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## **Inter-Organizational Relations in Anti-Trafficking Operations: The EU-UNODC Case**

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*The EU-UNODC Case*

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Trafficking in human beings (THB) is a crime. It is an infamous practice that stems from a long history of slavery and exploitation but is nonetheless more current than ever as a significant humanitarian concern (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2012). It is included as part of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) in several of its goals and indicators, which take into consideration various features of modern slavery and trafficking (Renzikowski, 2018). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has pledged to monitor the implementation of the SDGs goals in the domain of THB. These include: SDG 5.2 tackling sexual exploitation of women and girls, Goal 8.7 on forced and child labor, goal 16.2 on the trafficking of children, and goal 16.4 goal dealing with organized crime (UNODC, 2016). Conventionally, human trafficking is recognized as a severe unlawful activity, which involves human rights violations and exploitation, and also usually entailing ramifications in other major criminal enterprises such as serious organized crime (Winterdyk, 2020). It is also an exceedingly researched field due to its historical and societal relevance, its impact on state, society, and individuals, as well as its national and transnational nature. Many scholars study trafficking in human beings (THB) as the modern manifestation of slavery, hence analyzing it through the lenses of the legacy of historical slavery and its abolition (Allain, 2018; Allain, 2019; Armstrong, 2020; Wilkins, 2020). However, with the advent of modern conflicts, technology, and hybrid threats, the field of human trafficking has dramatically drifted away from the traditional understanding of slavery. In fact, it is pivotal to understand that THB is a highly complex and dynamic phenomenon that finds resonance in many spheres of research, ranging from history to law and from security to social studies.

Although having been criminalized internationally for the past 20 years by 147 states of the world who have ratified the UN *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, more commonly known as the Palermo protocol, THB is very much present in global supply chains and migration paths worldwide. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons of 2018, global trends of human trafficking have increased drastically as the authorities' capacity to detect, report and convict trafficking rings has also expanded. Due to the greater awareness that the phenomenon has gained, especially in the last decade, it is possible to observe a surge of attention by international organizations and national agencies in the fight against human trafficking. Several international, supranational, and national actors such as organizations, agencies, departments, and offices carry out anti-trafficking operations.

Anti-trafficking operations are, in fact, part of several organizations' humanitarian efforts, usually carried out as part of or in parallel with interventions such as peacekeeping operations, especially following the introduction of the responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine in humanitarianism (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2004; UNODC, 2018b). All of the players in the fight against human trafficking indeed have crucial roles globally; however, it is also essential to explore such actors' efforts and interactions from an organizational perspective. As a matter of fact, there is widespread criticism of the abundance of organizations dealing with peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, which can be "*duplicating efforts or even working at cross purposes, sometimes with limited knowledge of each other's activities*" (Paris, 2009, p.53). Thus, it is imperative to grasp whether the present plethora of organizations and agencies, ease or rather burden the achieving of their final shared goal.

This thesis seeks to analyze the inter-organizational relations (IOR) of international agencies that carry out anti-trafficking operations in order to understand their interaction. This thesis aims to answer the following research question: "*What is the state of the EU's relations with the UNODC in the field of human trafficking?*". As suggested by the question, the focus of IOR interaction will be on two actors: the EU and the UNODC. This is due to the fact that much research has been carried out on IOR, however, the study of EU-UNODC relations, their partnerships and cooperation are understudied. Some of the sub questions that will be investigated in this research are:

1. What is the evolution of their relations in the field of anti-trafficking?
2. What is the nature of their interaction?
3. Why do they cooperate in the first place?
4. How is their partnership formalized?
5. How is it implemented in practice?
6. How can it be improved?

Uncovering and evaluating the dynamics of their interaction, especially in the field of human trafficking, will allow for a better understanding of their functioning.

## **1.1 Human Trafficking: a Definition and its Historical Genealogy**

The trafficking of human beings is a highly complex phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of policy fields and theories, hence making it complicated to give a comprehensive definition of the concept. As a matter of fact, an internationally agreed legal definition of THB exists and is provided by the UN, yet it is subject to criticism as the phenomenon can be looked

at from different lenses, including as a form of modern slavery. It can also be divided into three main categories: sex trade, forced labor, and domestic servitude. The United Nations defines the concept as it follows:

*““Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.*<sup>1</sup>

As this definition explains, THB engages in many levels, from the recruitment until the actual exploitation of individuals, with both accountability and involvement of the perpetrator rising on each level (Renzikowski, 2018). The definitions adopted by the European Union in *The Preamble to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human* and the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive are complementary to the UN's one, marking THB as a violation of fundamental human rights and a serious crime. However, this Protocol only delineated what THB entails, whereas the punishment of the crime is solely an issue of national criminal law. This shows how an international definition is insufficient to tackle the issue and its legal repercussions (Renzikowski, 2018). In fact, this definition is not free from criticism. It has been claimed that this explanation of THB, concocted in 2000, and reconfirmed in 2015, does not include newer types of exploitation (Allain, 2019).

THB can distinctly be placed in a specific historical and social context, with delineated origins and push and pull factors. Nevertheless, such an elaborate definition of the phenomenon would facilitate the perpetrators' punishment and conviction by clearing several legal "grey zones". Generally, the nature of human trafficking is bestowed to the legacies of historical slavery to the extent that the UN Palermo Protocol even includes slavery in the definition of THB. Moreover, the two concepts - human trafficking and slavery - are often used as synonyms or generic terms, although they only come together in the Palermo Protocol (Allain, 2018). While the UN acknowledges the dynamic nature of the phenomenon of slavery and its evolving character throughout history, traditional slavery originated in the Atlantic Slave Trade, an *"industrial-scale enslavement and transportation, over a 350- year period, of more than 12.5 million African men, women, and children, destined to feed the New World plantations with labour"* (Allain, 2018, p.3). Transatlantic slavery only began its downfall with the advent of

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol.

the 20th century, until the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, when slavery became forbidden in all its forms.

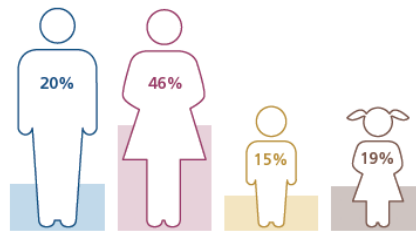
Contrarily to transatlantic slavery, THB finds its roots in 'White Slave Traffic', a phenomenon that originated towards the end of the 19th century in Europe and entailed the traffic of women and girls that were forced into prostitution from east to west/central Europe. Some scholars claim that this phenomenon happened in reaction to the Age of Steam when women were allowed to travel without a chaperone in the Victorian Age (Allain, 2018). Nevertheless, there is an element of discrimination towards more susceptible and vulnerable members of society in this newer version of slavery, reflecting the broader social and political reality of that time (Wilkins, 2020). Similarly to the end of the 19th century, most victims of human trafficking are women and children, in most cases coming from environments lacking opportunities and with a low quality of life. These types of environments characterized by poverty, economic crises, lack of education, instability, inequality, and conflicts are, in fact, categorized as risk (or push) factors for THB since they influence people into thinking that positive changes are improbable (Winterdyk, 2020). It is crucial to consider that because of the role that traffickers play in these poor situations, pull factors also exist. As a matter of fact, perpetrators take advantage of these environments in order to mislead, compel and then victimize individuals that, due to their poor conditions and a lack of awareness, trust traffickers into being recruited (Winterdyk, 2020).

## **1.2 Anti-THB Efforts: from Legislation to Action**

The fight against human trafficking is currently one of the main fields of action that most international law enforcement and peacekeeping organizations and national governments prioritize. For instance, the UN has several dedicated offices, such as the UNODC or the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, whose mandate includes the dealing with anti-THB operation and legislation. Other than UN dedicated offices, among others, essential players are Interpol and the EU through Europol and Frontex (Europol, 2018; Interpol, 2020). Generally speaking, the response of such organizations and agencies to THB can be condensed in two levels: the legal level, which aims at prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of human trafficking through transnational criminal law and the promotion of human rights; and the operational level, more law-enforcement focused, based on existing legislation, such as the Palermo Protocol, which seeks to suppress crime and dismantle human trafficking rings (Kaye et al., 2020).



Global trends of human trafficking have determined that the most victimized groups are women and girls (Figure 1), as trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most detected form of human trafficking (UNODC, 2021a).

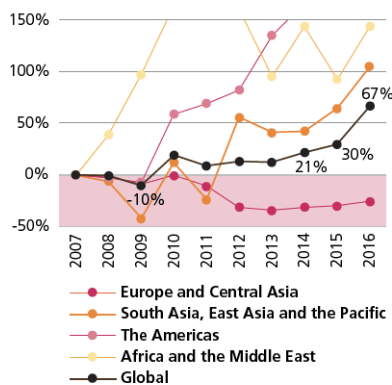


Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Figure 1**

Furthermore, UNODC data gives an interesting geographical overview where THB instances are most present and where most traffickers have been convicted since 2007 (Figure 2). If traditionally the region that includes Africa and the Middle East has always been the one where most THB would occur, a significant spike of convictions has been recorded in the Americas in recent years. The graph clearly shows how the most susceptible regions to THB are the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East and South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific (UNODC, 2018b).

Trends in the number of people convicted of trafficking in persons since 2007, globally and by region, 2007-2016



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

**Figure 2**

According to Interpol, only in 2018 over 600 people out of which nearly 100 children have been rescued thanks to their anti-trafficking operations. While some previous activity also included instances of anti-trafficking, Interpol's dedicated operations only began in full force in 2014. Such undertakings include the targeting perpetrators of illegal child labor, migrant smugglers, sexual exploitation, and forced begging. Since 2014, anti-trafficking operations have been carried out mainly in West and Central Africa, in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire,

Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sudan, and Senegal; but also in the Americas, where Interpol intervened against THB in the Caribbean, Central and South America (Interpol, 2020). Another crucial player in anti-THB operations is Europol, whose efforts mainly focus on THB linked to serious organized crime. Over the course of two years (2015-2017), Europol has concentrated on the analysis of trafficking networks involving minor victims, identifying over 985 victims and 3642 suspects in Europe but also several other regions of the world such as North Africa and the Middle East as well as South and East Asia (Europol, 2018). Thus, it is clear how THB is a widely spread national and transnational phenomenon that needs attention from law enforcement and peacekeeping organizations globally.

### **1.3 Approach and Case Study**

In academic scholarship, the first research on organizational studies emerged in the 1960s, especially in the field of management and administration. With a growing interest in policy and empirical research, organizational theories and the study of relations between organizations expanded into social studies and political science between the 70s and the 90s (Koops and Biermann, 2016). Since then, the field has significantly developed into many other spheres of interest, and the study of IORs has grown substantially.

Although inquiries on IOR in world politics have been abundantly carried out in the academic field, research on the state of relations between the UNODC and the EU has been neglected, thus motivating the choice of actors for this study. Among the domains of cooperation between the UNODC and the EU, THB and the management of human smuggling in the context of migration are the most significant areas. The setting and focus of this thesis will hence be on their partnership in anti-human trafficking operations from 2010 to 2020.

The process of analysis that this thesis will follow in order to evaluate the state of EU-UNODC interaction in the field of THB will be based on the application of a set of theories or IOR on an empirical case study. To begin with, the organizational framework will be examined and elements of organizational interaction will be identified. These elements and dynamics will thus serve as a base of theories that will be applied to the case study of this research.

### **1.4 Overview of Chapters**

As mentioned above, this thesis seeks to study the interaction of organizations involved in the fight against human trafficking. In the following chapters, the phenomenon of THB briefly introduced previously, will be placed in a broader context of the interplay between agencies.

Firstly, in *Chapter 2* literature on organizational studies and the elements of organizational interaction will be presented as a base for the methodology. Following that, scholarship on the concept of multi-level governance will be accompanied by the essential IOR concepts of cooperation and rivalry. *Chapter 3* will serve as the methodology of the paper, where the research question will be explained and elements and dynamics of IOR will be operationalized. In *Chapter 4* an overview on the actors and their approaches to THB will be presented. Furthermore, the evolution of EU-UNODC relations will be provided through an historical analysis. *Chapter 5* will give a general description of EU-UNODC joint approaches to THB, and following that will apply the theories and concepts explained in the literature review and methodology to the case study, in order to evaluate the state of interaction. Finally, *Chapter 6* will conclude the thesis with a presentation of findings and outcomes of the research and a conclusion that will wrap up the paper.

