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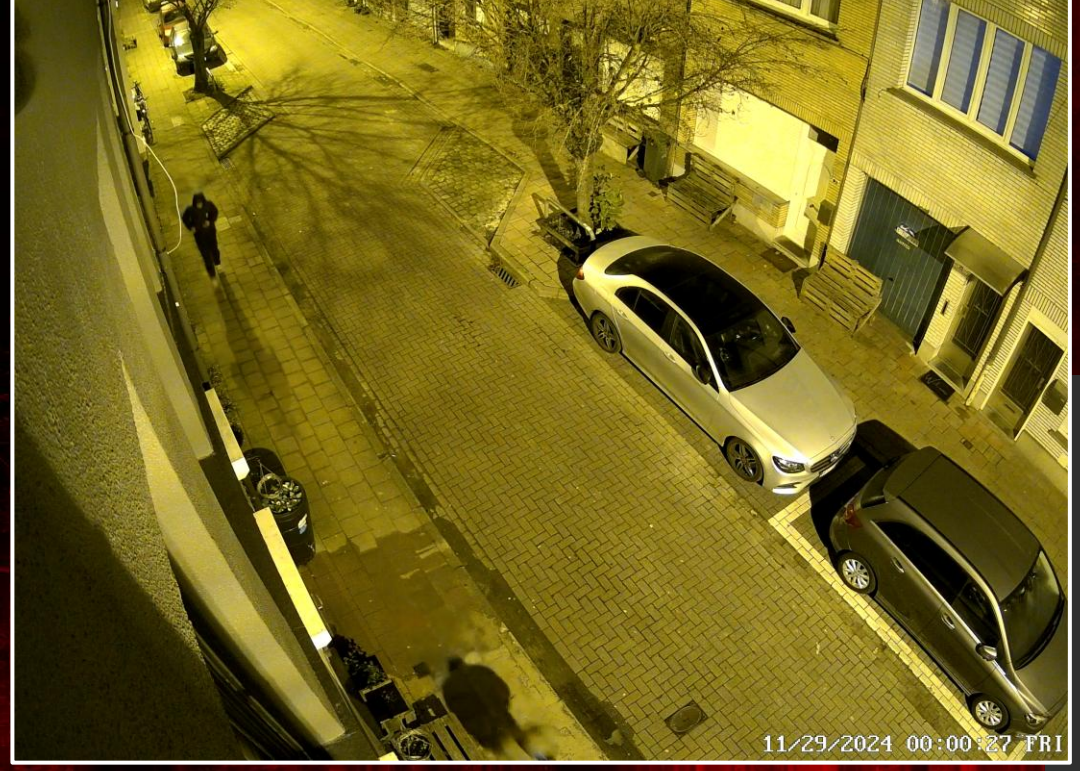
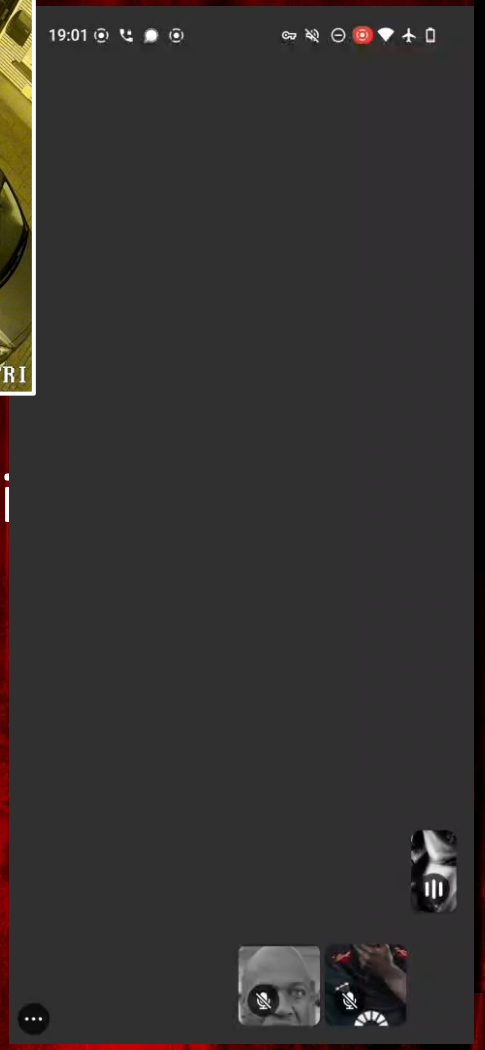
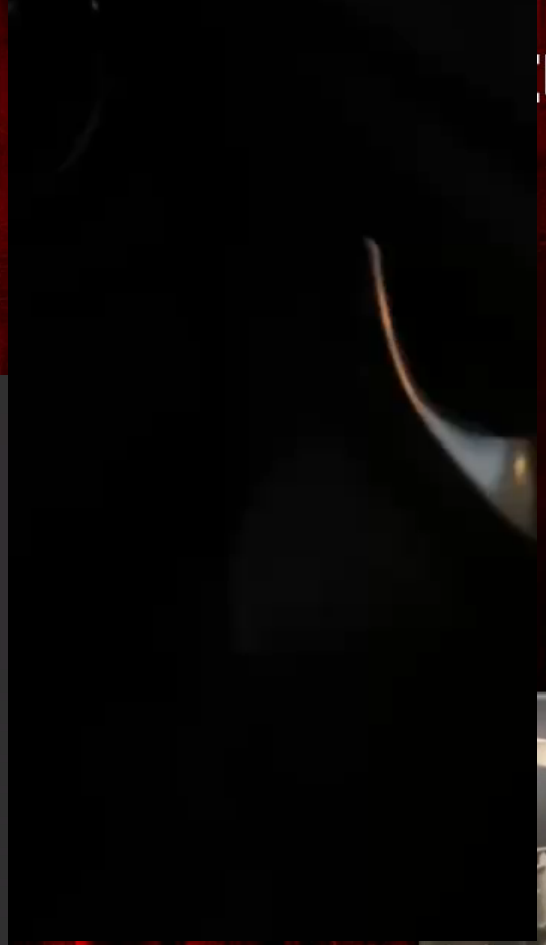
OTF **GRIMM**

