



DESIRE
Demand
for Sexual
Exploitation
In Europe

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Change Records

Issue	Author	Date	Reason for change
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0.2	Sibel Top (VUB)	9 July 2018	Circulation of template to partners for identifying non-legislative technological measures
0.3	Naa Adukwei Allotey (UU), Floris de Meijer (TiU), Iva Jovovic (FLIGHT), Carlotta Rigotti (VUB), Maria Shaidrova (TIU)	3 August 2018	All partners submitted contributions to measures that are alternatives to legislation
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Acronyms

A-Z	Acronym	Meaning
D	DESIRE DoA	DEmand for Sexual Exploitation In Europe Description of Action
E	ERG	Expert Reflection Group
F	FLIGHT	FLIGHT, NGO
T	THB TiU	Trafficking in human beings Tilburg University
U	UU UW	University of Uppsala University of Warsaw
V	VUB	Vrije Universiteit Brussels
W	WP	Work Package

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Executive summary

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide a snapshot of the array of existing and developing technologies that can be used in the different stages of the fight against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Each of these tools are described and their effectiveness assessed after an explanation of how they are implemented.

Following the introduction that briefly outlines the general project objectives and the methodology used, the paper presents the MTV Exit campaign (section 2), an awareness-raising campaign whose purpose is to reach the widest audience possible. Unfortunately, despite the efforts deployed in such campaigns, people still get caught in the nets of traffickers. Identification tools are therefore still very much needed. The following sections present various identification tools that can be used for different purposes. In this regard, various kinds of instruments that involve different types of stakeholders exist.

One category of stakeholders includes the professionals working on human trafficking, such as NGO workers and the law enforcement authorities. Because of the means that traffickers now employ, these specialists need to use tools to identify potential victims and/or traffickers that are at least as innovative and effective as the ones the traffickers use. The next sections thus outline cutting-edge technological tools (to be) used by these professionals, such as blockchain (section 3), PhotoDNA (section 4) and an automated technique for clustering sex advertisement that builds on artificial intelligence, machine learning, and bitcoin (section 5).

The paper then moves on to present crowdsourced identification and reporting tools. These include the STOPP APP, developed by the *Stop The Traffik* network (section 6), and the Crime Stoppers platforms (i.e. the “Police – Security and Trust” application developed by the Ministry of Interior of Croatia, or the “Meld Misdaad Anoniem” online platform in the Netherlands) (section 7).

The last instrument presented is the hotlines/helplines (section 8). Although they can be used for reporting and identification purposes, they are rather aimed at outreach. They leave room for the victims or the persons close to them to initiate the outreach process and provide assistance upon request.

The paper then concludes by stressing the need to carefully select the tools according to the goal to be achieved, simultaneously taking the recipients of the tool and their different needs into account for an optimal result. Similarly, the multiplication of tools can also be potentially considered to enhance the sought impact. However, these instruments can only be accompanying measures, and cannot, alone, provide a solution to a very complex problem that requires a holistic approach.

1. Introduction

The DESIRE Project. In Work Package 2, the DESIRE project mapped the legislative and policy measures that have been adopted on the provision of sex services in four European Member States and determined the extent to which the purpose of such provisions seeks to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings by discouraging demand.¹ This has been predominantly based upon the obligation of European Member States to establish as a criminal offence the use of services which are the objects of exploitation in order to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings more effectively by discouraging demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings.²

Obligations on EU Member States are not only restricted to law and policy measures but should also take other appropriate measures, such as education and training, to discourage and reduce the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings.³ To this end, this briefing paper outlines a number of measures that have been identified as technological alternatives to legislation that can support the fight against trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation regardless of the legal position towards the regulation of sex work in a domestic context.

Focus on preventing and combating human trafficking. The principle focus of the measures identified are those that seek to prevent and/or combat human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation as the desktop research demonstrated that there are very few non-legislative measures which directly focus on demand reduction. In addition, in deliverables 1.1 and 1.4, the notion of demand for sexual services that can fuel sexual exploitation, as defined in this project, comes out as a highly complex notion,⁴ involving a multiplicity of actors (facilitators, sex workers, buyers)⁵ with various types of ‘demands’ (for cheap labor, for good working conditions, for sexual services, etc.)⁶ and who may use various means to satisfy them (including, in some cases, physical and/or psychological coercion)⁷. On top of this, these demands potentially take place against the backdrop of concurrent dynamics (paradigm of choice, coercion, etc.)^{8,9}, which, in turn, also influence its understanding. Similarly, the notion of sexual exploitation as included in our understanding of demand is – tentatively, subject to general findings of the project – defined in deliverable 1.2 as a complex phenomenon

¹ DESIRE Deliverable, “Report on Legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries”, 10/2017, <<http://project-desire.eu/report-on-the-legal-and-regulatory-approaches-towards-sex-work-in-four-eu-countries-2/>> [accessed on 10/08/2018].

² Article 18(4) EU Directive

³ Article 18(1) EU Directive

⁴ DESIRE Deliverable. “Report on demand for sexual services that can fuel sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking”, 07/2017, pp. 9-17, *Op. Cit.*

⁵ DESIRE Deliverable. “Working Paper: a holistic approach to conceptualising demand for sexual services”, 04/2017, pp.8-9, <http://project-desire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DESIRE-Deliverable-1.1-Final_EN-4.pdf> [accessed on 19/09/2018].

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.6-10.

⁹ DESIRE Deliverable. “Report on demand for sexual services that can fuel sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking”, 07/2017, pp.17-27, *Op. Cit.*

that can be very difficult to identify.¹⁰ Consequently, given the complexity of these definitions and the ensuing difficulty of pinpointing alternatives to legislation that specifically target a type of demand for sex service that fuels trafficking for sexual exploitation, the choice has been made to focus on fighting trafficking in human beings. As a result, the measures identified can be considered as best practices for the prevention of human trafficking and could facilitate cross-border cooperation and collaboration where difficulties may arise from different legislative approaches to regulating sex work and as a result approaches to human trafficking for sexual exploitation.¹¹

Methodology. Contributing partners attended international conferences and seminars¹² on the topic of technology in fighting human trafficking to get state of the art knowledge on the ongoing projects in this sector and undertook desktop research to create a taxonomy of the different technological methods and means that could be used to combat human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Following an initial collaborative exercise to map the possible alternatives, each partner then selected a maximum of three measures to further research. Each measure was analysed using a structured reporting template to ensure consistency with the submission of data: i) Description of the tool; ii) Implementation of the tool; iii) Assessment [if available] of the tool; iv) Other remarks.

Structure of the paper. The paper starts by presenting the MTV Exit awareness-raising campaign deployed in Southeast Asia (section 2). It then outlines identification tools used by professionals. These include Blockchain (section 3), Photo DNA (section 4) and an automated technique for clustering sex advertisements (section 5). It goes on by presenting two crowdsourced reporting mechanisms that are used both for reporting and identification, the Stop App (section 6) and the crime stopper platforms (section 7). It ends by presenting hotlines/helplines (section 8) whose main goal is usually outreach, but which also serve purposes of identification and report.

