



AGIS Programme 2005

With the financial support of the European Commission

# Development of a child rights methodology to identify and support child victims of trafficking

## FULL REPORT

OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

(JLS/2005/AGIS/045)

Coordinator



**Save the Children**  
Italia ONLUS

Partners



Partners Bulgaria Foundation



caritas



**Salvați Copiii**  
Save the Children Romania

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

<b>I BULGARIA</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 General Overview	
1.2 Trafficking of male and female children for sexual exploitation	
1.3 Trafficking of male and female children for exploitation in forced labour, illegal activities and begging	
<b>2 GERMANY</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 General Overview	
2.2 Trafficking of male and female children for sexual exploitation	
2.3 Trafficking of male and female children for exploitation in forced labour, illegal activities and begging	
<b>3 ITALY</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 General Overview	
3.2 Trafficking of male and female children for sexual exploitation	
3.3 Trafficking of male and female children for exploitation in forced labour, illegal activities and begging	
<b>4 ROMANIA</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1 General Overview	
4.2 Trafficking of male and female children for sexual exploitation	
4.3 Trafficking of male and female children for exploitation in forced labour, illegal activities and begging	

**T**his Report presents the findings of the research conducted within the 24-month AGIS project, “Development of a Child Rights Methodology to Identify and Support Child Victims of Trafficking” (JLS/2005/AGIS/045), supported by the European Commission, in the four project countries, namely Bulgaria, Germany, Romania and Italy. The research highlights the main characteristics of child trafficking, drawing the profile of child victims, describing the way they are recruited and transported, and indicating trafficking routes and countries involved in the trafficking cycle. It also sheds some light on the conditions children live in before being recruited and in the course of trafficking, and gives some information on the forms of exploitation to which they are subjected. Most of the information gathered concerns trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and exploitation in illegal activities and begging.

The research findings have been fed into the child-rights based methodology to identify and support child victims of trafficking, which was the main aim of the project. In particular, the research has been key in the development of specific indicators for the identification of child victims.

## INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1

# BULGARIA

## 1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

### Vulnerability factors for child trafficking

Many are the factors affecting the vulnerability of children to trafficking in Bulgaria: poverty (in particular the feminisation of poverty), unemployment, domestic violence, lack of family support (including the case of children left behind by their parents after migration), lack of access to education or the non-completion of secondary studies, and lack of awareness and information on trafficking. In addition, in the case of Roma children, discrimination, social exclusion and marginalisation also increase the risk of trafficking. Furthermore, the fast spread and strengthening of organised crime in the country constitutes a powerful negative factor with regard to child trafficking.

Although the existence of vulnerability factors does not give the certainty that children will be trafficked, it does increase the risk of this occurring. Therefore children at risk are believed to have the following characteristics: they belong to the Roma community, they do not have access to education or their level of education is very low (this is more common among Roma children or children from isolated rural communities) or they have recently finished compulsory schooling and do not have the opportunity to continue their studies, they went through traumatic experiences (e.g. violence, rape, incest), they are poor, they present deviant behaviours, they are already involved in delinquency, they are deprived of parental care. Most frequently, they are between 12-18 years of age. The research has also led to the identification of regions where the risk of trafficking is higher, these being:

- Big cities and nearby villages in South and South-Eastern Bulgaria. Amongst them are Pazardjik/Peshtera, Plovdiv, Sliven and Bourgas known to be places of origin of child victims exploited mainly in prostitution but also for begging and other illegal activities. Bourgas Region and Kameno have been identified as areas at risk for trafficking of unborn babies for illegal international adoptions. Also Sliven, Stara and Nova Zagora are places of origin of pregnant women smuggled to Greece, and Pazardjik and Peshtera, of women smuggled to France and Italy. Trafficking starts from the moment women reach destination countries and give birth.
- Villages in Northern Bulgaria in the region of Dobrich, Rousse, Byala, Veliko Turnovo, Gorna Oryachovitsa, Turgovishte, Razgrad, Vratsa and Mezdra.
- Vidin in the North-West and Sandanski and Petrich in the South-West are areas at high risk of both international trafficking for all purposes and internal trafficking.

### Countries in the trafficking cycle

Bulgaria remains a country of origin and transit and, to a lesser extent, a country of destination. Main transit countries for child trafficking from Bulgaria are Albania, Romania, Serbia and Macedonia. The most common destination countries are Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy. However, according to trafficked victims interviewed and NGO representatives, other destination countries are now occasionally targeted, these being Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Macedonia.

Moldova and Ukraine seem to be the countries of origin of victims trafficked to Bulgaria, or through Bulgaria to Western European countries.

Furthermore, according to recent research findings, it seems that internal trafficking is increasing, in particular for sexual exploitation. To this extent, it is important to note that internal trafficking is a phenomenon that presents quite different characteristics to international trafficking. Nonetheless, the analysis of

concrete cases has led to the conclusion that sometimes exploitation within a country is one stage of international trafficking itself and its purpose is to overcome the victim's resistance and facilitate his/her transportation across the border.

The high levels of unemployment, poverty and the disproportions in the regional development are conducive both to internal and external migration, as well as to subjection to extreme forms of exploitation. Insofar as both migration and exploitation are elements of the trafficking in people, hypothetically the inhabitants of weakly developed regions are subjected to a greater risk of trafficking due to the risks they are willing to take in search of a living. This is equally true of long-term vulnerable and closed societies such as the Roma, whose living conditions however usually do not depend on the level of development of the region in which they live<sup>1</sup>.

### Border crossing

In general and independently from the form of exploitation, trafficked children leave the country using different modalities.