Together against
Violence as a Service







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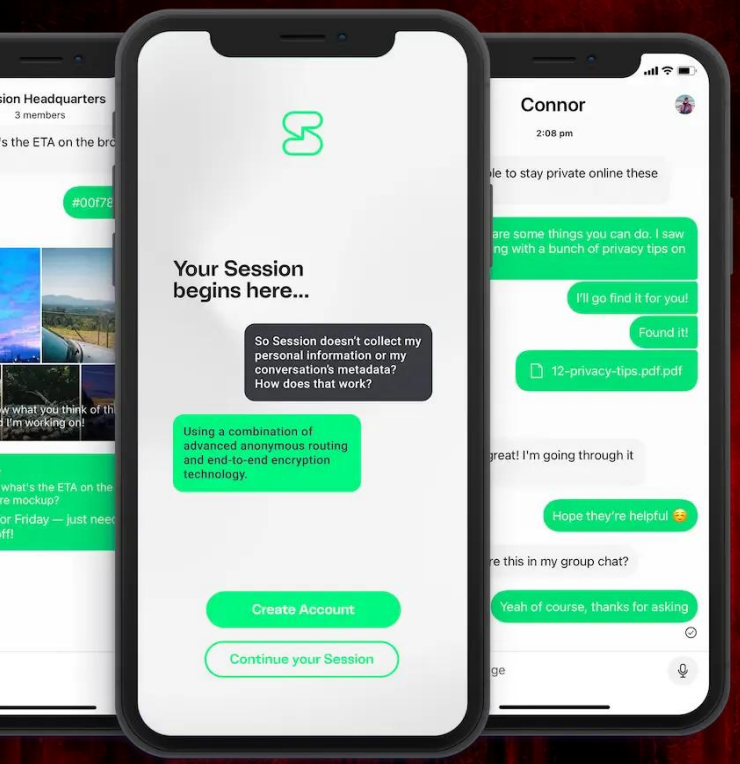


- The levels of violence in Europe increased dramaticly during 2022-2023 and Violence as ”crime as a service” became an new “Modus Operandi”, but the use of encrypted communication is not new – Enchro, Sky, Anom etc.