## **Chapter II: Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Inter-Organizational Relations: an Organizational Framework**

#### *Organizational Studies*

Organizational studies date back to the 1960s to research management and administration domains to understand organizational action and increase its effectiveness fully. In his book, Thompson (1967) presents organizations as complex entities carrying out instrumental activities and generally contained in an extensive range of subjects and domains. Regardless of the field in which they are placed, he delineates organizations as tools for accomplishing goals through outlined and regulated activities. As Thompson discusses, a vital limit to organizational action is rationality, yet the main difficulty that complex organizations face is uncertainty. According to him, uncertainty is caused by environments and technologies, and many organizations manage it by isolating it to a specific section to allow the rest to run under near certainty settings (Thompson, 1967). Van de Ven and Delbecq (1976) also discussed the challenge of uncertainty in their research on the collaboration between organizations. As they state, there is a call for cooperation in all organizations due to the shared sets of duties and tasks in which different sections take part. Their research is based on collaborations between roles, units, and departments within an organization in order to study the extent to which uncertainty, linkage, and unit size change, and it is one of the first investigations in the relational side of organizational studies that have been carried out (Van de Ven and Delbecq, 1976).

The scholarly debate on collaboration in the organizational field is limited to the dynamics within a said organization and between different ones. Evan (1965) examines intra-organizational dynamics in social sciences as one of the field's pioneers due to the extensive disregard for these phenomena in academia. According to him, the reasons why the study of inter-organizational relations has been neglected are two. The first one concerns the field's incredible complexity due to its classification as part of boundary-relations dynamics in social systems, known by scholars for the convoluted tendency. The second is a more historical reason that finds its roots in Weberian theory and Taylorism. As a matter of fact, Evan claims that IORs have been overlooked because early theories on bureaucracy and organizations mainly focused on internal relations between processes such as authority or guidelines but also between personnel, rather than on external ones. The disregard for IORs is also recorded 20 years later by Galaskiewicz (1985), whose work highlights the lack of a theory of inter-

organizational relations. However, his analysis of IOR's roots is based on different theories than the ones proposed by Evan. In fact, he discusses the concept of uncertainty, emerged in early organizational research, and underlines the importance of the power dependency theory when dealing with IOR, especially in resource allocation. Galaskiewicz's primary focus when studying IOR is the role of power and the dependency dynamics (or independence) that various organizations have for others (Galaskiewicz, 1985).

The definition of inter-organizational relations and the field's perception throughout the years has also seen a shift. In the mid-60s, Evan (1965) presented the field of IOR through the "role-set" concept developed by Merton (1957). Merton developed the "role-set" concept to analyze how people occupying a particular status are then involved by virtue in said status's role relationships (Merton, 1957). Evan used this notion to create his own, which he called "organization-set", in order to study the status of organizations and, consequently, their interaction, in the broader environment. Through this approach, he identified several practices of IOR, some of which are then presented again by future scholars and some of which are still actual to this day: *"allocation of resources to public relations; co-optation of personnel of environing organizations into leadership positions in order to reduce the threat they might otherwise pose; acquisition of and merging with competitors; use of espionage against competitors; and recourse to litigation, arbitration and mediation to resolve inter-organizational disputes"* (Evan, 1965, p.B-218). Galaskiewicz (1985) adopts a very different view on IOR than Evan's as he places organizations in a much more competitive and autonomous context, in which there is a continuous strive for independence. His research identifies three different realms of IOR: the resource realm, in which he places both resource procurement and resource allocation; the realm of political advocacy and collectivity; and the realm of legitimization. Lastly, his analysis concludes with the idea that experts in charge of organizations actually do not govern them as they are under the authority of laws and norms that dictate society at large (Galaskiewicz, 1985).

For the purpose of this paper, it is crucial to look at IOR in a more modern environment, focused on the role of international organizations (IOs) in world politics and international relations. The researcher that first developed IOR studies in the context of IR is Jönsson (1986), whose inquiry is based on the proliferation and expansion of international organizations as well as their range of action. According to Jönsson, IOs at the time were understudied due to the alleged chaotic setting in which they were established. He continues by claiming that they can instead be examined in the same way as national organizations due to the rise of a more 'organizational society' (Jönsson, 1986, p.40). Jönsson claims that organizational theories most

relevant to the field of IOs are the ones dealing with the relationships between organizations that have similar environments and goals (Jönsson, 1986). Thus, especially in the realm of politics and IR, the proliferation of IOs entailed the emergence of IOR. In a more recent publication, Koops and Biermann (2016) define the public or private interaction between IOs, in dyads, triads, or networks, as 'Inter-organizationalism' so the field that studies "*character, pattern, origins, rationale, and consequences of such relationships [...]. Processes and dynamics of achieving 'policy coordination' between organizations in order to tackle a particular problem in world politics more effectively*" (Koops and Biermann, 2016, p.4). Their research also explores all types and features of IOR, starting with other ways in which they can also be referred to: partnerships, inter-agency relations, alliances, joint ventures, or networks. They highlight that interaction can occur at different levels (national or international) or across levels; it can be formal or informal, direct or indirect, or both. According to Koops and Biermann, the lack of a power structure and authority is a significant element of IOR, and, mostly due to the open character of IOs, their interplay is rooted and affected by global shifts (Koops and Biermann, 2016).

### ***Dimensions of Interaction***

As outlined in the previous section, the interplay between organizations can occur in different ways, dynamics, and places. It is hence challenging for scientists and scholars to study, classify, and record such interactions as well as to operationalize them for future research. The following sections will review the existing literature on organizational features of interaction, and their indicators, as proposed by Aldrich (1979) and Marrett (1971). These elements are: formalization, intensity, symmetry (or reciprocity), and standardization.

#### ***Formalization***

According to Aldrich (1979), formalization is a crucial feature for balance and cohesion in traditional bureaucracy and bureaucratic structures. More so in IORs, where the stipulation of agreements and negotiations are a daily occurrence. As a matter of fact, in order to distinguish between different forms of collaboration - formal, informal, decentralized - formalization is a crucial feature (Dijkstra, 2016). Marrett (1971) highlights the importance of formalization as a way to measure how evident the relations between organizations are. As she discusses, informal processes are often preferred due to the lower degree of interdependence they call for, but also since formal mechanisms can be seen as a way to lower the autonomy of organizations (Marrett, 1971). The indicators that are used by scholars to measure formalization in inter-organizational

relations are two: the extent to which formalization is present in accords between organizations and the extent to which a formal coordinating figure exists (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

According to Aldrich, the first important factor - the extent to which formalization is present in accords between organizations - aims at measuring whether agreements between organizations are officially acknowledged and legally administered. For instance, he refers to the business domain, where organizations interact through contracts (Aldrich, 1979). Dijkstra (2016) places this indicator in the context of modern IOs and their interaction. As he claims, formal accords between IOs are very frequent, and there are many kinds of such agreements, which determine the degree of formalization: *"Some agreements are binding, others are not. Some outline vague principles and intentions, while others precisely define rules. The compliance with agreements may be subject to international arbitration or not."* (Dijkstra, 2016, p.101).

The second factor - the extent to which a formal coordinating figure exists - also is an effective way to measure how formalized existing interaction processes are. According to Marrett, organizations may be connected through: a third party, a shared office, or a specific unit tasked with the collaboration between organizations. As she claims, the study of the structure of interaction allows for evaluating the degree of mediation and, hence, the quantification of formalization in an exchange between organizations (Marrett, 1971). Aldrich adds that by including a third party, the nature of interaction processes changes as the state's role diminishes, and new shares, ethics, and limitations are included in the relationship (Aldrich, 1979). Lastly, Dijkstra discusses the role of organizational arrangements such as joint meetings and liaison offices in the IOR facilitation. As he states, main IOs have specific offices that deal with third organizations, becoming thus the leading external relation site for inter-organizational collaboration. Finally, another way that IOs adopt to facilitate collaboration is to establish permanent missions or stations close to other IOs or in locations where administrative bodies are present (Dijkstra, 2016).

### *Intensity*

When discussing organizational relations, it is crucial to determine their intensity. As Dijkstra claims, measuring intensity gives an idea of the actual degree of significance that IORs have (Dijkstra, 2016). Marrett describes intensity as the type and extent to which organizations collaborate. As she discusses, a lower degree of intensity would entail small meetings where the staff of various organizations only familiarizes themselves with one another, whereas a

higher degree would entail joint sessions between organizations where scopes and obligations are debated (Marrett, 1971). Aldrich adds by including a more economical side of intensity by referring to the relations between organizations as 'transactions' and dealing with a possible exchange between organizations in terms of 'investment' (Aldrich, 1979). The indicators used by scholars to measure intensity are two: the number of invested resources and the frequency of interaction (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

The first indicator - the number of invested resources - is very much straightforward. Aldrich defines it as the amount of resources pledged to the interaction between two or more organizations. He continues by underlining the difficulty in measuring resource flows in the public sector due to its not only monetary nature (Aldrich, 1979). Dijkstra also acknowledges the difficulty in determining a tangible unit to measure resources and highlights the importance of organizations' scope in intensity (Dijkstra, 2016). However, a distinction between amount and frequency is necessary as fewer resources can be invested, but in a more systematic manner, as well as more but less substantial resources can be involved (Marret, 1971).

Marrett claimed that the second indicator - frequency of interaction - is fundamental in determining the actual quantity and the quality of resources invested. Nevertheless, Aldrich adds that the nature of the investment and the level at which it happens also need to be considered. This is because: *"formalization of relations between agencies leads to more frequent interaction and frequent interaction is likely to lead to further efforts towards formalizing relations"* (Aldrich, 1979, p.275). Dijkstra analyzes frequency through the number of meetings between IOs, but mainly between secretariats since, as he claims, any level of IOs has regular contact with the secretariat. He includes all sorts of communication with a contact, ranging from informal kinds (emails or phone calls) to more formal ones (such as meetings or joint activities). However, he identifies a problem with this indicator as, on the one hand, it does give a complete view on interaction, yet it completely disregards the domain of power relations between IOs (Dijkstra, 2016). Lastly, Marrett discusses the relevance of resource investment and frequency in IOR due to the higher dependency those create between organizations and their survival (Marrett, 1971).

### *Symmetry*

The third factor is symmetry, also known as reciprocity by older literature, and as Aldrich states, it is a significant part of an exchange of resources as it allows for an assessment of power relations (Aldrich, 1979). Marrett adds that measuring symmetry is necessary as not all exchanges are equal, and one organization could be more influential than the others, thus



ending up dictating the rules of the exchange. Furthermore, as she discusses, the study of reciprocity also allows for a deeper understanding of the direction of interaction, which can be one-sided, mutual, or collective (Marrett, 1971). All in all, as Dijkstra states, this dimension has the role of investigating power structures in IOR, whether the relations are between equals and whether this equality can also be observed in decision-making processes (Dijkstra, 2016). The indicators used by scholars to measure symmetry are two: the extent to which reciprocity takes place in resource exchanges and the extent to which organizations have sovereign parity (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

Assessing reciprocity in resource exchanges is the easiest way to understand how balanced a relationship between two or more organizations is. This is because, as Marrett claims, recognizing whether a flow of resources is mutual can be done through the identification of specific elements such as the return of assistance, services, fame, personnel, funds, and customers (Marrett, 1971). Despite what Marrett states, Aldrich identifies several difficulties in assessing symmetry, especially in the public sphere, due to the lack of a common value for exchanged resources. He thus discusses this indicator in terms of mutual benefit and describes an equal exchange in the public sector as 'problematic' (Aldrich, 1979). When discussing the difficulty in operationalizing resource exchanges, Dijkstra attempts at listing exchanges that take place between IOs, such as: military assets, pieces of intelligence and information, as well as economic or scientific support. In addition, Dijkstra highlights the high degree of inequality in IOs where, for instance, NATO has the upper hand on the EU due to the EU's practice to call for NATO's military when in need. However, this inequality applies to IOs in Dijkstra's opinion and national governments, often relying on IOs cooperation and assets (Dijkstra, 2016). Hence, an important link here is made with the resource dependency theory in organizational studies as well as the impact it has on power relations.

