

**Operational Training**

**Needs Analysis**

**Migrant smuggling**

**Stay ahead of crime**



European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training - CEPOL  
1101 Budapest, Üllői út 114-116,  
Email: [info@cepol.europa.eu](mailto:info@cepol.europa.eu)  
[www.cepol.europa.eu](http://www.cepol.europa.eu)

#### OPERATIONAL TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS – MIGRANT SMUGGLING (2024)

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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
EES	Entry/Exit System
EL	Greece
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats
ETIAS	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
EU	European Union
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
EU-STNA	European Union Strategic Training Needs Assessment
FI	Finland
FR	France
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
JIT	Joint Investigation Team
LE	Law Enforcement
LEEd	CEPOL's Law Enforcement Education Platform
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MB	Management Board
MS	Member State/s
MT	Malta
NL	The Netherlands
OCG	Organised Crime Group
OSINT	Open-Source Intelligence
OTNA	Operational Training Need Analysis
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
TtT	Train-the-Trainer

## Executive Summary

Migrant smuggling remains a pressing concern for the European Union (EU), posing significant challenges to law enforcement (LE) professionals. To address these challenges, the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**<sup>1</sup> introduced common European solutions for managing migration, asylum, and border security, focusing on combatting smuggling networks. This approach is further supported by the **EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling (2021-2025)**<sup>2</sup>, which outlines measures to disrupt smuggling operations, strengthen MS cooperation, and enhance operational capacities. The **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)** prioritised migrant smuggling for the 2022-2025 policy cycle, recognising the need for coordinated action across Member States (MS). Additionally, the **European Union Strategic Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA) for 2022-2025**<sup>3</sup> ranked migrant smuggling as the sixth most important training topic for LE professionals. In its mid-term review, the topic increased its priority level, and two new training needs<sup>4</sup> were added to address emerging challenges.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/migration-and-asylum/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0591>

<sup>3</sup>According to the [Mid-term review of the EU-STNA 2022-2025](#) (November 2023) ‘Criminal finances, money laundering and asset recovery remain the second highest priority for EU-level training. Training needs related to this training area remained largely unchanged as well. The review process did not uncover completely new training needs, but it indicates adjustments concerning four of the existing training needs. Focus on the modus operandi remains the highest priority and with a slight expansion of topics to be covered such as Chinese underground banking, as a part of training on informal value transfer systems. Training on financial investigations and asset recovery for investigators of other crime areas (priority 3) should cover integrating financial investigations into serious crimes.’ pp. 15-18.

More: <https://www.cepola.europa.eu/newsroom/news/mid-term-review-confirms-validity-2022-2025-training-priorities>

<sup>4</sup> According to the [Mid-term review of the EU-STNA 2022-2025](#), ‘training on migrant smuggling should pay further attention to the trends and recent developments in the operating tactics of Organised Crime Groups (OGC) involved in migrant smuggling, and to the impact of shifts in migrant smuggling routes and the currently active sea entry corridors, such as the Central Mediterranean route, the Western Mediterranean routes, and the smuggling corridor from Türkiye into Greece, and changes in the Western Balkans route due to Ukrainian war’. In addition, ‘two of the current training needs have been complemented by adding new elements identified by the mid-term review’ and suggesting that ‘lessons learnt from landmark migrant smuggling investigations’ be included in training on investigations, while ‘another addition concerns fundamental rights aspects and trust-based approaches to the questioning of migrants’.

To address these complex challenges, CEPOL launched the **Operational Training Needs Analysis (OTNA) on migrant smuggling** in January 2024 to assess the needs of LE professionals and guide the development of future training responses.



The **online survey** received 34 responses from LE agencies across 21 EU MS<sup>5</sup> and Eurojust, representing 81% of countries participating under the CEPOL Regulation<sup>6</sup>. The data gathered reflect the views of **approximately 35 940 LE professionals** actively working to combat migrant smuggling in their respective services.



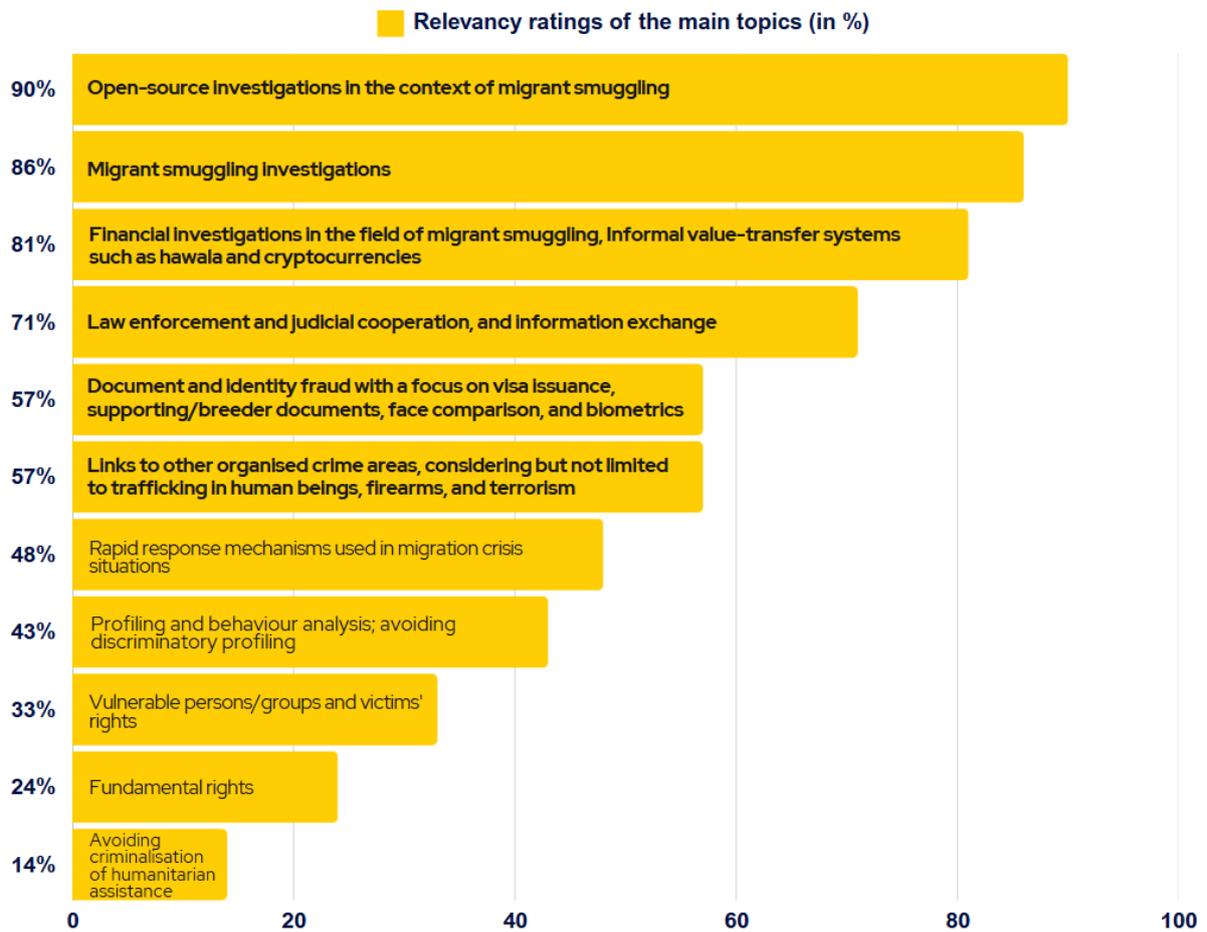
**Six priority topics identified**

Of the 11 main topics explored in the TNA, six were identified as the most relevant for EU-level training. The most relevant main topics include **open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling**, followed by **migrant smuggling investigations; financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies (financial crime); and law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange**. Additionally, subtopics related to **document fraud** and **the connections between migrant smuggling and other**

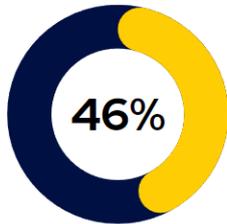
**forms of organised crime**, such as human trafficking and terrorism, were also considered relevant by the respondents.

<sup>5</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

<sup>6</sup> 26 EU MS, i.e. all the MS except Denmark participate in the CEPOL Regulation, available on: [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 \(europa.eu\)](#).



**High-risk criminal networks (83% relevance) and digital skills and new technologies (76% relevance) emerged as the top horizontal training priorities and should be consistently integrated into all migrant smuggling-related training.**



**Training within a year would be advantageous**

The **urgency** of training across these six main topics was assessed as **moderate**<sup>7</sup>. This means that the respondents view the training to be received within the next year as beneficial but do not expect it to significantly boost immediate operational performance. However, some main topics, such as financial investigations, may require more immediate attention due to the complexities of informal value-transfer systems and cryptocurrencies.

The demand emerged for specific training on additional subtopics related to the main topics raised. These included, for example, **social media and mobile applications used by criminals** (89%) under the open-source investigations topic and **special investigation methods and techniques**, such as undercover operations, digital forensics, and surveillance (71%) under



**Ten prioritised subtopics should be considered**

investigations in migrant smuggling. The **modi operandi** of migrant smugglers, such as sham marriages, bogus paternity claims, and fake employment contracts, were also a priority (70%). Cooperation between **administrative and law enforcement units** and the judicial sector was highlighted by 71% of respondents, and **EU cooperation tools** such as Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) were identified by 64%. Finally, the **nexus between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings** was rated as relevant by 83% of respondents.



**Experts as the main participant group on priority topics**

Based on the TNA findings, it is estimated that **within the six prioritised main topics, approximately 26 570 LE professionals across the EU** will require training. Taking into account all 11 main topics surveyed, this number could rise to as many as 47 203 professionals. Training needs are spread across various proficiency levels, particularly among the levels of **advanced practitioner, expert, and practitioner**. The data indicate that **experts will constitute the primary participant group in the most relevant training topics**. However, training on all proficiency levels remains crucial to effectively strengthen the capacity to combat migrant smuggling across the EU.