Shift from local problem with local recruitment to national and international reach. The purpose is not to recruit to a specific network – but to a specific crime!

Online behaviour and digital consumption of young people direct them towards applications and channels run by organized crime

Algorithms built in to the platforms amplify the effect

The numbers and variety of people on the digital platforms make the recruiters’ ”shotgun”-approach effective, with almost unlimited access to executors.

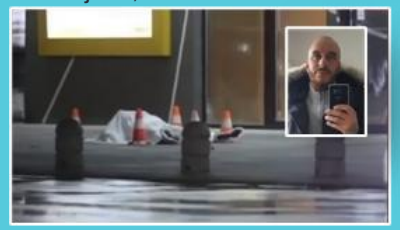
- Time from first contact to actual crime is extremely short, sometimes just hours

Europol Unclassified - Basic Protection Level

Manchester, UK 19/03/2025

Alphen aan den Rijn, NL, 16/01/2026

Sarajevo, Bosnia 31/10/2023



Vranje, Serbia, 11/05/2025

Oosterhout, NL, 28/03/2025

Iraq October 2023

Benalmadena, Spain 26/12/2024

Thailand 07/02/2026

Marbella, Spain 03/10/2025

Baghdad, Iraq 08/01/2024

Belgrade, 31/01/2026

Maslak, Istanbul 06/09/2023

Istanbul, Türkyie 17/03/2024

Istanbul, Türkiye 20/01/2025

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OTF GRIMM

Joined forces since 2025

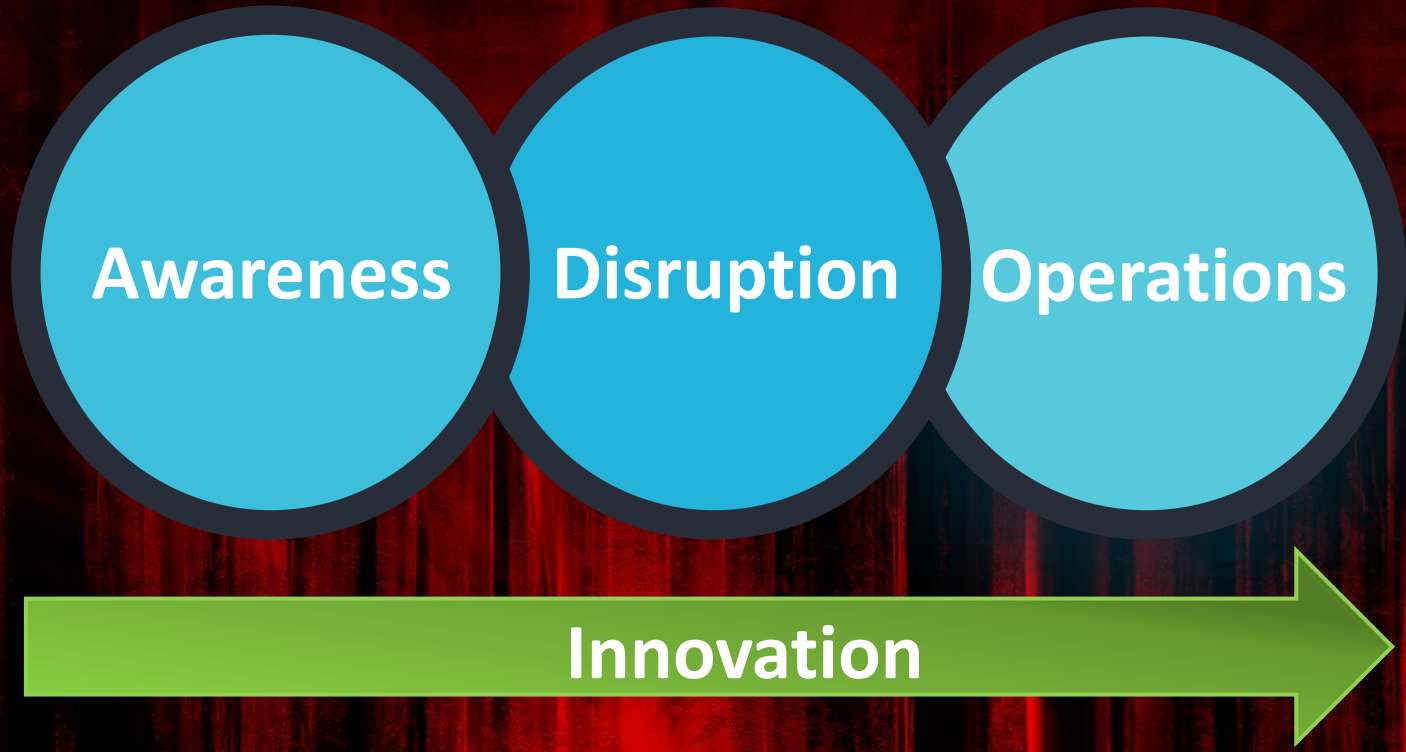
OTF GRIMM is the Taskforce that brings together law enforcement authorities from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom with Europol providing operational support, threat analysis and coordination.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

