



Public
Prosecution
Service

Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

[REDACTED]

FOI 580/24-25

9 May 2025

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 1 April 2025 in which you asked for information in relation to Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act creates rights of access for any person making a request for information to a public authority. The rights of access are twofold. First, to be informed by the public authority if it holds information of the description specified in the request, and if that is the case, secondly, to be provided with that information. These rights are subject to important limitations, which are designed to achieve a proper balance between the right to know and considerations of law and policy in the broader public interest.

You had asked the following:

"I am specifically seeking information about any formal JITs involving PPSNI and Romanian authorities (such as Romanian police or prosecutors) that were established during the period 2011–2023 to address offenses related to human trafficking or modern slavery. For each such Joint Investigation Team, please provide the following details, if available:

1. **JIT Name/Identifier:** *The name or designation of the joint investigation (including any operation name or code and the year it was initiated). For example, if the JIT was part of a named operation, please include that title and the year of formation.*
2. **PPSNI Units Involved:** *The specific unit(s), section(s), or division(s) within PPSNI that participated in the JIT or coordinated with it (for instance, any specialized teams or prosecutors dealing with human trafficking or organized crime within Northern Ireland).*

3. **Romanian Authorities Involved:** Identification of the Romanian counterpart agencies engaged in the JIT (such as the Romanian Police, DIICOT, or other law enforcement/prosecutorial bodies from Romania). Please include any known unit names or divisions on the Romanian side (for example, a particular county police unit or a directorate focused on trafficking).
4. **Type of Exploitation Addressed:** The category of exploitation that the JIT was investigating – for example, sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, forced begging, or other forms of modern slavery/human trafficking that were the focus of the operation.
5. **Operational Activities and Locations:** An overview of major operational steps taken under the JIT within Northern Ireland. This might include the number of arrests made, searches carried out, and victims identified or rescued as part of the joint operation. In particular, please note the locations in Northern Ireland where these activities took place (e.g. cities or towns where suspects were arrested or victims recovered) and any coordinated actions with Romanian authorities (such as simultaneous raids in Romania, if relevant).
6. **Legal Outcomes in NI:** The results of the JIT's efforts in terms of legal proceedings in Northern Ireland. This includes the number of individuals prosecuted by PPSNI as a result of the investigation, the number of convictions obtained, and any significant court rulings or sentences handed down (with reference to the year(s) those outcomes occurred). If possible, please specify which court or jurisdiction handled the cases (e.g. Crown Court locations) and any case references or noteworthy details from judgments.
7. **Source–Destination Links:** Any information on geographical links between Romania and Northern Ireland uncovered by the JIT. In particular, please provide details on the source regions in Romania (such as specific counties or cities) from which victims or suspects originated, and the corresponding destination areas in Northern Ireland where the trafficking or exploitation occurred. For example, if the JIT identified that victims were recruited in a certain region of Romania and then exploited in a particular area of Northern Ireland, please include that information.

This request aims to capture all joint investigations fitting the above description during the 2011–2023 timeframe. If no such JITs took place with Romanian authorities in that period under PPSNI's purview, please let me know."

In response to question 1 we can advise that JIT investigations are a matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and whilst PPS can confirm it is aware of several joint operations which were initiated and files submitted by PSNI to PPS

however we would refer you to the PSNI who would be best placed to assist you in respect of investigations.

In response to question 2, we can advise that Specialist Human Trafficking Prosecutors within the Serious Crime Unit (SCU)/ would be involved in JITs.

In response to question 3, the Romanian authorities involved are; Romanian Police, Prosecutors from the Directorate for Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT) and the Prosecution Office of the High Court of Cassation and Justice.

In response to question 4, we can advise that the types of exploitation addressed involved sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

In response to question 5, we would refer you to the PSNI in respect of arrests, searches and victims identified or rescued and whilst we can advise that there were various addresses in the Belfast area in which searches and arrests took place, the PPS does not hold this requested information therefore, in terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we can confirm that under Section 1(1)(a) of the Act, the PPS does not hold the requested information.

In response to question 6, we can advise that PPS are unable to determine whether decisions, outcomes and Court venue specifically arise from a JIT. Therefore, to answer your request accurately would require a manual search of all cases and would easily exceed the cost limit as defined in Section 12 of the Act which makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit; for the PPS as a Government Department the limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In response to question 7, we can advise that JIT investigations are a matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and whilst PPS can confirm it is aware of several joint operations we would refer you to the PSNI who would be best placed to assist you in respect of investigations.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review in accordance with our review procedure. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of this response and you can do so by writing to the Head of Policy and Information, Public Prosecution Service, Belfast Chambers, 93 Chichester Street, BELFAST, BT1 3JR or alternatively by sending an e-mail to info@ppsni.gov.uk. You should state clearly the grounds on which you are requesting the review.

Alternatively, you may wish to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Information Management Team
Public Prosecution Service