According to Aldrich, the second indicator for symmetry - the extent to which organizations have sovereign parity - serves as a way to understand if and how the conditions of exchange are jointly recognized and equally carried out. He continues by claiming that the purpose of measuring this indicator is to understand the degree and the circumstances of influence and dependency in formal and informal interactions (Aldrich, 1979). Dijkstra frames the discussion in terms of consent, so discussing the extent to which decision-making takes place at the individual or the collective level, entailing power-related matters such as the power to veto decisions or the power to outvote issues. Moreover, in his research, he understands symmetry as a highly political issue between IOs (Dijkstra, 2016). To conclude, Marrett also examines the dynamics and terms of a resource exchange through this indicator, yet she adds

a third indicator into the equation: power balance, which, as she states, is very difficult to assess (Marrett, 1971).

### *Standardization*

The last element presented is standardization, and it is necessary in organizational exchanges in order to give a common interpretation of exchanges and processes of interaction. It is vital to differentiate standardization from formalization as an overlap between the two concepts may exist. Aldrich discusses standardization as a notion drawn from the study of bureaucracy and traditional bureaucratic structures (Aldrich, 1979). Whereas Marrett clearly differentiates standardization from formalization by highlighting its operational nature: if an arrangement between organizations is formalized, standardization is needed to operationalize the exchange. In other words, formalization is not sufficient in the stipulation of an agreement if the units and processes of this agreement are not defined through standardization and, in the same way, standardization is also insufficient without a formal accord (Marrett, 1971; Dijkstra, 2016). The indicators that are used by scholars to measure standardization are two: the extent to which the units of exchange are delineated, and the extent to which rules and procedures for interaction are fixed (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

As Aldrich and Marrett state, the necessity of defining units of exchange is very unequivocal: a standardized unit of interaction results in strengthened and more uniformed procedures and, as a consequence, more frequent exchanges (Aldrich, 1979; Marrett, 1971). Aldrich adds that ambiguous or nonexistent standardization results in uncertainty, thus impacting organizational decision-making processes and power relations (Aldrich, 1979). According to Dijkstra, unit standardization is especially necessary for exchanges between IOs as it is a common concern of field practitioners. This is due to the fact that IOs often deal with ambiguous terms such as 'human rights' or 'terrorism' when discussing common goals or joint ventures objectives. Hence, the ambiguity of said terms only finds a solution in the standardization of units (Dijkstra, 2016).

Successively, Marrett claims that precisely as unit standardization is necessary for organizational exchanges, also the delineation of rules and procedures for the exchange is fundamental (Marrett, 1971). Aldrich refers to it as 'procedural standardization' and defines it as the *"degree of similarity over time in the procedures used for transactions with another organization, ranging from the same procedures for all cases to case-by-case interaction"* (Aldrich, 1979, p.277). He also identifies two factors that have a positive effect on procedural standardization: the first is intensity, as the greater the investment, the higher are

standardization practices to protect it; and the second is the size of an organization due to the tendency of larger organizations to homogenize (Aldrich, 1979). Finally, Dijkstra analyzes the types of interaction procedures between IOs by underlining the importance that standardized processes have in world politics and international relations. According to him, the higher the degree of standardization, the more business-like an interaction. However, he does recognize the difficulty of IOs in building and maintaining stable relationships due to the high level of politicization present (Dijkstra, 2016).

## **2.2 Resource-Dependency Theory, Principal-agent Theory and an Overview on Power Relations**

While organizational theories help in understanding the dynamics of interaction between organizations, there are theories that stem from such dynamics and look into the reality of interplay. This is especially relevant when looking at major world players such as IOs or similar considerable bodies. When looking at such high level dynamics, it is impossible to avoid taking into consideration resources, responsibilities and power relations more generally. This is why the sections below will look at the various academic debates on the resource-dependency theory, the principal-agent theory and theories related to power relations.

### ***Resource-Dependency Theory***

As mentioned, the resource dependency theory is particularly pertinent to the context of interaction between international entities. The theory is also popular in academia, in many different fields, and has been discussed by several scholars over the years. The resource-dependency theory has been first introduced in the early 1990s, by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) when they reported a high dependency on external resources, exerted by all sort of entities and bodies. Their analysis did not stop to the concept of being dependent to resources, they also looked at how such dependency shapes strategies and outcomes of entities and bodies. Their study thus concluded that organizations need to be extremely aware of their resource dependencies, as well as how such dependency can influence, or be influenced by their strategies and outcomes. The theory has been further studied by other scholars, such as Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee (1992) who looked at how organizations could gain competitive advantage to others, by positively managing their resources and consequent dependencies. Dyer and Singh (1998) looked deeper into the concept of competitive advantage discussed by Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee (1992), especially relating the theory to its relevance in the global market. In fact, they argued that, in order to compete in the global market, an effective

management of resources is crucial, especially when seeking to maximize the organization's ability to access resources. In the early 2000s, the concept was scrutinized again by Beugelsdijk et al. (2003) who claimed that, in order to pursue set objectives, any organization at any level must rely on external resources. In their study, in fact, they suggested that, in order to achieve their goals, organizations need to be able to acquire and control the resources they need, and that their availability and accessibility can determine the strategies available to be pursued (Beugelsdijk et al., 2003). Aldrich (1979) looked at the issue from a different angle, suggesting that for organizations, a crucial step to achieve their goals is to develop one or more strategies to acquire the needed resources. He argued that organizations must be able to diversify when seeking resources, and that it is on the resources themselves to shape the strategies they are able to pursue.

To add on the 'dependency' part of the resource-dependency theory, especially in the context of inter-organizational relations, scholars such as Gulati (1995) argued that the only way for organizations to obtain the needed resources, is to develop relationships with external stakeholders. Gulati also suggested that two main variables of such relationships, which guide the resource-dependency theory, are trust and commitment. As a matter of fact, he claims that only by developing trust and commitment between their partners, organizations can ensure that resources are obtained and used in an effective manner. Other scholars such as Dyer (1997) highlighted the importance of external stakeholders, arguing that, in order to access the resources they need, organizations must develop collaborative relationships. Further, scholars such as DiMaggio (1988) and Powell (2015) added on that, by claiming that resource-dependence can have a significant impact on relationships between organizations, at all levels. Specifically, they added that organizations dependent on external resources, not only have the need to develop collaborative relationships, but they are also much more likely to do so in order to access the resources they need to consequently achieve their set goals.

While the resource-dependence theory has been often used to look IOR, especially when trying to explain their dynamics in different contexts, it is crucial to underline that there is a lack of research exploring its relevance in the field of anti-human trafficking operations. However, when looking at it more specifically, it has been used to understand the dynamics of IOR particularly in the healthcare field. Huxham and Vangen (2013), for instance, argued that resource-dependence is an important factor in determining the effectiveness of collaborative partnerships in healthcare. Haunschild (1993) in his paper added on that, by discussing the theory in a more defined way, and asserting that it is a crucial concept which determines the success or failure of collaborations between organizations. To conclude, in order to have a

better overview on the relevance of this theory, not only applied to IOR, but also to the field of anti-human trafficking operations, the topic needs to be further researched in the academic landscape.

### ***Principal-agency Theory***

The principal-agency theory is a framework mainly used in economics and political science, among other fields, to analyze the relationship between principals and agents. Two of the key scholars who discussed in their studies the principal-agency theory are economists Michael Jensen and William Meckling (1976). More specifically, Jensen and Meckling's theory states that agents may act in their own self-interest, rather than in the interest of the principal, leading to what they describe as "agency costs." In order to address this issue, Jensen and Meckling proposed the use of incentive mechanisms, such as performance-based pay, to align the interests of the principal and the agent. To sum up their main point, according to Jensen and Meckling the principal-agent theory hypothesizes that principals, in this case entities such as shareholders or governments, delegate tasks to agents, for instance managers, public servants or again other entities/organizations, to achieve certain goals. The issue lies on the fact that interests of the principal and the agent may not always align, resulting in potential conflicts of interest (Jensen and Meckling, 1976).

Looking at a more specific angle for the purpose of this paper, the principal-agency theory can be applied to the relations between two (or more) IOs, with one as principal, and the other as agent. More specifically, when looking at the relationship between the EU and the UNODC, it is possible to find academic literature that uses the two organizations as their case study. Political scientist Maria-Teresa Herrero (2014) studied the subject and argued that in the vast majority of cases, it is the EU who 'mandates' and funds initiatives, then carried out by the UNODC. According to her, the EU's delegation of tasks to the UNODC, especially in the field of human trafficking, may not always lead to effective coordination and cooperation. Herrero suggested that when looking at principal agent dynamics in their exchanges, the EU uses incentive mechanisms, as the funding figure of all ventures, to align the interests of the UNODC with those of the EU in combating human trafficking, while the scope of organizations may differ, resulting in tensions. Overall, Herrero suggested that the principal-agency theory can be used as a powerful framework for analyzing the relationship between two or more prominent IOs in actual ongoing operations, especially when drafting lessons learned reports (Herrero, 2014). The value of this theory, especially for the purpose of this paper, is that it can

highlight the potential conflicts of interest between the two organizations and potentially offer possible solutions to address these challenges.

### ***Power Relations***

In the context of an interaction between two or more entities, power has a crucial role. In their research, Hardy and Clegg (2006) discuss the notion of power as well as its origin in academic literature. The founding voices of power literature, according to them, are Karl Marx and Max Weber, whose traditional interpretation of power is the skill to draw others, even in a coercive way, to carry out one's intentions. The authors argue that power is enabled by knowledge and sensemaking and frame power as a facilitator of hierarchical systems (Hardy and Clegg, 2006). Building on the notion, Barnett and Duvall (2005) highlight the role of power in international politics and differentiate between various interpretations of power. The first is 'compulsory power', in which one entity has direct authority over the other in a specific interaction, which could be, for instance, in the form of a threat. The second is 'institutional power' where, instead of direct authority, a form of indirect influence is present in interactions. Thirdly, the authors list 'structural power', so the power exercised through the establishment of social capabilities of entities involved in direct interaction with one another. Lastly, 'productive power' is discussed as *"the socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification"* (Barnett and Duvall, 2005, p.3). These interpretations of the concept are consequential to understanding interactions and relations in the international context.

However, for the purpose of this paper, it is also essential to frame power not only in the international context but also in the framework of IOR. According to Ojanen (2016) and Huxham and Beech (2008), power, as a relational concept, and its dynamics positively affect IOs. Huxham and Beech identify the resource dependency theory as the first outlook of power on organizations' interaction, yet they underline the little amount of research and available scholarship (Huxham and Beech, 2008). Nevertheless, thanks to both Huxham and Beech and Ojanen, a framework on power in IOR now exists, and it is divided into three different categories: power to, power over, and power for (Huxham and Beech, 2008; Ojanen, 2016). First, 'power to' is defined by Ojanen as the capacity and capability to exert power through resources, which can be of many different kinds, both hard and soft, ranging from territorial ones to financial ones (Ojanen, 2016). Huxham and Beech add that 'power to' entails reaching an objective, and it is a singular dimension, rather than a plural one. Nevertheless, they claim it has a collaborative nature as it can be perceived to keep balance in IOs relations (Huxham and Beech, 2008). Following, 'power over' can be intended as a more coercive kind of power

that, according to Ojanen, when exerted, results in the influence and control on another entity's agenda (Ojanen, 2016). From Huxham and Beech's perspective, 'power over' originates from exchange theory, and it concerns bargaining for control, finding leverage, earning the upper hand. It thus entails a relation between two entities that have different roles and often different power positions (Huxham and Beech, 2008). Lastly, 'power for' is the most cooperative dimension of power in IOR, also often known as empowerment, and defined by Ojanen as "*the ability to influence the amount of power of others, and in particular, increase it rather than limiting it (something that 'power over' implies)*" (Ojanen, 2016, p.368). As a matter of fact, Huxham and Beech frame it in the context of social interactions and organizations collaborating for a social objective (Huxham and Beech, 2008).

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Aim**

The positive, qualitative research presented in this thesis seeks to analyze and evaluate the interaction between two organizational entities in anti-THB operations, namely the EU and the UNODC. As a matter of fact, the research question that this paper seeks to answer is: “*What is the state of the EU's relations with the UNODC in the field of human trafficking?*”. The examination of elements and dynamics of organizational interaction allows for a better understanding of their role and functioning of important IOs in world politics. As mentioned in *Chapter 1* a set of sub questions has been developed in order to further frame and delineate the scope of this research. The sub questions of this study are: What is the evolution of their relations? What is the nature of their interaction? Why do they cooperate in the first place? How is their partnership formalized? How is it implemented in practice? How can it be improved?

