown, with **19 242 persons requesting training for practitioners** and **9 144 persons interested in advanced practitioner** training. Regardless of individual data discrepancies, the overall need for training across multiple proficiency levels was made clear, with an emphasis on the need for **basic and advanced training programmes**.

Awareness **78%**

Practitioner **12%**

Advanced practitioner **6%**

The need for training spans a broad range of professional profiles, with **investigators** being the primary focus and representing **almost half of the total demand** across all main topics, with **36 122 participants** identified by the MS. This group is followed by **analysts** with interest reported for **8 498 participants**, and **intelligence officers** with **6 482 interested participants**. While there is less demand for training reported for **prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates**, they still account for **8%** of the total (6 043 participants), followed by **border police/guards** representing **7.6%** (5 575 participants).

Investigators **49%**

Analysts **12%**

Intelligence officers **9%**

An **analysis was done based on the Eisenhower** matrix to assess the **relevance** and **urgency** of the identified topics and provide deeper insight into the distribution of training needs. **Graphic 1 on the following page** visually illustrates these findings, highlighting which areas should be prioritised for immediate action and which can be addressed over a longer time frame. These data feed into developing a strategic training approach in the longer term.

Graphic 1 - Eisenhower analysis – relevancy and urgency of training on main topics
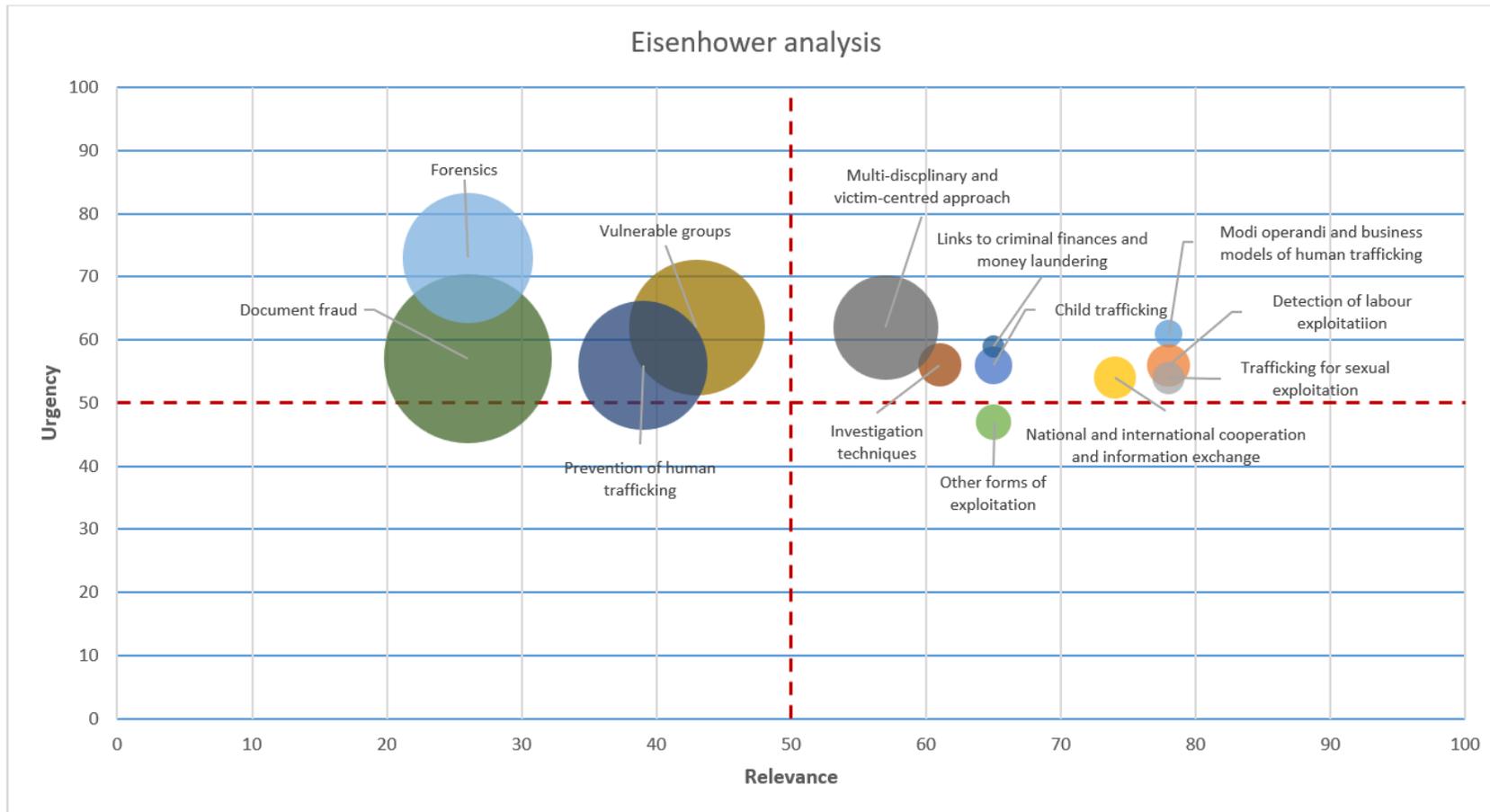
CEPOL's complex training portfolio on THB covers the training needs identified in this report. The combination of webinars, online products, and onsite activities, together with the CEPOL Exchange Programme offers a unique blended training package for law enforcement professionals across the EU. While addressing all critical aspects of human trafficking, including child trafficking, forced criminality, and sexual and labour exploitation, the different formats of self-paced and instructor-led training products cover a broad range of professionals from awareness to expert level. In the future, CEPOL will enhance its training portfolio by reflecting on the developments arising from the new Directive. If resources allow, CEPOL's portfolio will be improved by reaching out to a higher number of professionals regarding digital business models and technology used in human trafficking. See CEPOL's planned training portfolio on Trafficking in human beings in Annex 4.

Introduction

As defined under Article 3 of Regulation 2015/2219[6], CEPOL's objectives are to support, develop, implement, and coordinate training for law enforcement officials, particularly on protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the LE context. The agency facilitates the prevention and fight against serious and organised crime, terrorism, and emerging security threats by enhancing cross-border cooperation through vocational training.

To design its training portfolio, CEPOL builds on the outcomes of OTNAs, which are regularly conducted on priority topics defined by the EU-STNA. As outlined in the Single Programming Document (SDP) 2023-2026[7], the OTNA plays a crucial role in supporting CEPOL's strategic goals by aligning training activities with the operational needs of the EU MS. The OTNAs are implemented using a structured seven-step process that involves close cooperation with CEPOL National Units (CNU), CEPOL Knowledge Centres (CKC), and various LE agencies. First piloted in 2018 and officially adopted by CEPOL's Management Board (MB) in Decision 32/2017/MB, the OTNA methodology was updated in 2020 to reflect evolving needs and feedback from the MS[8]. The target group for the OTNA consists of LE officials, as defined in Article 2 of Regulation 2015/2219[9].

As stated above, trafficking in human beings has been recognised as a critical area for training within the EU. The EU-STNA 2022-2025 established THB as the fourth-highest strategic training priority for the LE audience, and this covers sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminality, and child trafficking, among others. The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025[10] further underscores the importance of systematic training for LE and justice practitioners. This includes using multi-stakeholder, simulation-based exercises to improve professionalism, enhance coordination, and ensure proper handling and follow-up of trafficking cases[11]. Building on these priorities, CEPOL launched the **OTNA on THB** in December 2023 to assess the most pressing training needs and shape its future training portfolio accordingly.

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[6] Available on: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015R2219&from=EN

[7] https://www.cepol.europa.eu/about/key-documents?pg=1, Annex to Management Board Decision 17/2022/MB, CEPOL Single Programming Document for 2024-2026, (13 December 2022), p. 5.

[8] Since then, CEPOL has conducted numerous OTNAs of various training topics within the **EU-STNA,** supplemented by additional assessments where necessary.

[9] Regulation (EU) 2015/2219 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) and replacing and repealing Council Decision 2005/681/JHA - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

[10] Available on: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0171

[11] EU-STNA p. 39.

The OTNA on THB focused on the following **13 main topics that represent the critical** aspects for combatting trafficking:

- Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking
- Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Detection of labour exploitation
- Other forms of exploitation
- Investigation techniques
- Links to criminal finances and money laundering
- National and international cooperation and information exchange
- Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach
- Vulnerable groups
- Prevention of human trafficking
- Document fraud
- Forensics

The OTNA survey, conducted in December 2023 and January 2024, invited 26 EU MS[12] and relevant EU institutions to provide insights into the training needs on the topic of THB. The survey gathered 33 responses from different LE agencies across 23 MS, representing 11 450 LE professionals from various agencies across the EU. Two expert interviews were conducted in February 2024 to enhance the depth of the data.

Graphic 2 - Respondent countries[13]

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[12] Hereinafter, 'Member States' refers to the 26 Member States of the European Union participating in the CEPOL Regulation, i.e. all EU Member States except Denmark.
[13] Created with MapChart

Of the responses received, 82% came from police forces, while border police and other relevant bodies accounted for the remaining 18%.