¹⁰ DESIRE Deliverable. "Working Paper: towards a comprehensive definition of sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking", 05/2018, <http://project-desire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EN_DESIRE-Deliverable-1.2-FINAL-3-1.pdf> [accessed on 19/09/2018].

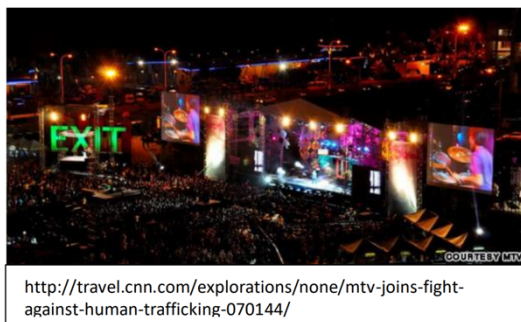
¹¹ DESIRE Deliverable, "Deliverable No.2.3: Legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries", 10/2017, pp.44-45, <http://project-desire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DESIRE-Deliverable-2.3_final-public-2.pdf> [accessed on 19/09/2018].

¹² For example, VUB participated to the Symposium of the Cambridge Center For Applied Research in Human Trafficking on "The 5 Ts of human trafficking: Trauma, Transport, Terror, Transparency and Tech.", available at: <<http://www.ccarht.org/site/symposium/>> [accessed on 06/08/2018].

2. Awareness-raising campaign using multimedia – MTV Exit Program for the Southeast Asia Region¹³

The very first step to fighting trafficking is to raise awareness about this issue by informing the public and groups at risk. By knowing how traffickers target and deceive their victims, people can be more resilient to trafficking. In this regard, television is a traditional tool that has been used for many years in the fight against trafficking.¹⁴ One of its biggest advantages is that it reaches a very large number of recipients compared to other existing means. One of these large-scale television campaigns was, for example, used by the MTV Exit programme.

2.1. Description



MTV Exit (End Trafficking and Exploitation) was an awareness-raising campaign that ran from 2008 to 2016 and that used multimedia channels to reach out to young people and educate them on issues of trafficking and exploitation. It was owned by the MTV Exit foundation, a UK-based charity, that sought to leverage the power and influence of MTV among youngsters to raise awareness on these issues.¹⁵ The objective was threefold. It first and foremost

sought to **raise awareness** about trafficking; it aimed at **promoting behaviour change** by inspiring youth to get involve and take action; by doing all this, it eventually strived to **drive social change**.¹⁶

2.2. Implementation

The charity was UK-based, but the program was implemented in 13 countries in the Southeast Asian region, where the trafficking in persons is most prevalent. This awareness-raising mission operated on three main levels. The first one was on the air: the network produced and broadcasted awareness-raising content through special programming on television, often starring celebrities.¹⁷ These included documentaries

¹³ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the International Maternal and Child Health Unit of Uppsala University.

¹⁴ TRACE (Trafficking as A Criminal Enterprise), "Deliverable D4.1: report on the rule of current and emerging technologies in human trafficking", 30/10/2015, p.62.

¹⁵ "MTV EXIT foundation (End Exploitation and Trafficking)", *Crossroads Global Hand*, <https://www.globalhand.org/en/browse/global_issues/24/all/organisation/38584 > [accessed on 06/08/2018].

¹⁶ The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), "Parliamentary Good Practices for Effective Implementation of Laws and Policies for Prevention of Trafficking", p.10 <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/29-parliamentary-good-practices-for-effective-implementation-of-laws-and-policies-for-prevention-of-trafficking.pdf>> [accessed on 06/08/2018].

¹⁷ A. Skuse & S. Downman, "MTV Exit Asia III – A campaign to increase awareness and prevention of trafficking in persons. Independent Review", 15 January 2012, University of Adelaide and Griffith University, p.12 <<https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/mtv-exit-iii-review-report.pdf>> [accessed on 08/08/2018].

as well as a series of short dramatic films that took country-specific risks into account to outline the risks of trafficking. In addition to this, music videos were also recorded and broadcasted through local media channels.¹⁸

The second level was on the ground. The program organized events, such as concerts featuring international music stars, and other creative initiatives including media forums targeting schools, universities, community and religious centers.¹⁹

The third component of this program was online. The goal here was to make the program exist on the web, thereby making its content easily accessible. The video clips and movies were thus also uploaded on platforms such as Youtube.²⁰

On top of this, the network produced information and awareness-raising materials such as training manuals and ‘tool kits’ for NGOs and public authorities. Therefore, the program also sought to establish strategic partnerships with various stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, youth organisations, and so on, in order to increase their impact.²¹

2.3. Assessment

The general efficacy of awareness-raising campaigns is very much contested because they are usually displayed in non-user-friendly formats or are placed in locations that target the wrong audience.²² The MTV Exit campaign overcame some of these shortcomings thanks to its use of interactive multimedia tools that broadcast short films or videos that are better suited for their young audience. However, the targeting of their audience was reported to be still too broad (12-34) to be able to convey the right message that would have a strong impact.²³ The campaign was also criticized in terms of content for relying on pre-existing tastes and assumptions of the audience rather than making a connection with the people’s existing values and experiences.²⁴

MTV Exit conducted an ‘impact assessment’ of its campaign by running a survey before and after the campaign. The survey divided respondents into segments of high, medium and low risk of trafficking. Those in the group at “high risk” of trafficking showed little to no knowledge of the issue and reported behaviour that confirmed their “at risk” profile. The impact assessment showed that the campaign had reduced the number of respondents in the category of “high risk” by 45%.²⁵ However, an independent reviewer suggested that their understanding of who is ‘at-risk’ was hampered by the lack of proper identification of a specific target group.²⁶ Even though the review of Skuse and Downman provided more mitigated results regarding the impact of the MTV Exit program and that the real impact of these sorts of campaigns are very hard to measure, especially when their aim is to “change behaviour”, some

¹⁸ The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

¹⁹ A. Skuse & S. Downman, *Op. Cit.*, p.12 .

²⁰ The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

²¹ A. Skuse & S. Downman, *Op. Cit.*, p.12 .

²² T. Dermott, “Does Awareness-Raising Prevent Trafficking?”, *Global Eye on Human Trafficking*, No.12, 2013, p.5.

²³ A. Skuse & S. Downman, *Op. Cit.*, p.18.

²⁴ J. Arthurs, “Brands, Markets and Charitable Ethics: MTV EXIT Campaign”, *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Vol. 6, No.2, pp. 308-317.

²⁵ The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), *Op. Cit.* p.10.

²⁶ A. Skuse & S. Downman, *Op Cit.*, p.18.

figures on the attendees of the program are significative. It ran for eight years and reached out to approximately 1,85 million people. 144 TV programmes have been produced and 1200 youth ambassadors trained. The range of the impact in terms of size of audience is thus tremendous. In addition, the online content is still available, and can therefore further reach people and create a bigger web of awareness around these issues.²⁷ As a result, if well targeted and well informed about the characteristics of the audience, these campaigns can be very powerful tools in terms of awareness-raising and prevention.