<sup>7</sup> For details, see the Urgency levels in Annex 2 below.

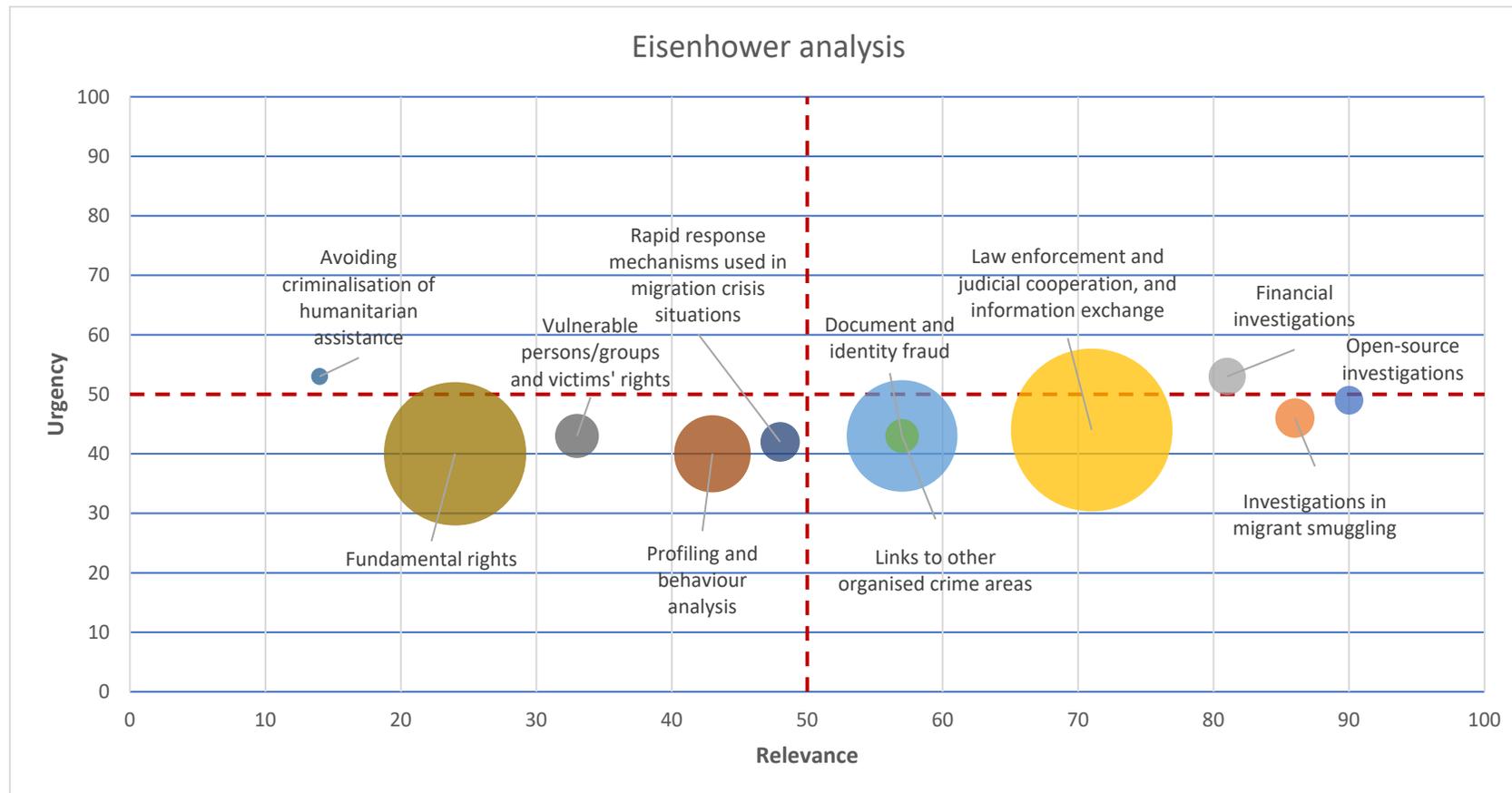


**Judicial authorities,  
investigators,  
intelligence officers**

The **profile distribution** of LE officials requiring CEPOL training over this period is also diverse. Most of the demand centres on **prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates**, who comprise 47% of the total, followed by **investigators** at 27% and **intelligence officials** at 13%. This distribution remains consistent across the six prioritised main topics, underscoring the need for a comprehensive, multi-level training approach.

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, urgency, and profile of participants – for all 11 main topics**



## Introduction

Under Article 3 of Regulation 2015/2219<sup>8</sup>, CEPOL's core mandate is to support, develop, implement, and coordinate training for law enforcement (LE) officials, focusing on protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. This training is essential for preventing and combatting serious and organised crime, terrorism, and emerging security threats and for enhancing cross-border cooperation through professional development initiatives. CEPOL's role also extends to providing training on migrant smuggling as part of the broader efforts to safeguard public order and coordinate international policing operations.

CEPOL's training portfolio is informed by the Operational Training Needs Analyses (OTNAs), which are conducted regularly on priority topics identified by the EU Strategic Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA). As outlined in CEPOL's Single Programming Document (SPD) 2023-2026<sup>9</sup>, OTNAs play a vital role in aligning CEPOL's training activities with the operational needs of EU MS. The OTNA methodology, first adopted in 2018 and revised in 2020 to incorporate feedback from the MS<sup>10</sup>, follows a structured, seven-step process that involves close collaboration with CEPOL National Units (CNU), CEPOL Knowledge Centres (CKC), and various LE agencies across Europe<sup>11</sup>.

Migrant smuggling has been identified as a key area for training in the EU-STNA 2022-2025, given the challenges it poses to LE agencies across the EU. With the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (COM(2020)609) and the EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling (2021-2025), the EU has reinforced its commitment to tackling this issue. The OTNA on migrant smuggling was launched by CEPOL in January 2024 to address the most pressing training needs related to this topic, and to shape CEPOL's future training portfolio accordingly.

The OTNA focused on the following 11 main topics to address migrant smuggling:

- **Open-source investigations** in the context of migrant smuggling
- **Migrant smuggling investigations.**
- **Financial investigations** in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies
- **Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information**
- **Document and identity fraud** with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics
- **Links to other organised crime areas**, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism
- **Rapid response mechanisms** used in migration crisis situations

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<sup>8</sup> Available on: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015R2219&from=EN>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cepola.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.

<sup>10</sup> Since then, CEPOL has conducted multiple OTNAs each year on the different topics defined in the EU-STNA, which have been complemented by extraordinary needs assessments as needed, conducted by applying the OTNA methodology.

<sup>11</sup> The target group referred to in this methodology is LE officials, as defined in Article 2 of Regulation 2015/2219.

- **Profiling and behaviour analysis**; avoiding discriminatory profiling
- **Vulnerable persons/groups and victims’ rights**, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)
- **Fundamental rights**, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination and data protection.
- **Avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance**

Through an online survey, CEPOL invited 26 MS<sup>12</sup> and the EU institutions to provide their views on the training needs for the main topics. 21 MS<sup>13</sup> and Eurojust responded, and two interviews<sup>14</sup> were conducted to clarify and collect complementary data. The analysis of these responses represents the views of 34 individual LE agencies, which account for around 35 940 LE professionals engaged in migrant smuggling-related work across the EU.

**Graphic 1 - Responding countries<sup>15</sup>**



Most of the responses came from police forces (61%), followed by border police/border guards (24%), with other relevant bodies, including prosecutors (9%) and judicial authorities (6%).

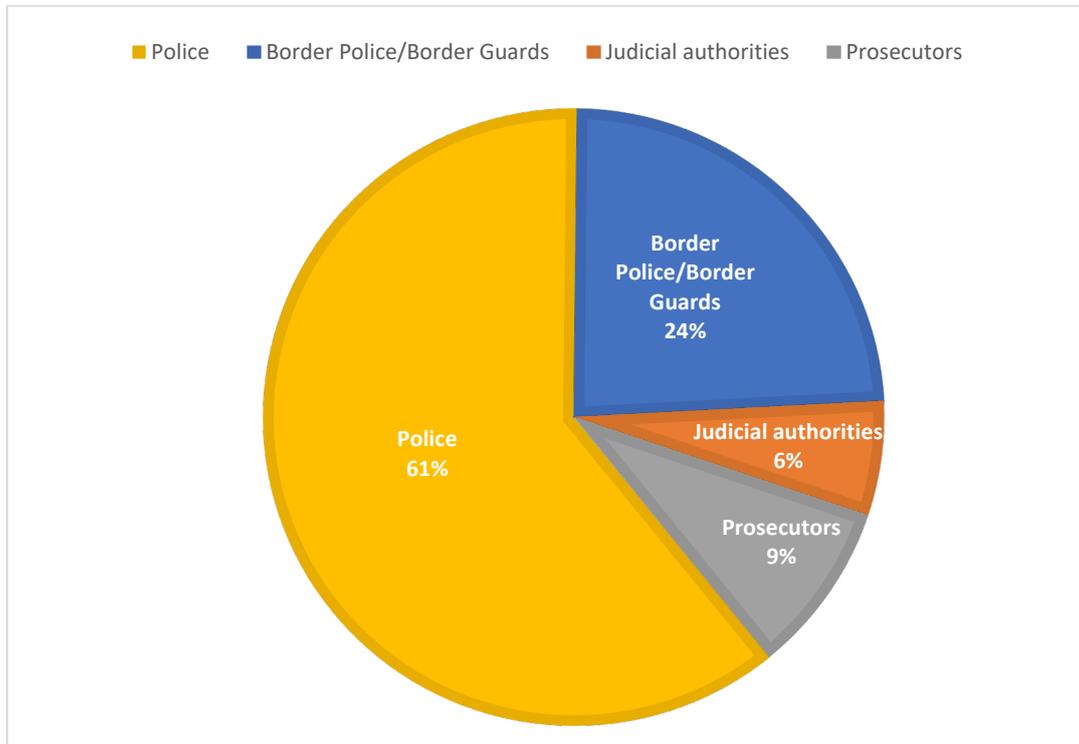
<sup>12</sup> Hereinafter, ‘Member States’ refers to the 26 Member States of the European Union participating in the CEPOL Regulation, i.e. all EU Member States except Denmark.