Graphic 3 - Distribution of professionals among respondents
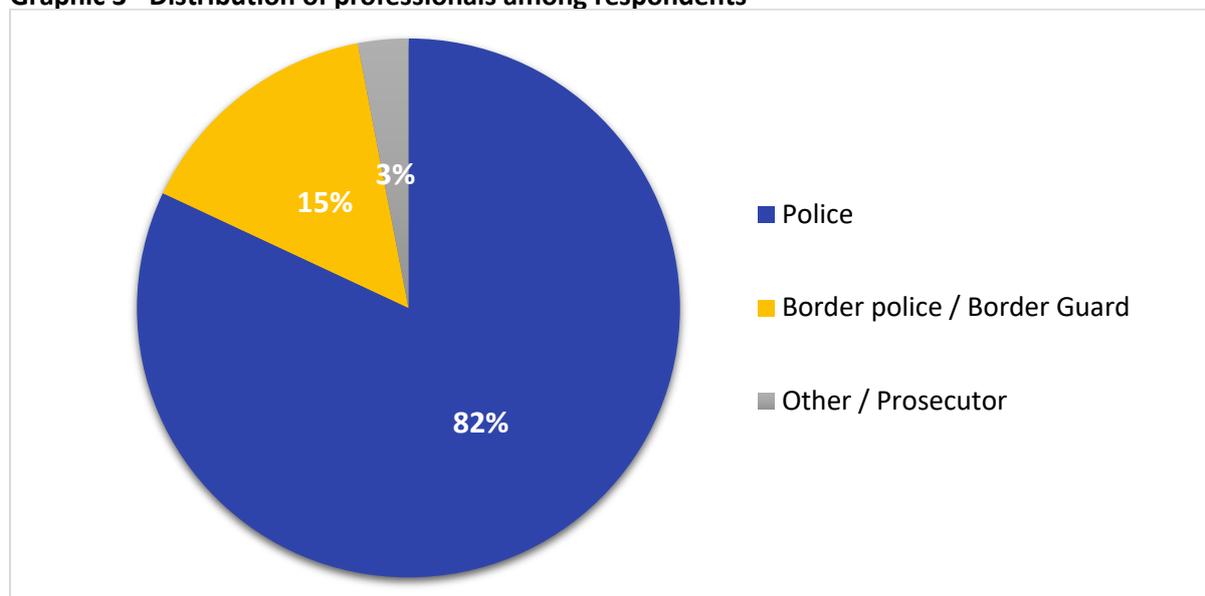
The results of the OTNA on THB are communicated in this six-chapter report, which begins with the *Executive Summary*, providing an overview of the key findings from the OTNA and summarising the most critical areas of training needs. This is followed by the current *Introduction* chapter, which outlines the methodological framework in more detail and describes the respondents who contributed to the OTNA survey. The *Analysis* chapter forms the analytical core of the report, focusing on the nine most relevant training topics identified by at least 50% of the responding MS. The next chapter, *Training dimensions for main topics*, delves into each of the main topics in depth, examining the subtopics to be prioritised for training, providing information on the profiles of potential training participants, the estimated volume of participants required at different proficiency levels, and other relevant details. The *Conclusions* chapter summarises the findings of the OTNA process and presents recommendations for the next steps in developing CEPOL's training portfolio on THB. Finally, the report concludes with the *Outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting*, where additional feedback and reflections on the OTNA results from key stakeholders and experts are presented, providing further insight into the training needs and areas requiring focus.

Analysis

The OTNA survey process primarily gathered quantitative data, supplemented by qualitative text-based feedback to provide deeper insights into the training needs on the topic of THB. To identify the most essential training topics for the LE community's needs in 2025-2027, the OTNA questionnaire included a multiple-choice question, where respondents could select one or more choices from a list of 13 main topics. The survey data was processed using Qualtrics® and analysed according to CEPOL's established OTNA methodology, applying a combination of quantitative methods and manual text analysis. Despite minor data collection and processing challenges caused by typographical errors and incomplete responses, the analysed survey results provide valuable insights into the training priorities for the LE community across the EU. Two expert interviews were conducted to enrich the analysis further, offering additional insights and clarifications. Together, these findings lay the foundation for CEPOL's upcoming training initiatives, focusing on the areas of most significant relevance and urgency.

Relevance of topics and subtopics

In line with the OTNA methodology, any topic deemed relevant by more than 50% of the responding MS was considered a priority and included in the subsequent analysis. The relevance of each topic was calculated by aggregating how many MS identified the topics as relevant. The final relevance score was determined by dividing the total number of MS considering a topic relevant by the total number of responding MS. In cases where multiple LE agencies from the same MS submitted responses, the data was consolidated to represent a single national perspective.

Based on this approach, nine main topics exceeded the relevancy threshold and are included in this report's detailed analysis.

Table 1 - Ranking of prioritised main topics based on their popularity level

Main Topic	Rate of topic being addressed (%)
Modi operandi and business model of human trafficking	78%
Detection of labour exploitation	78%
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	78%
National and international cooperation and information exchange	74%
Child trafficking	65%

Main Topic	Rate of topic being addressed (%)
Other forms of exploitation	65%
Links to criminal finances and money laundering	65%
Investigation techniques	61%
Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach	57%
Vulnerable groups	43%
Prevention of human trafficking	39%
Document fraud	26%
Forensics	26%

While vulnerable groups, prevention of human trafficking, document fraud, and forensics did not meet the relevancy threshold, it is worth noting that the training need on sub-topics within these areas remains urgent for the specific respondents who identified them.

The subtopics of the main topics were defined extremely broadly in the questionnaire, and 100 of these subtopics were considered relevant by the respondents (over 50%).

Table 2 - Relevance rates of subtopics across all main topics

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking	Use of digital technology, (increasing use of digital technology in cases of exploitation)	82%
	Online recruitment of victims with special focus on women and vulnerable groups	78%
	Online indicators and patterns including minors	78%
	Use of non-coercive measures to exercise pressure	74%
	High-risk criminal networks and use of crime-as-a-service	68%
	Psychological and physical violence, and drugs used to control and coerce victims	66%
	Indicators of different phases of human trafficking	66%
	Business model of THB	65%
	Links to other Organised Crime Groups, with a special focus on non-EU country nationals arriving illegally in the EU and being exploited; in particular, vulnerable groups	65%
	Vulnerable groups	64%
	Infiltration and use of legal business structures by criminals	61%
	Links to organised property crime, drug trafficking and document fraud	59%
Detection of labour exploitation	Multi-agency approach, cooperation between national authorities	77%
	International cooperation with neighbouring countries, Joint Investigation Teams, European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)	75%

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
	Use of OSINT	75%
	Cooperation with the private sector, especially with representatives of high-risk sectors	71%
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	Improving early identification of victims (tools, methods, protocols, guidelines, best practices)	77%
	Online detection	74%
	Providing assistance and support for victims of THB – gender-sensitive approaches	64%
	Safeguards and coercion modalities	62%
	Women with special needs	58%
National and international cooperation and information exchange	Identification of high-value targets and establishing Operational Task Force with Europol	70%
	Cooperation with non-EU countries	65%
	How to start a Joint Investigation Team	63%
	Use of large-scale IT systems	62%
	Cooperation with international institutions such as the United Nations and International Organisation for Migration, Council of Europe	60%
	Induction on activities related to the cooperation of relevant organisations such as Justice and Home Affairs agencies and INTERPOL	58%
	Cooperation with non-governmental organisations and all other institutions and EU agencies providing victim support	58%
	Referral of victims	57%
	EU instruments for judicial cooperation such as the European Arrest Warrant, European Investigation Order and Freezing Certificates	57%
	Support offered by Eurojust at judicial level	54%
	Rights to confidentiality and consent	51%
Child Trafficking	Links to child sexual exploitation	82%
	Risk Indicators for child trafficking	71%
	Understanding child trafficking	71%
	Links to forced begging	70%
	Prevention / awareness regarding child trafficking	68%
	Interviewing children	68%
	Coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders	65%
	Safeguards / child protection	65%
	Links to forced criminality	64%
	Links to illegal adoption	60%
	Identifying differences between child trafficking and adult trafficking	59%
	Links to forced marriages	51%
Links criminal finances and money laundering	Financial investigations: tracing, seizing and confiscating criminal proceeds, asset recovery	78%
	Cooperation with all relevant financial institutions	69%
	Cryptocurrencies	69%
	Digital banking	68%
	Informal value transfer systems	68%
	Planning and conducting searches for evidence with a focus on evidence linked to financial crime associated with THB	67%
	Collecting and processing evidence/forensic procedures	66%

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
	Monitoring changes of modi operandi	64%
	Money mules (taking over accounts)	60%
Other forms of exploitation	Forced begging	67%
	Forced criminality	62%
	Illegal adoption	52%
	Forced marriage	47%
	Illegal/exploitative surrogacy	45%
	Organ trafficking	40%
Investigation techniques	Use and analysis of specific means of communication (WhatsApp, Telegram, WeChat, etc.)	86%
	Open-source intelligence and Darknet	83%
	Collection of electronic evidence	80%
	Cooperation with online platforms and social media	80%
	Mobile forensics, analysis of data from mobile phones (use of specific analytical tools, (pathfinder, etc.))	80%
	Online recruitment, advertisement, exploitation (e.g. web streaming)	79%
	Web crawlers	77%
	Cooperation with private sector	71%
	Interviewing techniques, behavioural analysis	69%
The multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach	Interviewing victims of trafficking	85%
	Understanding trauma / Specialised victim agency or liaison officials	79%
	Continuous assessment of vulnerability	78%
	Psychological harm to victims influencing their behaviour during investigations/support workers	78%
	Provision of tailored information	77%
	Support for reporting/victim engagement	75%
	Protection of victims during investigations and criminal proceedings	72%
	Cultural differences	66%
	Rights of victims	64%
Vulnerable groups	Child trafficking	79%
	Risk Indicators for identification of victims and traffickers	79%
	Use of Passenger Name Record, Advance Passenger Information and other similar instruments	75%
	Identification of vulnerable groups such as children	74%
	Trafficking within family and community structures	71%
	Intersectionality (multiplication of several vulnerabilities)	69%
	Cross-border transportation	68%
	Use of OSINT	68%
	First response and safeguards, information provision	66%
	Behavioural analysis	64%
	Raising awareness on trafficking in human beings during the VISA issuing process	64%
The prevention of human trafficking	Criminalisation of the users of exploited services	69%
	Engagement with public sector/public responsibility	69%
	Data analysis predict vulnerability as proactive tool	68%
	Multi-agency partnerships and cooperation	65%
	Multimedia Platform Awareness	63%
	Outreach and community engagement	61%
	Ethics and integrity/anticorruption	54%

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
Document fraud	Face comparison	63%
	Breeder documents	58%
	Innovative EU projects for cooperation and support such as JITs in action and PROFID	58%
Forensic	Analysis of data	92%
	Analysis of audio and video surveillance data	88%
	Forensic accounting	83%
	Car forensics	71%
	Working with short-rental companies	67%

Additional subtopics

Despite the initial identification of more than 100 subtopics presented in the survey, the respondents have highlighted additional subtopics for consideration across several main topics. This response underscores the intricate nature of THB and suggests the need for LE training to integrate diverse perspectives.

