

Case 03

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Assessed case number: STS 63/2020 (Resolution Number: 63/2020)

Title: Crimes of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, coerced prostitution and sexual assault

- What type of trafficking/exploitation is being analysed?**

Sexual THB	Forced Labour	Forced Criminal Activities	Minor Exploitation and forced adoption	Polycrime	Other (Specify the type)	All the aforementioned
X				X		

- Please provide a brief description of the case (about 500 words)**

The accused individuals were members of a network which smuggled illegally females from Nigeria, mainly to Spain and to other Schengen States. The members of said network asked the victims to pay a certain price and, in exchange, they arranged the displacements and transfer of the victims from their country of origin and then their reception and further necessary procedures in Spain, supposedly to study in Europe. After those steps, the perpetrators completely controlled their victims. It is worth to mention that one of the perpetrators, as well as one of the victims were minors when the criminal group started to act and to arrange the issuance of the fake documentation and the trip of the victims.

The criminal organization finally exploited sexually the victims forcing them to prostitution, controlled the income of those activities and benefited from them. They controlled their victims first convincing them that they had a considerable debt to them, as they had arranged their transfer to Spain and the required documentation. In order to tighten the control over them, they used severe threats against the families of the victims, threatening to kill them, with the use of voodoo techniques as a means to make the threats more plausible for the victims. One of the perpetrators also repeatedly raped one of the victims.

Phone conversation records showed that the accused individuals “tricked” the victims convincing them that they would come to Europe in order to study. Once the victims arrived to Europe, they were told by the perpetrators that they had a 50,000 EUR debt to them and then were forced to prostitution. Apart from the



mentioned method of voodoo techniques, the perpetrators also used sexual violence, aggression and intimidation against the victims in order to control them and prevent them from talking to the law enforcement authorities.

The authorities found several fake passports issued by the perpetrators, which were linked to several bank accounts. The authorities also detected various bank transfers through the aforementioned bank accounts, namely digital money transfers to other accounts outside Spain. During the same investigation, in one of the apartments linked to the perpetrators, the authorities found folders with suspicious home addresses written on them, in places not related to the perpetrators or the victims, such as Austria. They also found documents related to a supposed lottery prize of almost 1,5 million GBP, whose beneficiary was supposed to pay a considerable amount of money as taxes in order to reclaim the prize. Various bank transfers were detected, to various bank accounts linked to false bank and state official documents. The perpetrators had also carried out money transfers through Western Union to various, unidentified receivers, of over 50,000 EUR each.

The records of some telephone conversations through a prepaid mobile phone (*Lyca Mobile*) revealed that the perpetrators were discussing topics such as the issuing of fake passports, and the bank transfers to different accounts. Further conversations were explaining in detail the way in which the perpetrators used the voodoo method to threaten and control the victims and their families. Likewise, the *modus operandi* of the criminal network regarding the sexual exploitation and the forced prostitution of the victims was also revealed through the conversations. Among others, the authorities detected conversations with clients, with intermediaries, and clarified the established prices and the distribution of the earnings from the prostitution. The phone conversations also showed the journey of the victims since they were recruited in Nigeria, to Morocco as a transit country and then to Malaga as the entry place to Spain, as well as the registry of various residencies and rented properties by the accused criminal network.

- **Which is the *modus operandi* of the entities using cyber tools for trafficking and/or exploitation?**

MODUS OPERANDI	Yes/No	Description
Cyber tool:	No	
Personal Contact	Yes	Contact persons in the country of origin of the victims (Nigeria) approached the victims to promise to them the arrangement of their studies abroad, namely in Spain and other Schengen States. Then forced them to prostitution and controlled the earnings, laundering them through Western Union transfers to people with false documentation



		and other techniques such as fake lottery prizes
Other		

• **Please provide more details on the perpetrator(s):**

Was/were the perpetrator(s) male or female?	Both
Which is the nationality of the perpetrator(s)?	Spanish
In which country was he/she, were they operating?	Nigeria, Morocco, Spain, UK
Was it an individual or a group?	Group
Were there any preliminary indicators for early detection?	Western Union suspicious transfers from Spain, huge amount of money allegedly acquired through lottery prize, fake documentation
Which other aspects are important?	<p>The fact that the perpetrators implement techniques to control the victims and prevent them from reporting to LEAs, such as intimidation, sexual violence and threatening their families back in Nigeria through voodoo techniques</p> <p>The “recruiter” in the home country was also a person close to the victims’ circle so he/she had more confidence and could be trusted easily</p>

