

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION



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INTRODUCTION

The report examines what role the internet plays in trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation. It considers in particular methods of online job recruitment and looks at cases studies from several EU Member States – Czech Republic, UK, Ireland, and Romania – and discusses to what extent the internet plays a role and if so, how significant the role of the internet is in facilitating human trafficking. The report provides examples of potential solutions.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this report combined desk research with mapping exercise and case analysis. Cases were collected from civil society organisations. Analysed cases come from a number of EU states, including UK, Austria, Ireland, Czech Republic and Romania.

The report is structured into the following parts:

Section 1 considers links between internet and labour trafficking.

Section 2 examines the significance of online recruitment.

Section 3 looks at cases of trafficking linked to the internet.

Section 4 explores some of the warning signs in cases of internet recruitment.

Section 5 gives conclusions and recommendations.

SECTION 1: WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL LINKS BETWEEN INTERNET AND LABOUR TRAFFICKING?

Trafficking is the process through which an individual is brought into a situation of exploitation that can amount to forced labour¹. Human trafficking is a serious crime and a grave abuse of human rights.

Those who exploit others in forced labour generate huge profits. The International Labour Organization estimates annual profits from forced labour to be at least \$150 billion.² These large profits are derived for example from the non-payment of wages to exploited workers, extreme deduction from exploited workers' salaries or from illegal charges for services such as job facilitation, transportation or accommodation for workers.

Media headlines like "internet fuels trade in human beings" have become a common sight. Most of the media reporting has been, however, about trafficking for sexual exploitation and its potential links to the internet, in particular as a means of advertising and procuring the services of victims. Considerations of the potential role of the internet in relation to trafficking for labour exploitation are far and few between. However, as this report demonstrates, there is a plausible link.

Despite the rise in overall internet use, there is still a dearth of information about the potential links between internet and human trafficking. In 2007, the Council of Europe published a report: "Trafficking in human beings: Internet recruitment". It was one of the first publications on this topic and still remains one of the few studies published on this issue.

Before looking at specific examples of cases where the internet played a role, we will first examine how the internet is, or can be used, in job recruitment.

E-recruitment has become a feature of 21st-century job facilitation. It is a cost effective method through which a broad range of candidates can be reached in a number of countries at the same time. It is fast, and it appears to be slowly replacing more traditional forms of recruitment.

The primary function of the internet when it comes to job facilitation is:

- Recruitment – this includes the advertising of job offers, advertising of job seekers, provision of advice for prospective candidates (e.g., résumé templates). The internet is also a tool to manage the application process. Many businesses now only accept applications received by e-mail;
- Public relations and legitimating of the job offer and business – companies use web presence as one of the methods of promoting their business. A professionally executed website legitimises the business and the job offer. In the same way as companies use various tricks (such as testimonies and reviews) to sell their services and products, they also use offers of working conditions or benefits to entice prospective candidates.

In this context it is very easy and very cheap to use the internet to place fraudulent job offers and create fraudulent websites to deceive those looking for work into believing that they are responding to a genuine job offer. The internet also offers a great deal of anonymity, which makes it difficult to identify who posted on a website, especially when public places such as internet cafes or libraries are used.

¹ For definition of trafficking, see Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; for definition of forced labour see Forced Labour Convention of the International Labour Organization No.29.
² Cost of Coercion, ILO 2014

In addition to recruitment, the internet is also used to communicate with prospective victims, by email or through chats. Threatening or controlling behaviour on the internet, on emails or social media has been described as an issue, not just in relation to trafficking. We have, however, come across cases of victims who were incarcerated in cannabis grow houses, where they were forced to tend cannabis plants and who were threatened by their traffickers using the internet (they were required to respond to Skype calls and show the traffickers what they were doing on camera).



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SECTION 2: HOW SIGNIFICANT IS JOB RECRUITMENT OVER THE INTERNET?

Advertising in printed media or pinning up notices on notice boards or bus stops is still an effective method of recruitment. However, this method of recruitment is likely to attract a smaller pool of candidates and is likely to work on a local, regional or possibly national scale, depending on the media outlet. Advertising on the internet will have a wider reach and is likely to attract not only those who are actively looking for work, but also those who might be looking for a new challenge.