There is a demand for tailored approaches in assessing evidence specific to human trafficking cases, highlighting the unique complexities compared to other crimes. The emphasis on understanding the exploitation of minors within organised crime underscores a need for focused expertise in dismantling such networks. The suggestions signal an urgent requirement for law enforcement to adapt to the digital age, particularly in using OSINT to identify recruitment on social media. Additionally, there is a need for victim-centred training to address significant gaps in the current handling of cases, advocating a more sensitive approach and with greater awareness of victims from vulnerable groups. The call for awareness around the exploitation of international students and domestic workers and the detection of labour exploitation in agriculture stresses the importance of sector-specific knowledge. This reflects an understanding that human trafficking manifests differently across sectors and requires tailored strategies to identify and combat. The suggestion for training on Joint Investigations Teams (JIT) and stakeholder cooperation emphasises the need for a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach. This approach recognises the integral roles of various stakeholders, including NGOs, to build a united front against trafficking. The need for skills in tracing cryptocurrencies points to the evolving methods of traffickers, who increasingly use digital currencies. This underscores the broader trend of traffickers adopting new technologies, with the result that those fighting trafficking must also update their investigative techniques.

Table 3 - Suggested additional subtopics

Main topic	Suggested subtopics
Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking	- Training on differentiating the evaluation of evidence in human trafficking cases from other criminal offences (LV) - Understanding the criminal exploitation of minors within organised crime groups, with a focus on drug-related activities (NL) - Specialised training on interview frameworks and key questions using the Peace model to identify THB (PT) - Training on OSINT techniques for identifying THB recruitment on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp) (PT) - Training on victim-centred cultural awareness on specific vulnerable groups (SE)
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	- Training on smurfing and money laundering in the context of sexual exploitation (LU) - Understanding the connection between sexual exploitation and organised crime, emphasising the need for knowledge about the digital sphere, online recruitment, and a victim-centred approach (SE) - Training to increase the understanding of cultures and backgrounds to better identify exposure and vulnerable situations, applicable to various forms of exploitation (LU)
Other forms of exploitation	- Addressing the specific framework of foreign students and housekeepers for foreign residents (FR) - Forced criminality connected to criminal networks (SE)
Detection of labour exploitation	- Training on detecting labour exploitation in seasonal agricultural work and understanding the role of NGOs in trafficking (FR) - Legal and psychological training to address court challenges regarding victims' inability to leave places of exploitation and to foster a deeper understanding of victim vulnerability and dependence (LV)
Investigation techniques	- Training on the formation and operation of Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) to enhance collaborative efforts (CY)
Links to criminal finances and money laundering	- Techniques for tracing cryptocurrencies using blockchain explorers, focusing on free tools for Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Monero, due to the lack of chain analysis and Transaction Relationship Management capabilities (PT)
Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach	- Training on enhancing cooperation between various stakeholders involved in combatting human trafficking (CY)

Urgency and volume of training needs

To better understand the training needs for each main topic, the questionnaire gave the respondents an option to indicate the level of urgency for training on topics related to THB and estimate the number of participants in the different professional profiles.

Urgency in the context of the OTNA methodology refers to the critical need for a timely training intervention and its impact on operational performance. In the analysis, responses were rated numerically from one (1) to five (5), where (1) refers to a low need with a minor expected impact on boosting performance and (5) refers to a crucial need as a critical response for ensuring the successful performance of duties.[14] Where the same proficiency level was indicated by several LE agencies of the same MS, the highest rating indicated was applied.

Since CEPOL's training activities are aimed at LE officials in the 26 EU MS, the number of participants indicated in the survey responses is considered to be the number of participants who would need training from the responding MS or EU institutions.

According to the responses, Document fraud, Vulnerable groups, Forensics and the prevention of human trafficking topics (the less relevant ones[15]) need the highest number of trainees, followed by a Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach[16] and **Investigation techniques, Detection of labour exploitation, and National and international cooperation and information exchange** at EU level.

Table 4 - Ranking of main topics based on urgency and trainee division

Main topic	Relevancy	Urgency	Trainees
Modi operandi and business model of human trafficking	78%	61%	7 757
Detection of labour exploitation	78%	56%	7 015
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	78%	54%	6 159
National and international cooperation and information exchange	74%	54%	10 391
Child trafficking	65%	56%	7 420
Links to criminal finances and money laundering	65%	59%	8 355
Other forms of exploitation	65%	47%	7 891
Investigation techniques	61%	56%	9 126
Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach	57%	62%	9 420
Vulnerable groups	43%	62%	19 693

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[14] Descriptions of the urgency levels are provided in Annex 2.

[15] Few countries responded to these topics, but one response from Finland gave answers to all of them, with very high numbers, which makes these topics stand out.

[16] Few countries responded to this topic, but one response from Finland gave answers to all of them, with very high numbers, which makes this topic stand out.

Main topic	Relevancy	Urgency	Trainees
Prevention of human trafficking	39%	56%	15 915
Document fraud	26%	57%	28 602
Forensics	26%	73%	16 756
Total/average	**58%**	**58%**	**154 500**

Profiles and proficiency levels

In addition to calculating the overall urgency rate and number of trainees per each prioritised main topic, the training needs and the volume of trainees were analysed for each proficiency level. Regarding potential trainees, the interest mostly lay at **awareness (72%)[17] and practitioner (15%)** levels, and they were the main groups with potential participants for training.[18]

The results, grounded in the data provided, are presented as estimations, adhering to the OTNA methodology for statistical data processing. It is important to note that these figures should be considered as indicative due to the inherent complexities of forecasting participation rates. Further insights from interviews conducted as a part of the OTNA process uncovered complexities. The respondents indicated difficulties in estimating participant numbers, attributed to uncertainties about CEPOL's training session frequency - yearly or more often - and logistical factors affecting attendance and the participation of colleagues from other LE agencies in their countries.

It must be noted that one respondent distorted the data, by indicating 10 or 100 times higher training needs than the rest of the respondents. Therefore, practitioner-level training can be considered the most in demand across the EU, followed by training at awareness-level and the level of advanced practitioner.

Table 5 - Proficiency levels and number of participants – prioritised main topics

Proficiency level	Number of participants
Awareness	52 885
Practitioner	10 841
Advanced practitioner	5 993
Expert	3 206
Train-the-trainer	609
Total	73 534

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[17] The awareness-level for all topics was indicated at 78% and 72% for prioritised topic.
[18] See the description of proficiency levels in Annex 3.

Table 6 - Profiles of potential participants – prioritised main topics

Category	Number of participants	Share % of all trainees
Investigators	36 122	49.1%
Intelligence officers	6 482	8.8%
Analysts	8 498	11.6%
Managers	4 711	6.4%
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	6 043	8.2%
Border Police/Guards	5 575	7.6%
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	2 636	3.6%
Other	3 467	4.7%
Total	73 534	100

Trainees per country

The highest number of potential trainees was reported by Finland (82%)[19], followed by Latvia (9%), Sweden (2%), and Poland (2%).

Table 7 - Volume of potential trainees per responding country - prioritised main topics

Country	Number of trainees	Share of all participants (%)
Finland (FI)	60 630	82%
Latvia (LV)	6 479	9%
Poland (PL)	1 325	2%
Sweden (SE)	1 308	2%
Ireland (IE)	552	1%
Portugal (PT)	542	1%
Bulgaria (BG)	452	1%
Italy (IT)	406	1%
Slovenia (SI)	395	1%
Spain (ES)	352	<1%
Netherlands (NL)	305	<1%
Austria (AT)	296	<1%

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[19] One respondent in Finland reported a significantly different and much higher number of participants than the other respondents.

Country	Number of trainees	Share of all participants (%)
Greece (EL)	122	<1%
Romania (RO)	71	<1%
France (FR)	67	<1%
Hungary (HU)	48	<1%
Luxembourg (LU)	44	<1%
Czech Republic (CZ)	42	<1%
Slovakia (SK)	41	<1%
Germany (DE)	27	<1%
Cyprus (CY)	26	<1%
Croatia (HR)	4	<1%
Lithuania (LT)	No data provided	Not known
Total	73 534	100%

Further training suggestions

In the survey, only 9% (n=3) of respondents identified additional training needs that fit into the initially outlined scope in the survey. This feedback came from police officers in **Austria**, **Cyprus**, and **Spain**, who highlighted specific areas where they see a gap in training on trafficking in human beings. Their responses call for a training focus on enhancing skills in interviewing techniques, case studies, and specialised investigation techniques, including transnational surveillance, and handling internal EU operational requests.

The need was raised by Austria for **expert-level** training in interviewing techniques for five law enforcement investigators, and identified a specialist need for skill enhancement in this area. The feedback from Cyprus points to a need for **practitioner-level** training in case studies for three investigators and one manager, with a noted urgency level of 5, suggesting immediate attention to this training requirement. Additionally, Spain outlined a comprehensive training need for 20 investigators in specific investigation techniques, with an emphasis on practitioner to advanced practitioner levels. This should include a clear focus on operational aspects such as transnational surveillance and internal EU operational requests. It put the urgency level at three for managers, and signalled the importance of these skills in their current operations. The above-suggested training areas are covered under **Investigation techniques**; therefore, they do not create additional training needs.

The feedback underscores the critical need for an expanded focus in law enforcement training under the topics of **Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking** and a **Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach**. The respondents highlighted the need to emphasise a more nuanced understanding of THB beyond its common misconceptions. The training must address the complexities of coercion, domestic scenarios, and exploitation through deceit, where victims might unknowingly be lured into exploitative situations. Since the CEPOL curriculum clarifies the broad definitions and common misconceptions around trafficking, especially highlighting the psychological manipulation of victims and the subtleties of non-physical coercion, this suggestion has been taken on board.