3. Blockchain²⁸

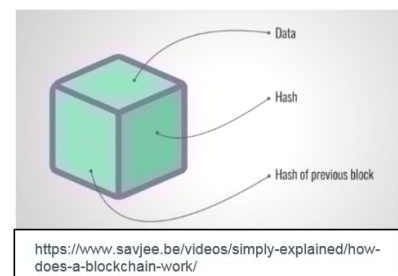
Despite intense efforts deployed in awareness-raising campaigns to prevent trafficking, people still get trafficked. This is why it is essential to have tools that enable the identification of (future) victims. In this regard, blockchain is now coming up as a technological “rising-star” in the fight against trafficking. Anew project developed for the national authorities to prevent human trafficking will be outlined here.

3.1. Description

A blockchain is a chain of digital ledgers (“blocks”) that contains information. One of the most important characteristics of this tool is that the data it contains is almost unalterable. Each bloc is composed of three main features: the data it contains, a hash, and the hash of the previous bloc.²⁹

Being a chain of digital ledgers, the first purpose of the blockchain is to store **data**. Its content will vary according to the type and purpose of blockchain. In some blockchain, the information is encrypted.

Once a block is created, it is assigned a **hash**, which is a unique sequence that enables one to identify a block and its content. The hash crystallizes the encrypted information contained in a block.³⁰ If the information contained in a block is tempered, the hash changes, and the block to which the new hash is related is no longer the same as in the initial one. It becomes therefore possible to trace the changes made to a block by comparing the hashes of the data of interest.

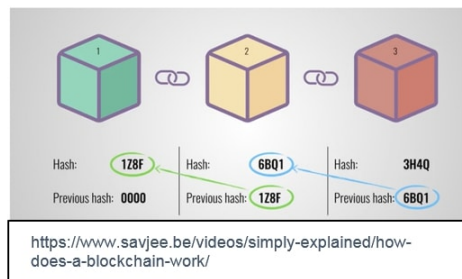


²⁷ The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

²⁸ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the Research Center on Fundamental Rights and Constitutionalism of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

²⁹ Xavier Decuyper, “How does a blockchain work”, Savjee.be, 2018 <<https://www.savjee.be/videos/simply-explained/how-does-a-blockchain-work/>> [accessed on 12 July 2018].

³⁰ Marc Pilkington, “Blockchain technology: principles and applications”, in : F. Xavier Olleros & Majlinda Zhegu, *Research Handbook on Digital Transformations*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA, USA, 2016, p. 228.



Each block also contains **the hash of the previous block**. This hash, by connecting each block to the previous one, effectively creates a chain of blocks.³¹

Two elements ensure the security of the information contained in blockchain. The first one is this **chain configuration**. Indeed, if the information contained in a block is tempered, its

hash changes. Therefore, the hash contained in the next block will no longer be valid, disrupting the whole chain. However, a recalculation of all hashes in following blocks would make this change of information in a block possible. To mitigate this possibility, peer-to-peer based systems of security have been established. These are the **proof-of-work** or **proof-of-stake** systems. The aggregated blocks of information are distributed among a peer-to-peer network who all receive an identical copy of the blockchain. This network validates new blocks by solving cryptographic equations associated with these new blocks, ensuring that they have not been tempered.³² If 51% of the peers in the network validate a newly created block, it can be added to the chain and everyone agrees on the new state of the chain. As a result, the tempering of the information of a block is almost impossible, as it would require recalculating all the hashes of a chain, re-doing the proof-of-work for each block, and taking over 51% of the peer-to-peer network to make the blockchain valid again.³³

3.2. Implementation

The blockchain technology has already been applied to various sectors for financial transactions, data storage, health-record storage, smart contracts, voting systems, digital identity verification, and the list goes on.³⁴ It has recently also drawn the attention of the United Nations (UN) who joined forces with the World Identity Network (WIN) and the government of Moldova in order to launch a pilot project that will be implemented by Consensus, a Brooklyn-based software company, that will develop blockchain-based identification documents (IDs) to prevent child trafficking in Moldova.

The starting point of the project is based on the observation that undocumented children, and, in some cases, trafficking survivors, are particularly vulnerable regarding traffickers who use fake identification documents to transport them across borders.³⁵ Not having documents, these individuals can be moved freely. To counter this, Consensus came up with the idea of providing undocumented children and trafficking survivors a digital identity, based on eye-scan and fingerprints that are immutable and that will be securely stored on the blockchain. This would enable Moldovan authorities to have a higher chance of catching and preventing the traffickers because every time they will try to cross the border with a potential victim, it will be recorded on the

³¹ Xavier Decuyper, *Op. Cit.*

³² E. Ducas & A. Wilner, "The security and financial implications of blockchain technologies: Regulating emerging technologies in Canada", *International Journal*, 2017, Vol. 72(4), p.545.

³³ Xavier Decuyper, *Op. Cit.*

³⁴ Marc Pilkington, *Op. Cit.*, p.238.

³⁵ UN Blockchain - Multi UN Agency platform, "Blockchain for Humanity – Global Challenge", 10 November 2017 <<https://un-blockchain.org/2017/11/10/blockchain-for-humanity-global-challenge/>>, [accessed on 13 July 2018].

blockchain, enabling the authorities to trace them. In addition, the proposal suggests developing a system of permissioned transactions so that the guardians of the children would be notified by a phone alert in case of border-crossing by the children. In order for the crossing of the border to be possible, the guardians would need to give their approval.³⁶

3.3. Assessment

The project of digital identification has not been implemented yet and is still being developed but civil society organizations have already raised concerns regarding the tool. Irina Arap, an IOM representative in Moldova, underlined, for example, that as long as jobs are not created, trafficking will always remain a major issue in Moldova. In this sense, this tool does not tackle the root causes of trafficking.³⁷ In this regard, Consensys is lucid about the limits of its solution, as it reminds that “digital identity alone will not fix the broken system”, and suggests a niche approach to tackle this issue, where blockchain would only be part of the solution.³⁸

Other stakeholders, such as Ecaterina Berejan, head of Moldova’s anti-trafficking agency, pointed that minors represented only 20% of the domestic and transnational victims identified in 2017 and added that some of them are trafficked with valid documents, sometimes with the complicity of their family members. However, advocates of the blockchain initiative argue that low registered numbers of trafficked children do not account for the undetected cases and that these IDs will therefore enable the authorities to have a better grasp on the scope of the problem. Mihail Beregoi, state secretary for Moldova’s internal affairs ministry, further argued that traffickers are always one step ahead in using the possibilities offered by the new technologies, as opposed to the national authorities usually lagging behind in exploiting the potential of these tools. Investing in new technologies could therefore enable the authorities to take a leap forward and have an edge on traffickers.³⁹

Other emerging issues will need to be resolved before these digital IDs are effectively implemented. Consensys foresees, in this regard, that malicious actors, including states, could very much use this technology to tighten control over their targets. The blockchain architects will therefore need to take all privacy considerations into account in the development of these IDs.⁴⁰ In addition, the question of how to protect the data uploaded on the blockchain when the system is based on the distribution of the data to the whole network creates other difficulties on which a team of researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is currently working.⁴¹

³⁶ Unite Ideas, “Consensys Blockchain for Social Impact”, <<https://uniteideas.spigit.com/blockchain4humanity/Page/ViewIdea?ideaid=374>>, [accessed on 13 July 2018].