While in certain parts of the world internet coverage and access to computers is still scarce, in Europe the picture is different. As of June 2014³, internet penetration Europe amounted to 70.5 per cent. With that level of penetration, it is safe to assume that the majority of population over a certain age will have access to the internet either at home or in a public space. Furthermore, with the spread of mobile phones that allow access to the internet, it is no longer required that a person own a computer to go online.

Against this backdrop it is no uprising that our findings suggest that of the trafficked persons who were recruited over the internet or where internet or modern information technologies played some part in their exploitation, most came from Europe.

However, it is important to note that not all European victims of trafficking would have been recruited or exploited through the use of the internet. Informal recruitment through word of mouth or through friends or relatives is still one of the most effective ways of trafficking someone into a situation of exploitation. This form of recruitment still appears to prevail in particular in rural areas or among particular communities (such as Roma or ethnic communities) or within peer groups.

The survey carried out amongst the partners of the FINE TUNE project showed that a number of cases of victims of trafficking from the EU supported by NGOs had been recruited via the internet.

For example, one NGO based in England reported that between 2012 and 2014, increasingly the men that they support were recruited via the internet.

In Romania, the largest online recruitment platform Tjobs⁴ registered 30,000 applications for jobs abroad in August 2014. Approximately 11,000 were for jobs in the UK, 4,800 in Germany and 2,800 in France. The most advertised jobs were in hotel and tourism, followed by domestic assistants or babysitters, healthcare, agriculture and restaurants or catering.

In the first three months of 2014, the UK became the top destination for Romanian jobseekers. A Romanian website that hosts more than 200 recruitment agencies had 42,562 applications for UK jobs from an estimated 23,000 people. That compares with 18,369 applications by 11,708 jobseekers in the first three months of 2013. Over the same period, Germany, the second most popular destination, received fewer than half that number of applications. Recruiters from the UK posted 31,588 vacancies on the site between January and March 2014, up 60 per cent in the first quarter of last year.⁵

In the past two years La Strada Czech Republic (hereafter LSCZ) identified three cases as trafficking in human beings (THB) in which the internet played a role during recruitment. Two of them were THB for sexual exploitation where victims posted online advertisements that they were looking for a job in the sex industry. The last one LSCZ identified as THB for forced labour, and a fraudulent job offer was used: the fraud was in terms of the job, not concerning the character of the job itself. A Romanian man found an offer on the internet; it promised a well-paid job in the Czech Republic, accommodation and food free-of-charge. He paid 150 euros for arranging the job and travel to the Czech Republic, but on the way his ID was confiscated and he had to work at a construction site. It is probable that around 20 other people from Romania were in the same situation.

³ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

⁴ Information from AidRom.

⁵ Data from AidRom.

While in some areas/industries/countries the internet has now assumed a dominant place, in others it only supplements traditional job brokering.

Police operations in several European countries and Europol report that the internet and other modern information technologies, such as mobile phones, are more widely used to recruit victims of trafficking in human beings.⁶

In November 2014, Europol published “Intelligence Notification: Trafficking in Human Beings and the Internet.” It finds that “The internet is a key facilitator for THB with an impact on the entire trafficking chain from recruitment and transportation to the harbouring of the victims and their actual exploitation. The recruitment of victims increasingly takes place online. Traffickers lure victims with promising advertisements for jobs or travel placed on general advertisement sites or distributed through au pair agencies, international marriage agencies or dating sites. In addition to advertisements, traffickers also directly approach victims in chat rooms or on mainstream social media.”⁷



⁶ Trafficking in human beings: Internet recruitment. Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2007. p.13
⁷ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/trafficking-human-beings-and-internet>

SECTION 3: CASES OF TRAFFICKING LINKED TO THE USE OF THE INTERNET

Among the FINE TUNE partner organisations, each one reported at least one case of a person trafficked with the use of the internet in the past five years. Most commonly it was cases of companies advertising jobs abroad or agents offering jobs abroad. There were also cases, however, where a social networking site, such as Facebook or something similar were used to approach prospective job seekers and either targeted particular individuals directly or through targeted placing of advertisements in particular sections of the sites or pop-ups.