Additionally, the feedback points to the challenges presented in legal proceedings against human trafficking. There is a distinct need for specialised training that equips legal practitioners with effective courtroom strategies to combat common misconceptions, such as queries regarding victims' inability to leave exploitative situations due to non-physical restraints. The training should delve into the dynamics of emotional abuse in trafficking and cover the legal aspects of representing complex victim experiences in court accurately. Training needs indicated under the main topic of the **Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach** address these suggestions.

The interest in understanding digital recruitment methods for victims through platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Viber presents an essential area for training development. Law enforcement professionals require insights into the technological advancements that traffickers use, potentially exploring the correlations between recruitment methods and victim backgrounds. This would require a curriculum update to include cyber investigative techniques and awareness of the role of digital platforms in trafficking. Curricula on **Online recruitment, advertisement, exploitation,** and **Investigation techniques** deliver training on these topics.

Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of investigators' roles, where they are not solely dedicated to trafficking cases but also addressing a wide array of crimes, highlights the importance of cross-disciplinary training. To tackle the evolving challenges of trafficking alongside other criminal activities, LE officers need a broad skill set that is adaptable and effective across various crime investigations, including THB.

Existing training at national and international levels

Information was received from 16 countries on 46 training initiatives aimed at addressing human trafficking in 2023. However, many of these responses lacked comprehensive details about this training.

The distribution of this training reflects a broad-ranging international effort. **Finland** leads in the number of training courses offered (15%), followed closely by **France** and **Slovakia** (each 11%). A closer examination of the proficiency levels targeted by this training shows a varied approach to capacity building. Expert-level training was the most frequent, totalling 14 sessions and covering various topics from financial crime investigation to the specifics of forced criminality. Advanced practitioner sessions numbered 12, highlighting ongoing efforts to elevate the skills of those already experienced in the field. Practitioner and awareness-level training addressed foundational knowledge and a broader understanding, indicating a layered strategy for education on THB.

The thematic focus of the training is diverse, ranging from key aspects such as the identification and support of THB victims, the investigation of financial crimes related to trafficking, and the exploration of labour exploitation. Finland's comprehensive approach included topics like labour exploitation, vulnerable groups, and domestic abuse, showcasing a multifaceted strategy to combat THB. Other notable programmes included Spain's Train-the-Trainer session, aimed at multiplying knowledge among professionals, and the THB project Balkans by Interpol, designed to enhance the investigative capabilities of law enforcement in the Balkans.

Table 8 - Topics and descriptions of existing national or international training

Topic	Objective	Target audience
Barnahus Network (FI)	Awareness of Child Protective Services	Police officers, health care officers
CEPOL 'Labour exploitation' (SK)	Better identification of THB victims	Multidisciplinary approach[20]
Child Trafficking (PL)	No info	Expert
Course related to financial crimes (FI)	Improve skills to investigate financial crimes	Police officers, tax officials
Criminal law, Human trafficking (LV)	To introduce students to the definition and types of human trafficking	State Border guard colleague students
EMPACT THB Hackathon (FR)	Searching for potential THB victims and perpetrators on the Internet	EMPACT community
Forced criminality (CY)	Understanding the framework of this specific offence	Investigators
Forced Criminality & Forced Begging (IE)	Knowledge sharing	THB Law Enforcement
Fundamentals of law and legislation, criminal law, human trafficking (LV)	To introduce the trainees to the concept and types of human trafficking	Cadets of the professional further education program of the State Border Guard College
IOM 'Prevention of THB in the context of humanitarian crises' (SK)	Better identification of THB victims	Multidisciplinary approach
Labour (CY)	The framework of this offence	Investigators.

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[20] These answers were given.

Topic	Objective	Target audience
Labour exploitation (IE; PL)	Understanding the framework of this offence	No info, Expert (PL)
OSCE 'Access to services for victims of THB' (SK)	Improve access to services for THB victims	Multidisciplinary approach
OSCE 'Prevention and response to THB in the context of the humanitarian crisis of war in Ukraine' (SK)	Better identification of THB victims	Multidisciplinary approach
OSINT (FR)	Conducting OSINT researches	THB investigators
Prevention and combatting of human trafficking. Instructor training programme (e-learning) (LV)	To train State Border Guard officials in identifying cases of human trafficking, providing assistance, performing professional activities, and providing support	State Border Guard officials
Recognition of victims of human trafficking in return and asylum procedures (LV)	To introduce the course participants to the risk profiles of human trafficking in return and asylum procedures	State Border Guard officials
Sexual exploitation (EL)	CEPOL course on sexual exploitation	LEAs
Sexual exploitation and child abuse (EL)	Upgrade the approach to the sexual exploitation for investigators and other related parts	Investigators
Special course for crimes related to children (FI)	Improve investigations and interviews skills concerning crimes against children	Police officers, social officers, prosecutors
Use of social media in THB investigations (PL)	No info	Expert
THB (new staff training, expert updates, online recruitment, forms of THB, indicators of THB and basics, knowledge sharing, dealing with the offence and victims) (ES, SI)	Various objectives including new staff orientation, expert knowledge updating, identifying and combatting THB through a comprehensive understanding of its forms, indicators, and effective response strategies	Investigators, Guardia Civil (ES)
THB focusing on victim approach (FR)	Giving different approaches on victim assistance and protection, sharing of best practices	Investigators on THB from different countries (different approaches)
THB project Balkans by Interpol (BG)	Strengthen the investigative capacity of law enforcement agencies in the Balkan countries to counter human trafficking by providing targeted training, investigative and operational support, and criminal analysis expertise	Train-the-Trainer sessions, in which selected participants will be trained to deliver national training courses to local investigators in hotspot areas
Victim assistance (FR)	Raising awareness and providing assistance	Former investigators working on THB for sexual exploitation
Vulnerable groups, domestic abuse (FI)	Recognise the phenomenon, improve efficiency methods	Police officers

Among the respondents, the most common mode of training delivery mentioned is 'on-site' (61%), with a significant majority opting for in-person training sessions. Online courses and webinars are mentioned but to a much lesser extent than on-site training. This suggests an overall preference for traditional, presential training over digital formats. While there are no details, the 'Other' category was selected by a smaller portion of respondents, which would indicate a need for niche or less common training delivery modes.

Training dimensions for main topics

Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking

The first topic addressed in the questionnaire was *Modi operandi and the business models of human trafficking,* which was consistently ranked as one of the most essential training areas. Responses were received from 18 MS[21], with 78% of all respondents identifying this topic as relevant for training. However, the urgency level for this topic was rated slightly lower, at 61%. Regarding the distribution of training needs, 48% of the responses indicated that training on *Modi operandi and the business models of human trafficking* is primarily required at national level.

Table 9 - Relevance of subtopics - Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking	Use of digital technology, (increasing use of digital technology in cases of exploitation)	82%
	Online recruitment of victims with a special focus on women and vulnerable groups	78%
	Online indicators and patterns including minors	78%
	Use of non-coercive measures exercising pressure	74%
	High-risk criminal networks and use of crime-as-a-service	68%
	Psychological and physical violence and drugs used to control and coerce victims	66%
	Indicators of different phases of human trafficking	66%
	Business model of THB	65%
	Links to other Organised Crime Groups, with a special focus on non-EU country nationals arriving illegally in the EU and being exploited; in particular, vulnerable groups	65%
	Vulnerable groups	64%

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[21]Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
	Infiltration and use of legal business structures by criminals	61%
	Links to organised property crime, drug trafficking and document fraud	59%

Table 10 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Modi operandi and business models of human trafficking

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	169	104	52	52	143	313
Border Police/Guards	1 300	780	780	273	195	580
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	156	156	52	52	26	64
Intelligence officers	52	65	156	52	26	230
Investigators	156	455	208	208	78	5 034
Managers	104	52	273	52	39	525
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	520	312	52	208	52	800
Other	1 300	676	91	91	65	211
Total	3 757	2 535	1 586	910	624	7 757

The survey highlighted several areas for additional training within the main topic of the modi operandi and business models of human trafficking. These include the necessity for **victim-centred cultural awareness training** tailored to specific vulnerable groups and the criminal exploitation of minors within organised crime groups, particularly those involved in drug-related activities. A focused need was identified for in-depth knowledge on conducting interviews and formulating key questions (using the Peace model) to effectively identify THB, alongside the OSINT techniques for uncovering THB recruitment efforts on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp. This approach is vital for enhancing the planning and implementing tax and detection strategies. Additionally, the

survey underscored the importance of understanding general (non-online) methods for recruiting victims, and indicates the comprehensive approach to tackling THB.

Detection of labour exploitation

Labour exploitation continues to be a significant and growing component of the THB phenomenon. Responses from 18 MS[22] ranked *Detection of labour exploitation* as a relevant topic for training, with 78% of respondents identifying it as necessary. This topic also had a relatively high urgency rating compared to other main topics, with 56% of respondents indicating a pressing need for training. The training needs for this topic were predominantly identified at organisational level, with 50% of respondents highlighting its importance for institutional capacity building. This was followed by 32% indicating a need for training at national level and 18% pointing to the unit level. This reflects the cross-sectoral and multi-level approach required to address labour exploitation effectively.