BELGIUM, DENMARK, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, ICELAND, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SPAIN, SWEDEN, THE UNITED KINGDOM

3 Step-Process

Joined Efforts to tackle Violence-as-a-Service



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The life of minors nowadays – the whole world in one klick!

Source: freepngim.com

Recruitment procedure

Polisen

Active on various social media platforms. Follow and interact with accounts or groups from a geographical or thematical common denominator.

INSTAGRAM

TIKTOK

SNAPCHAT

Shift to
applicat
groups. A

TELEGRA

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ation

WIRE

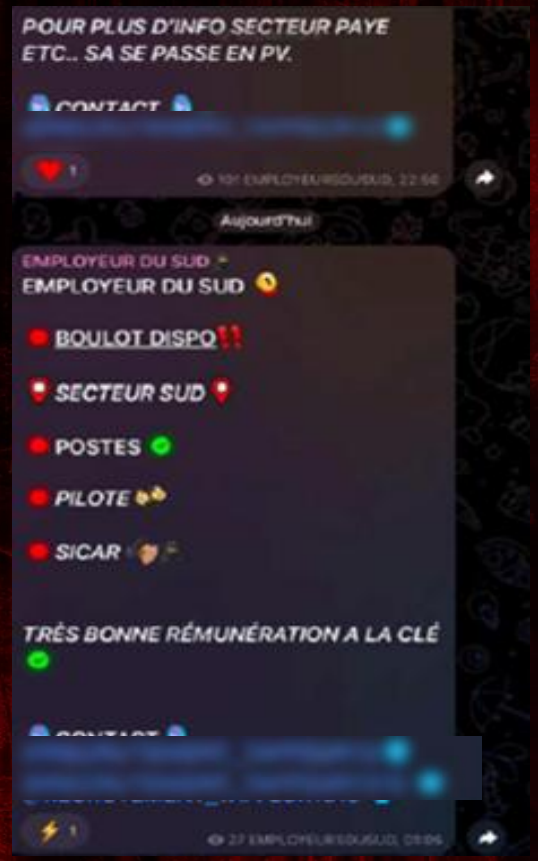
Planning and coordination almost exclusively on Signal.

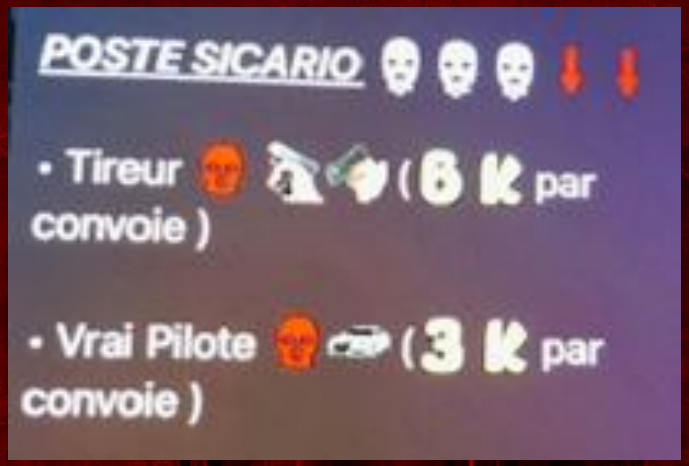
Information regarding target etc. shared partially as it develops.