Several organisations pointed out that au pair positions are frequently advertised on the web. However, in many cases these positions are in fact domestic-work positions and the conditions of the work are grossly exploitative. The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) reported that internet recruitment of au pairs has become very common in Ireland. The organisation has dealt with a number of cases of au pairs recruited via the internet who experienced severe levels of exploitation, and one case was identified as a potential case of trafficking for forced labour. While the more traditional methods of recruitment, particularly through word of mouth, are still prevalent in Ireland, the MRCI reported that they were, however, seeing a significant growth of online recruitment for au pairs. In terms of origin of the victims who were recruited online in Ireland, the nationalities vary. MRCI dealt with Brazilians or occasionally also Africans who were recruited online. In one case a Moroccan male was recruited via the internet.

One prominent example of trafficking for labour exploitation cases where the internet was involved in the process of recruitment was a case involving Romanian workers trafficked to Cyprus. The case has been investigated by the Romanian police since 2008 and criminal cases were filed. At the time of writing, in October 2014, the criminal court in Bucharest was hearing the cases.

Case study: Trafficking for labour exploitation with the use of internet (Romanian workers in Cyprus) – Example 1

In 2006, a Cypriot citizen and four Romanians established five companies, which were registered in Iasi with subsidiaries in three other cities including Bucharest, in order to select, recruit and provide a workforce. The companies recruited workers by advertising jobs abroad on the internet and in the newspapers. While the website seemingly advertised jobs in a number of countries, it led the candidates to believe that the most profitable ones were in Cyprus: the promised income there was between 800 and 1400 euros/month, including lodging, a meal a day, an eight-hour working day five days a week.

Interested candidates were required to sign contracts in Romania that were with two companies registered in Cyprus. Upon arrival in Cyprus, the workers were subjected to exploitation. Their identity documents and their work contracts were immediately seized. They were sent to work for different employers, but their wages were sent to the company owned by the Cypriot recruiter. They were required to work around 16 hours per day. Their accommodation was unsanitary.

Account of one of the victims - Mr. C

A friend suggested to Mr C that he search for a job abroad on the internet on www.ejobs.ro. He found a job as a welder and called the recruitment company, went to the company's office and paid a facilitation fee for a contract of 500 euros. The contract stipulated that the salary for a welder would be 1500 euros/month. Mr C travelled by plane along with 20 other workers recruited by the same company. Once they arrived at their destination, their identity documents and contracts were taken from them, and they were told they had to pay 3000 Euro to get them back. Mr C was put up in a barrack, along with 70 other Romanians. He was forced to work in extremely difficult conditions for different employers, without legal documents and without protective equipment. Sometimes he was forced to sleep on a field. Mr C was exploited in this way for one year and a half.

Investigation of the case:

In October 2008, following a number of complaints, the prosecutors in Iasi county organised twelve parallel raids in the counties Iasi, Neamt, Galati and Bucuresti targeting the criminal group that was suspected of trafficking in persons from Romania to Cyprus, using advertising on the internet. During these raids, four administrators of the recruitment companies were arrested and 39 trafficked persons were interviewed. A search was also on for the Cypriot recruiter and his close Romanian associate.

In 2009 the Cypriot authorities investigated the Romanian recruiter. The Cyprus Police arrested a 38-year-old man, later identified as the Cypriot recruiter and charged him with trafficking in persons and exploiting 110 Romanian workers in conditions similar to slavery. All 110 Romanians had been brought to Cyprus with the pretext they would be provided with jobs, but they were incarcerated in camps belonging to the arrested Cyprus recruiter where they had no showers or warm water and received only 20 euros per week, an amount which hardly sufficed for food.

Account of the Chief of Police Service against Trafficking in Persons in Cyprus, Rita Superman:

"These people lived in some containers, each including five rooms in which 50 people stayed. They had no warm water, had only two toilets and one washing machine. They couldn't take showers and had no food. Had they asked for bed sheets or spare beds, they would have been asked in return for 25, 30 or even 50 Euro."

