The digitalization of data collection and processing operations within the law enforcement sector has led to an increase of international data exchanges through INTERPOL’s channels. Increased data processing, while necessary to facilitate international police cooperation, also brings along an increased risk for infringements of individuals’ fundamental rights, such as privacy and data protection. To monitor and mitigate these risks, a Data Protection Officer was designated within INTERPOL in October 2015.

The INTERPOL Data Protection Office aims to strengthen the data protection culture within the Organization. With the cooperation of all the departments within the General Secretariat and the National Central Bureaus (NCBs), in particular via their Data Protection Officers, the Office promotes and facilitates INTERPOL’s data processing regime through the appropriate legal, technical and organizational channels. To achieve these objectives the Office focuses on:

- monitoring the lawfulness and compliance of the processing of data in the INTERPOL Information System with the Organization’s Constitution and Rules;
- recommending appropriate supervisory or corrective measures with the aim of improving internal control and risk management regarding data processing operations;
- liaising and collaborating with all Data Protection Officers designated at NCB level and at international partnership level;
- providing training and raising awareness of data processing issues among the GS, including the informing of staff of their rights and obligations with regard to privacy and data protection;
- liaising with the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL’s Files on data processing issues; and
- cooperating with Data Protection Officers of other institutions to exchange best practices.

In order to independently and effectively fulfil its role, the Office reports directly to the Secretary General.

Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants

Organized criminal groups take advantage of the most vulnerable people for profit, with a complete disregard for human safety and dignity. Human trafficking and migrant smuggling are low-risk, high profit criminal businesses that employ increasingly sophisticated methods and technological means to expand their reach.

While both crimes have clear distinctions, it is important to recognize that they can also be linked. Human trafficking occurs for specific purposes, such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminality, and organ removal among other forms of exploitation.

Migrant smugglers take advantage of people who want to leave their home countries to escape poverty, conflict, and crises or simply want to seek a better life. Even if irregular migrants generally enter into the journey voluntarily, they are often exposed to significant risks, including that of being trafficked, kidnapped or dying in transit to their destinations.

Human trafficking and migrant smuggling are also connected to other crimes including illicit money flows, corruption, document fraud, trafficking in illicit goods, cybercrime and terrorism.

We help law enforcement agencies around the world combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling through a variety of activities designed to increase their capacity to detect and investigate these crimes while protecting victims and vulnerable people.

Facilitating information sharing through the use of our secure global communications system, i24/7

Promoting the use of INTERPOL’s notices and diffusions system to locate missing persons, track criminals and suspects or collect information;

Providing access to our databases, especially those used to detect stolen, lost or fraudulent travel documents, and our forensic databases.
Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants

CRIMINAL ANALYSIS
We assess current threats and trends and produce operational and strategic analysis reports to support law enforcement decision making in INTERPOL member countries. The Odyssey Crime Analysis File is the basis for this work. This analysis file is a criminal intelligence database created for the collection of data from INTERPOL Member Countries and other sources to find links between different instances of crime.

TRANSNATIONAL OPERATIONS
We help member countries dismantle the criminal networks behind human trafficking and migrant smuggling through investigative support and global operations. Operations are preceded by training workshops to ensure that officers have the necessary skills to detect cases of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Operations often have a regional focus such as Turquesa across the Americas, WEKA in Africa, Storm Makers in Asia or cover multiple continents such as Liberterra. Between them, these operations identify hundreds of criminals and detect thousands of victims every year.

DEVELOPMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY
We work to increase the knowledge and skillsets of law enforcement officers to detect, prevent and investigate crimes as well as safeguard victims and migrants in vulnerable situations. This is done through national and regional needs assessments and the design and delivery of training courses.

COORDINATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIALIZED NETWORKS
Two specialized networks, comprised of experts from a variety of law enforcement agencies, provide advice and support to INTERPOL’s activities, facilitating the exchange of best practices and intelligence:
- INTERPOL’s Human Trafficking Expert Group (HTEG)
- INTERPOL’s Specialized Operational Network (ISON) against Migrant Smuggling

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
Effective law enforcement cannot happen in isolation, which is why we are constantly building new partnerships with a diverse range of regional policing bodies, international organizations, the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to share, analyze and disseminate relevant information.