<sup>13</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the questionnaire responses, two online interviews took place between 27 February and 6 March 2024 with two police officials from Malta and Portugal. These interviewees were selected from the countries that suggested additional topics.

<sup>15</sup> Created with [MapChart](#)

**Graphic 3 - Distribution of professionals among respondents**



This six-chapter report presents the findings of the OTNA on migrant smuggling. The report is structured to provide a comprehensive overview of the analysis and its implications for future training programmes. The **Executive Summary** offers a concise overview of the key findings from the OTNA, highlighting the most urgent areas for training. The **Introduction** explains the methodological framework used in the OTNA process and gives details of the respondents who contributed to the survey. The **Analysis** chapter serves as the core of the report, focusing on the most relevant training topics, each of which was identified by at least 50% of the responding MS. The chapter on the **Training Dimensions of the Main Topics** delves deeper into the subtopics offering insights into the profiles, proficiency levels, and estimated participant volumes for the necessary training. The **Conclusions** chapter summarises the overall findings and presents recommendations for developing CEPOL’s future training portfolio. Finally, the report concludes with feedback from an **Expert Group Meeting**, where additional reflections and insights on the OTNA findings were provided<sup>16</sup>.

## Analysis

To determine which of the main topics are most important for the European LE community requiring CEPOL training in 2024-2026, the OTNA questionnaire included a multiple-choice section, allowing respondents to select one or more options from a list of 11 main topics. The relevance of each topic

<sup>16</sup> This chapter was added after the distribution of the draft report.

was determined by aggregating the number of MS identifying it as relevant. The final relevancy rating was calculated by dividing the number of MS that selected a topic by the total number of respondents. The data were consolidated for countries where multiple LE agencies submitted responses to reflect a single national perspective. In line with the OTNA methodology, any topic considered relevant by more than 50% of the responding MS was included in the further analysis.

## Relevancy of topics and subtopics

As a result, six main topics met the relevancy threshold. **Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling** topped the list with a 90% relevancy rating. Several other topics were rated with a high level of relevancy. In particular, **migrant smuggling investigations** achieved an 86% relevancy rating, and **financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies**, returned an 81% relevancy rating. Therefore, a wide array of subjects was identified for potentially significant performance enhancement through targeted training.

**Table 1** shows the relevancy ratings in chronological order for the main topics. The topics scoring above the 50% relevancy threshold are highlighted in bold.

**Table 1 - Ranking of the main topics based on their level of relevancy**

Main Topic	Relevancy rate of the topic (%)
<b>Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>Migrant smuggling investigations</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>Financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism</b>	<b>57%</b>
Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations	48%
Profiling and behaviour analysis; avoiding discriminatory profiling	43%
Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)	33%
Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection	24%
Avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance	14%

Seven of the main topics had subtopics, and in this survey, the respondents were asked to rank the relevancy of the subtopics.<sup>17</sup> **Table 2** illustrates the specific training needs of European LE staff, which are closely related to the main training topics, and the data reveal certain cross-cutting

<sup>17</sup> The migrant smuggling survey used forced ranking instead of the Likert scale. The subtopics were ranked according to the respondents' preferred order.

themes. The demand for training in digital proficiency has a relevancy rating of 89%. It is needed for understanding the use of social media and mobile applications by criminals and is directly related to the area of open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling. This underscores the significant shift towards cyber-enabled crimes within this domain and the need for related training.

In the main topic of **migrant smuggling investigations**, the spotlight was put on special investigation techniques, including undercover operations and digital forensics, and this reflects the need for specialised and advanced training to equip LE professionals with modern investigative skills.

On the topic of **law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange** the importance of collaborative frameworks is evident, as shown by the high relevancy ratings given to cooperation between various units and with sectors and partnerships with non-EU countries. This suggests a need for cross-cutting themes to enhance inter-agency and international cooperation across multiple domains of LE activity.

The connection between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, with an 83% relevancy rating under the main topic of **links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism**, highlights the necessity for training that not only focuses on specific crimes but also on the interconnected nature of organised crime. This indicates a broader, thematic need for a holistic understanding of criminal networks and their operations.

**Table 2 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics – for all the main topics**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
<b>Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling</b>	<b>Social media and mobile applications by criminals</b>	<b>89%</b>
	Ability to respond to the use of digital platforms	45%
	Cooperation with private sector	26%
<b>Migrant smuggling investigations</b>	<b>Special investigation methods and techniques such as undercover operations, purpose-built malware, digital forensics, surveillance including the use of drones</b>	<b>71%</b>
	<b>Modi operandi (sham marriages, bogus paternity, false employment contracts, fake invitation letters, false medical visas, and false claims of being victims of trafficking or refugees, etc.)</b>	<b>70%</b>
	<b>Intelligence gathering</b>	<b>68%</b>
	Interviewing techniques	38%
	Mass mobilisation for the purpose of migration, detecting secondary movements, and monitoring law enforcement movements	36%
	Sharing good practices	31%
	<b>Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange</b>	<b>Cooperation between administrative and law enforcement units and the judicial sector (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges)</b>

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
	EU cooperation tools and mechanisms such as Joint Investigation Teams	64%
	Partnerships and cooperation with non-EU countries	61%
	EU cooperation legal background	59%
	Large-scale IT systems in combatting migrant smuggling like European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac), Schengen Information System (SIS), etc.	57%
	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Operational Action Plan on migrant smuggling	46%
	Comprehensive approach (involving consulates, civil registries, etc.)	21%
Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism	Nexus between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings including exploitation of migrants after arrival in the EU	83%
	Other organised crime areas and terrorism	17%
Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations	Identification of vulnerabilities	50%
	Referral	50%
Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)	Identification and referral	100%
	Appointment of guardians for unaccompanied children	14%
Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection	Identification and referral	80%
	Appointment of guardians for unaccompanied children	40%

## Additional subtopics

Additional subtopics were suggested for three of the main topics covering **open-source investigations**, **migrant smuggling investigations**, and **links to other organised crime areas**. These suggestions offer valuable directions for broadening training content to address the complexity of migrant smuggling and its connections with other criminal activities.

The suggested additional topic for **open-source investigations** was the need for specialised training in undercover operations on social media platforms, acknowledging the growing engagement of criminals in digital environments. The emphasis was put on social media advertisement and understanding the *modi operandi* of migrant smuggling by sea, including its ties with organised crime groups. These subtopics highlight the dynamic nature of smuggling operations and the necessity for LE to navigate both digital challenges and maritime contexts.

The suggested additional subtopics in relation to **migrant smuggling investigations** were interviewing and interrogations with interpreters, emphasising the complexities of cross-border

inquiries. There was a need expressed for advanced mobile phone extraction techniques, which underscores the critical role of technology in investigations. Finally, the need for language training was identified, specifically for English and tailored to combatting illegal migration. This need is noted for its significance to enhancing communication skills for international LE collaborations.

Under the main topic of **links to other organised crime areas**, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism, mention was made of document forgery, and the misuse of sham recruitment agencies and educational institutions for facilitating illegal migration. Mention was also made of the socio-economic implications of migrant smuggling, including the exploitation and use of migrants in destination areas. These points underscore the multifaceted aspects of migrant smuggling and its interconnection with other forms of criminal exploitation, stressing the need for comprehensive and multidimensional training approaches in law enforcement.

**Table 3** provides detailed insights on the suggested subtopics within these three main topics, including information on the country and professional group of LE professionals associated with each suggestion.

**Table 3 - Suggested subtopics related to the main topics**

Main topic	Suggested subtopic
<b>Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Undercover operations in Social Media Platforms, (Police officials-AT)</li> <li>- Migrant smuggling by sea - modi operandi e.g. by using loopholes in the system (Police officials-MT)</li> <li>- Migrant smuggling in relation with OCG, (Police official-MT)</li> <li>- Social media advertisement (Border guards-IT)</li> </ul>
<b>Migrant smuggling investigations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviewing and Interrogations with Interpreters Transborder surveillances, (Police officials-AT)</li> <li>- mobile phone extraction techniques using the best possible tools for the purpose, (Police officials-MT)</li> <li>- English language for combatting the crime of organising illegal migration. (Border guards-PL)</li> </ul>
<b>Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Document forgery</li> <li>- Sham recruitment agencies; sham schools using education to get student visas for a fee (Police officials-MT)</li> <li>- Connecting and using of migrants on the destination territories (Border guards-IT)</li> </ul>

### Urgency and volume of training needs

The urgency levels for the main topics surveyed ranged from 53% to 40%. Despite the considerable relevance of main topics such as **open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling** and **migrant smuggling investigations**, the urgency for training in these areas was not deemed very

high. The topic of **financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies**, emerged as the only one considered both relevant and marginally more urgent. According to the OTNA methodology, an urgency rating between 53% and 40% indicates a moderately urgent need for training. This suggests that while training within a year could be beneficial and improve performance, the expected impact is not substantial. The relatively small variation in urgency rates, and overall moderate urgency rating across different topics suggest that developing the **Migrant Smuggling training portfolio** within the next two years should adequately address the needs of European LE professionals without the need for immediate, large-scale interventions.

**Table 4** below details the division of participants across the main topics, presenting both the EU-level estimations—achieved by extrapolating the statistical median to the EU level—and actual submissions received from the 21 responding countries for comparison.