Despite these law enforcement activities, in 2010 companies linked to this case were still advertising jobs online:

2010 advertisement, source <http://locuridemunca.acasa.ro>

Company: (name of the company)

Available jobs:

Industries: Agriculture / Forestry / Fishing; Other domains; Building / Construction / Arrangements; Transports

Experience level: no experience required

Type of contract: full-time

Salary level: confidential

Country: England; Cyprus; France; Greece

Availability: until 09-04-2010

Number of applications: 987

Job description: *Accredited company for workforce selection and placement selects workers for placement in other European states*

Requirements: *Seriousness, Professionalism*

Offered Benefits: *Competitive salary, Bonuses depending on the work results, Western work conditions*

Company description: *(name of the company). For more details can contact us by phone: (phone number).*

Source: AidRom

Case study: Trafficking for labour exploitation with the use of internet (Romanian workers in Cyprus) – Example 2

In 2010, the Brigade for Combating Organized Crime in Bucharest opened a case against seven Romanian citizens (administrators of recruitment companies and a lawyer), one British citizen and two Cypriot citizens suspected of working as a criminal group and trafficking in persons.

They were believed to have recruited about 200 persons aged between 20 and 45 years for purposes of exploitation in Cyprus and Italy between 2005 and 2010. To commit the crime, they used 14 commercial organisations from Bucharest, Constanta and Bacau. The companies signed fraudulent contracts with the victims for which they asked for different taxes and commissions. The suspects promised them jobs in diverse industries, from construction to medicine. The trafficked persons were threatened by members of the criminal group and forced to perform other tasks than those stipulated in working contracts. In order to conceal their criminal activities between 2005 and 2010, they would regularly change the names of commercial companies and also changed locations of their subsidiaries. The estimated profit just from the fees the companies charged 60 workers for obtaining contracts amounted to 179,549 euros.

Status of the case as of October 2014:

The case was before the Criminal Court of Bucharest in relation to 44 victims (five women, 39 men). Those indicted included 13 individuals and three commercial organisations on charges of initialising, conspiracy to commit a crime as a part of an organised group, and participation in an organised group and trafficking in persons.

Source: AidRom

Further cases of trafficking of Romanian workers linked to recruitment over the internet:

Case study: Trafficking for labour exploitation with the use of internet (Romanian workers in United Arab Emirates)

“Work in United Arab Emirates - construction”

Since September 2013, workers from Romania were recruited through advertisements posted on the Internet by a recruitment company registered in Romania, owned by an Italian.

Job description: Work in construction, with experience, a salary of 1500 euros per month, work for eight hours a day, overtime paid and accommodation provided.

Exploitation: Once in Dubai, the workers' identity documents were confiscated, and the workers were housed in unsanitary conditions and forced to work without receiving any money.

Twenty-two victims were identified.

In January 2014, the investigation began in Romania for the criminal case of trafficking for labour exploitation.

In April 2014, based on this trafficking case, a political debate was launched on the necessity to regulate businesses that place Romanian workers abroad.

Source: AidRom

Case study: Trafficking for labour exploitation with the use of internet (Romanian workers in the Czech Republic and Spain)

Three recruitment agencies (Sc Profi Jobs SRL și SC Trading Jobs 2000 SRL și SC Anjex Group SRL) posted on the Internet advertising about jobs in agriculture for Spain and Czech Republic.

Job description (as in the advertisement posted on the Internet): Work in agriculture, possibility to gain experience and studies (professional school), a salary between 700 - 1000 euros per month, 6 or 5 hour program, overtime paid and accommodation provided for a fee, free transportation.

Exploitation: Over a hundred Romanians from four Romanian counties ended a so-called mediation contract that had no value because the foreign firms did not exist. The victims were transported by minibus to the Czech Republic and Spain, where they were forced to work as day laborers picking garlic or asparagus, and the money was received by the traffickers. The victims testified that they were beaten and threatened with a gun as a means of controlling them so that they would not try to escape.