Table 11 - Relevance of subtopics - Detection of labour exploitation

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance
Detection of labour exploitation	Multi-agency approach, cooperation between national authorities	77%
	International cooperation with neighbouring countries, Joint Investigation Teams, European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)	75%
	Use of OSINT	75%
	Cooperation with the private sector, especially representatives of high-risk sectors	71%

Table 12 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Detection of labour exploitation

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the trainer	Total
Analysts	78	91	26	52	65	492
Border Police/Guards	1 300	130	1 040	520	130	648
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	26	273	143	52	26	95

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[22]Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the trainer	Total
Intelligence officers	52	52	104	39	65	237
Investigators	1 300	325	130	130	52	3 612
Managers	52	1 313	26	52	26	508
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	1 430	1 300	286	208	39	921
Other	7 800	2 600	806	780	260	502
Total	12 038	6 084	2 561	1 833	663	7 015

Although all the subtopics under this topic were relevant for the respondents, some suggested additional subtopics related to detecting labour exploitation. These additional subtopics emphasise the need for targeted training on several fronts. The key areas include understanding **the dynamics of seasonal work** in agriculture and assessing the role and reliability of NGOs in potentially facilitating labour exploitation. A significant challenge highlighted is the judiciary's current approach to evaluating victims' situations, particularly the misconception around victims' freedom of movement and the need for a better understanding of victim vulnerability, dependence, and how these factors should influence legal proceedings and evidence evaluation. Additionally, the importance was raised of developing **specialised interviewing techniques** for victims and witnesses, verifying labour contracts and examining fraudulent documents. These suggestions indicate the need for a more multifaceted approach to better identify and combat labour exploitation through enhanced investigative and legal frameworks.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation remains the most common form of THB across the EU. Based on responses from 18 MS[23], *Trafficking for sexual exploitation* was identified as both highly relevant (78%) and urgent (54%) in terms of training needs. This indicates a strong demand for targeted

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[23] Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

training efforts to address the complexities of sexual exploitation in the context of THB. The distribution of training needs for this topic is spread across national and organisational levels, with 36% of respondents identifying a need for training at both levels. A slightly lower proportion (27%) indicated the need for training at the unit level, reflecting that efforts to combat sexual exploitation require a multi-tiered approach involving both broader strategic frameworks and more focused operational-level interventions.

Table 13 - Relevance of subtopics - Trafficking for sexual exploitation

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Trafficking for sexual exploitation	Improving early identification of victims (tools, methods, protocols, guidelines, best practices)	77
	Online detection	74
	Providing assistance and support for victims of THB – gender-sensitive approaches	64
	Safeguards and coercion modalities	62
	Women with special needs	58

Table 14 - Profiles and proficiency level – Trafficking for sexual exploitation

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	91	130	52	39	52	**351**
Border Police/Guards	1 300	715	520	130	52	522
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	156	78	52	26	49
Intelligence officers	39	91	130	52	52	168
Investigators	156	260	260	234	52	3 816
Managers	52	663	52	65	26	508
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	156	663	273	117	39	308
Other	4 550	1 040	156	104	130	437
Total	6 604	3 718	1 521	793	429	6 159

An additional training suggestion was made to include the topics of smurfing and money laundering in the context of sexual exploitation.

National and international cooperation and information exchange

National and international cooperation and information exchange are crucial elements in combatting THB, particularly given the cross-border nature of human-trafficking networks. 74% of respondents from 17 MS[24] rated this topic as highly relevant, although its urgency was rated slightly lower at 54%. These figures underscore the importance of building cooperative frameworks within and between nations to improve information-sharing and coordination in tackling THB. This topic was primarily formulated as relevant at national level, with 48% of respondents highlighting the need for training on national cooperation and information exchange mechanisms. Meanwhile, 29% of the responses indicated a focus on the organisational level and 24% identified training needs at unit level. All subtopics under this main topic were also considered relevant, further supporting the need for comprehensive training to strengthen national and international collaboration in the fight against THB.

Table 15 - Relevance of subtopics – National and international cooperation and information exchange

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
National and international cooperation and information exchange	Identification of high-value targets and establishing Operational Task Force with Europol	70
	Cooperation with non-EU countries	65
	How to start a Joint Investigation Team	63
	Use of large-scale IT systems	62
	Cooperation with international institutions such as the United Nations and International Organisation for Migration, and the Council of Europe	60
	Induction on the activities related to the cooperation of relevant organisations such as Justice and Home Affairs agencies and INTERPOL	58
	Cooperation with non-governmental organisations and all other institutions and EU agencies providing victim support	58
	Referral of victims	57
	EU instruments for judicial cooperation such as European Arrest Warrant, European Investigation Order and Freezing Certificates	57
	Support offered by Eurojust at judicial level	54
	Right to confidentiality and consent	51

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[24] Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.

The investigators and analysts need training in national and international cooperation and information exchange.

Table 16 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – National and international cooperation and information exchange

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	104	3 926	52	52	130	2 631
Border Police/Guards	520	130	910	260	65	240
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	52	546	273	65	1 133
Intelligence officers	39	39	78	65	130	1 142
Investigators	182	260	65	104	26	3 831
Managers	52	26	39	52	26	533
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	260	1 300	650	52	39	390
Other	7 800	2 080	1 560	104	130	491
Total	9 217	7 813	3 900	962	611	10 391

Child trafficking

The topic of *child trafficking* is a key concern in the whole area of combatting human trafficking. 15 responding countries[25] rated this topic as relevant (65%), with an urgency rating of 56%. This indicates that while the need for training in this area is clear, the urgency is moderate compared to other topics. Training on child trafficking is seen as primarily applicable at national level, with 47% of respondents emphasising its importance for national strategies and frameworks.

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[25] Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden.

Table 17 - Relevance of subtopics - Child trafficking

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Child trafficking	Links to child sexual exploitation	82
	Understanding child trafficking	71
	Risk Indicators for child trafficking	71
	Links to forced begging	70
	Prevention / awareness of child trafficking	68
	Interviewing children	68
	Coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders	65
	Safeguards / children protection	65
	Links to forced criminality	64
	Links to illegal adoption	60
	Identifying differences between child trafficking and adult trafficking	59
	Links to forced marriages	51

In terms of professional profiles, respondents indicated that training on child trafficking is particularly important for *investigators*, *prosecutors*, *investigative judges* and *magistrates*, underscoring the critical role of these professionals in addressing this form of exploitation. Additionally, all subtopics under child trafficking were deemed relevant, further emphasising the comprehensive training required to equip law enforcement authorities with the skills to protect vulnerable children effectively.

Table 18 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Child trafficking

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	130	195	52	143	52	248
Border Police/Guards	1 300	1 040	780	520	130	603
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	260	208	104	52	49
Intelligence officers	156	130	273	286	52	234
Investigators	1 300	312	247	208	39	4 543
Managers	104	1 326	533	520	52	475
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	780	286	260	208	65	1 023
Other	2 600	2 080	1 040	520	130	245
Total	6 630	5 629	3 393	2 509	572	7 420

Some respondents highlighted the importance of training on distinguishing THB from sexual crimes, and of receiving training on the sexual exploitation of children through online video streams and chat rooms.

Links to criminal finances and money laundering

THB has significant connections to *criminal finances and money laundering*, with this main topic being rated as relevant by 65% of respondents from 15 countries[26]. The urgency rating for addressing this topic was 59%, indicating a moderately high need for training in this area. The need for training on *links to criminal finances and money laundering* is distributed across various levels: national-level training was deemed the most important (39%), followed by training at organisational level (33%) and unit level (28%).

Table 19 - Relevance of subtopics - Links to criminal finances and money laundering

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Links to criminal finances and money laundering	Financial investigations: tracing, seizing and confiscating criminal proceeds, asset recovery	78
	Cryptocurrencies	69
	Cooperation with all relevant financial institutions	69
	Digital banking	68
	Informal value transfer systems	68
	Planning and running searches for evidence with the focus on evidence linked to financial crime associated with THB	67
	Collecting and handling evidence/forensic procedures	66
	Monitoring changes of modi operandi	64
	Money mules (freezing accounts)	60

Table 20 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Links to criminal finances and money laundering

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	130	91	78	39	26	1 263
Border Police/Guards	520	221	52	52	65	128
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	52	286	52	26	1 153

[26] Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden.

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Intelligence officers	52	130	52	52	130	389
Investigators	390	260	156	130	26	4 170
Managers	52	78	52	793	130	576
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	260	26	1 313	208	39	676
Other	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	1 664	858	1 989	1 326	442	8 355

Other forms of exploitation

O*ther forms of exploitation* were deemed relevant by 65% of respondents from 15 MS[27], although the urgency rating for training in this area was lower, at 47%. This indicates that while training on this topic is essential, it is not regarded as immediately pressing unlike other areas under the topic of THB. There were six subtopics under *other forms of exploitation*, and the respondents ranked three as particularly relevant. The need for training on this topic was most strongly identified at the unit level (47%), highlighting its practical importance in frontline operations. The national and organisational levels were given a lower rating (27% each).

Table 21 - Relevance of subtopics - Other forms of exploitation

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Other forms of exploitation	Forced begging	67
	Forced criminality	62
	Illegal adoption	52
	Forced marriage	*47*
	Illegal/exploitative surrogacy	*45*
	Organ trafficking	*40*

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[27] Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden.

Table 22 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Other forms of exploitation

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	78	65	39	39	65	264
Border Police/Guards	1 300	650	520	130	65	2 185
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	156	156	156	52	26	67
Intelligence officers	52	91	156	39	65	161
Investigators	156	208	221	169	26	3 677
Managers	52	52	26	52	26	439
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	1 430	663	520	234	52	583
Other	4 550	2 600	1 040	520	130	515
Total	7 774	4 485	2 678	1 235	455	7 891

There were two other subtopics suggested in relation to other forms of exploitation: **forced criminality related to criminal networks** and **the situation of foreign students** - the specific framework of housekeepers for foreign residents.

Investigation techniques

The topic of *investigation techniques* received responses from 14 MS[28], with a relevance score of 61% and an urgency rating of 56%. Training on *investigation techniques* was identified as primarily important at national level (53%), followed by the organisational level (27%) and unit level (20%).

Table 23 - Relevance of subtopics - Investigation techniques

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Investigation techniques	Use and analysis of specific means of communication (WhatsApp, Telegram, WeChat, etc.)	86
	Open-source intelligence and Darknet	83
	Cooperation with online platforms and social media	80

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[28] Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden.