**Table 4 - Ranking of the main topics based on urgency and estimated number of trainees**

Main Topic	Relevancy	Urgency	Trainees (EU)	Actual Trainees
Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling	90%	49%	1 846	627
Migrant smuggling investigations	86%	46%	2 535	910
Financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies	81%	53%	2 405	1 328
Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange	71%	44%	10 452	931
Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics	57%	43%	7 163	1 261
Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism	57%	43%	2 171	1 010
<b>Total/average (prioritised main topics)</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>26 572</b>	<b>6 067</b>
<i>Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations</i>	48%	42%	2 548	279
<i>Profiling and behaviour analysis; avoiding discriminatory profiling</i>	43%	40%	4 953	326
<i>Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)</i>	33%	43%	2 834	825
<i>Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection</i>	24%	40%	9 204	698
<i>Avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance</i>	14%	53%	1 092	42

Main Topic	Relevancy	Urgency	Trainees (EU)	Actual Trainees
<b>Total/average (all main topics)</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>47 203</b>	<b>8 237</b>

Based on the data, **26 572 participants at EU level** need training across the prioritised main topics related to migrant smuggling and its interconnected crimes.<sup>18</sup>

## Profiles and proficiency levels

The distribution of potential participant volumes for each proficiency level within the prioritised main topics varies. For the prioritised areas, the expert level (45%) emerged on top, followed by both practitioner and advanced practitioner levels at 19% each, with awareness at (9%) and Train-the-Trainer (TtT) at (7%). Data analysis, employing the OTNA methodology, which identifies the statistical median and extrapolates it to the EU level, reveals a noticeable shift towards a heightened need for expert-level training within the group of prioritised main topics. This shift would require more specialised skills and knowledge to tackle complex challenges. However, the numbers submitted by the 21 responding countries indicate that experts do not represent the primary participant group. Instead, advanced practitioners take the lead, with experts and practitioners following closely behind<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 5** shows the potential participant numbers for training in the prioritised main topics. They are based on both calculated estimations forecasted for the EU level and the actual submissions received from responding countries.

**Table 5 - Proficiency levels and number of participants – for the main topics**

Proficiency level	Number of participants (EU 26)	Number of participants (actual)
<b>Awareness</b>	2 483	380
<b>Practitioner</b>	4 992	1 163
<b>Advanced practitioner</b>	5 109	3 077
<b>Expert</b>	12 064	1 291
<b>Train-the-Trainer</b>	1 924	156
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 572</b>	<b>6 067</b>

<sup>18</sup> The differences between actual and median-based EU-level on LE and judicial cooperation, and document and identity fraud, came from the fact that one respondent from Portugal answered for these topics and gave high number of participants.

<sup>19</sup> This finding is also in line with the proficiency distribution across all main topics, where advanced practitioners (36%) lead, followed by experts (31%) and practitioners (18%).

As shown in **Table 6**, for the prioritised main topics, most trainees are expected to belong to the group of **prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates**, followed by **investigators** and **intelligence officials**. Although the expected number of prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates at EU level has significantly increased in the statistical analysis, due to the disproportionately high submissions from a single responding country<sup>20</sup> affecting the statistical median, this professional group still constitutes the primary group of participants<sup>21</sup>.

**Table 6 - Professions and number of participants – for the main topics**

Category	Number of participants (EU)	Number of participants (actual)	Share % of all trainees
Investigators	4 069	1 565	15%
Intelligence officials	3 211	764	12%
Analysts	2 704	319	10%
Managers	1 495	235	6%
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	10 088	2 764	38%
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	1 846	2 764	7%
Other	3 159	233	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 572</b>	<b>6 067</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Trainees per country

For the 11 main topics addressed in the OTNA survey, Portugal (53%) and Malta (9%) indicated the highest proportion of anticipated trainees. **Table 7** below details the number of participants requiring training across the 21 responding countries. These figures are presented as submitted by each country's representatives without any statistical adjustments.

**Table 7 - Volume of potential trainees per responding country – actual values for all main topics**

Country	Number of trainees	Share of all participants (%)
Portugal (PT)	4 342	53%
Malta (MT)	735	9%
Latvia (LV)	490	6%
Austria (AT)	435	5%

<sup>20</sup> One respondent from Portugal submitted 650 prosecutors for all the main topics, and this has impacted the overall numbers of trainees for prosecutors.

<sup>21</sup> This trend is consistent across all the main topics.

Country	Number of trainees	Share of all participants (%)
Slovenia (SI)	327	4%
Slovakia (SK)	308	4%
Bulgaria (BG)	303	4%
Netherlands (NL)	289	4%
Italy (IT)	273	3%
France (FR)	153	2%
Greece (EL)	130	2%
Cyprus (CY)	94	1%
Romania (RO)	82	1%
Poland (PL)	72	1%
Lithuania (LT)	43	1%
Hungary (HU)	41	<1%
Czech Republic (CZ)	31	<1%
Finland (FI)	26	<1%
Germany (DE)	24	<1%
Ireland (IE)	21	<1%
Luxembourg (LU)	18	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 237</b>	<b>100%</b>

Portugal's submissions account for over half of the potential total participants identified by the survey. This was significantly shaped by notably high estimates of potential participants (640-650 prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates), primarily at the advanced practitioner level, across most of the main topics. Although Portugal's contribution came from four responding organisations, equally representing both police and judiciary sectors, the substantial submissions primarily came from a respondent associated with a prominent judicial oversight body.

## Horizontal aspects

In the survey, the respondents were presented with four horizontal training topics. They had the opportunity to rank these additional topics according to their relevancy to them<sup>22</sup>. **Table 8** below displays the ranking of horizontal aspects.

**Table 8 - Relevancy of horizontal training topics**

Horizontal aspect	Relevancy
<b>High-risk criminal networks</b>	83%
<b>Digital skills and the use of new technologies by law enforcement</b>	76%
<i>Crime prevention</i>	48%
<i>Forensics</i>	29%

The topics of **high-risk criminal networks; digital skills, and the use of new technologies by LE** emerged as the leading horizontal priorities among the surveyed countries. With high-risk criminal networks achieving an average ranking of 1.52 (where value one represents the highest priority) and digital skills closely following at 1.71, the rankings reflect explicit agreement on the critical need to confront complex criminal entities and boost digital proficiencies within LE agencies. This underscores the importance for LE to evolve alongside the fast-paced criminal advancements in technology. While remaining priorities for some responding countries, the topics of crime prevention and forensics received a lower priority overall.

The data analysis reveals that high-risk criminal networks are a universally recognised priority. Yet, the focus on digital skills and the use of new technologies by LE shows notable variation among countries. For instance, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic prioritise digital skills above high-risk criminal networks. In contrast, Finland's approach, which ranks digital skills as the top priority while deeming high-risk criminal networks less important, potentially points to specific national concerns or operational contexts that diverge from the broader European perspective. Similarly, Malta's greater focus on crime prevention reflects different strategic priorities or challenges. Although forensics consistently ranks as the lowest priority<sup>23</sup>, this consensus among the respondents on its positioning in the training agenda does not detract from its significance but underscores the more immediate need to address more pressing areas, such as digital skills and high-risk criminal networks, within LE training.

<sup>22</sup> The respondents ranked the subtopics according to their preference from being extremely relevant to not relevant at all. Applying the OTNA methodology, adapted for instances where a country provided multiple responses, the highest ranking was given to the one consistently chosen. For consistency with the typical presentation format of OTNA reports, these rankings were converted into percentages.

<sup>23</sup> With the exception of Latvia, which gave forensics its top priority.

## Regional training needs

The aim of this survey was also to gather detailed insights into the relevance of various main topics for regional-level training to understand better the nuanced training needs across different geographical contexts. Only 57% of the responding countries offered insights on regional training needs, which therefore restricts the analysis and impact of the results of the moderately low relevancy ratings (all below 50%) for these topics at regional level when gauged against the total survey population. With this proviso, **Table 9** reports the relevancy ratings of the 12 respondent MS on the main topics for regional training. However, it is essential to note that regardless of the calculation method used—whether based on the total survey population or the sample that provided feedback—the ranking order of the topics in relation to regional training needs is useful feedback.

**Table 9 - Relevancy ratings of the main topics for regional training**

Topic	N:o of countries addressed	Relevance
Migrant smuggling investigations	9	83%
Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange	9	83%
Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics	8	83%
Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis	8	75%
Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)	7	67%
Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling	7	58%
Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to THB, firearms, and terrorism	6	58%
Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination and data protection	5	58%
Financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies	5	50%
Profiling and behaviour analysis; avoiding discriminatory profiling	4	42%
Avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance	1	8%

Most of the topics were ranked as highly relevant by Slovenia, Portugal, Romania, and Malta, and interestingly, the ranking of topics identified as necessary for regional training somewhat diverged from those deemed relevant as main topics.

Under the main topic of **migrant smuggling investigations**, respondents from Portugal and Malta specifically underlined the interconnectedness of their challenges with illegal migration and the flow of counterfeit documents. They highlighted instances where organised crime groups exploit their geographical and operational proximity, and expressed the need for collaborative regional training

that focuses on shared investigative strategies and cooperative mechanisms to effectively disrupt these networks.

For **LE and judicial cooperation, and information exchange**, submissions from countries such as Slovenia and Portugal further underscored the critical importance of regional knowledge-sharing. Countries, affected by the Balkan route, pointed out their unique position in the migration and smuggling landscape, advocating for training that enhances understanding and cooperation between jurisdictions to tackle these issues more effectively.

On the topic of **document and identity fraud**, responses from Malta and Slovenia indicated how these crimes serve as gateways to more extensive criminal operations. This insight justifies the need for training to equip officials with the skills to detect and investigate document fraud early in the crime chain, and thereby prevent broader criminal activities.

Regarding **rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations**, respondents from countries such as Slovenia and Italy emphasised the ever-changing nature of migration flows and crisis situations, highlighting the necessity for training that prepares regional teams for swift, coordinated responses to emerging challenges, ensuring that rapid response mechanisms are robust and adaptable.