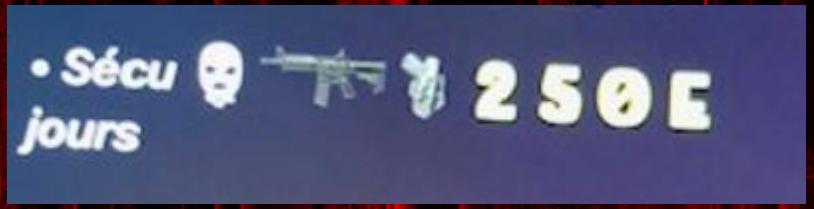
SIGNAL

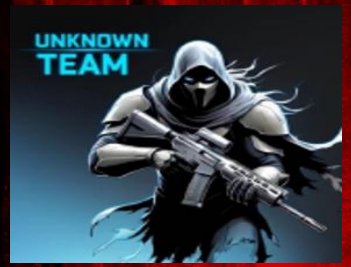
Polisen

Online recruitment - advertising









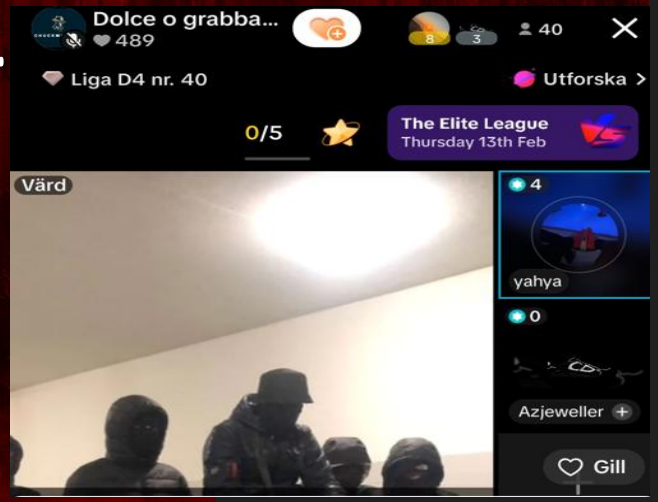
Online recruitment - advertising

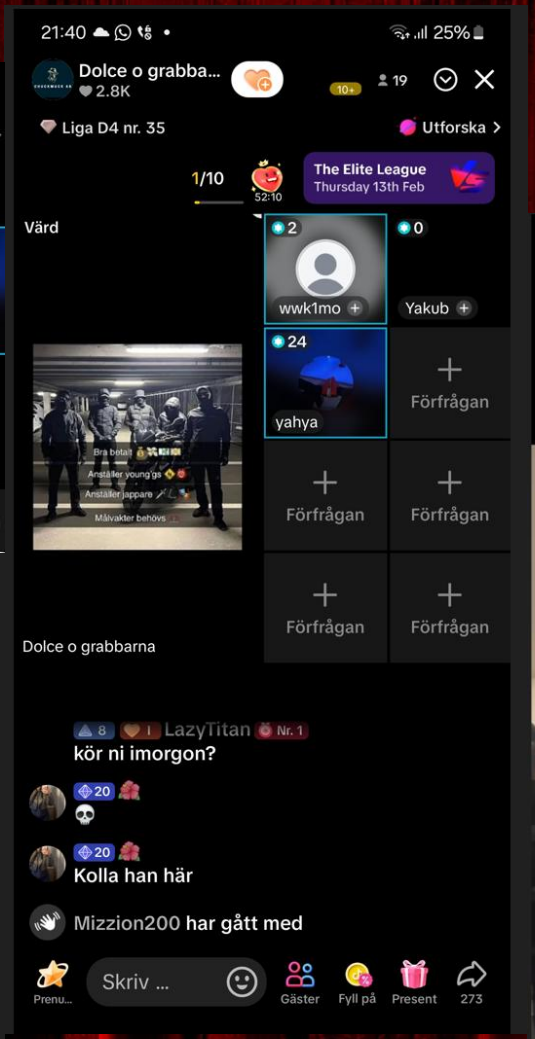
Now adays Instagram, SnapChat and TikTok are beeing used as well for adevertishing and recruitment to ”VaaS”-concept.