Enforcement action:

The Court in Timis delivered the ruling on 26.10.2012. The administrators of the recruitment agencies received between six years and five months and five years in prison for trafficking in persons for labour exploitation.

The recruitment agencies were convicted to pay, together with the traffickers, compensation to all the victims for material and moral damages.

Below is the example of the advertisement posted on the internet in Romanian in September 2010, related to the case study presented above:

Sumar job

Companie
S.C. PROFJOBS S.R.L.

Posturi disponibile
60

Domeniu
Agricultura / Silvicultura / Pescuit

Nivel experienta
1 - 2 ani

Tip contract
Sezonier

Nivel studii
Scoala profesionala

Nivel salarial
700 - 1000 Euro

Tara
Spania

Valabilitate
09-10-2010 : 15-10-2010

Numar de aplicatii
169

domeniul agricol

Postat la: 15-09-2010

Responsabilitati
Contract de munca sezonier de minim 3 luni cu posibilitate de prelungire.
Contract de munca pentru barbati la cules masline.

Cerinte
programul de lucru este de minim 6.5ore/zi cu jumatate de ora pauza de masa. Se pot efectua ore suplimentare.
Cazarea este asigurata, contracost.
Transportul Romania-Spania este asigurat de angajat.

Beneficii Oferite
Plata se face la ora, aproximativ 4.2-4.7 euro/ora.

Descrierea firmei
Compania noastra este autorizata pentru a desfasura activitatea de selectie si plasare de personal si inca de la inceput a incheiat contracte ferme cu mai multe companii similare din strainatate care au rolul de a efectua plasarea efectiva la locurile de munca si de a apara interesele angajatilor romani trimisi la munca de catre agentia noastra.

 **7 persoane apreciază asta. Fii primul dintre prietenii tăi.**

Another case of a Romanian citizen recruited via the internet was reported by the FINE TUNE project partner LEFÖ – IBF, involving an agency providing carers for families and elderly people.

Case study: Trafficking for labour exploitation with the use of internet (Romanian worker in Austria)

M was 45 years old and lived with her 14-year-old son in Romania and needed a job. She found an advertisement for carers in Austria on the internet that appealed to her and emailed her application in. She received a positive response and was sent a contract in Romanian and in German, which she signed and posted back. Her job was meant to include caring for the elderly in their homes, where she was meant to be living, and also assisting with taking care of the household. The agreed salary was 1,490 euros per month. However, the Romanian contract differed from the German version. She noticed the difference; however, since the agency claimed on the internet that they were officially registered with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, she did not see a reason to worry. Furthermore, she was desperate to find a job and was keen to start. The key caveat in the German contract was that she would be self-employed. The agent organised transportation to Austria for a week. On arrival to Austria, the agent brought her to her place of work and suggested that she still needed some paperwork to be sorted, such as health insurance. He offered to sort these out, and she handed over her passport. M was badly mistreated by the family, working without breaks, being constantly on call. Without her passport or any other documents and without pay, she was desperate. She contacted the agent several times, but he always found excuses as to why he could not pay yet or return her documents. She also asked the family about her pay, but was referred to the agent, as they had paid the money to him. Eventually, she phoned the police, but it was not taken seriously. Subsequently, she decided to go to a police station and make a complaint against the agent.

Lefoe learned about the case via the criminal justice system. The case came to court, and despite the fact that the agent was unlicensed, the case was quickly closed due to lack of evidence. Through the effort of Lefoe, the case was re-opened, but soon closed again by the prosecutor, as it was not possible to prove the agent's intent.

Source: LEFÖ – IBF

SECTION 4: WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

Searching for jobs on the internet is very common, and there are plenty of job offers available online. Online recruitment, advertising and referencing is a well-developed industry. There are dedicated social media sites, such as LinkedIn, that specialise in career development and matching candidates to jobs and offer individuals platforms to promote their skills. However, these tools are generally targeted at highly skilled professionals rather than temporary and manual labourers.