On **vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights**, submissions from a broad range of countries revealed a consensus on the paramount importance of safeguarding vulnerable individuals. They specifically mentioned the need for training that enhances the ability of LE personnel to recognise and protect victims of trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence effectively.

The topic of **open-source investigations** was particularly noted as relevant in the modern digital age by countries such as Malta and Slovenia, where migrant smuggling and related criminal activities are increasingly advertised and organised via social media. These countries stressed the need for specialised training that equips officials with the skills to navigate and investigate these digital platforms comprehensively.

The **links to other organised crime areas**, highlighted by respondents, reflect an acknowledgement of the multifaceted nature of migrant smuggling operations that often intersect with other forms of organised crime, as noted by countries such as Italy and Slovenia. This underscores the need for a holistic training approach that addresses these complexities and fosters an integrated response strategy. Based on the interviews, different training on the varied routes of smugglers could be considered. Different target countries have different geographical countries, and regions face different problems due to geographical reasons, which would require specialised training.

On **fundamental rights**, Malta and Slovenia specifically cited the critical need for LE officials to receive training that reinforces their commitment to and understanding of fundamental rights, ensuring that enforcement practices always uphold the highest standards of human rights protection.

Lastly, on **financial investigations**, the emphasis was placed on the strategic importance of dismantling the financial infrastructure supporting migrant smuggling operations in Malta and

Slovenia. These countries highlighted the necessity for specialised training focused on uncovering financial trails early in investigations, demonstrating the pivotal role financial analysis plays in targeting the economic foundations of criminal networks.

**Table 10** below offers detailed insights into the justifications provided by respondent countries on regional training needs.

**Table 10 - Regional training needs and justifications**

Main topics	Topics for national/regional training	Countries identified
<b>Migrant smuggling investigations</b>	Enhanced regional collaboration for combatting organised crime and illegal migration.	Portugal, Italy, Malta, Latvia
	Specific challenges related to secondary movements and counterfeit documents.	Italy, Malta
	Addressing transit country dynamics for illegal migration.	Latvia (also mentioned by Estonia, Lithuania, Poland)
	The daily basis challenges of illegal migration and people smuggling.	Slovenia
	Improving methods and responses to emergency situations and crises.	Italy
<b>Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange</b>	Knowledge exchange on modi operandi, laws, and procedures.	Portugal
	Importance of better cooperation without specifying regional training.	Netherlands
	The significance of the Balkan route in smuggling operations.	Slovenia
	Understanding the roles of people and organisations involved in smuggling.	Italy
<b>Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance/supporting breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics</b>	Document fraud as a trigger for complex investigations.	Malta
	Document fraud as a common modus operandi.	Slovenia
<b>Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)</b>	Need for training on identifying and protecting vulnerable persons.	Malta
	The issue of migrants being victims of human trafficking.	Slovenia
<b>Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations</b>	Addressing the changing nature of migrant crises.	Slovenia
	Developing immediate response plans for emergencies.	Italy
<b>Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling</b>	The role of social media in promoting smuggling.	Malta

Main topics	Topics for national/regional training	Countries identified
	Investigating smuggling activities along the Balkan route.	Slovenia
<b>Financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies</b>	The importance of financial investigations from early stages.	Malta
	The impact of tracing the money trail on identifying suspects and confiscating assets.	Slovenia
<b>Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism</b>	The interconnectedness of migrant smuggling with other crimes.	Malta, Slovenia, Italy
<b>Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination and data protection</b>	Training necessity on fundamental rights for law enforcement officials.	Malta
	Advocacy for universal rights awareness.	Slovenia

## Further training suggestions

The survey identified additional training suggestions from three countries: Austria, Italy, and Malta, each proposing topics that address unique aspects of migration and migrant smuggling. Austria recommended two specific areas of training: **ethnological aspects of migration** targeted at the practitioner level, deemed as moderately urgent. This topic would enhance the understanding of migration's cultural dimensions<sup>24</sup>. Austria's second suggestion, **mobile phone analysis**, is considered important for advanced practitioners, with a suggestion for training 50 investigators and ten analysts to deepen their skills in analysing mobile data. Italy proposed training on the **connections between local mafias and foreign ones in human trafficking**, expressing the need across various proficiency levels<sup>25</sup>. This topic, marked as moderately urgent, would aim to broaden the understanding of the interconnectedness of criminal networks for a diverse group of LE professionals. Malta highlighted the urgency of training on **legal methods to import the third country (non-EU) nationals<sup>26</sup> to Europe**, with a focus on legal frameworks and procedures. This training would be intended for a wide range of roles<sup>27</sup>, underscoring the importance of understanding legal channels and their implications for migration management.

<sup>24</sup> Training on this topic would be required for 100 investigators and five managers in Austria.

<sup>25</sup> Awareness, Practitioner, Advanced Practitioner, Expert, and Train-the-Trainer (TtT) levels; training need to include four investigators, eight intelligence officials, 16 analysts, 20 managers, two prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates, and four experts.

<sup>26</sup> In the original submission, provided as 'tcns', which in the analysis has been interpreted as third (non-EU) country nationals.

<sup>27</sup> Practitioner, Advanced Practitioner, and TtT levels; training need including five investigators, five intelligence officials, two analysts, two managers, two prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates, and one expert.

## Existing training at national or international level

Eleven MS<sup>28</sup> mentioned national or international training activities (33) on themes and topics related to migrant smuggling in 2023. The Netherlands (8) and Latvia (5) made particular reference to national training.

**Table 11** below presents a detailed overview of existing national and international training initiatives, organised around identifiable key themes in the responding MS submissions. It outlines the topics covered, the aims of the training, the target audience, and the countries where these training sessions are held.

**Table 11 - Overview of themes and topics in existing national or international training**

Theme	Topic	Aim	Audience	Country
<b>Digital investigations and cybersecurity</b>	Digital aspect of investigations (OSINT, dark web etc.)	To enhance capabilities in conducting digital investigations using open-source intelligence.	Police Inspectors	Malta
	Migrant Smuggling - Digital Investigations	Strengthen the fight against migrant smuggling by improving OSINT use in digital investigations.	Team leaders, mid-rank officials, investigators	Finland
<b>Migrant smuggling investigations</b>	Investigations methods	Provide new investigators with comprehensive training in the field of migrant smuggling.	Beginners	Austria
<b>Financial investigations</b>	Fighting migrant smuggling by means of financial investigation	Encourage initiation of financial investigations parallel to migrant smuggling operations.	LE officials investigating Migrant Smuggling	Greece, Portugal
<b>Human trafficking and migrant smuggling</b>	ILOT Caserta (Migrant Smuggling in Human Trafficking)	Enhance international knowledge and practices in combatting migrant smuggling and human trafficking.	LE professionals	Italy, Slovenia
<b>Cooperation and information exchange</b>	Inter-agency LE cooperation and information exchange	Enhance cooperation and information exchange within EU LE agencies.	To be specified	France
<b>Fundamental Rights and Victim Protection</b>	Fundamental rights	Raise awareness on fundamental rights within the context of LE operations.	Officials (as indicated by the respondent)	Lithuania
	Identification of vulnerable persons	Update knowledge on new trends in identifying vulnerable persons.	Officials	Lithuania
<b>Crime prevention and awareness</b>	Crime prevention in smuggling	Improve awareness on crime prevention strategies in the context of smuggling.	Units	Italy

<sup>28</sup> Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, and Slovenia.

Theme	Topic	Aim	Audience	Country
	Preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings	Prepare trainers to deliver comprehensive training on trafficking to other border guards.	Border guards who give training	Latvia
<b>Document and identity fraud</b>	Document and identity fraud training programme	Enhance skills in detecting false documents to prevent migrant smuggling and trafficking.	Experienced forensic experts and document examiners	Finland
<b>Other training and capacity building</b>	Europol EMPACT GRANTS	Raise awareness regarding the availability and use of EMPACT Grants for law enforcement initiatives.	EMPACT Participants	Greece

Additional topics mentioned by the Netherlands: 'Exchange-bite on Law enforcement cooperation, information exchange and interoperability II; Exchange-bite on Migrant Smuggling II, Police Cooperation in Addressing A High Influx Of Displaced (these were webinars) and an on-site training about populations and migrants'<sup>29</sup>.

Most of the reported training sessions used virtual training opportunities, accounting for 51% of the total: webinars comprised 42% of the 33 training sessions, online modules 6%, and online courses 3%. Conversely, one-third (33%) of the sessions were conducted on-site, while the remaining 15% employed other training methods. Details of the target audience were provided for 22 training sessions. On-site training primarily catered to a range of participants, from entry-level and future junior officials of the State Border Guard to team leaders, mid-rank officials, investigators, and border guards responsible for training at their duty stations. This format also catered for experienced forensic experts and document examiners from the Border police. Alternatively, other training formats targeted border guards engaged in Immigration services and asylum procedures. Webinars were specifically aimed at EMPACT participants and LE officials investigating migrant smuggling and various units.