³⁷ U. Bacchi, “Scan on exit: can Blockchain save Moldova’s children from traffickers?”, Reuters Website, 19 June 2018, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-moldova-trafficking-technology-blockc/scan-on-exit-can-blockchain-save-moldovas-children-from-traffickers-idUSKBN1JF00J>>, [accessed on 13 July 2018].

³⁸ Unite Ideas, *Op. Cit.*

³⁹ U. Bacchi, *Op. Cit.*

⁴⁰ Unite Ideas, *Op. Cit.*

⁴¹ Enigma, “Enigma”, <<https://enigma.co>>, [accessed on 13 July 2018].

Finally, in the European context, the protection of privacy comes hand in hand with the right to be forgotten. In this respect, the immutable nature of the blockchain is another factor that might create difficulties in the implementation process. The future of this technology in the European Union will therefore very much depend on whether it is developed in a way that is “privacy-friendly” and that aligns with EU standards.

Blockchain is increasingly gaining momentum, and intensive research is directed to the diversification of its use. It shows high potential to usher the combat against trafficking, bearing in mind that it cannot solve the problem alone. Besides the privacy concerns that need addressing, the issue of the scalability of this energy-intensive technology is already arising. It is thus a promising technology to fight trafficking provided that certain questions can be addressed. More research will therefore definitely be necessary to assess the possibilities it offers in the fight against trafficking.

4. Photo DNA⁴²

Until preventive identification tools such as the one presented above deliver exceptionally good results, tools to identify current victims will still be needed. PhotoDNA is one of them.

4.1. Description

PhotoDNA is a software developed by Microsoft in collaboration with Dartmouth College and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 2009 to combat child sexual exploitation. It converts pictures into a common black-and-white format of a uniform size. It then divides the images into squares and attributes a numerical value to them, which acts as a fingerprint or a digital signature. In order to **identify pictures**, it follows a “matching process”, whereby the hash value is used to compare signatures of photos stored in the databases of Interpol, NCMEC or other law enforcement agencies to find copies of the same images and to eliminate them.⁴³

4.2. Implementation

PhotoDNA is used within Microsoft's own services - such as Bing, Outlook.com and One Drive, but many other software companies, such as Facebook, Twitter and Adobe Systems, national police services and Interpol have also started using it. At the moment, PhotoDNA is mainly used to curb child sexual abuse online, but governments are also considering using it in the fight against terrorism.⁴⁴

⁴² This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the Research Center on Fundamental Rights and Constitutionalism of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

⁴³ E. Yiallourou, R. Demetriou & A. Lanitis, “On the detection of images containing child-pornographic material”, in *IEEE*, 2017, <https://encase.socialcomputing.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/On_the_detection_Yiallourou.pdf> [accessed 26/07/2018].

⁴⁴ H. Farid, “Reining in online abuses”, *Technology and innovation*, Vol. 19, 2018, pp. 593-599.

Bearing in mind the 47th Recommendation of the European Parliament Resolution (P8_TA(2017)0501) on the possible application of *"newly developed hashing technology involving automatic image detection and recognition"* to combat sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, the use of PhotoDNA to fight the sexual exploitation of adults as well can be welcome. In this regard, the facilities are already in place in some of our countries of studies. Indeed, the Netherlands Forensic Institute already has a licence to evaluate and supplement the PhotoDNA programme⁴⁵, and the Swedish child protection tools provider, NetClean, collaborates to this end with Microsoft, which is an active member of the EU CEO Coalition striving to make internet a safer place for children.⁴⁶

4.3. Assessment

PhotoDNA's main advantage lays in its ability to process a high number of pictures in a short period of time. In addition, the software can match images even if the picture has been altered or resized as it is grounded on perceptual similarity, i.e. it identifies contents which are similar under a human perspective.⁴⁷ Finally, the cryptographic hash function is non-invertible, which means that the once the hash function has been used on a picture, it cannot be modified or tempered, which renders this system secure and reliable.⁴⁸

However, it has weaknesses. One of them is that the processing of images and their comparison with other images rely exclusively on pre-existing content stored in the database.⁴⁹ Because of this, PhotoDNA cannot be used to discover new perpetrators or victims. New images that are not in the databases are constantly uploaded and cannot be immediately processed through PhotoDNA. PhotoDNA is also ineffective to identify a person in a video or live cam.⁵⁰ A final concern refers to the issues of privacy that this technology entails, considering that it is owned by a private company.⁵¹

⁴⁵ C. Lomas, "Dutch test software to combat online child abuse", *DW*, 15/06/2012, <<https://www.dw.com/en/dutch-test-software-to-combat-online-child-abuse/a-16019381>> [accessed on 26/07/2018]; "NFI tests PhotoDNA by Microsoft", *Netherlands Forensic Institute. Ministry of Security and Justice*, 03/05/2012, <<https://www.forensicinstitute.nl/news/news/2012/05/03/nfi-tests-photodna-by-microsoft>> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

⁴⁶ Meddelanden, "Microsoft and NetClean Provide PhotoDNA Technology to Help Law Enforcement Fight Online Child Sexual Exploitation", *Mynewsdesk*, 19.03.2012, <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/netclean_technologies/pressreleases/microsoft-and-netclean-provide-photodna-technology-to-help-law-enforcement-fight-online-child-sexual-exploitation-743087> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

⁴⁷ P. C. Bjelland, K. Franke & A. Arnes, "Practical use of approximate hash based matching in digital investigations", *Digital Investigation*, Vol. 11, 2014, p. 519 *et seq.*

⁴⁸ PhotoDNA Cloud Service, "FAQ", *Microsoft*, <<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/PhotoDNA/FAQ>> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

⁴⁹ B. Westlake, M. Bouchard & R. Frank, "Comparing methods for detecting child exploitation content online", *European intelligence and security informatics conference*, 2012, p. 157.