The research question, as well as the various sub questions, serve as a starting point for this project. The way in which the research will be carried out is through the application of theories. In order to assess the state and nature of EU-UNODC interaction in the field of THB, a set of organizational and IOR theories will be applied to the selected empirical case study. To begin with, the organizational framework as explained in the previous chapter needs to be adopted. The examination of organizational interaction through the elements of formalization, intensity, symmetry and standardization as proposed by Aldrich (1979) and Marrett (1971), serves as a way to better understand the dynamics between the chosen bodies as well as to assess the type of relation and the outcome of interaction from a purely organizational point of view. Thus, these elements and dynamics will be adopted as a working base of theories that will be applied to the case study of this research.

### **3.2 Case Study**

This research focuses on organizational interaction between actors that have a role in world politics and IR. One of the fields in which international politics and IR both play an important role is security. The research of this thesis is focused on a specific domain of interaction in the security field: the domain of anti-human trafficking operations. As explained in the introduction, many different actors are involved in anti-trafficking operations worldwide, it would indeed be very costly to study all of them. Despite the fact that investigations on IOR in the world order are plentiful in the academic domain, research on EU-UNODC relations, their



partnerships and cooperation have been understudied. The neglect on research of this particular partnership, as well as the increasingly important role of international cooperation in international security, are the reasons why these two actors have been chosen as case study for the paper. As a matter of fact, with the advent of the 21st century, especially in the management of new forms of crime and the fight against criminal activities, international collaboration has increased substantially. There are in fact plenty of agreements between many national governments, supranational entities and IOs. For instance, among the domains of cooperation between the UNODC and the EU, THB and the management of human smuggling in the context of migration are the most significant areas. Moreover, as explained previously, human trafficking trends have only gained more momentum since the migration crisis of 2012. Finally, the setting and focus of this thesis will be on their partnership in anti-human trafficking operations from 2015 to 2020.

### 3.3 Operationalization

#### *Organizational elements*

The features of the organizational framework are: formalization, intensity, symmetry and standardization. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, indicators and sub-indicators are available for every element. Table 1 below summarizes the factors and their indicators in order to operationalize the various concepts. The third column indicates sub-indicators, so a more in-depth variety of ways in which data crucial for this study will be collected and analyzed.

**Table 1. Operationalization of organizational elements**

Elements	Indicators	Sub-indicators
<b>Formalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the extent to which formalization is present in accords between organizations</li> <li>- the extent to which a formal coordinating figure exists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether agreements stipulated in the past years between UNODC and EU exist</li> <li>- Whether such agreements are binding or not</li> <li>- Whether they define intentions or regulations</li> <li>- Whether organizational arrangements for the facilitation of interaction exist</li> <li>- Whether meetings between organizations take place</li> <li>- Whether specific offices or officers are tasked with liaison duties</li> <li>- Whether organizations have offices near each other</li> </ul>

<b>Intensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the number of invested resources</li> <li>- the frequency of interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether UNODC and EU have similar or different scopes</li> <li>- Whether scope-specific resources such as funds, training, information, capabilities or equipment are exchanged</li> <li>- Whether offices or officers interact through statements, meetings, joint activities etc...</li> <li>- How much interaction occurs</li> </ul>
<b>Symmetry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the extent to which reciprocity takes place in resource exchanges</li> <li>- the extent to which organizations have sovereign parity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether UNODC and EU use each other's assets and resources</li> <li>- Whether one body financially assists another</li> <li>- Whether one body is dependent on another for one or more specific resources</li> <li>- Whether one body fully consents to its relations with another</li> <li>- Whether one body has veto powers over decisions</li> <li>- Whether decisions are taken through equality</li> <li>- Whether there is one more actors that dominate the interaction</li> </ul>
<b>Standardization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the extent to which the units of exchange are delineated</li> <li>- the extent to which rules and procedures for interaction are fixed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether an overview of the procedures that govern an interaction exists</li> <li>- Whether coordination bodies have fixed guidelines on specific events</li> <li>- Whether an interaction is subject to specific "contractual" rules</li> <li>- Whether an interaction is free from politicization</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Data Collection

The above mentioned organizational factors and their indicators are crucial features of this research as they are used as a map for the collection of data. In order to answer the research question and uncover the dynamics of interaction, data will be gathered through document analysis, from both primary and secondary sources. The research of this paper is largely based on secondary sources, such as reports, statutes, meeting briefs or public statements of the various organizations, speeches from executive directors or heads of organizations, journal articles, handbooks and editorials. Newspaper articles and NGOs of think tank reports is where the majority of data on human trafficking occurrences is collected as these less formal channels generally are where most recent events are first reported. Primary sources, such as laws

regarding human trafficking (e.g. the Palermo Protocol or the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive) and data extracted from interviews are also used. For the purpose of this research, some employees of the UNODC and the EU working in both the domain of THB and the field of inter-agency coordination are interviewed.

Focal sources to assess interaction between the UNODC and the EU are legal documents and official reports. For instance, article 13 of the UN Palermo Protocol, delineates guidelines on the cooperation between states and international organizations in human trafficking operations. Or again the articles 1, 10, 18, 19 of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, in which cooperation between member states and organizations is discussed in the domains of jurisdiction and prevention. Yet, laws and statutes, although being the most formalized product of cooperation, are not the only way to assess interaction in the international order. This is why data based on the indicators, will also be collected from public documents available on the websites of the various organizations, which include policy briefs, meeting briefs, statements, speeches or interviews of officials. Lastly, interview material will also be crucial to this research as it will serve as the main primary source of data.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

As mentioned in the data collection section above, this research will have two main sources from which information will be extracted: reports and interviews. Official reports of the various organizations that are involved in the fight against human trafficking are vital as they provide analyzed, ready to use quantitative data, in a qualitative product. This is why several tables and charts from these sources will be included in the analysis. In addition, reports provide information on anti-trafficking endeavors of the various organizations, joint or not, which can be interpreted based on the operationalized factors. Successively, interviews with organizations' employees will be adopted as the main primary source of data. In social sciences, interviews are a very common method used in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). There are many different types of research interviews, but this paper will adopt the semi structured one. Semi Structured interviews involve an interview guide with a series of questions and different follow ups that allow the interviewer to ask further questions, in order to have more significant replies (Bryman, 2012). The interview guide used can be found in Appendix 1. The questions asked in the interviews are fully based on the operationalized factors. The information extracted from interviews with experts will be complementary to the data from the reports, in order to provide a wider understanding in the analysis of organizational factors in the cooperation between EU and UNODC. Respondents have been contacted via digital videoconferencing

platforms due to the period in which they were recorded. In fact, interviews have taken place between early 2020 and early 2021, during the pandemic period.

### **3.6 Limitations**

As every other method of research, interviews are subject to limitations. In terms of reliability, both structured and semi structured interviews are affected by the issue of consistency. This is because of two reasons. First, the issue rests with the interviewees: two or more people hardly observe the same behavior or possess the same norms and values. Secondly, interviewers also have an issue with consistency, this is because the degree of consistency in the application of semi structured interviews especially, cannot be considered fully reliable. In terms of validity, semi structured interviews are specifically limited, due to their unstandardized nature. In fact, for instance, when dealing with a large-N study, semi structured interviews are highly discouraged. Moreover, interviews of all kinds are subject to human error and full reliability and validity may be impossible to achieve in most instances (Bryman, 2012). In terms of its application, the method of interviews in qualitative research can be considered limited as it entails a more fleeting contact with interviewees, and may need re-interviewing. In addition, interviewing is not considered to present information in a natural and organic way due to its formal and disruptive character. These are factors to keep into consideration when going through this research as it is largely based on interviews.

## **Chapter IV: Mapping Actors and Approaches**

This chapter traces the evolution of UNODC-EU relations, with the objective of providing an overview on the actors and their approaches to THB. The evolution of EU-UNODC relations will be presented through an historical analysis through which the relevance of academic theories such as the resource dependency theory and the principal agent theory will become clear. The way in which the two studied entities will be discussed, will then set the pace for the following chapter, in which the dimensions of IOR theory will be applied.

### **4.1 Historical Evolution of UNODC-EU relations**

The Post-War era was characterized by the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which created the European Economic Community. These events laid out a base for a natural partnership built on shared core values and beliefs: the UN-EU partnership. However, much has changed since then, and the international landscape is now broader and more complex, composed of a more significant number of sub actors that play crucial roles in specific domains. The establishment of sub-agencies and offices within the UN and the EU gave rise to an even greater number of intra-agency partnerships and collaborations. Although the landscape has changed, the partnership between the UN and the EU and their agencies has only increased momentum, especially following the UN Millenium Declaration of 2000, an international policy agenda with several goals encompassing most domains of life. As mentioned throughout the paper, various features of human trafficking are part of the UN Millenium Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), and the UNODC is tasked with their monitoring and implementation. It is hence vital to discuss the historical evolution of UNODC-EU relations, their shared and non-shared resources, as well as dependency.

The beginning of UNODC-EU relations can be traced back to 1987 when the UNODC was still known as the International Drug Control Programme, and the European Community was signing the Single European Act. It has been since 1987 that the two bodies carry out joint operational work. The collaboration began through the first project in Bolivia, where local communities and health centers received aid in fighting the production and diffusion of cocaine. Notwithstanding that the relations between bodies have existed informally since 1987, a formal partnership agreement was ratified only in 2005, through an exchange of letters (UNODC, 2015; UNODC, 2020). In the same year, the two entities embarked on the first criminal justice endeavor, which sought to support Somali pirates' prosecution in West India. Slowly through

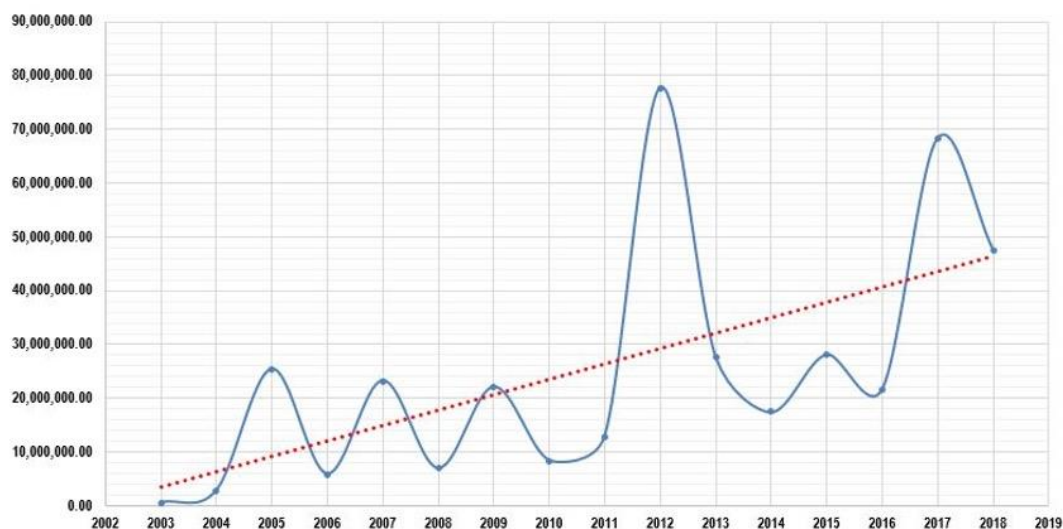
the years, the UNODC-EU partnership became more and more diversified. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, several joint ventures focused on issues such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling, especially in Africa, Central Asia, and Central America, or terrorism and organized criminality, with target areas all over the world. All in all, the UNODC-EU partnership since 2005 has evolved massively both on a policy level and an operational one. The collaboration is now focused on addressing a wide range of transnational challenges, including but not limited to drug trafficking, organized criminality, illicit migration, corruption, and criminal justice (UNODC, 2015).