At the same time, there is a plethora of portals that also offer manual and temporary work – both in country and abroad. Websites in Czech, Slovak, Romanian, Polish, English and German were reviewed for the purposes of FINE TUNE research to see the kinds of job advertisements that were on offer. While searching for job offers abroad, we deliberately used key words that would direct us to announcements in industries that are commonly recognised as those where there is a high risk of exploitation, such as:

- construction
- cleaning
- catering
- care
- au-pair
- agriculture
- food processing and packaging

Furthermore, we also searched for jobs that did not require qualifications and/or language knowledge.

After a few mouse clicks and few minutes of internet search, one gets numerous offers of work in the UK, Ireland, Germany, Czech Republic and many other EU countries. Jobs on offer are varied, from manual labour in construction over cleaning and catering jobs to seasonal agricultural work to child care. Some of the adverts were accessed through search engines, such as Google or national search engines; others were accessed via job portals or found on social networking sites, such as Facebook.

While many of the jobs advertised appeared proper and the announcements were professionally written and gave a lot of detail, many of the advertisements appeared rather unconvincing or contained information that was questionable.

We deliberately looked for red flags that might indicate that the job offer is untrustworthy, or perhaps a front for fraud (such as demanding upfront payments from candidates), or even a deceitful offer, which could in fact lead to someone's being exploited.

Common red flags that we have identified and that were in the past described by others include:

- promise of unrealistically high pay (such as 1,200 – 1,700 euros net pay per month for an unqualified job at a meat factory in Ireland)
- administrative fees
- finders' fees
- only general description of the job
- no address for the recruitment agent
- contact details containing only a mobile number or general email address

These were some of the warning signs immediately apparent when examining the advertisement. Further red flags can be discovered by simple probing into the job notice a little more. For example, in a number of cases a website offered a particular job in a company in a specific location, but it was impossible to find any record of such a company at the location. Furthermore, there was no record of official registration of several of the recruitment agencies that advertised jobs abroad. Administrative fees and deposits were also required by several agents. It is illegal within the EU to charge a job seeker for job facilitation; hence, some agents resort to charging other fees for their services to boost profits.

Below are examples of advertisements found on the internet that raise red flags about the credibility of the advertisement and give rise to concerns about the potential risks for candidates that would reply to that offer:

Advertisement from a Facebook page in Romanian offering jobs abroad

None of these advertisements have any information included about the recruiter; it is impossible to discern whether it is an individual or an agency

Nor is there any information about the employers and place of work provided.

The salary levels and benefits offered for the job also seem questionable.

Agriculture:

"The IDEAL CANDIDATE:

Unqualified workers for a turkey farm, in Germany, net salary 1450 Euro. Seeking animal loving candidates who are looking for well paid job. Tasks include: preparing and weigh animals kept for food service or labour, feeding and cleaning cages, monitoring health of the birds. Be there to get the job, call: (phone number)"

Construction:

The IDEAL CANDIDATE:

Urgently needed, in August, unqualified workers to fit solar panels in Germany. Free training provided by employer, salary of 1,600 Euros (plus two meals a day and medical insurance),. If you want a really secure job where to be respected and paid for your work. Call: (phone number).

Transportation:

We recruit professional drivers with at least two years' experience for Ireland and the Community. It provides employment contract for an indefinite period. Transport to Ireland is provided by the employer. Salary increases with age.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/locuridemuncainstrainatate> (accessed on 15 January 2015)

Advertisement from a Romanian job portal

Position: Unskilled workers for warehouses in the UK

Responsibilities: packaging, labelling

Remuneration: £ 6.31 net / hour

Working hours: 7-12 hours / day

Lodging cost: £ 220 / month

On arrival in the UK £ 345 deposit payable for the first month accommodation. **Illegal fees?**

Accommodation: Four to six people in the room. **Overcrowding?**

We accept only people with medium / conversational English.

Permanent contract after three months. No self-employment!!

Medical insurance paid by the company.