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<sup>29</sup> Exchange bites are short online sessions designed for LE officials to share and learn best practices based on the experiences of CEPOL Exchange Programme participants. Each session, lasting between 45-60 minutes, is dedicated to a specific thematic area and is accessible in recorded form via CEPOL's Law Enforcement Education platform (LEEd). These sessions are available to all LEEd users free of charge and do not require nomination by a CEPOL National Unit or Contact Point. For more information, see: <https://www.cepola.europa.eu/training-education/exchange-bites>

## CEPOL as the EU Hub for law enforcement training

The survey was used to map the MS views on CEPOL's potential role as the EU hub for LE training. The results indicate that a significant majority (85%) of respondents support the idea of CEPOL developing its role and that such a hub would serve as a central platform to facilitate international cooperation and exchange experiences and best practices among the MS. To fulfil this role effectively, the respondents listed specific tasks and roles for CEPOL, putting emphasis on the need for a cohesive and comprehensive approach to law enforcement training across the EU:

- **Central coordination, knowledge exchange, and information dissemination:** CEPOL could serve as a central platform for both sharing and exchanging detailed information and insights on law enforcement challenges, such as migrant smuggling, among the EU MS. This role could encompass, for example, organising specialised workshops for knowledge exchange, facilitating direct communication between countries and services to foster cross-border cooperation, and setting up forums for learning and collaboration. Such efforts would enhance the collective response to crime across the EU and support making CEPOL a key reference point for practitioners in the field.
- **Networking, support, and international cooperation:** as a hub, CEPOL could further encourage networking by offering spaces where LE entities and experts from various MS can connect, share experiences, and provide mutual support. For example, organising meetings for national experts and LE agencies could create spaces for discussing detection and investigation strategies and foster a collaborative knowledge-sharing environment. This initiative could be extended to enhance international cooperation by acting as the main liaison bridge between the MS and LE agencies and facilitate the sharing of best practices and feedback on training needs.
- **Developing common curricula and innovative training programmes:** CEPOL could focus on standardising training curricula and innovative training programmes to streamline international cooperation and investigations. These efforts could be extended to mentor programmes designed to support the professional development of less experienced officials by pairing them with more experienced officials (mentors), to facilitate practitioner exchanges, and integrate field missions with theoretical training to offer comprehensive learning experiences. Emphasising the pan-European aspect of training by applying the highest standards would ensure a uniform level of expertise across the EU.
- **Building a trainer pool and promoting cooperation:** establishing a dedicated pool of trainers and setting an annual training agenda would ensure structured and continuous professional development across the EU. This approach would not only support the direct sharing of insights during training sessions but also promote cooperation and the exchange of good practices among law enforcement bodies in the EU MS. All of this should enhance the EU's capacity to combat cross-border crime more effectively.

## Training dimensions of the main topics

Following analysis of the survey results, the following are the survey indications on the training dimensions of the main topics for training in the area of migrant smuggling:

### Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling

Based on the responses from nineteen (19) countries<sup>30</sup>, the main topic of **open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling** was rated as the most relevant (90%) main topic, but not so urgent (43%). This topic had three subtopics, and the subtopic of **social media and mobile applications by criminals** was rated as the most relevant by the respondents. The respondents answered on this topic indicating one of the following levels: national (36%), organisational (36%), or unit (28%).

**Table 12 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Open-source investigations in the context of migrant smuggling	Social media and mobile applications by criminals	89%
	Ability to respond to the use of digital platforms	45%
	Cooperation with private sector	26%

Training on **open-source investigations** in the context of migrant smuggling is needed mainly by investigators and analysts at advanced practitioner and practitioner levels.

**Table 13 - Topics and descriptions of existing national or international training**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	0	39	260	104	0	403	46
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	0	0	26	52	0	78	15
Intelligence officials	26	52	260	52	0	390	204
Investigators	143	169	195	65	13	585	297
Managers	39	13	26	104	0	182	23
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	65	143	0	0	0	208	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1 846</b>	<b>627</b>

<sup>30</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Some respondents suggested subtopics related to this topic that include undercover operations on social media platforms, migrant smuggling by sea—particularly methods of exploiting loopholes in the system—and the connection between migrant smuggling, OCGs, and social media advertisements.

### Migrant smuggling investigations

The responses from eighteen (18) countries<sup>31</sup> ranked the main topic of **migrant smuggling investigations** as highly relevant (86%), but not urgent (46%). This topic had six subtopics, three of which were ranked as relevant. The respondents answered from various perspectives in connection with this topic, but mainly from the organisational (35%), unit-level (35%), and national perspective (30%).

**Table 14 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under migrant smuggling investigations**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Migrant smuggling investigations	Special investigation methods and techniques such as undercover operations, purpose-built malware, digital forensics, surveillance including the use of drones	71%
	Modi operandi (sham marriages, bogus paternity, false employment contracts, fake invitation letters, false medical visas, and false claims of being victims of trafficking or refugees, etc.)	70%
	Intelligence gathering	68%
	Interviewing techniques	38%
	Mass mobilisation for the purpose of migration, detecting secondary movements, and monitoring law enforcement movements	36%
	Sharing good practices	31%

According to the responses, training on **migrant smuggling investigations** could be relevant for investigators and analysts at expert and practitioner levels.

<sup>31</sup> Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

**Table 15 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on migrant smuggling investigations**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	91	156	52	182	52	533	84
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	26	52	130	104	52	364	48
Intelligence officials	52	78	104	117	52	403	240
Investigators	208	117	78	130	26	559	413
Managers	52	26	39	104	65	286	68
Other	39	0	0	0	0	39	3
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	52	143	130	0	26	351	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>2 535</b>	<b>910</b>

Financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling, Informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies

The main topic of **financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling and informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies** was the only topic rated as both strongly relevant (81%) and urgent (53%) by the responses from seventeen (17) countries<sup>32</sup>. The respondents gave their answers in connection with this topic mainly from the organisational (45%), national (35%) and unit-level (20%) perspective. At EU level, according to the respondents, this topic would be needed by investigators and intelligence officials at expert and advanced practitioner levels.

**Table 16 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on financial investigations in the field of migrant smuggling and informal value-transfer systems such as hawala and cryptocurrencies**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	52	52	91	182	52	429	81
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	52	52	0	117	52	273	36
Intelligence officials	39	52	208	182	52	533	122
Investigators	130	169	260	104	26	689	371
Managers	52	39	52	104	26	273	51

<sup>32</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	26	26	52	52	52	208	667
<b>Total</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2 405</b>	<b>1 328</b>

## Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange

The main topic of **law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange** was rated as relevant (71%), but not so urgent (44%) according to the responses from fifteen (15) countries<sup>33</sup>. The respondents gave their answers on this topic mainly from the national (37%), organisational (37%), and unit-level (26%) perspective. This topic had seven subtopics, four of which were ranked as relevant.

**Table 17 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange	Cooperation between administrative and law enforcement units and the judicial sector (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges)	71%
	EU cooperation tools and mechanisms like Joint Investigation Teams	64%
	Partnerships and cooperation with non-EU countries	61%
	EU cooperation legal background	59%
	Large-scale IT systems in combatting migrant smuggling like European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac), Schengen Information System (SIS), etc.	57%
	European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Operational Action Plan on migrant smuggling	46%
	Comprehensive approach (involving consulates, civil registries, etc.)	21%

According to the respondents, the training on law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange as rated as important mainly for prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates at expert level.

<sup>33</sup> Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Slovenia.

**Table 18 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on law enforcement and judicial cooperation, and information exchange**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	52	273	52	104	0	481	37
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	26	130	0	91	0	247	14
Intelligence officials	26	52	39	91	338	546	55
Investigators	130	208	52	78	26	494	147
Managers	39	13	26	65	0	143	21
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	0	0	65	8 476	0	8 541	657
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>8 905</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>10 452</b>	<b>931</b>

Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics

The main topic of **document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics** was rated as relevant (57%), but not so urgent (43%) by the respondents from twelve (12) countries<sup>34</sup>. The main topic of document and identity fraud, focusing on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics, had no subtopics. The respondents gave their answers in connection with this topic mainly from the organisational (50%), national (38%), and unit-level (12%) perspective. After analysis, the distribution of profiles and potential trainees was slightly different at the EU level. The 'Other' (Senior inspector of the state Border guard for Latvia) refers to law enforcement officials at advanced practitioner and practitioner levels.

**Table 19 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on document and identity fraud with a focus on visa issuance, supporting/breeder documents, face comparison, and biometrics**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	104	104	104	143	104	559	31
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	104	65	91	143	104	507	42
Intelligence officials	273	52	416	143	104	988	76

<sup>34</sup> Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Slovenia.

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Investigators	156	442	338	143	65	1 144	182
Managers	78	52	65	104	104	403	35
Other	0	1 560	1 300	130	130	3 120	230
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	52	52	130	52	156	442	665
<b>Total</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>2 327</b>	<b>2 444</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>7 163</b>	<b>1 261</b>

Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism

Training on **links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism** was rated as relevant (57%), but not urgent (43%) according to respondents from twelve (12) countries<sup>35</sup>. The respondents gave their answers in connection with this topic mainly from the unit (38%), national (31%), and organisational-level (31%) perspective. This topic had two subtopics and one of them, the nexus between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, including exploitation of migrants after arrival in the EU, was ranked as relevant.

**Table 20 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
<b>Links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism</b>	Nexus between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings including exploitation of migrants after arrival in the EU	83%
	Other organised crime areas and terrorism	17%

At EU level, the training on the topic of **links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism** could be relevant for investigators at practitioner and expert levels.

<sup>35</sup> Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Slovenia.

**Table 21 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on links to other organised crime areas, considering but not limited to trafficking in human beings, firearms, and terrorism**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	26	52	52	104	65	299	40
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	52	52	104	104	65	377	32
Intelligence officials	52	91	117	65	26	351	67
Investigators	104	234	117	117	26	598	155
Managers	39	26	26	104	13	208	37
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	26	156	52	52	52	338	679
<b>Total</b>	299	611	468	546	247	2 171	<b>1 010</b>

Some additional subtopics suggested for this topic were **document forgery, sham recruitment agencies, sham schools that use education to get student visas for a fee, and the connection and use of migrants in the territories of destination.**

#### Rapid Response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations

Respondents from ten (10) countries<sup>36</sup> ranked the topic **rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations** as not relevant (48%) nor urgent (42%). It had two subtopics, and their relevancy ratings were the same. This topic would interest investigators at the practitioner level. It was mainly addressed from the organisational (55%), national (36%), and unit-level (9%) perspective.

**Table 22 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations	Identification of vulnerabilities	50%
	Referral	50%

<sup>36</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and Slovenia.