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
	Collection of electronic evidence	80
	Mobile forensics, analysis of data from mobile phones (use of specific analytical tools, (pathfinder, etc.))	80
	Online recruitment, advertisement, exploitation (e.g. web streaming)	79
	Web crawlers	77
	Cooperation with private sector	71
	Interviewing techniques, behavioural analysis	69

Table 24 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Investigation techniques

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	156	2 080	130	26	26	594
Border Police/Guards	1 300	390	390	286	130	338
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	52	52	52	52	26	13
Intelligence officers	52	52	78	52	26	2 662
Investigators	273	260	208	208	52	3 679
Managers	52	52	52	533	26	651
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	52	2 600	78	130	39	669
Other	7 800	2 600	2 080	780	260	520
Total	9 737	8 086	3 068	2 067	585	9 126

Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach

Respondents from 13 MS[29] addressed the topic of a *multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach,* with a relevance rating of 57%. Despite its moderate relevance, the urgency rating for this topic was notably high at 62%, indicating that those who responded considered it a

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[29] Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

critical and urgent area for training. Training in this area was identified as predominantly important at national level (53%), with a lesser emphasis on the organisational level (33%) and unit level (17%). All subtopics within this category were ranked as relevant by the respondents.

Table 25 - Relevance of subtopics - Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach	Interviewing victims of trafficking	85
	Understanding trauma / Specialised victim Agency or liaison official	79
	Continuous assessment of vulnerability	78
	Psychological harm to victims influencing their behaviour during investigation/support worker	78
	Provision of tailored information	77
	Support for reporting/victim engagement	75
	Protection of victims during investigations and criminal proceedings	72
	Cultural differences	66
	Rights of victims	64

Only six countries gave details of the number of law enforcement professionals, their profiles, and the required proficiency levels for CEPOL training in 2025 on this topic of a multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach. Finland reported the same notably high numbers in this category as for other topics, particularly in the profiles of investigators and analysts.

Table 26 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	26 065	5 200	39	52	260	2 342
Border Police/Guards	1 300	975	260	520	130	331
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	143	0	0	52	0	13
Intelligence officers	52	1 313	156	52	130	1 259
Investigators	78 000	364	299	208	130	3 760
Managers	156	2 080	793	52	26	496

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	4 030	5 200	2 600	208	52	673
Other	4 550	1 105	1 560	533	260	546
Total	114 296	16 237	5 707	1 677	988	9 420

Vulnerable groups

Respondents from ten countries[30] addressed the topic of vulnerable groups. While its relevance rating was at 43%, the urgency rating of this topic was notably high at 62%. This indicates that although fewer countries rated it as highly relevant, those who did also rated it as an urgent area for training and one that requires immediate attention. Training on vulnerable groups was identified as primarily crucial at national (54%) and organisational levels (36%), and the need at unit level (18%) was lower. The combination of lower relevance but high urgency suggests that this topic, while not widely prioritised, is critical in specific contexts and should be integrated into relevant training initiatives to ensure timely and effective responses to the needs of vulnerable groups.

Table 27 - Relevance of subtopics - Vulnerable groups

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Vulnerable groups	Child trafficking	79
	Risk Indicators for identification of victims and traffickers	79
	Use of Passenger Name Record, Advice Passenger Information and other similar instruments	75
	Identification of vulnerable groups such as children	74
	Trafficking within family and community structures	71
	Intersectionality (multiplication of several vulnerabilities)	69
	Cross-border transportation	68
	Use of open-source intelligence	68
	First response and safeguards, information provision	66
	Behavioural analysis	64
	Raising awareness on trafficking in human beings during the VISA-issuing process	64

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[30] Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden.

Table 28 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Vulnerable groups

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	130	2 639	1 326	26	260	4 364
Border Police/Guards	1 690	1 820	1 040	520	130	445
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	1 560	520	156	52	2 105
Intelligence officers	52	130	858	286	130	2 182
Investigators	182 000	195	208	208	273	7 941
Managers	156	3 276	2 080	533	26	688
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	4 030	2 613	1 989	208	78	726
Other	8 450	10 400	2 600	1 066	260	1 242
Total	196 768	22 633	10 621	3 003	1 209	19 693

Prevention of human trafficking

The topic of *prevention of human trafficking* received responses from nine MS[31]. Its relevance rating was 39%, but the urgency rating was high, at 56%. This indicates that while fewer countries prioritised this topic, those that did view it as an urgent area for training and requiring immediate action. Training in the prevention of human trafficking was identified as primarily essential at national level (60%), reflecting the need for broad, coordinated prevention strategies at nationwide scale. The need was also recognised at organisational level (30%), with a minor need at unit level (10%). The contrast between its lower relevance and high urgency ratings highlights the growing recognition of the importance of prevention in tackling human trafficking, even if this is not widely prioritised across all countries. The respondents ranked all subtopics related to this main topic as relevant.

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[31] Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain Sweden.

Table 29 - Relevance of subtopics - Prevention of human trafficking

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
The prevention of human trafficking	Criminalisation of the users of exploited services	69
	Engagement with public sector/public responsibility	69
	Data analysis for predicting vulnerability as proactive tool	68
	Multi-agency partnerships and cooperation	65
	Multimedia Platform Awareness	63
	Outreach and community engagement	61
	Ethics and integrity/anticorruption	54

Table 30 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Prevention of human trafficking

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	130	7 800	39	52	260	2 623
Border Police/Guards	910	1 820	936	520	78	328
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	260	1 560	273	156	52	2 106
Intelligence officers	52	5 200	1 378	52	260	2 382
Investigators	156 000	4 160	403	208	143	6 695
Managers	156	5 200	2 600	52	39	634
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	260	0	52	117	26	22
Other	8 450	7 800	2 600	845	260	1 125
Total	166 218	33 540	8 281	2 002	1 118	15 915

Document fraud

The *document fraud* topic received responses from six MS[32]. While its relevance was lower, at 26%, the urgency rating was significantly higher, at 57%. This suggests that, although fewer countries prioritised this topic, those that did think there is an urgent need for training, reflecting the increasing importance of combatting document fraud in the context of human trafficking. Training on document fraud was seen as primarily necessary at national level (50%), at organisational level (33%) and, to a lesser extent, at unit level (17%). The

[32] Finland, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden.

combination of lower relevance and higher urgency ratings reflects the pressing need for targeted training in document fraud, especially as traffickers increasingly exploit fraudulent documents to facilitate illegal activities. All subtopics associated with this main topic were ranked as relevant by respondents.

Table 31 - Relevance of subtopics - Document fraud

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Document fraud	Face comparison	63
	Breeder documents	58
	Innovative EU projects for cooperation and support such as JITs in action and PROFID	58

Table 32 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Document fraud

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	78 065	3 926	2 600	1 560	520	6 487
Border Police/Guards	1 300	0	0	0	0	120
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	97 630	2 600	1 560	260	52	7 727
Intelligence officers	260	2 600	2 080	1 560	260	2 262
Investigators	97 825	39 286	7 800	260	1 040	11 102
Managers	3 926	3 276	5 200	2 080	1 560	894
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	260	0	0	0	0	10
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	279 266	51 688	19 240	5 720	3 432	28 602

Forensics

The *forensics* topic received responses from six MS[33], with 26% of the total survey respondents considering it as relevant. However, its urgency was rated as very high, at 73%. This indicates that, while fewer countries prioritised forensics as a critical topic, those that did highlighted its immediate need for training, emphasising its crucial role in combatting human

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[33] Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Sweden.

trafficking. Training in forensics was seen as primarily necessary at national level (50%), followed by the unit level (33%) and organisational level (17%). The discrepancy between the ratings for relevance and urgency suggests the growing recognition of the importance of forensic science for THB investigations. This then triggers the need for upskilling among LE professionals to enhance their ability to gather and interpret evidence effectively. All subtopics within this category were deemed relevant by the respondents.

Table 33 - Relevance of subtopics - Forensics

Main topic	Subtopic	Relevance (%)
Forensics	Analysis of data	92
	Analysis of audio and video surveillance data	88
	Forensic accounting	83
	Car forensics	71
	Working with short-term rental companies	67

Table 34 - Profiles and number of potential trainees – Forensics

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total
Analysts	65 026	3 926	52	1 326	130	5 620
Border Police/Guards	0	0	13	0	0	1
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	130	130	65	91	130	32
Intelligence officers	13 013	1 313	793	273	65	1 189
Investigators	97 565	6 565	2 639	1 976	143	8 376
Managers	3 900	1 950	780	260	65	535
Prosecutors, Investigative Judges, Magistrates	5 200	3 900	2 600	1 300	39	1 003
Other	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	184 834	17 784	6 942	5 226	572	16 756

Outcomes of Expert Group Meeting

Following the dissemination of the draft report, the OTNA Expert Group[34] was convened online on Thursday, 21 March 2024, to discuss the findings and validate the report. The group concluded its review by endorsing the report and proposing specific recommendations to address the identified issues. This chapter details the key outcomes and provides an overview of the suggested enhancements to the THB training portfolio.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) emphasised the strong alignment of the OTNA report findings with their organisational priorities, stressing the critical nature of these issues for effective response mechanisms. An area of discussion was the MS interest in victim referral mechanisms, especially in the context of national and international cooperation and connections to forced marriages. This observation sparked a conversation about the evolving policy landscape in the EU, notably the forthcoming Directive on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women[35], the development of which has progressed in parallel with the OTNA process. This Directive, expected to impact the THB sector significantly, gives a mandate to the MS to develop more effective victim referral mechanisms and enhance support services. It represents a landmark legislative effort to combat violence against women and domestic violence, extending criminalisation to various forms of physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence, including cyber-violence and forced marriages. The discussions in the OTNA Expert Group meeting further highlighted the need for increased awareness and training on the early identification of victims, online detection methods, and victim-centred care. The anticipated Directive underscores the importance of digital literacy for combatting cyber-violence, creating a need for training that equips responders with the skills to identify, address, and prevent such violence.

Another central insight from the meeting was the significant overlap between THB and drug markets, as highlighted by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). The interconnectedness of these sectors, particularly in the context of criminal organisations using drug trafficking as a financing mechanism for human trafficking, calls for integrated training modules. The discussions progressed to the topics of the exploitation of trafficked individuals in drug laboratories and the role of drug addiction as a form of coercion. There was a strong consensus on the importance of incorporating training on the nexus between drugs and THB, considering the comprehensive impact on victims and the operational strategies of criminal networks. The EMCDDA offered to support the training portfolio by providing specialised expertise and cooperation on sessions related to the nexus

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[34] Including representatives from EIGE, EUAA, EMPACT, EMCDDA, and CEPOL.