Fees: **Illegal fees?**

- Interview fee: 100 lei (direct interview with the UK partner agency)

- Mediation Cost: 400 lei

- UK agency fee - £ 100

Accessed on 15 January 2015

Advertisement from a Slovak recruitment agency posted on internet:

Agency advertised jobs, alleging that they are able to facilitate these for a fee. However, these jobs were also advertised directly on the website of the employer, suggesting that direct applications for the jobs were possible. While there is sometimes collusion of both direct employment and employment by the same employer via agency arrangement, the fact that a job is advertised directly, while at the same time there is an agency offering the same job for a fee, raises questions.

Warehouse job

Jobs at a (Name of a multinational supermarket chain) warehouse in Daventry near Birmingham.

Details (working conditions, wages, hours, etc. attached).

Accommodation provided. **Tied accommodation?**

Template of placement contract "Warehouses in the UK" is attached. Candidates are required to fill out and sign the contract and return scan/photo to the agent by email at: (e-mail address).

Administrative fee: 99 EUR payable before travel or 149 EUR from first salary. **Illegal fees?**

Transport to the UK: approx 100-150 EUR by air, departure from various locations, depending from various locations (Bratislava, Kosice, Brno, Praha, Ostrava, Budapest) by different air carries (Ryanair.com, Wizzair.com, easyJet.com)

Bus approx 79 EUR from various locations in Slovakia (Kosice, Presov, Poprad, Ruzomberok, Zilina, Trencin, Roznava, Rimavska Sobota, Lucenec, Zvolen, Nitra, Bratislava)

If you need assistance with booking flights or bus travel, we will be happy to help you find the cheapest route, without any additional fees. This service is FREE.

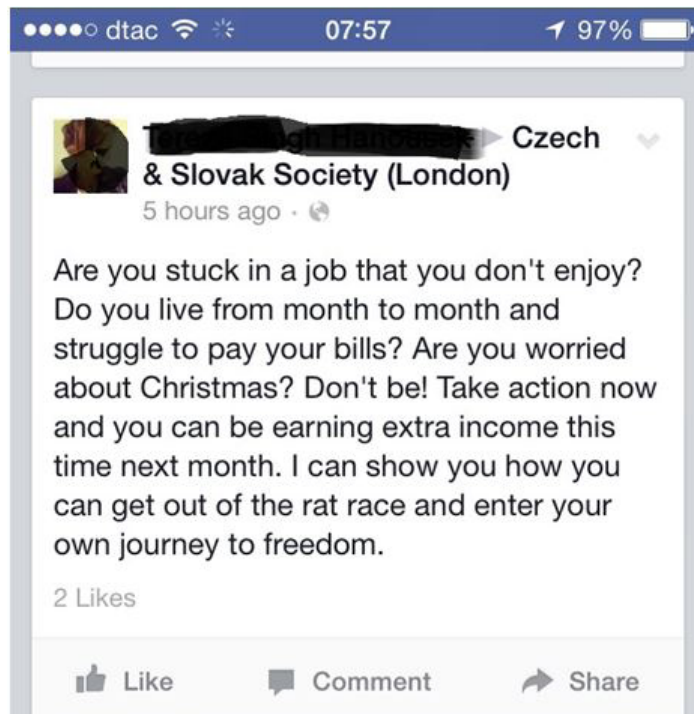
The advertisement was followed by the details of the recruitment agency⁸.

Accessed on 15 January 2015

⁸ The address and telephone number of the agency appeared to be genuine, but we were unable to ascertain whether the agency is official registered.

Further examples of job advertising that is a cause of concern is found on social media. Posts similar to the one below appear on Facebook Groups offering job. While we have no further information about this particular post and cannot comment as to its authenticity, the research shows that similar posts have been linked to fraudulent job offers.

The following advertisement appeared on an open Facebook Group on 17 November 2014:



SECTION 5. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The examples presented in the previous sections illustrate that the internet has become a means used by traffickers to recruit victims. It was beyond the scope of this study to assess the proliferation of this form of recruitment as opposed to the traditional methods. However, we found that in some countries, such as Romania, recruitment via the internet has become a prominent method of recruitment.

We have examined how the internet can be misused for the recruitment of victims. However, in the same way that traffickers use the internet to mislead victims, it can also be a tool to disseminate information for job seekers.