• **Which were the main characteristics of the victim(s)?**

THB Victims	Involved (x)	Please describe in more detail
Men		
Women	X	
Minors	X	
LGTBI		
Country of origin	Nigeria, Benin	
Country of exploitation	Spain	



Capturing Method	X	False promises of studies abroad
Coercion Method (debt-bonded, victims' families threatened...)	X	Debt-bonded, threats to victims themselves and their families in the home countries, voodoo methods
Handing over the passport	X	
Other	X	sexual violence, aggression and abuse, intimidation of the victims by the perpetrators false documentation dressing up for clients (e.g. use of wigs)
Unknown		

- **What were the money laundering mechanisms used by the traffickers?**

Money Laundering Mechanisms	Involved (x)	Please describe in more detail
Checks and money orders to anonymous post office boxes		
Back accounts in foreign countries	X	An account beneficiary in the UK was detected
Funnel account(s)	X	Bank accounts in various European cities which appeared as recipients in the folders the authorities found
Route cash from different cities		
Money Mules		
Hawala System		
Purchase of corporate vehicles or real estate		
Cash business entities such as restaurants or bars		
Other	X	Remittance (Western Union)
Unknown		

- **Has the case been tried or is it still under investigation?**

Legal Procedure	Yes/No	Please describe in more detail
Case with judgment	Yes	SENTENCE No. STS 63/2020 of the Supreme



		Court Spain (Tribunal Supremo): https://vlex.es/vid/840987617
Under investigation		

• **What was the economic evidence of the crime?**

Economic evidence	Yes/No	Please describe in more detail
Money Transfers	Yes	Money transfers performed by the perpetrators through Western Union
Banks Accounts	Yes	
Unjustified Financial Wealth	No	
Network Accountancy	Yes	False documentation
Financial Study of the Victim	Yes	Possession of money in cash
Wallet Cards	No	
Suspicious transactions	Yes	Various addresses outside Spain, alleged lottery prize of 1,5 million GBP to be claimed
Cryptocurrency exchanges or payments	No	
Cash payments	No	
Faster Payments Inwards (FPI) from the same entity	No	
Same mobile number or email address	Unknown	
Hawala Payments	No	
Various bank accounts beneficiaries	Yes	Under false documentation
Others		The alleged lottery prize in the UK, along with the various folders with different addresses all over Europe were triggering
Unknown		

• **What activities in internet were considered suspicious?**

Internet Activities	Yes/No	Please describe in more detail
Online money transfers	No	
Purchases in online gaming sites	No	
Ads on Backpage.com or similar sites	No	
Social media as a means for recruitment	No	
Use of digital platforms to advertise deceptive job offers and to market exploitative ser-	Unknown	



vices to potential paying customers		
Fishing potential victims by posting advertisements	Not clear	
Use of video equipment to stream and broadcast exploitative services	No	
Used of multiple online profiles	No	
Use of specific apps: Please mention the relevant apps or add the name at the end if not listed	<p>For Recruitment and communications: Prepaid mobile phones (Lyca Mobile) for communications; For Payments Online money transfer Western Union Transfers tools for payments</p>	<p>Ex: 1) For Advertising : Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.; 2) For Recruitment and Communication: FaceTime, IMO, Messenger, Signal, Signal, Skype, Viber, WA, WeChat, Zalo, etc. 3) For Logistic: video-sharing platforms distributing essential logistic instructions, satellite images and photos, planned routes, Google Maps waypoints, GPS data, etc.; Guidance, including mapping applications (Maps.me, Google Maps) for remotely guiding migrants across borders through tailor-made tutorials and YouTube videos containing detailed guides on how to navigate migrant routes, where to cross borders or buy fake documents, how to find smuggling hotspots, shelter or assistance, etc.; 4) For Payments, online transfer of fees and documentation of payment proof via messaging services, hawala, etc. 5) Countermeasures adopted by smugglers to anonymize their services, AppLocks, Secure Folders, burner applications, DiskDigger, private VPN connections, or clone apps, Fake GPS and modified display caller ID (Numberbook).</p>
Others		

• **Other relevant information or important case specificities:**

		Please describe in more detail