Information in ads with brief job description (murder, shooting, bombing etc.) geographic location (low resolution) or just ”death-lists” are published

More active recruiters posts several jobs in each ad. Further communication private through E2EE.

Polisen

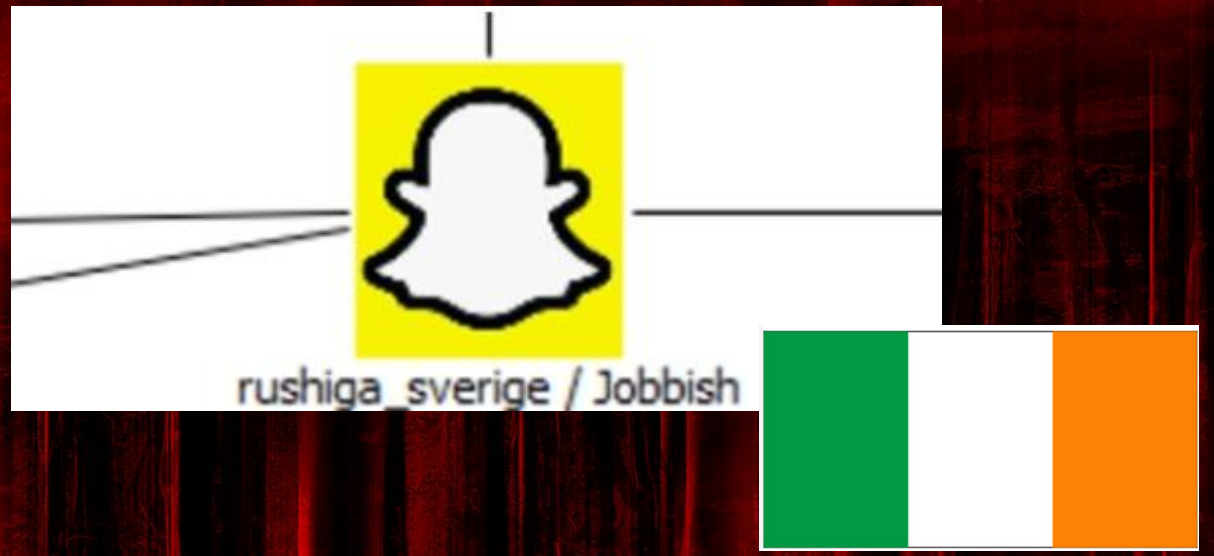




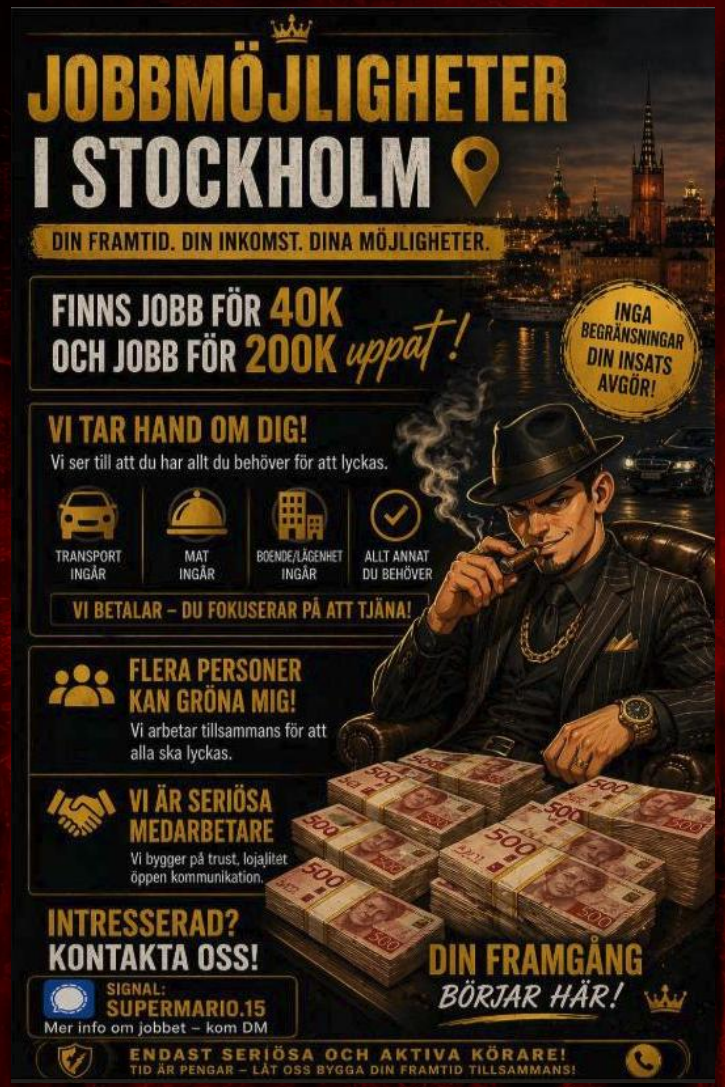
Online recruitment - advertising

Söker nån
som kan åka
till Grekland
för en rush,
betalar bra
para, o ja
står för
biljett o
boende!

Söker nån
lojal som kan
åka t
Grekland för
ett jobb, jag
står för
boende o pass
behöver ba
att du e redo
att åka o
stepppa upp,
belöning på
en miljon
kronor



Online recruitment - advertising



Source: freepngim.com

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Online recruitment – Clearing process

Requested to identify themselves by sending ID-videos or having a FaceTime-call

Two purposes – to avoid police interference and to put pressure on the executor to follow through with the assignment

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Online recruitment – Proof of crime

The executors are also often requested to document the act of violence.

Used to provide proof of the deed as well as part of the online war, being posted in various chat groups and affiliated channels to provoke and “mock” the opponent

Polisen

Polisen

What is Violence-as-a-service?

Violence-as-a-Service (or VaaS) is a new national and international criminal phenomenon. It refers to the outsourcing of violent acts to criminal service providers — often involving the use of minors/ young perpetrators to carry out threats, assaults, or killings for a fee. Said perpetrators are often recruited via online platforms or messenger services.

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OTF **GRIMM**
Factsheet

How to identify VaaS?

Recruitment Process

- The initial contact of the recruitment process, is usually carried out via openly accessible social media platforms (e.g. Snapchat via so-called stories, public Telegram groups/channels).
- Details of the order are sent via privacy-focused end-to-end encrypted messenger services (in particular Signal).