[35] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_649

between drugs and THB. This raises an opportunity for multi-agency collaboration to further reinforce the training efforts in THB.

CEPOL's THB training portfolio offers diverse educational activities targeting critical aspects of human trafficking, including child trafficking, forced criminality, and sexual and labour exploitation. The combination of webinars, online products, and onsite activities, together with the CEPOL Exchange Programme offers a unique blended training package for law enforcement professionals across the EU. The interactive, instructor-led online and onsite courses offer a dynamic learning environment, while self-paced online modules are for those seeking to advance beyond foundational knowledge. Completing the portfolio, two webinars on detecting and investigating human trafficking at EU level and organ trafficking aim to broaden awareness. Recordings of parts of the training will be made available for extended access.

The Expert Group confirmed that the THB-related training topics identified in this Report are covered by CEPOL's training portfolio offering a blended package from awareness level to expert level training in different formats (see Annex 4 for the CEPOL training portfolio on THB). In response to the discussions and insights gained from work on the OTNA, some enhancements to the THB training portfolio have been proposed for consideration. These include a focus on ad-hoc webinars in collaboration with the European Commission to address the forthcoming Directive on violence against women and domestic violence and explore new forms of exploitation, including forced marriages. The organisation of the webinars is ongoing in cooperation with the respective stakeholders. Suggestions to expand the training scope to include topics such as forced adoption and illegal surrogacy reflect a commitment to staying attuned to the evolving dynamics of THB. Additionally, there is strong support for enhancing the multidisciplinary and victim-centric aspects of training, with a particular emphasis on improving approaches to interviewing victims, assessing vulnerability, and understanding the psychological impacts on victims. The business model of human trafficking activity was highly praised by the workshop participants who emphasised the need for exploring internet exploitation by traffickers, the darknet, and the application of LE techniques such as OSINT and web crawlers.

The Expert Group raised concerns about the discrepancy between the extensive training needs identified and the existing capacity of CEPOL to meet these demands effectively. With webinars currently reaching between 200 and 400 participants, a significant gap remains on how to meet the training demands of all potential participants for THB-related training identified in the OTNA process. This challenge underscores the importance of national authorities in disseminating training materials and enhancing the outreach of training initiatives.

In a written consultation, FRONTEX highlighted that the training needs of border guards concerning THB are higher than indicated in this current survey because border guards are underrepresented within the respondent group. Border guards are very much in need of

tailored training on THB, as very often, the only chance for potential victims to be identified (and saved) from exploitation is when they cross the EU's external borders. FRONTEX has invested a great deal of effort and resources, especially in relation to areas of prevention and identification of THB victims (as well as traffickers) at the EU external borders.

Overall, the insights from the Expert Group reaffirm the need for the THB training portfolio to remain agile, responsive to evolving trends and legislative updates, forward-looking, and deeply integrated in the current realities and future projections of human trafficking. Ensuring that LE professionals across the Union have access to such dynamic and comprehensive training resources is an essential EU-level training priority for providing the tools and insights needed to tackle the challenges of human trafficking both now and in the future.

Conclusions

Combatting THB remains a critical priority for the EU, reflecting its commitment to addressing this serious and multifaceted crime that infringes on fundamental human rights. In 2021, the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) by EUROPOL[36] highlighted THB as a principal threat, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue. The European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) has identified disrupting criminal networks engaged in all forms of human trafficking as a key objective for 2022-2025, including a focused effort on dismantling groups that exploit minors for forced criminality, that use violence or deceit, and leverage online platforms for victim recruitment and exploitation. Moreover, the EU-STNA for 2022-2025[37] has prioritised training in the THB domain at EU level, thereby reinforcing the importance of enhancing LE capabilities to combat this crime effectively.

The outcomes of the OTNA on the topic of THB, informed by contributions from 33 respondents across 23 EU Member States, indicate that nine out of the 13 main topics presented were deemed relevant for the MS, with the necessity for training on these topics varying from moderate to urgent. The most critical areas for training encompass the modi operandi and business models underlying human trafficking, the detection of labour exploitation, trafficking for sexual exploitation, enhancing national and international cooperation and information exchange, child trafficking, connections to criminal finances and money laundering, addressing other forms of exploitation, refining investigation techniques, and adopting a multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach. While some topics, namely document fraud, forensics, vulnerable groups, and prevention, received lower prioritisation, it is imperative to recognise these as core capability gaps, as identified in the EU-STNA 2022-

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[36] https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/socta2021_1.pdf
[37] https://www.cepol.europa.eu/publications/european-union-strategic-training-needs-assessment-2022-2025

2025. As such, they should be integrated as core learning outcomes within all training initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive approach to combatting THB that addresses immediate training needs and the underlying systemic challenges.

The need for training across a range of THB topics is notably high among various professional profiles, encompassing all proficiency levels. Investigators emerged as the group with the highest training need; however, the prevalence of single submissions from some MS may have skewed the perceived EU-wide demand for investigator training[38]. Alongside investigators there are many professional groups throughout the EU requiring this kind of training, including analysts, prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates, and border police and guards. There is at the same time a lower, yet notable, demand for training for managers and specialists in forensics and IT. The OTNA reveals a considerable need for awareness-level training, that is essential for establishing a fundamental understanding of THB and is essential for all officers, irrespective of their roles. Although the responsibility for providing such foundational training typically rests with the MS, this situation suggests the necessity for enhanced collaboration between EU LE training entities and the MS. It also indicates an opportunity to explore options for regional training initiatives to ensure all LE officers have a comprehensive baseline understanding of THB. This approach would also open the door for more specialised training at EU level to complement and supplement national training efforts.

Given the diversity of training needs spanning a wide array of topics, profiles, and proficiency levels among LE personnel, it seems clear that a tiered training approach could be the right approach, comprehensively adapting to the varying levels of familiarity and expertise with THB phenomena among LE personnel. Blended learning solutions could synergise with online and in-person training modalities to optimise accessibility and depth of learning. Online modules can lay the groundwork with essential knowledge, while in-person sessions would be optimal for facilitation, e.g. in relation to practical exercises on more specialised topics. Modular training programmes could be implemented to span a range of expertise levels, from basic to advanced, allowing participants to interact with content that aligns with their current proficiency and leads to more intricate subjects gradually. Specialisation tracks could offer targeted training on particular facets of THB, allowing for the development of specialised skills that are crucial for addressing the unique challenges posed by different forms of trafficking. Emphasising collaboration among LE organisations, prosecutors, and judges and integrating civil society, NGOs, and the private sector into training efforts will bring results. Cross-disciplinary workshops would be recommended for uniting professionals across the spectrum of THB response and supporting the development of effective practical cooperation.

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[38] This distortion is attributed to a singular respondent's submission, which reported training needs at levels 10 to 100 times higher than those indicated by other respondents. Such discrepancies have been considered in the analysis but should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings.

Annex 1: EU-STNA Chapter on Trafficking in Human Beings

Criminals involved in any type of **trafficking in human beings** increasingly use online environments for different purposes. For investigators, it is a challenge to follow social media and internet sources in the framework of cross-border cooperation because of the existing differences in legislation across Member States. At the same time, criminals often distance themselves from the place of exploitation; therefore, cooperation in investigating open sources is essential. Trafficking in human beings is increasingly carried out by criminal networks based on family ties. Being based on trust and loyalty, these networks are more stable and thus more difficult to disrupt. Criminal networks infiltrating legal business structures makes it challenging to trace and prosecute offenders.

Trafficking in human beings has become easier as services are available throughout the trafficking chain and information can be increasingly shared online via encrypted communication. In order to detect criminal networks, investigators should be aware of the structure and operation of these networks and of the different techniques used by them to hide or legalise criminal proceeds, including the infiltration of legal businesses. Besides, investigators lack adequate ability to use the digital tools available for identifying IP addresses, service providers, users, potential victims and suspects of trafficking as well as for detecting online recruitment and exploitation.

Acquiring knowledge about the crime patterns of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced criminality constitutes the highest training priority. The modi operandi of child trafficking is also considered an important topic to be addressed. In order to be effective, law enforcement officials need training on the use of digital tools and new technology for investigating. Training on offline and online victim identification is necessary for various target groups, including border guards and frontline officials. This should be complemented with training activities on collaborating with victims, cultural aspects, and victim psychology. The need for training on trends in related crime areas, such as organised property crime, migrant smuggling, document fraud and criminal finances, is also highlighted. Since cross-border cooperation is paramount, more training is required on EU and international cooperation tools and mechanisms. In order to enhance cooperation at national level, especially with labour authorities, training for law enforcement officials should also involve labour inspectors and civil registrars. The Member States indicated that 5 665 officials need training in this area.

The top training priority is acquiring knowledge about the modi operandi of trafficking in human beings, particularly human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced criminality, with a special focus on how criminals apply different forms of violence to coerce victims and on how they use digital tools to their advantage.

