

FAQ: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION



FAQ: What are the links between the Internet and labour trafficking?

In today's globalised economy, workers are increasingly looking for job opportunities beyond their home country. In addition, millions of workers migrate internally. The use of new information and communication technologies for the purpose of labour recruitment has become a feature of 21st-century job facilitation and contributes to even greater labour mobility. Unfortunately, this is combined with gaps in regulation that would prevent the new technologies' potentially harmful effects – such as facilitation of labour trafficking. It is easy and 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 offers anonymity, which makes it difficult to identify who posted on a website.

FAQ: What is the significance of online recruitment?

Traditional forms of recruitment such as job advertising in printed media, pinning up notices on notice boards or bus stops or informal recruitment through word-of-mouth or through friends or relatives are still very popular ways of trafficking someone into a situation of exploitation. Such methods are likely to work on a local, regional or possibly national scale, depending on the media outlet. However, the use of e-recruitment is growing. For example, in Romania, the largest online recruitment platform Tjobs 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 work, healthcare, agriculture and restaurants or catering. As of June 2014, Internet penetration in Europe amounted to 70.5%. With the spread of mobile phones, it is no longer required that a person own a computer to go online. Reportedly, the Internet and mobile communication are becoming more widely used to recruit victims of trafficking in human beings.¹

FAQ: What are the typical cases of trafficking linked to the Internet?

Typical cases of Internet recruitment for labour trafficking include deceptive information about employment and working conditions aimed at a broad or individualised audience. Information about fraudulent job offers can be available to a broad audience when posted on publicly available websites; search engines or pop-ups are also used to publicise tempting job offers, as well as more individualised spaces, e.g., chat-rooms, social media or spam mail. In addition to recruitment, the Internet is also used to communicate with prospective and actual victims of labour trafficking, by e-mail, social media or through chats. This can include threatening or controlling behaviour (for example, victims might be required to show their work on camera through Skype).

FAQ: What are the warning signs?

Common “red flags” that might indicate danger of a fraudulent job offer include promises of unrealistically high pay (such as EUR 1 200 - 1 700 net pay per month for an unqualified job at a meat factory in Ireland); information about charging of “administrative fees” or “finders’ fees”; only general description of the job; no address for the recruitment agent; contact details containing only a mobile number or general e-mail address; information about accommodation in a room shared by a large group of persons.

¹ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/trafficking-human-beings-and-internet>

FAQ: What are the legal and administrative measures available?

Public and private recruitment and employment agencies, when appropriately regulated, play an important role in the efficient and equitable functioning of labour markets. Unfortunately, in many EU countries effective licencing and monitoring of recruiters is lacking. However, all EU Member States are required to prevent or effectively criminalise and prosecute cases of labour trafficking and protect victims. As a basic principle, crimes which are punishable offline are also punishable online, and therefore prohibition of deceptive recruitment for the purpose of labour exploitation should be applicable regardless of whether the Internet was used as a means to commit the crime.

FAQ: What are examples of good practice?

The Internet can be also used as a tool to protect against abusive recruitment. Examples of such good practice include online information campaigns advertised by government agencies; communication platforms set up by communities of migrant workers in a country of destination, aimed at sharing information about opportunities of regular employment and warning about false recruitment offers; online information provided by ethical recruitment agencies outlining acceptable practice; trade unions' information services for migrant workers such as <https://unionmigrantnetportal.eu> .

FAQ: What are recommendations for a future action?

National regulation should require all job recruiters to be licenced; dedicated job portals should be available to carry safety advice and information, including referral links to points of assistance; consideration should be given to developing a pan-EU web platform with information and links to assistance in all EU Member States that would be linked with certified recruitment portals; independent monitoring of Internet safety should be introduced in relation to online recruitment, linked with the labour inspection; social networking sites should be encouraged to implement safety features in relation to impromptu job offers; more capacity-building is needed with regard to the ability of workers to recognise a fraudulent job offer.

FAQS: THE ROLE OF INTERNET RECRUITMENT IN TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION

CONTACT DETAILS

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
37 Dame Street, Dublin 2
Tel 01 889 7570
Fax 01 889 7579
Drop-In Centre:
Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays,
10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Congress House 31/32 Parnell Square Dublin 1
Tel: +353-18897777
Fax: +353-18872012
E-Mail: congress@ictu.ie
Web: <http://www.ictu.ie>



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