As mentioned above, the nature of UNODC-EU cooperation throughout the years has been policy-oriented and operational. The EU is one of the leading partners of the UNODC on a significant number of mandate areas. This 16-years-old partnership is primarily expressed in two ways: through information exchanges and funding. For instance, UNODC and EU representatives have met regularly since 2005. In addition, since 2003, so before the formalization of cooperation, the EU has donated 429 million euros, allowing the UNODC to launch 107 collaboration projects. *Figure 3* below shows the yearly funding of the EU to the UNODC from 2003 to 2018 (UNODC, 2020b).

Total projects (2003-2019): 107  
Ongoing projects: 38

EU commitment since 2003: €428,852,068.00\*  
Ongoing portfolio: €216,369,327.42  
\*composed by direct and indirect funding.

**Overall EU commitment by year**

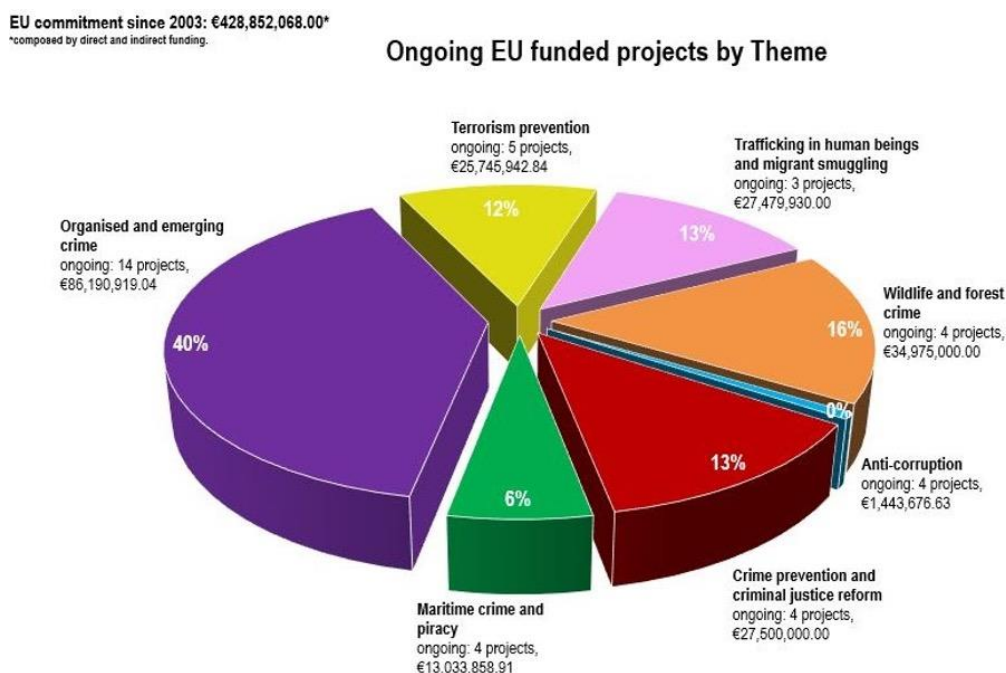


Source: UNODC

**Figure 3**

The areas of cooperation between the UNODC and the EU, as already discussed, vary greatly. Similarly, all funds provided by the EU through external action tools have been

dedicated to many different projects throughout the years. For instance, in 2019, 38 EU-funded projects were ongoing, with a budget that amounted to 216,369,327.42 Euros. *Figure 4* below shows the various intervention areas to which these funds were allocated in 2019 (UNODC, 2020b).



Source: UNODC  
**Figure 4**

As demonstrated in the graph, the most substantial theme funded by the EU in 2019 was organized and emerging crime. This is because of its dynamic and profitable nature, requiring a higher involvement and commitment from the EU and the UNODC (UNODC, 2020b). The second is wildlife and forest crime, and the third, together with crime prevention, is trafficking in human beings.

Historically, the cooperation between the UNODC and the EU on THB dates back to 2007, with the first EU-funded endeavor. Since 2007, 12 global joint ventures against the trafficking of human beings have been carried out, for a total contribution of 31.9 million US dollars. These projects, implemented in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia, have been crucial to support local governments and prevent major trafficking rings to operate in more impoverished regions of the world. One of the main domains of THB where the EU and the UNODC most contribute is legislation. As a matter of fact, the EU has had a legal framework to counter THB since 2002, and all EU countries are signatories of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In addition, as stated in the celebratory report on EU-UNODC cooperation of 2015, joint anti-THB projects between the two bodies,

among other ambitions, have always been focused on “*awareness raising to prevent vulnerable persons falling prey to traffickers or smugglers*”(UNODC, 2015, p.29).

## **4.2 UNODC approach to THB**

When fighting against THB, the UNODC has a crucial role, both for what policy and legislation are concerned and their application to reality. As a matter of fact, the UNODC’s approach to THB is entirely based on the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* - also known as the Palermo Protocol - which was adopted in 2000 by the UN and signed by the vast majority of world countries (UNODC, 2000). Although being primarily based on the Protocol, the UNODC’s approach is not limited to it. The UNODC is the guardian of the Protocol and has devised several strategies to implement it, such as the 2009 International Framework for Action To Implement the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. However, it also offers several other tools and services that are pivotal in the fight against human trafficking (UNODC, 2021b).

### ***Legal and Policy-Driven Approach***

From a legal perspective, as previously mentioned, the UNODC safeguards and assists with implementing the Protocol. Following concerns on the Palermo Protocol's applicability to real-life situations, the UNODC has formulated international strategies to overcome possible challenges. Therefore, based on the Protocol's objectives and provisions, the UNODC has presented an operational framework to facilitate its application. The framework is founded upon the "3Ps", prosecution, protection, and prevention, as well as instructions to enhance national and international collaboration and planning (UNODC, 2009). These five pillars represent the more legal and policy-oriented approach that the UNODC employs in fighting THB.

First are the development and support to the prosecution of THB-related crimes and victims' rights. One of the priorities of the UNODC is that act, means, and purpose, as outlined in the definition of human trafficking, are all prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law (UNODC, 2008). Moreover, the UNODC's priority is to ensure that proper structures and protocols, both from a judicial standpoint and from a more investigative perspective, are not only established but also accurately pursued. Following that, the protection of human trafficking victims is the second pillar of the UNODC legal strategy. This is provided through the ratification and development of several mechanisms such as the necessary process for far-



reaching assistance and empowerment of victims, as well as dedicated legal channels for their victimization claims (UNODC, 2009). Furthermore, the UNODC supplies a human rights-based comprehensive system for victims. This system provides them with aid and relief in their identification process, in the referral to a national scheme (e.g., asylum system), and in their return when the case demands it (UNODC, 2009). The third and last P stands for prevention. Prevention is a significant part of the UNODC legal strategy as it allows for the support of measures against re-victimization and legal migration and working schemes. Moreover, by focusing on the root causes of THB, the UNODC strives to reduce vulnerability and social indifference.

The last pillars of the UNODC framework to implement the Palermo Protocol are very much intertwined and essential for this paper's purpose: collaboration and planning at the national and the international level. Nationally and at the local level, the UNODC's role is to guarantee the existence, evaluation, and implementation of governmental policies and action plans. These policies not only ought to ensure prosecution, protection, and prevention, but they should also dictate the rules of cooperation on human trafficking between the various stakeholders involved. As a matter of fact, the establishment of a structure of collaboration and coordination between relevant bodies, public and private as well as at the civil society level, is between the actions implemented by the UNODC. Some examples provided in the *International Framework* are: "*as governmental institutions (including law enforcement agencies, judicial authorities, labour inspectorates, immigration and asylum authorities), non-governmental organizations, victim service providers, health institutions, child protection institutions, trade unions, workers' and employers' organizations*" (UNODC, 2009, p. 12). Due to a more complex landscape of actors, the UNODC's approach on the international level is more prominent. Both formal and informal collaboration and cooperation agreements on THB-related matters internationally are crucial for the Protocol's overall implementation. Therefore, the UNODC plays an essential role in developing an international legal process that involves issues such as identifications, returns, joint investigations, trials, and prosecutions. This is because, in many human trafficking cases, more than one country is involved as trafficked individuals go through origin, transit, and destination countries. Hence, a key factor that the UNODC has to guarantee is communication between international bodies, especially for what information and data networks are concerned. In addition, the UNODC's role is to boost and maintain consistency and unity between international, national, and local entities in terms of policies to address THB and strategies, joint programs, and activities (UNODC, 2009).

### ***Operational Approach and Other Initiatives***

From an operational standpoint, the UNODC is very active and involved in the fight against human trafficking. In addition to dealing with legislative support, it is tasked with assisting countries in strategic planning and capacity-building ventures. For instance, the UNODC provides states with specially designed, expert plans and tools to deal with THB and intensify local capabilities and skills (UNODC, 2021a). Among such management tools, the UNODC has devised a unique toolkit known as the 2008 *Toolkit to combat trafficking in persons: Global programme against trafficking in human beings*. Such a toolkit analyzes and illustrates examples of several, but not all, prominent practices of trafficking interventions. Hence, it is an essential device in portraying what the UNODC carries out from an operational standpoint and showing all sorts of anti-trafficking efforts that governments themselves can undertake. The toolkit is divided into several main thematic areas of intervention, among which: international legal support, assessment response and strategy development, criminal justice support, law enforcement support, victim identification, victim support, and monitoring and evaluation of THB trends. More specifically, every intervention area is characterized by special tools that can be used in countering THB, each presented with a detailed explanation (UNODC, 2008).

Although being the most conspicuous and detailed manifestation of the UNODC's operational approach to anti-trafficking, the toolkit is not the only one. Numerous publications and documents on strategic and operational THB-related goals of the UNODC have been published throughout the past decade. Another notable operative statement is the 2012 *Comprehensive Strategy on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling*. In this strategy, the UNODC identifies three critical matters that characterize the course of UNODC's operations: research and awareness-raising, promotions of capacity-building and strengthening of partnerships, and inter-agency coordination. To begin with, when concentrating on awareness-raising, the UNODC leads a vital campaign and advocacy tool known as the Blue Heart Campaign to counter and prevent THB (UNODC, 2021). Successively, the sponsoring of capacity-building initiatives and operations is also crucial both regionally and nationally. Indeed, the UNODC collaborates with several partners and agencies to provide training, advice, expertise and to implement bilateral programs and agreements of operational and technical support (UNODC, 2012). Finally, to bolster partnerships with other UN agencies and other IOs, the UNODC is part of several working groups, such as ICAT, the GMG, and the UN-GIFT. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) is a group of UN and non-UN agencies formally established in 2007, which aims at *"improving the*

*coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons"* (ICAT 2010). Successively, the Global Migration Group (GMG), founded in 2006, is a high-level group comprising 22 UN bodies collaborating to improve and promote migration-related policies and activities (Global Migration Group, 2021). Lastly, the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) is a hub of key national and international actors established in 2007, which cooperates with all sorts of stakeholders, such as businesses, academia, and the media, in order to develop new tools and strategies against THB (UN.GIFT, 2021).

To conclude on the UNODC's operational efforts, it is pivotal to mention the extensive research that the UNODC carries out when studying and reporting on all sorts of trends on THB, victims, and perpetrators. Following the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the UN General Assembly tasked the UNODC with drafting a bi-annual report on THB trends and patterns covering 142 countries. Since then, a report known as the *UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* has been published every two years, with the most recent one published on February 2nd, 2021. In fact, the UNODC is an expert body in data collection, monitoring, and analysis of information that has been systematically gathered for over a decade (UNODC, 2021a). In hand with the report on human trafficking, since 2018, the UNODC also presents a publication reporting trends and flows of illicit migration known as the *UNODC Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants*. Such study presents extensive research and analyses of data on issues such as *"major smuggling routes connecting origin, transit, and destination points; the modus operandi of smugglers; the risks the journeys pose for migrants and refugees; and the profile of smugglers and the vulnerable groups on which they prey"* (UNODC, 2018a, p. iii).

### **4.3 EU approach to THB**

To discuss the EU approach against THB, it is crucial to understand the complex dynamics that the EU entails due to the wide variety of bodies and agencies involved. In 2018, the *Joint Statement of commitment to working together against trafficking in human beings* was signed by all the EU-related entities that agreed to collaborate to fight THB. The agreement includes ten agencies: EUROPOL, the former European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the EU Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), the European

Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND), the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) (European Commission, 2018). How the EU and its bodies approach anti-THB efforts is mostly based on legislation. More specifically, the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive (Directive 2011/36/EU) dictates the legislative framework for the fight against THB and gives a direction to all active policies. Nevertheless, the EU's approach is not limited to legal measures. There are a series of implemented operational initiatives that outline the EU's strategy and its bodies against trafficking in persons.