- Messages are sent using symbols and emojis in combination with locations (*see illustration*).
- The recruiters use emotional manipulation (grooming) and use of "gaming" elements (e.g. challenges) to encourage violence (this process is also known as "gamification").
- The perpetrator must send a picture of their ID card. This marks a point of no return for the perpetrators as they become more susceptible to blackmail.

Perpetrators

- Minors or young adults are often recruited as perpetrators. They usually have no experience in weapons or explosives which can lead to risk of over-explosion, mistakes in correct victim identification etc.
- Perpetrators generally have no connection to the victims or clients/instigators.

Modus Operandi

- The modus operandi includes a clear division of labour (e.g. spotter, driver, executor).
- Perpetrators film their crime via smartphones as a proof of their actions (e.g. sending to third parties via Snapchat and other platforms).
- Use of flash-bang kits, often manufactured in improvised laboratories using a mixture of fuel and category F3/F4 pyrotechnics.
- The crime scenes are often private addresses (e.g. apartment entrances) and restaurants.
- Victims are often criminally active themselves (e.g. drug scene).
- Possible forms of VaaS: (attempted) homicides, dangerous bodily injuries, shootings and arson/ explosive attacks on residential buildings (e.g.for the purpose of intimidation).

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What is the process followed to recruit minors/young adults?

The recruitment process usually happens in four stages, each led by different facilitators who can move between the stages:

Instigator

The person who orders and finances the crime, usually located abroad.

Recruiter

The person who recruits potential perpetrators via digital communication platforms, usually reachable 24/7.

Enabler

The person who ensures the conditions to carry out the act such as logistics, tools, contacts and financial conditions.

Perpetrator

The person who commits the crime, usually an inexperienced minor without a connection to a criminal group/ the recruiters.