⁵⁰ PhotoDNA Cloud Service, "FAQ", *Microsoft*, <<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/PhotoDNA/FAQ>> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

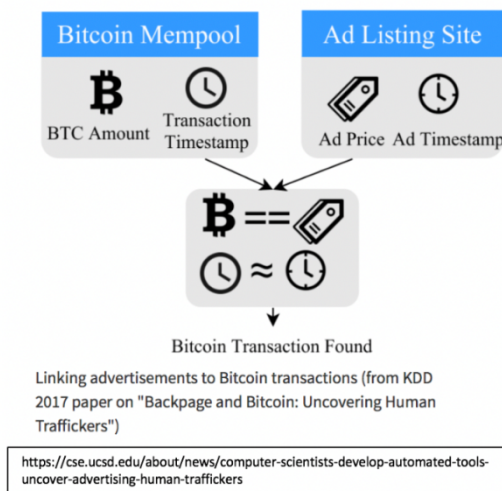
⁵¹ B. Saetta, "PhotoDNA: Microsoft, Facebook e il controllo globale che piace alla Commissione Europea", *Valigia Blu*, 12/11/2012 <<https://www.valigiablu.it/photodna-microsoft-facebook-e-il-controllo-globale-che-piace-alla-commissione-europea/>> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

5. Automated technique for clustering sex advertisements⁵²

The police have access to various software and technologies that help them identify suspects involved in trafficking activities.⁵³ However, their low reliability and scale are their biggest weaknesses. In this regard, Rebecca Portnoff is on the verge of offering a tool that not only provides more reliable results in terms of identification, but which also allows for an unprecedented scale of processing.

5.1. Description

In August 2017, Rebecca Portnoff, PhD candidate at UC Berkeley at the time, developed, together with a team of fellow researchers, an automated and scalable approach for clustering sex advertisements by owners, regardless of the claimed authorship for the advertisements. To that purpose, she devised two tools that can be used separately or in conjunction. The first one is a machine learning **stylometry classifier** that is able to identify whether two advertisements or more were written by the same or different authors. The second **technique** makes use of the publicly available information on Bitcoin transactions **to link specific advertisements to the Bitcoin wallet** that paid for them.⁵⁴



The stylometry classifier distinguishes advertisements that are posted by the same person from the ones posted by different people. Stylometry refers to the analysis of writing styles and is used to identify authorship. "[It] can provide confirmation of authorship with high confidence, and, in the case of online trafficking ads, allows researchers and police to identify cases in which separate advertisements for different sex workers share a single author: a tell tale sign of a trafficking ring, but hard to identify without sophisticated computer analysis."⁵⁵ The classifier does not only recognise advertisements written by a specific set of authors, which would limit its use since new

advertisements are added by new persons every day, but it is able to learn and

⁵² This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the Research Center on Fundamental Rights and Constitutionalism of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

⁵³ TRACE (Trafficking as A Criminal Enterprise), *Op. Cit.*, p.45-46.

⁵⁴ R. S. Portnoff, D. Yuxing Huang, P. Doerfler, S. Afroz & D. McCoy, "Backpage and Bitcoin: Uncovering Human Traffickers", *KDD 2017 Applied Data Science Paper*, August 2017, p.1595.

⁵⁵ B. Israel, "In a step toward fighting human trafficking, sex ads are linked to Bitcoin data", *UC Berkeley: Berkeley News*, <<http://news.berkeley.edu/2017/08/16/in-a-step-toward-fighting-human-trafficking-sex-ads-are-linked-to-bitcoin-data/>> [accessed on 26/07/2018].

recognize the concepts of same vs. different, making it applicable to all advertisements from all authors.⁵⁶

The second tool links specific ads to Bitcoin transactions, in turn leading to the bitcoin wallet(s) paying for them. This is done by using available information from the Bitcoin mempool⁵⁷, namely price and time. Regarding the latter, the research was developed based on the use of Backpage (shut down in the meantime) whose system did not wait for the transaction to be confirmed by the network to post the advertisements.⁵⁸ Instead, it used to post them as soon as the payment was received. Building on this, the team managed to link the transactions to the Bitcoin wallets that paid for the advertisements by comparing the timestamp of payment to the one of its appearance on Backpage. If, for example, multiple advertisements are linked to a single Bitcoin wallet, this could suggest that the wallet is owned by persons involved in trafficking activities.⁵⁹

5.2. Implementation

This tool has not been implemented yet, as it is still at a fine-tuning stage, in collaboration with the law enforcement and NGOs whose advice feed into its refining. In this regard, this tool is primarily aimed to be used by these two group of actors involved in the fight against trafficking. The law enforcement and NGOs that have collaborated to the project already expressed a strong interest in deploying it in the framework of their investigations once it becomes available.⁶⁰

5.3. Assessment

The assessment of the tool at this stage is difficult since it has only been recently developed, and that it has not been implemented yet. However, the research team already identified notable advantages the tool provides compared to what currently exists in the field, while being aware of some of its shortcomings.

This system offers undeniable and multiple advantages. To start with, even though it is theoretically possible for the law enforcement to manually go through all the advertisements posted on websites such as Backpage, the staff, time and resources limitations make this practically impossible. Furthermore, identifying signs of trafficking on these ads require a specific expertise that is not necessarily available in all law enforcement teams, without mentioning the psychological toll that screening all this content entails. This technique remedies all these issues at once as it is able to process an unprecedented number of advertisements in an automatic way without human

⁵⁶ S. Portnoff, D. Yuxing Huang, P. Doerfler, S. Afroz & D. McCoy, *Op. Cit.*, p.1599.

⁵⁷ The mempool is a pool of pending ledgers (or, as referred in the document on blockchains, “blocks”) that need to be validated by the peers-to-peer network before being confirmed and added to the chain.

⁵⁸ Cfr. Blockchains.

⁵⁹ UC San Diego, “Computer scientist develop automated tool to uncover advertising by human traffickers”, *UC San Diego – Jacobs School of Engineering, Computer and Engineering*, <<https://cse.ucsd.edu/about/news/computer-scientists-develop-automated-tools-uncover-advertising-human-traffickers>>[accessed on 26/07/2018].

⁶⁰ R. S. Portnoff, D. Yuxing Huang, P. Doerfler, S. Afroz & D. McCoy, *Op. Cit.*, p.1596.

supervision.⁶¹ In addition, it is more reliable than the previously existing techniques that were usually based on hard identifiers such as phone numbers or email addresses. Portnoff and her team argue in this regard that those are known to be unreliable identifiers since the cost of creating an email address is very low, thus enabling the traffickers to change it regularly. Similarly, traffickers often change phone numbers or use burner phones. The identifiers used in this technology, bitcoin wallets, are, in this regard, much more secure.⁶² Finally, this elaborate technique does not conflate voluntary sex work with trafficking, as it does not target any advertisement for sex services. On the contrary, it is designed from the outset in order to only identify suspicious patterns with regards to sex advertisements and bitcoin wallets.⁶³ As previously said, this could be, for example, the identification of advertisements for multiple different women across multiple locations and coming from the same author.