### ***Legal and Policy-Driven Approach***

As mentioned above, the European landscape is characterized by a multitude of actors involved in legislation, policy, and operations regarding human trafficking. Specifically, when discussing EU bodies' legal measures to counter THB, the key players are the the European Court of Human Rights, and the European Commission and Parliament. Before providing an overview of existing legislation, it is imperative to highlight that all European member states are signatories of the UN Palermo Protocol and are thus hinged upon its rules and provisions. However, the European legal approach to THB is unquestionably not limited to it. In fact, several laws presented by European bodies seek to overcome many of the weaknesses and critiques that the Palermo Protocol is subject to (Gaspari, 2019).

Legislation against THB in the EU's case, specifically concerning Parliament and Commission, is a matter that requires a more in-depth approach due to its significant historical development as well as for its relevance to this paper. First off, THB practices are forbidden in Article 5 of the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which was enforced in 2009 with the Lisbon Treaty. However, EU decisions and measures regarding the fight against human trafficking have been reflecting Article 5 since the 1990s, so considerably before its enforcement. With regards to THB, the most crucial piece of legislation of the EU is the Directive 2011/36/EU - also known as the Anti-Trafficking Directive - which entered into force in 2011. The Directive "*sets robust provisions for the protection, assistance, and support to victims, as well as provisions to prevent the crime and provisions to better monitor and evaluate our efforts*" (European Commission, 2021c). In its text, three main points that embody the EU's legal and policy approach towards THB can be identified: criminal law and prosecution, prevention and victim protection and support. In detail, regarding criminal law and prosecution, the EU provides a legal working-definition for THB, ensures extraterritorial jurisdiction for perpetrators, and withdraws any penalty or consequence for victims who were

trafficked. In order to establish a prevention mechanism, the EU promotes legal migration channels to deter demand and bolsters victims and officials - such as border police and social workers - training. Lastly, to ensure the protection and support of victims, the EU provides them with legal, psychological, medical, and information assistance guarantees their well-being and appropriate treatment and establishes an identification system by securing a collaboration between law enforcement and civil society (European Commission, 2021a).

Finally, there are other instruments that are also used to prevent trafficking, from other policy areas, including legal migration. An example is the 2004/81/EC Directive, which states that individuals coming from a third country that have been victims of human trafficking and that cooperate with the authorities, have the right to a temporary residence permit. Such permit allows them to have medical care, find independence from their traffickers and have access to the job market. Another example is the 2005 *EU Plan on Combating and Preventing Human Trafficking*, which established a policy framework of practices and procedures for individual EU governments in order to cooperate, collect information, and other operational features (European Commission, 2021c).

### ***Operational Approach and Other Initiatives***

From an operational point of view, the EU has been actively fighting THB through a series of strategies, policy cycles, and targeted actions carried out by the bodies involved as well as member states. As mentioned above, the multitude of EU bodies involved in the fight of THB is regulated by a Joint Statement of Commitment, which discusses a multi-agency approach, organized with specific contact points in every agency (European Commission, 2018). Nevertheless, the most important document which outlines the operational strategy of the EU is the *EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016*, in which five priorities are identified. Such priorities involve: protection and support of victims, prevention and awareness campaigns on THB, augmented prosecution of perpetrators, strengthened cooperation between actors and policies, and greater attention towards emerging challenges (European Commission, 2012). The 2012-2016 Strategy is followed by a series of updates such as the *2017 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council*. In this document, three primary target areas of action and the operational priorities to achieve them have been delineated. These are the disruption of the perpetrators' business model and chains, the ensuring of better access to victim rights, and the intensification of collaboration and coordination with member states and IOs. Firstly, the operationalization of the disruption of the perpetrators' business model and chains is achieved to a greater

criminalization, mainly through financial disruption such as seizures and confiscation of assets, and through the enhancement of investigations and practices. Secondly, the operational approach of the EU towards ensuring better access to victim rights revolves around the strengthening of national systems and mechanisms, greater dependence on border and migration tools, as well as on an intensified cooperation with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. Finally, the operationalization of the intensification of collaboration is carried out through the setting and supporting objectives with funding programs, the implementation of joint activities and initiatives, and the drafting and sharing of data reports and papers on THB (European Commission, 2017).

With regards to the drafting and sharing of data-based reports and publications, Article 20 of the Anti-Trafficking Directive clearly states that the Commission has to provide progress reports on THB operational actions. One of the most recent reports is the third one, and it has been made available in 2020. Said report has three main objectives: to identify patterns and challenges of THB, to present an analysis of data, and to delineate the results of anti-THB measures. The first two objectives are undoubtedly useful in the devising of future EU operational measures and actions. Nevertheless, especially when evaluating the results of existing operational efforts, the report shows very interesting and compelling data representing the base upon which the EU's operational approach is built (European Commission, 2020a).

To conclude, other noteworthy initiatives demonstrate the active operational approach that the EU has against THB. For instance, the adoption of a formal figure, known as the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, is tasked with setting the path for strategic policy, enhancing cooperation between EU bodies, member states, and international parties, and participating in the deliberation on existing and new THB-related policies. Successively, since 2007 the Commission has marked October 18th as the EU Anti-Trafficking Day in order to raise awareness and increase information exchanges on THB-related matters. The financial dimension is also crucial when discussing anti-THB operational efforts. The EU provides funding to several anti-THB programs such as "*Daphne III (2007-2013) and Prevention of and Fight against Crime (ISEC) (2007-2013)*, the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); Thematic Programme Migration and Asylum*" (European Commission, 2021c). Lastly, it is crucial to mention the EMPACT EU policy cycle, which includes THB as one priority. Said policy cycle, set in 2017, calls for cooperation between law enforcement, EU agencies, institutions, and third relevant organizations (Europol, 2021).

## **Chapter V: The State of UNODC and EU Interaction in Anti-Trafficking Operations**

As established, EU and the UNODC are two key actors in the fight against human trafficking. While the objective of this thesis is to assess the state of their relations in anti-human trafficking operations, many relevant theories have been discussed in the previous section, and an important historical overview has been presented as well. In this section, such background will be analyzed in the context of the current state of relations. Following an overview of current joint ventures, the idea is to look into differences and similarities in both IOs approaches to fighting human trafficking first to observe whether joint ventures at the legal and operational levels are comparable. This will be done through a general outlook on the situation, extrapolated from the more general questions asked during interviews, as well as from the many readily available reports on anti-human trafficking reports. Once their comparability in joint ventures is confirmed, the research will detail the variables that will be used to assess the state of their relations. As mentioned in the methodology, Aldrich's (1979) IOR theory will be the base of this analysis, and the degrees of formalization, intensity, symmetry, and standardization will be evaluated in the context of UNODC-EU interaction in anti-human trafficking operations.

### **5.1 Joint Approaches in THB**

The EU and UNODC have jointly launched several projects to combat human trafficking. These initiatives are designed to strengthen criminal justice responses, improve coordination among key stakeholders, and provide support and assistance to victims. Such projects are varied in magnitude and in focus, yet all share the same objective.

While sharing the same end goal, there is a clear distinction in terms of roles and responsibilities in such projects. EU-UNODC joint undertakings are all EU funded, meaning that the implementation role is played almost solely by the UNODC. Some of the most notable projects are:

1. Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT), which aims to strengthen criminal justice responses to human trafficking and migrant smuggling while improving coordination among key stakeholders (UNODC, 2019). The initiative has a total budget of €15 million and is funded by the EU. It was launched in 2018 and is continued until 2022 (UNODC, 2018).

2. "Initiative for the Global Elimination of Trafficking in Children" (GETCH), aims to prevent and combat child trafficking and exploitation by strengthening legal frameworks, improving coordination among stakeholders, and providing assistance to victims. The project is funded by the EU and has a total budget of €10 million. It began in 2013 and is expected to continue until 2023 (European Commission, 2021).
3. The "Capacity Building and Technical Assistance to Enhance Anti-Trafficking in Persons in the Gambia" project was launched in 2020 and ended in 2022. The project was funded by the EU and implemented by the UNODC with a total budget of €1.5 million. It aimed to strengthen the Gambian government's capacity to prevent and combat human trafficking, including by improving law enforcement, victim identification and assistance, and awareness-raising activities (UNODC, 2020).
4. The EU-funded "SHERLOC" project aims to improve law enforcement responses to human trafficking by strengthening the use of data and intelligence analysis. It is implemented by UNODC in partnership with Europol and Eurojust, among others. The project was launched in 2018 and continued until 2021 (UNODC, 2020).
5. West and Central Africa Regional Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons (RPTP): This program is aimed at strengthening the capacity of governments and civil society organizations in West and Central Africa to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. The project is implemented in nine countries and is funded by the European Union with a budget of €12 million. It began in 2016 and is expected to run until 2021 (European Commission, 2021b).
6. Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries: This project focuses on addressing the challenges of human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the region, which has been heavily affected by conflict and insecurity. The programme aims to enhance the capacity of government authorities and civil society organizations to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers. The project has a budget of €10 million and began in 2017, with a duration of five years (European Commission, 2021b).
7. Project to Support the Implementation of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP): The project aims to strengthen the capacity of ASEAN Member States to prevent and combat human trafficking. The focus is on



improving legal frameworks, enhancing protection for victims, and strengthening law enforcement efforts. The project began in 2017 and has a budget of €5 million.

8. **Supporting the Development of Effective National Responses to Trafficking in Persons in Mozambique:** This project is aimed at strengthening the capacity of Mozambique to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. The focus is on improving the legal framework, enhancing protection and assistance for victims, and strengthening law enforcement and prosecution efforts. The project is funded by the European Union with a budget of €4 million and began in 2019 with a duration of four years (European Commission, 2021b).

Overall, the EU and the UNODC have launched several initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing human trafficking, with a focus on strengthening criminal justice responses, improving coordination among stakeholders, and providing support and assistance to victims. These initiatives are an important step in the right direction, but more needs to be done to eradicate this grave violation of human rights. Through continued collaboration and increased efforts, progress can be made towards a world free from human trafficking.

## **5.2 Differences and Similarities in Approaches**

In the fight against human trafficking, the EU and UNODC are two significant players. Despite the fact that they share the objective of tackling this worldwide issue, their techniques differ in a number of ways. To begin with, their scope of operations is a fundamental difference. The EU is primarily concerned with combating human trafficking within its member states and adjacent nations. This is reflected in EU efforts and regulations, such as the EU Strategy on Combating Human Trafficking, which focuses on prevention, protection, and punishment within the EU (European Commission, 2012). In contrast, the UNODC has a global mandate and collaborates with nations worldwide to combat human trafficking. Its activities include the UNODC Global Programme against Trafficking in People, which assists countries in implementing the United Nations Convention to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (UNODC, 2018). Secondly, the exact areas of concern in the battle against human trafficking are varied. The EU lays special emphasis on giving victims of human trafficking the needed help, such as legal and financial aid (European Commission, 2020a). In contrast, the UNODC focuses on preventing human trafficking and interrupting the activities of trafficking networks, as seen in its work to increase law enforcement capability and its support for international collaboration in investigations and prosecutions.

Notwithstanding these contrasts, the EU and UNODC share certain parallels in their approaches. For instance, both groups understand the necessity for a multifaceted approach to combating human trafficking, which includes governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations, among others. Additionally, they both underline the need for international cooperation and coordination. This is proved by their involvement in international settings like the United Nations General Assembly and their support for programs like the Global Counter-Trafficking Coordination Mechanism. Finally, the EU and UNODC have collaborated on a variety of initiatives and projects to combat human trafficking, including the collaborative drafting of several annual and ad-hoc papers and reports, as well as joint campaigns supported by a number of governments, civil society organizations, and private sector enterprises.