Example of using internet as a tool to protect against abusive recruitment (Romania – action by the Government)

In Romania, in response to a large number of victims that were trafficked via the use of the internet, several campaigns were launched to target this:

In 2014 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started cooperation with National Agency against Trafficking in Persons on an information campaign for Romanian citizens seeking work abroad.

The joint project aims to support the Romanian citizens who intend to find a job abroad, by presenting the minimum information that they need to know before they move to an EU Member State or third country to conclude a contract for the work. The campaign has an online component. The information and the campaign's spot can be found at: <http://www.mae.ro/node/21804>

These cases have also led to activities within civil society. For example Romanian communities in different countries set up information platform. Example of the Romanian community in Germany:

Example of using the internet as a tool to protect against abusive recruitment (Germany– action by Romanian communities)

On the website <http://romaninermania.ro/cum-putem-gasi-pe-internet-un-loc-de-munca-in-germania/> Romanians can find a lot of recommendations about the legal work in Germany and a lot of resources for finding a job in all the sectors.

Blogs warning about scams have also appeared:

“October 2014

Hello! Recently, appeared a new type of “teapa”: individuals who give their ad on the net, as provides jobs in Germany or England and no mediation fee. Instead, they ask you 150-300 lei for translation and legalisation of documents. They say that if you do it on your own.

Heads Up! Attention! Attention!

Source : AidRom.

One of the largest internet recruitment platforms active in Romania also launched own safety information for applicants:

Example of using the internet as a tool to protect against abusive recruitment (Romania – action by a recruitment agency)

"Recommendations for people seeking jobs abroad on internet:

- 1. Pay attention to the source of supply. Most specialized sites for job search do not check posts from recruitment companies.*
- 2. Never accept the offer came from individuals.*
- 3. Carefully read the mediation agreement. If you pay a fee, make sure that you know what you pay for and what you agree as conditions. Once signed, it is difficult – or impossible – to denounce.*
- 4. Ask as many details about the job for which you are recruited.*
- 5. If a job seems too good to be true ... probably is not true!*

Source : AidRom.

Example of using the internet as a tool to protect against abusive recruitment - Trade union network UnionMigrantNet providing service and assistance to migrants and members of their families for integration in the EU

The European Trade Union Confederation has recently started the initiative aimed at connecting trade union services for migrants in a single EU-level network supported by a public internet portal. UnionMigrantNet is a network established, managed and supported by trade unions.⁹ It includes a public internet platform to support the rights of migrant workers and to prevent abusive recruitment and abusive employment. The platform makes accessible the following information:

- rights of migrant workers and working conditions in the given European country;
- accessibility to the labour market and referral to job-matching entities;
- family reunification and rights of migrants' family members.;
- recognition of diplomas and qualifications;
- pre-departure information;
- trade union rights;
- personal contacts of trade union focal points by a province, region or town;

Fig. 1 A search wizard in seven languages helps migrants to get in touch with a trade union contact point according to pre-defined search criteria.



⁹ The start-up phase of UnionMigrantNet has been co-financed by European Integration Fund of the DG Home Affairs.

Fig. 2 Migrant workers can select a trade union contact point directly from a geo-location facility.



Thanks to the new network, trade unions from all European countries can better coordinate their activities, organise migrant workers and protect them against abuses. The platform strengthens pre-departure information, supports labour mobility and reinforces the rights of migrants.

<https://unionmigrantnetportal.eu>

A general recommendation from this report is to highlight the importance of the internet as one of the methods used by traffickers to primarily recruit victims, but also to communicate and control them.

At the same time, the internet can be used pro-actively by authorities, trade unions and NGOs to provide information to job seekers who might be looking for jobs abroad.

Recommendations:

- Introduce a requirement for all job recruiters to be licensed.
- Build internet job portals to carry safety advice and information, including referral links to points of assistance.
- Consider developing a pan-EU web platform with information and links to assistance in all EU Member States that would be linked with recruitment portals.
- Introduce independent monitoring of internet safety in relation to online recruitment.
- Encourage social networking sites to implement safety features in relation to impromptu job offers.
- Raise awareness about red flags of online job recruitment.