**Table 23 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on rapid response mechanisms used in migration crisis situations**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
<b>Analysts</b>	39	182	0	104	0	325	25
<b>Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)</b>	26	0	104	182	0	312	15
<b>Intelligence officials</b>	39	52	0	182	0	273	65
<b>Investigators</b>	234	598	104	182	26	1 144	152
<b>Managers</b>	52	0	104	182	0	338	16
<b>Other</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates</b>	26	0	130	0	0	156	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2 548</b>	<b>279</b>

## Profiling and behaviour analysis; avoiding discriminatory profiling

Respondents from nine (9) countries<sup>37</sup> ranked the relevancy of **profiling and behaviour analysis, avoiding discriminatory profiling** below the relevancy threshold (at 43%). For these respondents, this topic is not urgent (40%) either, but it would be important for ‘others’ and for intelligence officials at the advanced practitioner level. The answers mainly addressed the national (40%), organisational (40%), and unit-level (20%) perspective.

**Table 24 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on profiling and behaviour analysis; avoiding discriminatory profiling**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	0	26	104	0	0	130	9
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	0	0	39	0	0	39	3
Intelligence officials	26	611	585	0	0	1 222	93
Investigators	156	130	286	104	26	702	78
Managers	52	0	78	0	0	130	8
Other	0	780	1 300	520	130	2 730	135
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>1 547</b>	<b>2 392</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>4 953</b>	<b>326</b>

<sup>37</sup> Finland, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia.

Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)

The main topic of **vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)** was responded to by representatives from seven countries<sup>38</sup>, who gave it a relevancy rating of 33%. According to these responses, the topic is not so urgent (43%). This topic had two subtopics (the same as for the topic of fundamental rights), and the identification and referral subtopic was rated as the most relevant. This topic was mainly addressed from the national (56%), organisational (22%), and unit-level (22%) perspective.

**Table 25 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights, including but not limited to minors (victims of human trafficking, victims of sexual and gender-based violence)	Identification and referral	100%
	Appointment of guardians for unaccompanied children	14%

**Table 26 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	91	104	104	143	104	546	30
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	78	78	78	130	78	442	22
Intelligence officials	104	78	78	143	104	507	31
Investigators	104	117	104	143	26	494	46
Managers	65	65	26	143	104	403	31
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	52	52	130	52	156	442	665
<b>Total</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>2 834</b>	<b>825</b>

<sup>38</sup> France, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia.

Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination and data protection

This topic was ranked as not relevant (24%) and not urgent (40%) in the responses from five countries.<sup>39</sup> **Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection**, had the same two subtopics as the vulnerable persons/groups and victims' rights main topic. The responses indicated that the subtopic under fundamental rights (identification and referral) is very relevant (80%). This topic was answered mainly from the national (50%), organisational, (33%) and unit-level (17%) perspective.

**Table 27 - Relevancy ratings of subtopics under fundamental rights, included but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection**

Main Topic	Subtopic	Relevancy
Fundamental rights, including but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection	Identification and referral	80%
	Appointment of guardians for unaccompanied children	40%

**Table 28 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on fundamental rights, included but not limited to access to international protection, non-discrimination and data protection**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	0	0	39	0	0	39	3
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	0	130	0	26	0	156	6
Intelligence officials	0	130	52	0	0	182	7
Investigators	0	208	26	0	26	260	25
Managers	0	0	39	0	26	65	4
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	0	0	8 346	26	130	8 502	653
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>8 502</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>9 204</b>	<b>698</b>

<sup>39</sup> France, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania.

## Avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance

Responses were received from three countries<sup>40</sup> on this topic; its relevancy rating was 14%, but its urgency rating rose to 53%. The **avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance** topic had no subtopics. Training on this topic would be important for experts (Forensics, IT, etc.) at an awareness level. This topic is essential from both at the national (80%) and organisational level (20%).

**Table 29 - Profiles and number of potential trainees for training on avoiding criminalisation of humanitarian assistance**

	Awareness	Practitioner	Advanced practitioner	Expert	Train-the-Trainer	Total (EU-level)	Total (actual)
Analysts	0	52	26	52	0	130	5
Experts (Forensic, IT, etc.)	520	52	52	0	0	624	24
Intelligence officials	0	52	52	52	0	156	6
Investigators	0	0	52	26	0	78	3
Managers	0	0	0	52	0	52	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Prosecutors, investigative judges, magistrates	0	0	0	0	52	52	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1 092</b>	<b>42</b>

<sup>40</sup> Italy, Latvia, Portugal.

## Outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting

After the draft Operational Training Needs Analysis report was distributed, the OTNA Expert Group<sup>41</sup> gathered online on 22 March 2024, to review and validate the findings and discuss how EU-level training should respond to them. This chapter outlines the main outcomes of the meeting and summarises the proposed improvements to the training portfolio on migrant smuggling.

The experts noted that, overall, the OTNA outcomes presented - with the focus on investigation techniques, financial investigations, and document fraud - align well with expectations. Despite fundamental rights and other issues being prioritised less, the need for targeted training in these areas remains essential.

While not explicitly identified in the OTNA but recognised in the practical training environments and interaction with the MS representatives, the **pressing need for training on document fraud, particularly at foundation level** was discussed. For example, Belgium, Portugal, and Romania highlighted a significant need for more basic training for frontline officials who are often the first to encounter fraudulent documents. This group includes but is not limited to border guards and police forces. A widespread need for basic level training was expressed by respondents.

While the EU in principle should deliver training only on higher proficiency levels, the OTNA on migrant smuggling<sup>42</sup> and other OTNAs have identified a trend where topics with possible knowledge gaps at national level on lower proficiency levels are covered by training at EU-level. While the responsibility for such basic training is assigned to MS, it creates a gap in preparing new officials and/or otherwise meeting the training demand at national level. This suggests a need for a strategic reassessment of training priorities at both EU and national levels and for exploring avenues for EU training providers to support awareness-level training needs. Recognising CEPOL's evolving role as a central hub for EU law enforcement training, despite traditionally not delivering awareness-level training, proposed solutions for such needs could include, e.g. developing resources that could help a standardised approach to training across MS, as well as online-based, self-paced training products complemented by handbooks or manuals. Regarding document fraud, a potential collaboration between CEPOL and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) was discussed to find synergies and leverage their unique expertise to create joint training products.

Additionally, the discussion touched on the implications of new systems, namely the **Entry/Exit System (EES) and European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)**, on counter-migrant smuggling efforts, which creates a need for training in these developments. With the systems planned to go live in 2024-2025, there is an expectation that the MS will seek guidance on how to implement these systems effectively and navigate the changing operational landscape with proficiency. CEPOL agreed to offer **webinars to respond to the training needs arising from the introduction of these new information systems**.

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<sup>41</sup> With the participation of representatives from CEPOL, eu-LISA and FRONTEX.

<sup>42</sup> OTNA respondents mentioned a training need at basic/awareness level.

CEPOL's current training portfolio on migrant smuggling includes three onsite activities focusing on digital investigations, analysis, behaviour analysis, interviewing techniques, and document fraud investigations. Additionally, an online module titled **Facilitated Illegal Immigration** offers in-depth knowledge beyond essential awareness, working towards a practitioner-level understanding. This module, alongside a shorter version focused on **behaviour analysis in migrant smuggling**, can be used as self-paced learning. The portfolio is complemented with webinars on topics such as facilitating illegal immigration and document fraud. A notable addition this year has been an onsite course on interviewing techniques, which supplements the established behaviour analysis course—a flagship course offered at EU level as part of the LE training.

**CEPOL's existing training offer on migrant smuggling** addresses several essential aspects of this complex field and, in general, **fits the needs identified in the analysis**. To keep pace with evolving challenges and developments, **the need for updates and expansions to fine-tune the current portfolio was recognised**. For 2025, the plan is to introduce a new course on identity fraud, in response to the demand for skills in document investigation, face comparison, and facial recognition. This need for this training, emphasised by several MS, calls for a training approach that serves a broad spectrum of law enforcement personnel, from police officials to prosecutors. Moreover, plans are in place **to update the online module on facilitated illegal immigration**, and the timeline for such updates will depend on CEPOL's operational capacity in the near to medium term. There is also a proposal to enrich the training portfolio by **incorporating topics** related to financial investigations, **such as hawala mapping**, into webinar formats to support the development of a comprehensive understanding of the financial dimensions of migrant smuggling. Additionally, the current eLessons on drugs could be added to the migrant smuggling portfolio as blended learning products to reflect the complex relationship between **drug trafficking** and migrant smuggling, so as to maintain its relevancy and address the complexities of these intersecting issues. Additionally, there is the possibility of **launching a dedicated section within** the Law Enforcement Education Platform (**LEEd**) for **sharing news, learning materials, and resources specific to migrant smuggling** and this is under consideration.

Furthermore, the Expert Group discussed the innovative **potential of integrating CEPOL's exchange programme (CEP) with operational activities such as Joint Action Days** to strengthen the practical impact of training and encourage closer educational-operational collaboration. Although implementing such initiatives within the current year may pose challenges, they represent a forward-looking approach for enriching the training portfolio, promising significant benefits for future training strategies on combatting migrant smuggling.

The distinct regional training needs arising from the OTNA process, such as managing migration crises highlighted by Italy and a proposed regional activity for the Balkan routes suggested by Slovenia, were also discussed. The recurring theme of emergency crisis management, pertinent due to ongoing migration challenges, emerged as a critical area for development. This led to a suggestion for **a broader applicability for crisis management training, potentially benefiting frontline countries** such as Greece and Bulgaria, especially in light of Bulgaria's Schengen integration that entered into force on 31 March 2024. The discussions also pointed to a gap in training for transit country dynamics, a topic that remains vaguely defined but is acknowledged as a persistent concern.