However, this new technology also bears serious limitations. The first one is that this whole system has been developed and tested around Backpage, which, in the meantime, has been seized by U.S. authorities.⁶⁴ In spite of that, this technology is scalable and can be used on other platforms, such as Craigslist, provided that they use bitcoin payments or any virtual currency that uses publicly accessible ledgers. The latter is another limitation. This system only works with platforms that use bitcoin or similar payment methods. The system was tested on Backpage because Visa and Mastercard decided to stop processing transactions for adult listings on the website, which opened the way to the use of Bitcoins instead.⁶⁵ However, this might not necessarily be the case for all other websites for classified advertisements. Lastly, although this system is already ground-breaking as it is, it does not enable one to ensure that advertisements believed to have been placed by traffickers were actually placed by traffickers. The system is not able to identify ground truth, i.e. advertisements for which we can be certain that they have been posted by traffickers. This is where the law enforcement would need to intervene to carry on the investigation in order to confirm or rule out that linkage.⁶⁶

In conclusion, although these techniques have some disadvantages, the most notable of which being the fact that the second one only applies to sex advertisement websites that use cryptocurrencies specifically using publicly accessible ledgers, thereby limiting its use to specific websites, they clearly open a new world of possibilities in the fight against trafficking in human beings. This is true both in terms of automaticity and scalability of operations. Once properly refined, they will certainly represent a turnaround in the field of online fight against trafficking in human beings.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.1595.

⁶² *Ibidem.*

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁴ C. Savage & T. Williams, "U.S. seizes Backpage.com, a site accused of enabling prostitution", *The New York Times* <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/us/politics/backpage-prostitution-classified.html>> [accessed on 26/07/2018]

⁶⁵ R. S. Portnoff, D. Yuxing Huang, P. Doerfler, S. Afroz & D. McCoy, "Op. Cit.", p. 1597.

⁶⁶ UC San Diego, *Op. Cit.*

6. The STOP APP⁶⁷

In addition to the identification tools used by professionals, there are ways for the public to be actively involved in the security of the persons selling sex. In this regard, in 2015, the TRACE Report on the role of technologies in human trafficking mentioned the future role that applications could have to prevent trafficking.⁶⁸ Today, these applications have multiplied and become more specialised in what they target in the fight against trafficking. One of them is the STOPP APP, an intelligence-led prevention tool that enables reporting.

6.1. Description

The STOP App is a smartphone application developed by the *Stop The Traffik* network that enables people who may know, witness, or hear about a situation linked to trafficking to report it remotely and from a safe place. The aggregated information provided by the users of the application contribute to a more accurate mapping and understanding of trafficking activities, eventually enabling to do **intelligence-led prevention**. The targeted users are members of the public, NGO workers, activists, law enforcement authorities, or anyone who may have reasons to believe they witnessed a situation linked to trafficking. Although its general purpose is to prevent trafficking by building resilience through knowledge based on crowdsourced intelligence, it is also useful in situations where a person would be in immediate danger. In such cases, relevant organisations and authorities are immediately alerted.

The information shared via the app is not a substitute for making a report to the police. If and when possible, the application developers encourage the users to always report first to the police, and then to upload their input via the application. In cases where people may be afraid to report to the local authorities or do not trust them, the anonymity provided by this service enables them to still upload and share information. However, it will not account for a report to the police.⁶⁹

6.2. Implementation

In practical terms, the processing of the data gathered takes place in three stages. The data is collected, analysed and finally shared. The data entered into the application is sent to the Center for Intelligence-led Prevention (CfILP) that receives data from the STOP APP, Partner Data, Open Source Intelligence and Community Intelligence. All this information is held in a secure online location that is only accessible to *Stop The Traffik*. The raw data is then analysed by specialists, with expertise in law enforcement, human intelligence and anti-money laundering, who use art big data analysis tools that are also used by intelligence services. The analysis of the data sheds light on patterns

⁶⁷ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the International Maternal and Child Health Unit of Uppsala University.

⁶⁸ TRACE (Trafficking as A Criminal Enterprise), *Op. Cit.*, p.34.

⁶⁹ Stop the Traffik, "Intelligence-led prevention: the STOP APP", *Stop the Traffik*, <<https://www.stopthetraffik.org/intelligence-led-prevention/the-stop-app/>> [accessed on 07/08/2018].

that provides a better understanding of current human trafficking trends and hotspots. Overall, this helps to have an up-to-date and accurate picture of how and where human-trafficking rings operate. Finally, the findings are shared with individuals and organisations within the communities so that, instead of being low-risk and high-profit for traffickers, they become high-risk and low-profit. They are also shared with businesses, policy-makers, international organisations, and all potentially interested stakeholders for which the findings could help make better decisions.⁷⁰

6.3. Assessment

Because of its purpose – intelligence-led prevention – the effectiveness of the application is hard to assess. Indeed, the impact of prevention tools is hardly measurable.

In addition, the use of the application itself raises concerns linked to the security of the user, data protection, and the legality of the sharing of information via this application. These issues have already been foreseen and thought through by the developers.

Regarding the security of the user, the application provides information on how to use it safely via an information page on safety and usage that immediately appears directly as the person opens the application. This page encourages, for example, to hide the application among other applications. By doing so, the user can better protect his/her phone and, as such, prevent it from potentially leading back to him/her. Furthermore, the fact that the application is on the phone of the user offers a very safe reporting, as it can be done remotely from a secure location. Finally, once a report is submitted, all traces of it will be erased on the phone. There will be no record of the report stored on the phone of the user.⁷¹

Regarding data protection, the organisation abides by European data protection law. However, the charity is UK-based. It thus remains to be seen how the data protection standards post-Brexit will be safeguarded in order to ensure full compliance of the application with EU law and remain usable across Europe.

Finally, a legitimate concern about this application is whether or not it is legal. In this regard, the organisation argues that “anybody can ask anybody anything and anybody can tell anybody anything”. However, when it proved necessary, the team of *Stop the Traffik* sought professional advice to deal with concerns raised in particular jurisdictions.⁷²

7. Crime stopper platforms

⁷⁰ Stop the Traffik, “The Center for Intelligence-Led Prevention”, *Stop the Traffik*, <<https://www.stopthetraffik.org/intelligence-led-prevention/centre-intelligence-led-prevention/>> [accessed on 07/08/2018].

⁷¹ Stop the Traffik, “Intelligence-led prevention: The Stop app”, *Op. Cit.*

⁷² *Ibidem.*

Other mechanisms, such as crime-stoppers, also include the public in the identification and reporting of persons in situation of exploitation or experiencing violence. These are used in various countries across Europe and act as both identification and reporting tools. They are not necessarily aimed at reporting crimes specifically committed against persons selling sex but are more generally used to report all types of crimes. In this respect, they are not always very well advertised in the sex industry but can definitely be useful in this sector as well. Two examples of these platforms will be outlined in this paper, the “Police – Security and Trust” application used in Croatia, and the “Meld Misdaad Anoniem” platform available in the Netherlands.⁷³

7.1. “Police – Security and Trust” application⁷⁴

7.1.1. Description

In 2015, the Croatian Ministry of Interior released an app, “Police – Security and Trust”, that enables **citizens to report crimes** that they witnessed or share information **anonymously** via their smartphone. The concept is similar to the STOP APP, but this one is rather aimed at crime prosecution than prevention and is directly linked to the law-enforcement authorities.