The next topic on the list of priorities is the modi operandi of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, with a focus on detection, victim identification, safeguards, support and referral. The improvement of the capacity to combat child trafficking is also considered important. Moreover, training should be provided on the use of digital technology by criminals at the different stages of trafficking, particularly on encrypted communication, document fraud and moving assets, as well as on improving the digital skills of law enforcement officials and their use of new technologies. In addition, there is a need for training on victim identification at the borders, by first responders and online. It should cover, inter alia, the use of open-source intelligence and the darknet, identifying and dealing with vulnerable victims such as children and women, and the victim referral system. Although ranked slightly lower, training dedicated to a multidisciplinary approach concerning victims is also considered important, with a focus on working with victims of human trafficking for forced criminality, tackling cultural differences, and understanding how the psychological harm suffered by victims influences their behaviour during investigation. As Ireland indicated, training should also provide knowledge on how to manage the physical and psychological trauma symptoms manifested by victims of human trafficking (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, etc.) during the investigation and litigation process. The next priority on the list is training on the link between criminal finances and money laundering and on tracing, seizing and confiscating criminal proceeds and recovering assets. This would enable law enforcement officials to disrupt criminal networks by following the money. In order to enhance international cooperation, training is required on the use of the existing information channels, the setting up and operation of joint investigation teams, the use of large-scale IT systems and interoperability. Investigators also need training on international cooperation tools, cooperation with the United Nations (UN), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-EU countries, and cooperation with NGOs and institutions providing victim support. As the prevention and detection of criminal activities are key elements, dedicated training activities should be organised. During the consultation process with training providers, the FRA noted that supporting victims' access to justice could be accentuated, whereby special emphasis is placed on women and children. Regarding unaccompanied children/minors, especially third-country nationals in need of special protection and entitled to have a person appointed to assist them throughout the proceedings, the FRA highlighted those topics related to guardianship, the rights of the child and the best interests of the child should be integrated into the training curriculum, where applicable. The EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 also contains a key action on enhancing capacity building, sharing of best practices for the identification of victims of trafficking, in particular among vulnerable groups, including through dedicated funding for training of police, social workers, inspector services, border guards and encourages the Member States to promote gender-sensitive and child rights-based training for officers and all practitioners likely to come into contact with victims.

List of identified and prioritised training needs

• 1. Modi operandi of trafficking in human beings, with increased reliance on digital technology, including the online recruitment of minors; different forms of human trafficking and their indicators, including the purpose of exploitation: human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced criminality; psychological and physical violence and drugs used to control and coerce victims
• 2. Business model of human trafficking, including the use of crime-as-a-service, as well as the infiltration and use of legal business structures by criminals; links to migrant smuggling networks, with a special focus on non-EU country nationals arriving illegally to the EU and being exploited, in particular vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and women; links to organised property crime, drug trafficking and document fraud
• 3. Trafficking for sexual exploitation: modi operandi including online; detection, victim identification, safeguards, support and referral, with a focus on women and children
• 4. Investigations on the increasing use of digital technology at different stages of trafficking, particularly on encrypted communication and moving assets
• 5. Child trafficking
• 6. Victim identification at borders, by first responders and online (use of OSINT and darknet), with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as women and children
• 7. Links to criminal finances and money laundering; financial investigations: tracing, seizing and confiscating criminal proceeds, asset recovery
• 8. Use of existing information and cooperation channels (e.g., Europol, Interpol); how to start a JIT; use of large-scale IT systems
• 9. International cooperation with the UN and IOM, cooperation with non-EU countries, cooperation with NGOs/ institutions providing victim support; referral of victims
• 10. Multidisciplinary and victim-centred approach; working with victims of trafficking for forced criminality such as organised property crime, drug-related crime, etc.; support for reporting; cultural differences; psychological harm to victims influencing their behaviour during investigation; fundamental rights of victims
• 11. Prevention of human trafficking
• 12. Detection of criminal forms of labour exploitation in workplaces
• 13. Forensics

Annex 2: Urgency levels

Urgency in the context of this questionnaire refers to the criticality of timely training intervention and its impact on the operational performance.

Urgency scale level	1	2	3	4	5
Training need is	Low	Secondary	Moderate	Urgent	Crucial
Training impact	Training has a minor role in the performance boost, it would refresh the knowledge, officials could benefit from training, and however, it is not essential.	It would be useful if the training would be delivered, however, the need is not urgent. Training can be delivered in (predictable) 2-3 years' time, it is needed to stay updated.	It would be advantageous to receive training within a year's period, it would improve the performance, however, not significantly.	Training is essential, it is necessary to be delivered within a year's period, it is important to perform qualitatively.	Training is critical, it is necessary as soon as possible, it is crucial for the successful performance of duties.

Annex 3: Proficiency levels

	Level 1 – Awareness	Level 2- Practitioner	Level 3 – Advanced Practitioner	Level 4 - Expert	Level 5 – Train-the-trainer
Definition	Refers to those who only need an insight into the particular topic, they do not need specific skills, competences and knowledge to perform the particular tasks, however they require general information in order to be able to efficiently support the practitioners working in that particular field.	Refers to those who independently perform their everyday standard duties in the area of the particular topic.	Have increased knowledge, skills and competences in the particular topic because of their extended experience, or specific function, i.e. team/unit leader.	Have additional competences, highly specialised knowledge and skills. Are at the forefront of knowledge in the particular topic.	Officials who are to be used as trainers for staff.
Description	Have a general factual and theoretical understanding of what the topic is about, understand basic concepts, principles, facts and processes, and are familiar with the terminology and standard predictable situations. Taking responsibility for their contribution to the performance of practitioners in the particular field.	Have a good working knowledge of the topic, are able to apply the knowledge in their daily work, and do not require any specific guidance in standard situations. Have knowledge about possible situation deviations and can practically apply necessary skills. Can assist in the solution development for abstract problems. Are aware of the boundaries of their knowledge and skills, are motivated to develop self-performance.	Have broad and in-depth knowledge, skills and competences involving a critical understanding of theories and principles. Are able to operate in conditions of uncertainty, manage extraordinary situations and special cases independently, solve complex and unpredictable problems, direct work of others. Are able to share their knowledge with and provide guidance to less experienced colleagues. Are able to debate the issue with a sceptical colleague, countering sophisticated denialist talking points and arguments for inaction.	Have extensive knowledge, skills and competences, are able to link the processes to other competency areas and assess the interface in whole. Are able to provide tailored advice with valid argumentation. Are able to innovate, develop new procedures and integrate knowledge from different fields. Are (fully or partially) responsible for policy development and strategic performance in the particular area.	Have knowledge and skills to organise training and appropriate learning environment using modern adult training methods and blended learning techniques. Are familiar with and can apply different theories, factors and processes of learning in challenging situations. Experienced with different methods and techniques of learning. Can prepare and conduct at least one theoretical and one practical training session for law enforcement officials.
EQF equivalent	EQF Level 3-4	EQF Level 5	EQF Level 6	EQF Level 7	
EQF levels – Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework, more information is available at https://europa.eu/europass/en/description-eight-eqf-levels					

Annex 4: CEPOL Blended training portfolio on Trafficking in human beings planned for 2024[39]

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	EMPACT

Course 07/2024/ONS: Child trafficking - Forced criminality and forced begging

Aim: To enhance the fight against child trafficking, forced criminality and forced begging by improving the capacity of law enforcement officials in detecting and investigating these forms of human trafficking and identifying the victims.

Target audience	Dates	Location
Investigators and prosecutors as well as other law enforcement staff specialised in THB and involved in combatting child trafficking, forced criminality and forced begging, and/or responsible for the identification of the victims, including child victims.	25 November – 29 November	Hungary

Level: advanced practitioner

ISO 29993 course

Organiser: CEPOL

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	EMPACT

Course 08/2024/ONS: Trafficking in human beings (THB) - Sexual exploitation

Aim: To enhance the investigation capacity of THB investigators and prosecutors to fight sexual exploitation, by demonstrating successful examples of a multi-agency approach by means of concrete case studies.

Target audience	Dates	Location
Law enforcement officers (26 funded by CEPOL), prosecutors, (10-12 fully funded by EJTN) specialised in sexual exploitation.	22 May – 24 May	Hungary

Level: advanced practitioner

Organiser: CEPOL, in cooperation with EJTN

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	EMPACT

Course 09/2024/ONS: Trafficking in human beings - Labour Exploitation

Aim: To enhance the investigation capacity of THB investigators, prosecutors and labour inspectors on labour exploitation. To reinforce the cooperation between law enforcement and labour inspectorates by demonstrating successful examples of a multi-agency approach by means of concrete case studies.

Target audience	Dates	Location

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[39] CEPOL Training Catalogue 2024 | CEPOL (europa.eu)

Law enforcement officials, prosecutors specialised in labour exploitation (26 funded by CEPOL), as well as labour inspectors (10-12 funded and arranged by ELA).

Level: advanced practitioner

	11 November – 15 November	Cyprus

Organiser: Cyprus Police, in cooperation with ELA

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	@ EMPACT

Webinar 3011/2024/WEB: Trafficking in human beings I – Latest trends in human trafficking facilitated by the Internet

Aim: To raise awareness on the latest trends in human trafficking committed online and to promote Europol support services to tackle the criminal networks engaged in online trafficking.

Target audience	Date	Location
Law enforcement officials, including investigators and prosecutors involved in addressing trafficking in human beings and protecting the victims.	27 March	Online

Organiser: CEPOL

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	@ EMPACT

Webinar 3012/2024/WEB: Trafficking in human beings II – Organ trafficking

Aim: To raise awareness on the phenomenon of organ removal and organ trafficking from EU perspective.

Target audience	Date	Location
Law enforcement officials, including investigators and prosecutors involved in addressing trafficking in human beings and protecting the victims.	Q2	Online

Organiser: CEPOL

	SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS	@ EMPACT

Online course 2010/2024/ONL: Trafficking in human beings

Aim: To enhance the knowledge of law enforcement officials on the impact of digital technology on the modi operandi of human traffickers and to improve their digital skills to identify victims and to detect and investigate cases of trafficking in human beings.

Target audience	Dates	Location
Law enforcement officials and prosecutors involved in the	08 April –	Online

detection and investigation of sexual exploitation, as well as in the identification of victims recruited and/or exploited on the internet.

19 April

Level: practitioner

Organiser: CEPOL

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS   EMPACT

Online Module 6011/2020/MOD: Trafficking in human beings

Aim: To provide knowledge on THB, its definition and the different forms of exploitation, as well as on the EU Policy (EMPACT) framework and the relevant investigative techniques to address the crime.

Target audience	Dates	Location
First-line police and border guards as well as law enforcement officials and judiciary staff who deal with THB at a national or cross-border cooperation level.	01 January - 31 December	Online **Self-paced**

Organiser: CEPOL

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