What is Operational Taskforce (OTF) GRIMM?

Scan the QR code to get the latest news and updates from the OTF:

It is a taskforce tackling Violence-as-a-service and the recruitment of young perpetrators into serious and organised crime.

Target: Violence-as-a-service

Coordination: European Serious and Organised Crime Centre (ESOCC)

Partners: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Duration: April 2025 – Ongoing

EUROPOL UNCLASSIFIED - BASIC PROTECTION LEVEL

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What you can do

- Be present. Keep routines. Do things together. Don't wait until it's too late.
- Ask questions. Even if they push back.
- Get help early from teachers, social workers, and the police — you're not alone in this.

Approaching the conversation and what young people need to hear:

Let's be honest. Young people are being sold a dream that ends in prison — or worse. So here's the truth, no filters. Talk to them in a calm environment and tell them:

- It takes one message to ruin your life. One job. One post. One meet-up. What looks like easy money today could wreck everything tomorrow.
- You're tying yourself — and your family — to criminals. These people don't just disappear, especially when things go wrong. You bring their world into yours and your world into theirs.
- They won't do the dirty work themselves — that's what you're for. If you get caught, you're alone. If you get hurt, they won't come running.
- Law enforcement knows who they are and who they're talking to. You're not invisible — online or offline.
- There's no rewind button. Once you're in, it's not easy to get out. The streets, and these groups, don't forget.
  They are criminals. Why would you trust them to have your back?

- They call it fire and forget — because that's what you are to them. Just another name on a screen, one job away from being discarded.
- All this — for what? A new phone? A quick hit of cash? That's not power. That's bait.

Organised crime networks are increasingly recruiting young people to carry out violent offences.

Exploiting youth is a criminal countermeasure that creates a buffer between the criminal activity and the network's core members. This helps the core members remain anonymous and avoid law enforcement's radar. For criminal networks, youngsters are low-risk and disposable assets.

Recruited youth becomes trapped in a criminal lifestyle. Not only is it hard for them to break free, but they will often drag people in their environment into the same illicit orbit.

What parents need to watch for:

Organised crime starts at home — not with violence, but with subtle changes. Here's what to look out for:

- They've started using encrypted messaging apps. Ask why. What do they need to hide?
- They're talking differently. New opinions, new values — sometimes suddenly. Who are they listening to?
- They're lying more. Or just avoiding questions altogether.
- They've got new friends. Especially older youth or adults you've never met.
- They've got new stuff. Clothes, tech, money — but no explanation as to where it came from.
- They've stopped asking for money. But they seem to have plenty. That's not independence — that's a red flag.
- They're pulling away from normal life. Skipping school. Avoiding routines. Less interest in old friends or hobbies.

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https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-and-innovation/public-awareness-and-prevention-guides/stop-criminal-networks-recruiting-youngsters

Violence as a service: criminals hire criminals

Criminals violently settle drug trade dispute with explosive attacks and kidnappings

Eight countries launch Operational Taskforce to tackle violence-as-a-service

Organised crime is turning to youth for violence-on-demand

Teenagers recruited as hitmen: Denmark and Sweden strike back at violence-as-a-service

Iceland is latest country to join Europol's Operational Taskforce GRIMM

Politie arresteert Zweedse schutters voor drievoudige liquidatie in Oosterhout

Andy Kraag
Head of Europol's European Serious Organised Crime Centre

Teenagers being paid to pull the trigger — this is what organised crime looks like in 2025. We are not dealing with petty street crime. This is calculated outsourcing of murder by criminal networks that treat human lives as disposable assets. Through Europol's OTF GRIMM, law enforcement is tracking down the masterminds and dismantling the infrastructure they hide behind. There is no safe haven — online or offline — for those who trade in violence.

Torben Svarrer
Chief Police Inspector at the Danish National Special Crime Unit

We are stepping up our cooperation across the Nordic countries and through OTF GRIMM. We know what these criminal networks are doing, and we are determined to prevent these attacks. Let this serve as a warning to young people approached on social media with promises of easy money: our investigations show the reality is far less lucrative than promised, and the consequences can be severe.

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VCO-DETECT

(Violent-Content-Online)

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