The procedure to report a crime follows a few simple steps. First, a person who witnessed a crime and recorded or photographed it can upload the picture/video on the app. The information is then sent to the central portal of the Ministry of Interior who shares it with the ‘officers at the operational communication centers who assess whether urgent action is needed or not. If it is, the information is immediately transferred to the competent services who send agents on the ground. This application can similarly be used for people directly needing help.



For the app to be fully effective, the location function of the phone needs to be enabled. Otherwise, the address can also be shared via the comment section or a picture, but geo-localisation remains the most precise and efficient way to locate the person.⁷⁵

7.1.2. Implementation

⁷³ It should be noted that although only two types of crime stopper tools will be presented here, it is acknowledged that other types of reporting platforms targeted at different audiences exist. The National Ugly Mug, for instance, provides a platform where information is fueled by sex workers for sex workers. They can warn colleagues about potential dangers (e.g. a violent client) as well as receive alerts. Please refer to their website for more information: <https://uknswp.org/um/>.

⁷⁴ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by FLIGHT (LET in Croatian), a life quality improvement organization.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Interior, “Nove mogućnosti MUP-ove mobilne aplikacije za e-dojave”, *Website of the Ministry of Interior of Croatia*, 03/08/2017, <<https://www.mup.hr/novosti/803/nove-mogucnosti-mup-ove-mobilne-aplikacije-za-e-dojave>> [accessed on 07/08/2018].

The application has been used by private citizens to contact the police. It has proved to be very popular as it has been downloaded 80 000 times so far. It has been especially useful when citizens could not make calls to the police for security reasons.⁷⁶

Additionally, the fieldwork of Project DESIRE in Croatia has shown that in the summer most persons selling sex go to the beach because of the big influx of tourists. The latest update of the application that offered translation into English, German and Italian (for the largest tourist groups) could therefore potentially encourage them to report any suspicious activities of exploitation and/or trafficking.⁷⁷

7.1.3. Assessment

The effective assessment and evaluation of this application is rendered difficult by the fact that the files compiling the violations and criminal offences do not distinguish between the ones that were discovered via the app and the rest. Therefore, its efficacy is hardly measurable, although it has been reported that 75 000 reports have been sent via the app.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, this application still provides an innovative way to directly engage with the police, in addition to giving community members a greater sense of contribution thanks to more convenient options to report crimes and suspicious activities. This method of direct engagement and contribution helps to improve the efficiency of police operations, allowing more effort to be directed towards solving crimes and addressing community concerns.

7.2. “Meld Misdaad Anoniem” platform⁷⁹

7.2.1. Description

As for the “Policy – Security and Trust App”, this online platform is aimed at enabling citizens to deposit **anonymous reports** that are then transferred to competent authorities, including the police. The platform is not coordinated by the police, it rather acts as an intermediary agent that dispatches the different types of reports to the relevant authorities. Similarly to the “Policy – Security and Trust App”, any type of crime can be reported on this platform, but this one also has a specific section dedicated to forced sex work, with an explanatory video enabling the viewer to spot the main signs of exploitation.⁸⁰

7.2.2. Implementation

⁷⁶ M. Wranka, “Znate li kako prijaviti zločin policiji aplikacijom? MUP nam otkriva što vam je činiti”, *TPortal*, 02/04/2018, <<https://www.tportal.hr/tehnolo/clanak/znate-li-kako-prijaviti-zlocin-policiji-aplikacijom-mup-nam-otkriva-sto-vam-je-ciniti-foto-20180402>>[accessed on 29/08/2018].

⁷⁷ Ministry of Interior, “Nove mogućnosti MUP-ove mobilne aplikacije za e-dojave”, *Op. Cit.*

⁷⁸ M. Wranka, *Op. Cit.*

⁷⁹ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by the Victimology Institute of Tilburg University.

⁸⁰ “Meld Misdaad Anoniem”, <<https://www.meldmisdaadanoniem.nl>> [accessed on 09/08/2018].

In 2012, Meld Misdaad Anoniem launched a campaign that sought to encourage the clients of sex workers to report instances of forced prostitution. This campaign has not only proved to be very fruitful, as, since its launch, 392 reports were filed by clients⁸¹, but it has also enabled the platform to gain a great deal of visibility. Indeed, following the campaign, the number of reports filed on forced and illegal sex work on the website has increased by 36% in the time period between 2012 and 2013.⁸²

7.2.3. Assessment

The efficacy of the platforms in helping the police forces apprehend suspects involved in sexual exploitation and trafficking seems to be valuable in light of the available figures. In 2017, up to 17 000 reports on forced prostitution, illegal sex work and trafficking were registered on the website. As abovementioned, 392 of these were filed by clients of sex workers. Similarly, since 2003, around 20 000 arrests have been conducted following reporting.⁸³ The success of this platform could potentially suggest that the combination of tools -in this case: awareness-raising campaigns and reporting - can enhance and optimize their effects.

8. Hotlines/Helplines⁸⁴

Besides the identification and reporting tools that rely on crowdsourced or professionally fed inputs, it is equally important to put in place mechanisms that allow for victims of trafficking to reach out for help themselves. In this regard, although a bit old-fashioned, the use of telephone lines that directly connect the caller to a specialized counsellor might be better suited for victims of trafficking who would try to initiate contact. Indeed, the process of reaching out for help might be difficult and having recourse to a system that provides a sense of human companionship and moral support could be a preferable option in the case of vulnerable people. In cases where the person is not able to immediately talk, the conversation could be initiated in a chat room and then move to the phone line.

8.1. Description

Because there are various types of hotlines targeted at different users and with varying purposes, providing a general definition of a hotline is difficult. In this regard, Barbara Limanowska has identified 3 types of hotline that deal with trafficking cases. The first one refers to hotlines set up by government agencies and that provide information about migration and trafficking. There are also hotlines that have various target audiences, such as victims of violence or child abuse, and that might also come to provide information on trafficking. The one that will be outlined in this section refers to

⁸¹ CoMensha, "Nieuwe campagne Meld Misdaad Anoniem", *CoMensha – Mensenhandel in beeld*, <<https://www.comensha.nl/artikel/detail/nieuwe-campagne-meld-misdaad-anoniem>> [accessed on 09/08/2018].

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ "Meld Misdaad Anoniem", *Op. Cit.*

⁸⁴ This section has been drafted based on the information provided by FLIGHT (LET in Croatian), a life quality improvement organization.

the helplines that are put in place by anti-trafficking organisations, and whose primary objective is to reach out to and/or support victims of trafficking.⁸⁵

These hotlines can have two different simultaneous purposes. They can **prevent** situations of trafficking by the provision of general information on trafficking, as well as safe migration paths and legal jobs abroad. In this regard, the NGOASTRA, involved in the fight against trafficking through a holistic approach, reported that, at many occasions, it was able to keep track and get informed about the new trends in trafficking thanks to the calls of its clients who are seeking to receive additional information regarding a job or business opportunity they had been offered. If the agent on the line perceives that there might a risk of trafficking, s/he can warn them about the possible risk of deception and manipulation and immediately offer assistance.

