

Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, publishes comprehensive information detailing Ireland's efforts to combat human trafficking

- **Detections increase for third year in a row**
- **Minister Flanagan encourages the public to recognise the signs of human trafficking**

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The Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, has today published comprehensive information detailing Ireland's efforts to combat human trafficking. The 2016 "Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland" report brings together information on actions across government to prevent and combat human trafficking and to provide support to victims. The Report also seeks to provide clarity as to what is meant by trafficking in Ireland, the different circumstance in which it might occur, and the legislation that is used to combat this crime.

Publishing the report, the Minister said: ***"Human Trafficking is a crime hidden in plain sight, perpetrated on society's most vulnerable and is taking place in communities throughout the country. This report seeks to analyse the scale of human trafficking in Ireland, while also highlighting the measures implemented by my Department and across government to both combat the crime and protect its victims."***

This is the eighth such annual report produced by the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, and shows that the number of human trafficking victims detected rose for the third consecutive year to 95 in 2016. As highlighted in the report, Ireland's experience of human trafficking is broadly similar to that of the EU as a whole. Sexual exploitation is most common, and female victims outnumber males. However, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of labour exploitation being detected, which has involved mostly males in Ireland. The Report draws attention to offences against children under Section 3 of the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, as amended by the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008. Victims of such offences are generally Irish children who have been sexual exploited in Ireland, often by someone known to them.

Minister Flanagan stated: ***"In 2016, for the first time, the State initiated prosecutions under both the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 for the sexual exploitation of an adult, and under the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013 for the labour exploitation of adults. Convictions in such prosecutions carry a maximum life sentence."***

The Minister added: "We are sending a strong message to criminals who seek to traffic and exploit vulnerable people: strong laws are in place, detections are increasing, and perpetrators will pay a high price for their heinous behaviour. Human trafficking is a clandestine activity and I am

encouraging members of the public to notify Gardaí if they fear a person is the victim of human trafficking.”

The report published by the Minister provides further detailed victim and exploitation statistics, while also shedding some light on criminal investigations, prosecutions and convictions. It is expected that comparative data for 2017 will be made available at the mid-year stage in 2018.

The report can be viewed online here:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Trafficking_in_Human_Beings_in_Ireland_Annual_Report_2016.pdf/Files/Trafficking_in_Human_Beings_in_Ireland_Annual_Report_2016.pdf. The 2016 report, together with all previous annual reports, is also available on the Department's dedicated human trafficking website; www.blueblindfold.gov.ie.

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Notes for Editor in relation to child victims

Due to popular misconceptions about human trafficking, reporting of child victims has in the past been interpreted as indicative of organised criminal networks targeting individual children for sexual exploitation over an extended period of time and in multiple locations for commercial gain. This is not the profile of child victims of trafficking in Ireland, where the exploitation suffered is usually at the hands of one person, and does not involve a criminal network. Typically, the offences against children do not involve the transport of a child into or within the jurisdiction and the exploitation involved is not commercial.