



ROUND-TABLE MEETING

Stepping up the Council of Europe action against trafficking in human beings in the digital age

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Concluding remarks

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- The fight against human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach – which is envisaged by the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings – as well as multi-stakeholder engagement and innovative solutions. Since the adoption of the CoE Convention in 2005, an important global shift has taken place with the development of technology and the rapid expansion of the Internet. Information and communication technologies are increasingly used for recruiting and controlling victims, advertising their services across state borders, for conducting financial operations anonymously. At the same time, they provide opportunities for preventing human trafficking and ensuring better protection of victims.
- The discussions today provided useful insights into the main features of the approach that the Council of Europe should promote through its future activities, in collaboration with member States, other international organisations, businesses and civil society. The key points that can be drawn include:
 - **The need for strengthening the criminal justice response**, including through appropriate criminalisation of technology-enabled human trafficking offences. The legislative framework should ensure that there are no safe cyberspace havens for traffickers or their assets. The Second Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention **on electronic evidence** will provide new opportunities for more efficient MLA and direct co-operation with providers in other jurisdictions;
 - Specific attention should be paid to **the intersection between security and privacy**. While technology can be used to uphold and protect human rights, it can also be misused to violate them. The raise of AI provides opportunities to develop tools, such as analysis of massive data or pattern recognition that can help identify suspects or potential victims. However, in the area of human trafficking, protection of victims and confidential information is of paramount importance and should be given due consideration. As policies and initiatives are formulated, **their main objective should remain to promote and protect human rights**;

- **Appropriate capacity of law enforcement agencies to investigate technology-enabled human trafficking.** The presentations today confirm that capacity and training are essential to effective investigative response. The programmes which the CoE has developed to strengthen the criminal justice capacities through the Cybercrime Programme Office should be used to the benefit of the fight against human trafficking;
- **Leveraging the power and knowledge of companies,** which can offer tools and solutions to significantly advance states' responses to human trafficking. Some technology providers already have a range of solutions that can be shared, piloted and scaled up. **The CoE co-operation platform with Internet and telecommunication companies** can provide a framework for new partnerships which will strengthen the implementation of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention;
- **Addressing data gaps and increasing the efficiency of data sharing.** The CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention recognises the need for consistent data. **A mapping exercise by GRETA** on the problems faced by States Parties and the existing legislative and operational tools could help improve the understanding of the situation with a view of developing new policies and provide additional guidance.

Thanks to an intense work currently underway, a fragile consensus is emerging on the best way forward. However, much remains to be done. The next few years will be critical in terms of fleshing out the agreed elements of an effective response and confirming good-evidence practice that can be used to act effectively against trafficking in human beings in the digital age. We count on member States' support to make progress in this respect.