The hotlines are also helpful to **identify** victims and subsequently provide assistance. This is made possible by the identification of a situation of trafficking by a person reporting a missing person, or by a direct call from a victim of trafficking themselves who can, in some cases, provide additional information on where other victims might be located and/or about traffickers.⁸⁶

The NGO ASTRA has dedicated a branch of its outreach programme to hotlines. In this framework, the NGO has developed best practices and principles to be scrupulously respected regarding the use of this tool. They believe that hotlines should operate in a way that they are accessible to all, without discrimination; the respect of anonymity as well as confidentiality is defined as essential; the importance of trust is emphasized in the sense that confidence should be placed by the person receiving the call in the statement and information provided by the victims or of the person calling to someone's disappearance; the operator should always be on the victim's side, show support and never lose from sight that the victims are never responsible for the violence that they had to endure; the need to approach the victim bearing all the aspects of his/her life into account – including violence, exploitation, poverty, special needs, and so on, as, otherwise, his/her successful reintegration will be jeopardized; the respect of the principle of equality is crucial, i.e. the need to ensure that there is no position of power of the social worker on the end of the line; it is similarly important to respect the agency and autonomy of the person who calls and to therefore let them express their needs and desires for themselves; the line should not give advice, but information, thereby avoiding a moralizing stance; the principle of urgency in contacting relevant authorities, institutions and organisations upon receipt of information of potential victims and/or location in order to rescue or prevent a person from being trafficked/trafficking is also underlined as crucial in some cases; finally, a last and utterly important feature to be respected in these calls is the principle of caution, as the victim might be exposed, and as it is equally possible to receive calls from traffickers who seek to locate lost victims or witnesses in judicial proceedings.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Barbara Limanowska, "Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe 2004 – Focus on prevention in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, The UN Administered Province of Kosovo", *Produced by UNICEF, UNOHCHR, OSCE ODIHR*, 2005, p. 32.

⁸⁶ NGO ASTRA, "Manual for Work on SOS hotlines for (potential) victims of human trafficking", 2009, p.36-37 <<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5362/pdf/5362.pdf>> [accessed on 08/08/2018].

⁸⁷ NGO ASTRA, *Op. Cit.*, p.37-39.

8.2. Implementation

These hotlines have been implemented all across Europe. In Romania, for example, the National Agency against Trafficking in persons has set up a toll-free telephone line dedicated to Trafficking in human being. Anyone can call this number to get information on trafficking or to report potential trafficking cases. The TRACE consortium reported in this regard that each year, the average number of calls for information requests about trafficking on this helpline is 200. As for the confirmed cases of victims of trafficking, their numbers vary. In 2011, 16 confirmed cases of trafficking have been reported through this helpline, as opposed to only 4 in 2012.⁸⁸

8.3. Assessment

In 2008, Kerrie Shandley and Susan Moore conducted a study on gamblers' helpline to evaluate their advantages and disadvantages. The key advantages identified included their low cost, their high accessibility, the anonymity and confidentiality that they provide to clients, and the fact that they can supplement face-to-face counselling. The authors also point out that helplines can be a springboard to a conventional treatment, or act as treatment as a whole for individuals who experience difficulties in talking to other persons.

The main disadvantages they pinpointed relate to the "lack of visual cues to assist the counselling process (...), the frequency of inappropriate and hoax calls which can be desensitising and detrimental to counsellor morale (...) and limited opportunities to use the full range of therapeutic techniques (...)." In addition, the "time-limited nature of telephone counselling necessitates primarily the use of brief intervention and problem-focused strategies" that might be difficult to apply to a problem as serious, complex and sensitive as trafficking. As a result, the counsellors experience "an 'inner pressure' to completely resolve callers' problems due to the expectation that the call will be an isolated interaction. This is compounded by the actuality that some callers expect a solution to be provided (...)." ⁸⁹

To this, the NGO ASTRA, added that helplines that are focusing on trafficking do not reach victims of trafficking who do not self-identify as such or categories of people who are more at risk of trafficking. These groups would be more likely to call general information hotlines rather than the ones focused on prevention and information about trafficking. However, ASTRA also pointed out that the hotlines dedicated to trafficking better target their audience as they would be used by family, friends and clients of the victim of trafficking, or even by the victims themselves.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ TRACE (Trafficking as A Criminal Enterprise), *Op. Cit.*, p.61.

⁸⁹ K. Shandley & S. Moore, "Evaluation of Gambler's Helpline: A Consumer Perspective", *International Gambling Studies*, Vol. 8, No.3, 2008, p.317.

⁹⁰ NGO ASTRA, *Op. Cit.*, p.34.

9. Conclusion

The different tools presented in this briefing paper give a brief and selected overview of the possibilities that technology offers in the fight against trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The paper does not provide a full coverage of the tools that exist, it however draws attention on the fact that various tools that seek to achieve different goal exist. In this regard, a few points need to be underlined on the use of these tools.

First, when using any of the available instruments, it is important to clearly identify what goal the endeavour seeks to achieve (e.g. Prevention? Awareness-raising? Identification of victims? Etc.). Only with specific objectives in mind will one be able to use the most appropriate tool for that purpose. The lack of well-defined objectives was, for example, one of the shortcomings pointed out in the interim review of the MTV Exit campaign.⁹¹ The identification of specific goals goes hand in hand with the identification of both the audience that the initiative seeks to mobilize, and of the ultimate recipients of the outcome (victims of trafficking, general public, specialized stakeholders, etc.).

Besides the identification of the aims, audience and recipients, the capacity of the audience, the capacity of the tools and the needs of the recipients all need to be taken into account in the choice of instruments to be used, bearing the national legislative framework in mind. An awareness-raising campaign alone cannot prevent trafficking. The alerts and reports of the general public alone cannot help identifying all victims and traffickers. Outreach programmes alone will not help all victims exit their trafficking situation. Legislation alone is unable to stop trafficking.

The tools can also be used in conjunction with one another as well as with the ones presented in the briefing paper on “non-legislative measures that discourage and reduce the demand that fosters sexual exploitation related to trafficking in human beings” (D4.3.). This is the approach that the MTV Exit Campaign adopted in order to reach out to an audience that was as wide as possible; it is also the approach that Rebecca Portnoff adopted for her technology clustering sex advertisements by their owner; this is also what came out of the “Meld Misdaad Anoniem” platform whose success grew after it decided to launch an awareness-raising campaign to encourage reporting. The multiplication of tools to fight trafficking can only be beneficial in curbing this phenomenon, thereby covering its different facets, provided that they are carefully selected bearing the legal framework, goals to be achieved, target audiences and recipients in mind.

As a result of all this, the policy-makers, law-enforcement and NGO workers are not only faced with the challenging task of getting an accurate knowledge of how trafficking rings operate in their context, on the basis of which they can choose the most appropriate tools to fight the phenomenon, but they also need to keep their eyes wide open on the constantly emerging technologies so that they can use them before traffickers do.

⁹¹A. Skuse & S. Downman, *Op. Cit.*, p.11.