In view of these similarities and contrasts, the question remains as to whether the EU and UNODC have comparable approaches to combating human trafficking. Comparability in this case refers to whether the techniques of the two organizations are sufficiently comparable to allow for efficient coordination and collaboration (Balch, 2015). As mentioned, both the EU and the UNODC acknowledge the need for a comprehensive approach to combating human trafficking, involving a variety of players such as governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations. This mutual comprehension provides the foundation for effective collaboration between the two organizations. On the other hand, the scope of their operations and specific areas of focus may make it difficult to compare their approaches. The EU's regional approach and emphasis on victim support may not coincide with the UNODC's worldwide mandate and emphasis on strengthening law enforcement capability. These distinctions may complicate the coordination of cooperative initiatives and undertakings (Balch, 2015). To conclude, while the EU and UNODC may have differing approaches, they share a commitment to eradicating this worldwide problem. Their participation and collaborative efforts are vital in the battle against the trafficking in human beings and demonstrate the pivotal importance of different groups working together to combat this issue. Established comparability, in the following section, Aldrich's (1979) IOR theory will be applied to the state of their interaction.

### **5.3 Evaluation of Organizational Factors**

#### ***Formalization***

As mentioned in Chapter II and III, Aldrich's (1979) IOR theory claims that the collaboration between organizations can be facilitated by the presence of formalization, which he refers to

as the degree to which the terms and conditions of a mutual agreement that established collaboration between the entities are clearly specified and legally binding.

When looking at formalization, it is possible to observe both benefits and challenges, particularly when examining the relationship between two significant international organizations such as the EU and the UNODC. To begin with, it is pivotal to highlight that a high degree of formalization ensures that all partners are aligned and working toward the same objective, which is one of the main benefits. As a matter of fact, especially when discussing complicated collaborations such as the one between two main IOs, where several partners with varying backgrounds and priorities may be involved. Another benefit is that, by clearly defining the conditions of a possible collaboration, through the use of formal agreements, confusion and misunderstandings can be reduced, and there is a higher likelihood of a productive collaboration between organizations. Lastly, legal, formalized agreements give a basis for accountability and responsibility. In the case of having well established and legally binding parameters of a partnership, entities can be held responsible for both their actions and outcomes. This facilitates accountability processes and ensures that partners fulfill their obligations, thus resulting in a higher possibility of a successful collaboration. However, there are also possible drawbacks to a high degree of formalization. Formal agreements, for instance, can result to be expensive, both financially and in terms of time, to draft, negotiate, and implement. In the context of this research, this can be a particularly problematic in fast-moving fields like counter-trafficking, where rapid reactions are necessary. In addition, formal agreements can be inflexible, as they are normally thought for the long-run, rather than the short-run, and difficult to modify once they are in place, which can be a problem in situations where the needs or priorities of partners change over time (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

In the context of cooperation and collaboration between the EU and the UNODC to combat human trafficking, formalization is a crucial factor to examine, especially when looking at the efficacy of agreements. In examining formalization in anti-trafficking operations, both organizations have protocols and agreements in place outlining the terms of their partnership. For instance, they have signed a number of legally binding agreements, such as memorandums of understanding, which are pivotal in understating and outlining the roles and responsibilities of each entity, as well as the protocols for sharing information and coordinating joint operations. The most pertinent is the 2004 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two organizations, which established a framework for cooperation on several issues related to

organized crime, among which human trafficking can be found (European External Action Service, 2013; European External Action Service, 2021a).

As a general outcome of this qualitative research, it looks as if that the cooperative efforts of the EU and UNODC to combat human trafficking are marked by a high degree of formalization. As a main example, it is crucial to look at the "Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants" (GLO.ACT) project, which is funded by the EU and implemented by the UNODC. The GLO.ACT project serves as the best example to show the presence of a formalized agreement between the EU and the UNODC, this is because such legal agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various partners involved (UNODC, 2018). Another venture that demonstrates a high degree of formalization is the "Initiative for the Global Elimination of Trafficking in Children" (GETCH) is funded by the EU and implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Also the GETCH project has a written agreement between parties which, in this case, not only defines the project's scope and the roles and obligations of the many partners participating, but also the precise tasks, as well as the anticipated results (European Commission, 2021b). Joint projects also feature a high degree of formal coordination, according to expert interviews carried out. According to experts, in the majority of instances, a chosen implementing entity is responsible for coordinating the actions of the many other participating partners. For instance, in the case of the GLO.ACT project, the UNODC is the main leading agency and is responsible for overseeing the project's implementation, while the EU 'mandates' the project and provides financing and technical support. Likewise, UNICEF is the principal implementing partner for the GETCH project and is responsible for coordinating the logistics of operations, while the EU again provides the financial resources needed (European Commission, 2021b). Experts also claim that it is very likely that there are other formalized or not organizational arrangements in place to facilitate communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution between the two organizations, in most of the cases linked to a specific venture or project in place.

Another factor that helps in determining whether there is a high degree of formalization or not in inter organizational relations is the presence of recurring meetings between organizations. According to expert interviews, the UNODC and the EU have regular meetings, such as workshops or steering committees, due to their coordinated efforts to combat human trafficking. Nevertheless, the frequency and format of these meetings is not clear from the information provided. The meetings both occur at the regional or worldwide level, but they may also take place more informally, such as through bilateral encounters between representatives of the two organizations. While there are different types of meetings and

settings in which such meetings can take place, it is clear that there is only one defined point of contact within each institution responsible for enabling communication and collaboration between the UNODC and the EU, such as liaison offices or officers, as certified by experts. Additionally, UNODC and EU have offices close to one another, or at least in the same city, in numerous regions of the world, such as in Brussels.

Overall, based on the qualitative data gathered for this research, it appears that a high degree of formalization and formal coordination can be recorded in EU-UNODC anti-human trafficking ventures. In fact, in this case, it can be concluded that the collaboration between the two organizations sets very well-defined roles and duties, it is managed effectively and efficiently through appropriate communication channels, as well as pre-established decision-making procedures. At the same time, as mentioned, it is vital to not forget that formalization and formal coordination have their shortfalls, and that there may be trade-offs in having such formalized relations such as issues with flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness.

### ***Intensity***

According to Aldrich's (1979) research, and as established in the preceding chapters, the second variable to be analyzed is intensity. The quantity of resource investment and the frequency of contact may both impact the degree of intensity of a relationship among two organizations.

As with every other variable of this study, it is important to highlight the potential benefits and difficulties that can result from a high degree of intensity in interactions. To begin with, the potential for greater collaboration and coordination is the first benefit. In fact, this opportunity for increased collaboration and coordination in the fight against human trafficking between the two organizations, can result in more effective strategies, particularly when combining resources and expertise. Secondly, another benefit is the increased visibility and profile of the problem of human trafficking. In fact, the joint actions of the EU and UNODC have the potential to raise awareness and inspire action by other system participants. Operating at a high intensity, however, also presents challenges. The fact that the two entities at times may have different interests, mandates, and approaches to the problem of human trafficking, for instance, is a barrier. This is because it increases the likelihood of disagreements or tensions between them, which could potentially result in important obstacles especially when on the field. Finally, another potential drawback is the possibility that efforts will be duplicated or overlapped, both of which could result in a loss of productivity and an excessive consumption of resources. Consequently, it is crucial for the EU and UNODC to carefully manage their

relations and ensure that they work toward common goals in a coordinated and effective manner, rather than over each other (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

Both the EU and the UNODC have made substantial resource investments and established numerous institutional channels for coordination and collaboration, indicating a high level of contact between the two organizations. In recent years, both groups IOs have dedicated significant financial assistance to anti-trafficking activities. To mention one, the EU has invested more than €200 million to anti-trafficking programs between 2014 and 2020. The financial support by the EU aims at raising public awareness through campaigns, support victims of THB and smuggling both psychologically and legally and enhance training programs of law enforcement in order to equip them with more tools to combat THB (European Commission, 2020). As previously stated, in 2018, the EU and UNODC started the GLO.ACT project, which lasts four years and has a budget of €15 million, with the objective of helping governments in establishing comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies (UNODC, 2018a). Two more ventures led by the UNODC and financed by the EU are the "Global Program Against Human Trafficking" and the "Global Program Against Money Laundering,". While the Global Programme against Money Laundering focuses on preventing and detecting money laundering most of the time linked to trafficking in persons, the Global Programme against Trafficking in Persons focuses on criminal justice response and provides countries with technical assistance and capacity building support to strengthen their criminal justice systems. The Global Programme against Money Laundering focuses on preventing and detecting money laundering and other financial crimes that are frequently associated with human trafficking (UNODC, 2021).

In terms of the frequency of interactions between the EU and UNODC, a number of official structures for coordination and collaboration have been established. An example of this is the 2013 "Joint Statement on UNODC-EU Collaboration in the Area of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" which confirms the two organizations' commitment to working together to fight THB. This statement was produced in response to the 2013 "Joint Declaration on UNODC-EU Collaboration in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" (European External Action Service, 2013). According to interviews with subject matter experts, the EU and UNODC hold frequent meetings and workshops to discuss strategy, identify areas for collaboration, and share best practices. They have arranged a series of coordinated training sessions and capacity-building workshops in several different countries to increase the efficacy of their efforts to prevent human trafficking. In order to facilitate coordination and the exchange of information, they also collaborate on the creation of joint reports and publications

and participate in collaborative policy debates. Additionally, the EU supports other UNODC-led initiatives, among which the "Blue Heart Campaign," aimed at raising awareness about trafficking, and the "UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in People," which gives direct aid to victims of trafficking. These two initiatives are intended to combat the problem of human trafficking (European External Action Service, 2021). The UNODC and the EU collaborate extensively in their efforts to combat human trafficking, despite the fact that the number of connections varies depending on the specific initiatives and programs. This is the case despite the fact that the frequency of interactions varies. This is due to the fact that successful anti-THB operations require coordination and cooperation across multiple organizations and stakeholders at the national, regional, and international levels. This applies to all three levels.

Considering the large financial commitment and the regular interaction and coordination between the two organizations as proved above, it is very much possible to characterize the relations between the EU and the UNODC as intense. Both the EU and the UNODC have established institutional structures for coordinating and collaborating in order to combat human trafficking and assist victims. This alliance serves as an essential example of inter-organizational connections and highlights the potential benefits of collaboration and resource sharing in handling complex global concerns.

### ***Symmetry***

The third variable according to Aldrich's (1979) IOR theory, is symmetry, which refers to the degree of parity between organizations involved in a partnership or collaboration. According to the principle, for partnerships to be effective, there must be a balance of power and rewards amongst the entities involved, linking very much to the principal-agent theory mentioned in the literature review.

Benefits of high levels of symmetry in EU-UNODC interactions are mutual respect and effective collaboration. When power and influence are balanced, one entity is more inclined to listen to and appreciate the other's viewpoints and expertise. This may lead to mutual respect and a stronger readiness to collaborate toward common aims. Also, when there is symmetry in the relationship, it may lead to more successful teamwork. Each company may bring its own set of talents and resources to the table and collaborate to create results that are larger than each business could accomplish on its own. However, a challenge of high levels of symmetry is the potential for conflicts of interest and competition. If each group is equally powerful, they may have opposing agendas and interests that make it difficult to reach an agreement on some

subjects. Additionally, there may be challenges around sharing resources and decision-making power, as both organizations may be reluctant to cede control (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

Concerning joint initiatives between the UNODC and the EU to counter human trafficking, it is possible to assess the symmetry of the relationship by considering the extent to which reciprocity takes place in resource exchanges and whether the organizations have sovereign parity. For the purpose of this paper, the two main resources that will be taken into consideration are: funding and information sharing. In terms of finance, the EU has contributed in many different instances to UNODC's anti-human trafficking activities, with the most recent donation of 10 million euros dedicated to a project in Southeast Asia. These financial contributions demonstrate a degree of reciprocity in the partnership, yet mainly evident on the EU side (European External Action Service, 2015). On information sharing, according to the experts interviewed, both EU and UNODC they have collaborated on research and intelligence sharing to enhance their understanding of human trafficking, but with cumbersome obstacles. While Europol, has collaborated with UNODC to share information and develop joint operations to combat human trafficking, data gathered in interviews carried out for this study, clearly demonstrate that information sharing among IOs is to this day, the main hindrance to achieve a proper level of collaboration. Yet, there is a significant exchange of knowledge, as the EU supplies UNODC with information on trafficking trends and patterns in Europe, while UNODC provides the EU with information on worldwide trafficking patterns (European External Action Service, 2015).