The Expert Group endorsed the report with the above reflections, and emphasised the importance of developing the training portfolio to address the foundation-level and specialised needs of EU law enforcement in combatting migrant smuggling and ensure that it remains relevant in the face of new challenges and technological advancements. This calls for addressing emerging trends and operational challenges, updating existing modules, fostering greater integration between education and operational activities, and promoting training development and delivery collaboration between the relevant JHA agencies to address migrant smuggling comprehensively.

## Conclusions

The EU faces significant challenges in combatting the smuggling of migrants, a critical issue that impacts not only the MS with external borders but also the entire Union. In response to this escalating challenge, the European Commission has adopted a renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling for 2021-2025<sup>43</sup>, announced in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>44</sup> and the EU Security Union Strategy<sup>45</sup>. The complex and interconnected nature of migrant smuggling, which often overlaps with other forms of serious and organised crime, such as trafficking in human beings, money laundering, and even terrorism, prompted the inclusion of migrant smuggling as one of the key priorities in the EMPACT framework for the 2022-2025 period. The topic is firmly on the EU's agenda, and the Commission recently proposed a new regulation to increase police cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings<sup>46</sup>. Aligned with the strategic approach of EMPACT and recognising that the diversity of challenges underscores the necessity for tailored LE training strategies, the EU-STNA 2022-2025 also identified training on this topic as an EU-level priority.

This **OTNA on Migrant Smuggling**, based on the contributions of 21 EU MS, underscored a broad spectrum of training needs. The significant emphasis on training needs across various investigative domains highlights a critical demand for training to equip LE bodies and officials with comprehensive investigative skills, ranging from the adept use of digital platforms to a nuanced understanding of the financial mechanisms underpinning smuggling networks, so as to dismantle the sophisticated landscape of migrant smuggling operations efficiently. In addition to developing training for these investigative tasks, there is a clear need for a collaborative framework where stakeholders can exchange intelligence, share best practices, and pool resources as a central step towards boosting the operational effectiveness of LE agencies in their response to smuggling networks. Incorporating the capacity to disrupt high-risk criminal networks and enhancing digital skills and technological proficiency as cross-cutting themes across all LE training are essential for improving both the digital competencies of LE officials and their understanding of the broader criminal networks. Training with this focus will not only enhance the capacity to disrupt criminal operations in migrant smuggling, by making better use of digital platforms, but will also address the intertwined relationships between migrant smuggling and other related high-risk criminal activities.

Despite the high relevancy rating of certain topics in the survey, the responses also revealed that the urgency for training across these areas was moderate. In other words, while training needs exist for a wide range of topics, the needs could be responded to by applying a staged approach, e.g. over the coming two years. The results indicate that approximately 26 570 LE professionals at EU level require training across the prioritised topics, pointing to a substantial demand for training in combatting migrant smuggling. The findings suggest a shift in the demand for training towards more

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<sup>43</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0591>

<sup>44</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020_en)

<sup>45</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/document/46f6c237-4a09-46b8-a7fd-62f479df4c79\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/46f6c237-4a09-46b8-a7fd-62f479df4c79_en)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760364/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)760364\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760364/EPRS_BRI(2024)760364_EN.pdf)

expert-level training within the prioritised training dimensions, and an increasing need for specialised knowledge and skills to address complex challenges effectively. Regarding the professional profiles, prosecutors, investigative judges, and magistrates<sup>47</sup> were identified as the primary group of anticipated trainees, emphasising the critical role of judicial and prosecutorial staff in the fight against migrant smuggling. These professionals were closely followed by investigators and intelligence officials in the expression of training needs.

Given the findings from the OTNA survey on training needs for combatting migrant smuggling within the EU, CEPOL - together with its partners who contribute to the EU-level LE training provision, could consider modular training programmes that address the broad spectrum of topics identified as relevant, with a particular focus on high-demand areas. These modules should cater to different proficiency levels, from the level of basic awareness to expertise level, allowing for a tailored learning experience that meets the varied needs of LE professionals across the EU. Continuing a blended learning approach that combines online digital training for foundation-level training with in-person workshops on practical skills and on more advanced topics would maximise the reach, flexibility, and effectiveness of the training. Creating specialised training paths focusing on the critically relevant and most urgent areas could be considered, offering in-depth knowledge and advanced skill development for LE officials, particularly those in prosecutorial and judicial roles, to tackle the sophisticated financial mechanisms used in smuggling networks. Given the notable shift in the training demand towards expert-level training needs, EU LE training could evolve to develop and offer advanced courses that cater to this demand. These courses would enhance the strategic and tactical capabilities of more senior law enforcement officials and specialists in dealing with complex migrant smuggling operations.

To be effective in the fight against migrant smuggling beyond EU borders, closer cooperation is essential both on bilateral and regional levels. By tailoring training to the unique operational contexts of different EU regions, implementing regional training initiatives that address specific geographical challenges and smuggling routes, and promoting cross-border cooperation and information sharing would enhance the effectiveness of LE actions against migrant smuggling networks. Finally, the feedback from the MS collected through this OTNA survey suggests that strengthening CEPOL's role as an EU Hub for LE training would also have the added potential to create a collaborative platform for knowledge exchange, best practices, and the sharing of innovative training methods and technologies, and serve as a central resource for continuous professional development and cooperation among EU MS. Such an initiative would also contribute to the objective outlined in the EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling (2021-2025)<sup>48</sup>, among others, on the need to ensure comprehensive training and capacity-building for LE officials across the EU.

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<sup>47</sup> The total number of prosecutors, investigative judges and magistrates was influenced by one respondent from Portugal.

<sup>48</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0591>

## Annex 1- EU-STNA Chapter on Migrant Smuggling

To enhance the investigative capabilities of law enforcement, enhanced training is needed on the use of digital platforms and new technological tools. In the field, officials and LE staff should be aware of the multifaceted crime patterns of migrant smuggling and able to use related financial investigation techniques. Training on linked crime areas, such as trafficking in human beings and document fraud, is also necessary. Cross-border cooperation should be enhanced through training on information exchange systems, interoperability, EU cooperation tools and mechanisms, and cooperation with non-EU countries, including the role of CSDP missions. Moreover, training activities should address compliance with fundamental rights, particularly as regards gender equality. The respondent Member States indicated that 6 149 officials need training in this area.

Law enforcement officials primarily need training on investigation tools, with a focus on the application of digital instruments, open-source intelligence, the use of social media and mobile applications, intelligence gathering and decryption. Training on the varied modi operandi used in migrant smuggling cases is also high on the priority list. It should cover crime patterns such as sham marriages, bogus paternity, false employment contracts, fake invitation letters, false medical visas (including vaccination certificates), and false claims about being victims of trafficking or refugees. Furthermore, the use of digital platforms by criminals for all phases of migrant smuggling, mass mobilisation for the purpose of migration, arranging secondary movements, and monitoring law enforcement movements should also be addressed during training activities. The next priority in the analysis is to better understand the operation of criminal networks, their structure and their organisation.

## List of identified and prioritised training needs

The following list shows the prioritisation of topics, by the Member States, in the area of training to combat migrant smuggling.

1. Investigation: sharing best practices, OSINT, ability to respond to the use of digital platforms, social media and mobile applications by criminals, intelligence gathering, and decryption.
2. Modi operandi: sham marriages, bogus paternity, false employment contracts, fake invitation letters, false medical visas, and false claims of being victims of trafficking or refugees; use of digital platforms for all phases of migrant smuggling, mass mobilisation for the purpose of migration, arranging secondary movements, and monitoring law enforcement movements; profiling and behaviour analysis; surveillance including use of drones; use of cryptocurrencies; use of encrypted communication; and smuggling techniques.
3. Understanding the operation of organised crime groups.
4. Information exchange: European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac), SIS II, the role of large-scale IT systems in combatting migrant smuggling under the EMPACT framework.
5. Improving knowledge on financial models including hawala and money service bureaux, cryptocurrencies, financial investigations and asset recovery.
6. Nexus between migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings: exploitation of migrants after arrival in the EU.
7. Partnerships and cooperation with non-EU countries: supporting host countries in participating in regional and international cooperation mechanisms that are meant to address migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; and taking a comprehensive approach (involving consulates, civil registries, etc.).
8. Document and identity fraud with a focus on visa fraud and forged supporting documents; biometrics; networking and support.
9. EU cooperation tools and mechanisms, JITs; cooperation between administrative and law enforcement units and the judicial sector (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges).
10. Dealing with requests concerning unaccompanied minors.
11. Detecting secondary movements.
12. Procedures and tools used in migration crisis situations.
13. Fundamental rights, including access to international protection, non-discrimination, and data protection.

## Annex 2 - Urgency levels

Urgency in the context of this survey refers to the need for timely training and its potential impact on operational performance.

<b>Urgency scale level</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Training need is</b>	Low	Secondary	Moderate	Urgent	Crucial
<b>Training impact</b>	Training has a minor role in the performance boost, it would refresh knowledge, officials would benefit from training, although it is not essential.	It would be useful if the training were delivered, however, the need is not urgent. Training could be delivered in a period of 2-3 years' time, it is needed to stay up-to-date.	It would be advantageous to receive training in the coming year, it would improve the performance, but not significantly.	Training is essential, it is needed in the coming year, it is important for performing qualitatively.	Training is critical, it is needed as soon as possible, it is crucial for the successful performance of duties.

## Annex 3 - Proficiency levels

	<b>Level 1 – Awareness</b>	<b>Level 2- Practitioner</b>	<b>Level 3 – Advanced Practitioner</b>	<b>Level 4 - Expert</b>	<b>Level 5 – Train-the-Trainer</b>
<b>Definition</b>	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.
<b>Description</b>	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.
<b>EQF equivalent</b>	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-efq-levels>



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**European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)**

**Offices:** 1101 Budapest, Üllői út 114-116, Hungary

**Email:** [info@cepol.europa.eu](mailto:info@cepol.europa.eu)

**www.cepola.europa.eu**

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