Sovereign parity refers to the degree of equality between the organizations involved in a partnership or collaboration. In the context of the joint projects on human trafficking, we can assess sovereign parity by considering the relative power and autonomy of the UNODC and the EU. According to expert interviews, both groups are autonomous in their acts and do not rely on each other for particular resources. As a result, it is difficult to establish if they have enough representation in decision-making. Notwithstanding their organizational mission disparities, the UNODC and the EU have formed a collaboration based on mutual respect and similar interests. Their relationship is undeniably based on mutual consent, and although the EU has provided financial aid to UNODC, it does not have veto power over UNODC decisions. Ultimately, UNODC does not have veto authority over EU decisions and vice versa. The relationship between the two organizations is one of parity, and decisions are taken through equality (European External Action Service, 2015). While the UNODC may have a greater



degree of autonomy and global reach, the EU's financial and political support has been instrumental in advancing the joint efforts against human trafficking.

In summary, the joint projects on human trafficking between the UNODC and the EU demonstrate a delicate yet present degree of symmetry, as the reciprocity in resource exchanges and a degree of sovereign parity in their collaboration. The partnership has been characterized by a mutual respect and shared goals, and both organizations have contributed their resources and expertise to advance their collective efforts against human trafficking, yet a lack of information sharing is very much present, and more clarity on their dependency in future studies, would allow for a more accurate research outcome.

### ***Standardization***

Lastly, the final dimension of Aldrich's (1979) IOR theory, is standardization, which is a critical variable when analyzing the coordination of joint ventures between organizations. As described by Aldrich, standardization refers to the extent to which the units of exchange are delineated and the rules and procedures for interaction are fixed (1979).

Looking at benefits and challenges of high levels of standardization, the first thing that comes to mind is that, if two major IOs such as the EU and the UNODC follow the same procedures and protocols in their operations, increased efficiency and coordination can be expected. Not only that, but it has the ability to increase the quality of their work by ensuring that best practices are constantly followed. Additionally, the use of standardized language and frameworks can also facilitate information sharing and learning. When analyzing challenges, however, it is recorded that high levels of standardization can result in inflexibility and may hinder innovation. This occurs when two or more organizations are too rigid in their adherence to standardized procedures, and they consequently may miss opportunities to adapt to changing circumstances and adopt new approaches. Another issue is the possible loss of subtlety and context-specific information, both of which are critical for successful anti-trafficking operations. Therefore, especially in the context of such a dynamic issue as THB, it is crucial for IOs to strike a balance between standardization and flexibility, and to continually assess and adapt their procedures to ensure effectiveness and responsiveness (Aldrich, 1979; Dijkstra, 2016; Marrett, 1971).

Regarding the joint undertakings between the UNODC and the EU on fighting human trafficking, standardization plays a critical role in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of their collaboration. To assess the level of standardization, we need to examine how the two organizations delineate their units of exchange and establish rules and procedures for

interaction. Regarding the delineation of units of exchange, the UNODC and the EU exchange various resources and assets to fight human trafficking globally. For instance, they exchange expertise, technical assistance, and information to enhance their respective capabilities in addressing the multifaceted aspects of human trafficking (UNODC, 2021). The UNODC also offers data and research to the EU to help policy formulation and evidence-based decision-making on human trafficking prevention and prosecution. Moreover, the EU financially supports the UNODC's anti-human trafficking projects and initiatives, which require substantial financial resources (European Commission, 2021b).

In terms of the rules and procedures for interaction, the UNODC and the EU have established various agreements and frameworks to guide their collaboration. In 2018, for instance, the UNODC and the EU released a joint statement on the EU-UN global partnership, confirming their commitment to the SDGs and the fight against organized crime, including human trafficking (European External Action Service, 2018). This joint declaration is critical as it serves the purpose to establish a set framework between the two IOs on how to operate jointly, particularly focusing on information exchange, coordination, and anti-trafficking effectiveness. Moreover, the UNODC and the EU have established working groups and liaison officers to facilitate interaction and ensure that their joint projects are standardized. As main example, the UNODC and the EU established a Joint Working Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, which meets regularly to share information, coordinate activities, and identify areas of cooperation (European Commission, 2021b). This working group allows the two groups to discuss human trafficking concerns and devise coordinated strategies to combat the crime. In addition, the UNODC and the EU have developed various guidelines and protocols to standardize their interaction. The EU has also developed directives and binding regulations to prevent THB, such as the Directive on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking and Protecting Victims (European Commission, 2012). Moreover, there are coordination bodies in place that have fixed guidelines on specific events. To name one, the GLO.ACT project mentioned above is a joint initiative focusing on legal and criminal justice response to THB and migrant smuggling in 13 partner countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America (UNODC, 2020a). This initiative's coordination body consists of a steering committee, a technical working group, and a project management team that collaborate to guarantee the project's effective execution in accordance with defined standards and procedures.

To sum up, the joint projects on fighting human trafficking between the UNODC and the EU are characterized by a high level of standardization. The two organizations have

delineated their units of exchange and established rules and procedures for interaction through various agreements, frameworks, working groups, and protocols. They exchange various resources and assets, and have established mechanisms for cooperation and interaction to ensure that their joint projects are standardized. This high level of standardization is essential for the effective coordination of joint projects and the prevention and combating of human trafficking globally.

## Chapter VI: Conclusion and Outcomes

In conclusion, THB continues to be a serious humanitarian concern. Despite being internationally criminalized for the past two decades and notwithstanding the harsh penal consequences it entails, THB is still very much present in global supply chains and migration routes. Nevertheless, over the past decade and thanks to modern technologies and communication strategies, there has been an increase in awareness and focus on the phenomenon, which carried as consequence increased efforts by IOs and national agencies to engage in the fight against it.

As part of their humanitarian efforts, many different organizations, agencies, departments, and offices at various different levels conduct anti-human trafficking operations. The plethora of organizations engaging in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, however, also comes a widespread criticism, as scholars claim that such organizations need to be more consistent with efforts or work at cross-purposes (Paris, 2009). As a way to better understand their actions and interactions, this study therefore, sought to analyze the IOR of international organizations conducting anti-human trafficking operations. This thesis particularly focused on the understudied relationship between the EU and the UNODC in the field of human trafficking. The idea for this study was to uncover and evaluate the dynamics of IOs interaction in order to better comprehend how they function. In order to do so, the research question of the paper, aimed to look at their interaction placed in the broader context, beginning with analyzing the state and evolution of their relationships, then moving to the nature of their interaction, as well as how it is implemented, and how it can be improved.

While some academic research on joint efforts between the UN and the EU in the context of anti-human trafficking already exists, additional inquiries would be extremely beneficial in order to gain the necessary deeper understanding of the effectiveness and dynamics of these joint efforts. As mentioned throughout the paper, one of the main factors of relevance in the evolution of EU-UNODC relations has been the recognition that human trafficking is a global problem requiring a coordinated response. It is only through such a high level of recognition that efforts and resources, both operational and financial, are allocated to anti-THB operations. This has spurred policymakers to stir towards a higher degree of international cooperation to hopefully address and eradicate the issue. As analyzed in the historical section of this paper, the relationship between the EU and UNODC in the field of human trafficking, is characterized by a strong partnership and cooperation. The two organizations have been collaborating to combat human trafficking through joint initiatives and

programs. The objective of these projects, other than to fight and possibly eradicate THB, is also to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies, improve victim protection, and ameliorate coordination of efforts. The last chapter of this thesis provided a general overview of the various projects financially supported by the EU and implemented by the UNODC. Among these initiatives is the GLO.ACT project is the largest and most relevant ventures which seeks to improve criminal justice responses to human trafficking and migrant smuggling (UNODC, 2019).

While the EU and UNODC partnership in the area of anti-trafficking has been fruitful, there is still room for improvement, and to identify areas of possible improvement it is crucial to look at how the dynamics of interaction between the two IOs unfold in ongoing projects. Therefore, this thesis applied Aldrich's (1979) theory of IOR between organizations to the case of joint EU-UNODC projects in order to evaluate the actual status of their relations. This paper specifically looked at formalization, intensity, symmetry, and standardization as Aldrich's working variables to evaluate such collaboration. Several interesting factors emerged from the application of such variables. When looking at **formalization**, what came to light is that the EU-UNODC relationship is characterized by a high degree of formalization. This stems from the numerous binding agreements in place between the two organizations, as well as a clear hierarchy and decision-making process in joint ventures. On **intensity**, it became clear that both organizations have devoted a significant amount of resources and time to their collaboration. In spite of the fact that both entities share the same objectives, it is still not fully clear whether the relations between EU and UNODC are characterized by a high degree of **symmetry**, due to the lack of information on reciprocity in resource exchanges. Last but not least, **standardization** has been observed in this study between the two organizations as a result of agreements, protocols, and frameworks in place. In general, the results indicate that the sharing of information and best practices could be enhanced. There is a need for more effective mechanisms to share information and best practices, even though the two entities have signed agreements intended to improve cooperation. Additionally, as found in many different reports and studies, an increased and appropriate amount of resources are necessary to support anti-trafficking efforts. As the UNODC (2018b) notes, effective responses to human trafficking require sufficient resources.

While there has been some research on the formalization, intensity, symmetry, and standardization of joint projects and operations between the UNODC and the EU in the context of anti-human trafficking, there are still areas that could benefit from additional investigation. The role of politics in collaborative efforts to combat human trafficking is one area that needs

more study. It is essential to grasp how political factors, among which changes in government, diplomatic relations, and the geopolitical climate on a larger scale, have the power to impact international efforts to combat human trafficking. Additionally, further research could examine the dynamics of interaction and communication between the UNODC and the EU in anti-human trafficking efforts. For instance, one of the most urgent issues would be to have a deeper understanding of how information is shared between the two IOs and whether there are any difficulties or obstacles created by this in coordinating efforts. This can help identify areas for improvement in joint efforts to combat human trafficking.

In conclusion, through this qualitative research, it has been established that the partnership between the EU and UNODC is a crucial element of the international effort to combat human trafficking. Through the years, the two organizations have collaborated to combat and eradicate THB through joint initiatives and programs motivated by a shared commitment. Their partnership is a highly formalized one, as established by the presence of a variety of mechanisms, such as agreements regulating joint initiatives, which are implemented in at the grass root level through programs and activities. Their cooperative effort offers a promising example for other IOs to follow, and it is vital that their relationship continues to evolve and improve in order to combat human trafficking more effectively. In order to ensure that all victims are protected and perpetrators are brought to justice, the fight against THB entails a concerted effort from all involved stakeholders, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and individuals. Despite all the progress made, the awareness campaigns and the activism around it, more effort and preparedness are required. While the EU-UNODC case study is just one example of a relevant partnership where positive efforts are being made to combat human trafficking, the current world situation would really benefit from other organizations following their example. To ensure that their partnership remains effective in the fight against human trafficking, it is also crucial that it is reviewed, evaluated, and improved on a regular basis. The EU and UNODC, as well as any other organization, at any level, really can make significant progress toward eradicating human trafficking and protecting the most vulnerable members of society, but only through continued positive collaboration and well-managed joint initiatives.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

### 'Control' questions

Q1: May I record this interview for the purpose of transcribing and analyzing the data?

Q2: Should we quote any extract from this interview, would you like this to be:

- a. fully anonymized (e.g., UNODC)
- b. partly anonymized (e.g., UNODC + your position)
- c. not anonymized (e.g., UNODC + your position + your surname)

Q3: Which organization do you work for?

Q4: What is your position at (organization)?

Q5: Which are your main tasks and responsibilities?

### Research-related questions

Q1: Do UNODC and the EU cooperate against THB? (give some examples of GLO.ACT)

Follow up:

If yes, how do they cooperate?

Q2: How is cooperation facilitated, enhanced, promoted and supported? For example, do you have shared resources? Shared communication strategies? Joint coordinated activities?

Meetings (formal and informal)? Training?

Follow up:

Are there any areas in which they have a limited cooperation on anti-trafficking?

Q3: Is there a joint decision-making process or joint problem solving between the UNODC and the EU in anti-trafficking?

Follow up:

If they ask in which domain, talk about operations and project coordination.

Can you give examples?

Q4: Is there policy coordination between the UNODC and the EU on anti-trafficking?

Q5: Are there differences in the way you both jointly address THB or HS?

Q6: To what extent can you say that your cooperation contributes positively to solving human trafficking?