In the case of Roma children, it is very likely that they are accompanied either by their parents or relatives or travel with their parents' formal authorisation and their legal documents. Otherwise, children travelling alone with recruiters or traffickers, are given false identity documents. In some cases where the victims are adolescents, they declare they are 18 years old to avoid presenting the authorisation from their parents or guardians to leave the country. If they are very young, then false declarations of consent are given, previously prepared by the traffickers. According to research findings, these declarations are generally issued by criminal networks. There are rumours that sometimes corrupt notaries are involved in the forgeries, but this information has not been corroborated.

## 1.2 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### Main profile

The majority of children victims of trafficking or at risk of becoming victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are aged between 16 and 18 years. They are mainly female, but can also be male.

### Recruitment

The first contact between traffickers and children victims commonly takes place in discos, restaurants or pubs and frequently also in offices that appear to be "modelling and fashion model agencies". In some cases, children already involved in prostitution, are approached in the hotels where they work by recruiters. Although it is difficult to prove the active involvement of hotel owners or employees in trafficking, according to representatives of NGOs interviewed, a certain degree of complicity exists and they benefit from this support offered to recruiters. Recruiters are mainly acquaintances or friends and sometimes relatives who frequently promise well paid jobs in Western European countries. Therefore, most of the victims do choose to work abroad although they dream of jobs and situations very different from what in fact await them. They are most frequently children

<sup>1</sup> For further information see Save the Children in Albania, *Children Speak Out - Trafficking Risk and Resilience in Southeast Europe*, Regional Report, July 2007 (hereinafter: "Children Speak Out")

experiencing economic hardship, being children from poor isolated areas or children escaped from an institution. Otherwise, they are adolescents with aspirations for fast material gains.

In the case of children already involved in prostitution, it is very likely that they were aware that they would have performed the same activity abroad albeit freely, to earn more money than what they would do in Bulgaria.

Sometimes children follow-up real job advertisements in newspapers, offering positions such as models, barmen, waiters, or chambermaids.

In general, recruiters establish a relationship of trust with the victims, which is quite easy when recruiters are already friends, relatives or acquaintances (including inhabitants of their same village). Sometimes traffickers use other victims as recruiters, who are controlled and manipulated and instructed to get close to children and convince them to leave the country. In other situations, it could be that traffickers themselves become friends with the victims through third parties or “by chance” in bars or discotheques. These bars usually are owned by criminal groups involved in trafficking, which, often, is the very reason for their establishment. Discos are instead meeting points for most of the youth living in the country. It is very common that recruiters give expensive gifts to victims, in order to establish a relationship of trust. Roma children are frequently sold to traffickers by their parents or relatives who, sometimes, may be involved in the exploitation itself.

*K. is a 16 year old girl who regularly attends a centre for street children in a small town in South-Western Bulgaria. She was approached one night at a discotheque by a man who claimed to be the boyfriend of one of her friends at the centre and the girl also knew him as the son of a local shopkeeper. The man met K. several times and each time he gave her expensive presents - a mobile phone and a gold bracelet. He offered K. a job as a chamber maid at a hotel in the Netherlands with very good payment. He also told her that her friend was currently there, and would be very glad to work with her at the hotel. Later, she discovered that the girl who this man claimed to know intimately had been trafficked to the Netherlands for the purposes of sexual exploitation.*

*A. is a 17 year old girl from a residential institution for children without parental care in a big Bulgarian city. She told a friend from the home that she had found on the internet a very interesting advertisement for a modelling agency, but told her not to tell anyone. She had always wanted to be a model and was planning to send her photo to this agency which was based in Germany. She ran away from the home and the staff of the institution called the police who started a national search of the girl. Later it was found out that she had crossed the border and for a long time nobody heard from her. Her friend finally told the staff of the institution about A.'s plans and they tried to contact the agency she applied to but found it no longer existed.*

## Transport and trafficking routes

Research findings have confirmed that channels and networks for trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation coincide with those for trafficking in drug and weapons.

Land transportation is the one used most frequently and traffickers or recruiters use both private or public buses. Nonetheless, sometimes children are moved to destination countries via plane, which, apparently, is believed to be safer, as it prevents victims from running away.

On the trafficking routes, accompanying adults, in general either recruiters or other intermediaries that depend from the traffickers, change at the so called “redistribution stations”. This occurs where a group of victims depart Bulgaria travelling together to a certain point accompanied by their recruiters, but then go on to different destination countries accompanied by different people.

Although the main transit countries for trafficking from Bulgaria are Romania, Serbia, and Macedonia, the largest number of victims come from the interior of the

country, and the victims from the coastal regions are equal in number to those from the areas bordering on Romania<sup>2</sup>.

*G. (a 12 year old girl) and K. (a 10 year old boy), sister and brother, were found by the Border police at the border with Serbia in a van transporting meat. The police report stated that the children appeared to be very frightened, confused and frozen. They told the police that they were originally picked up in their hometown by a man and a woman who told them that their mother was looking for them. They had travelled for hours to what appeared to be a village, after that they were taken by another man, forced into the meat truck and later on were discovered by the Border police.*

*Y., a 15 year old girl, had met her boyfriend on the internet and was making plans to visit him in Belgium where he claimed to live and study. One of her friends in Bulgaria told her that he could provide her with false documents needed for travelling abroad. Y. was very enthusiastic about finally meeting her new friend. Several weeks later, a call was received at the centre for abused women and children that Y. had returned and been stopped at Sofia airport, with visible signs of abuse. A social worker from the centre went to meet her at the airport and it was later discovered that she had been trafficked by her so-called “boyfriend” to another town in Belgium.*

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Prior to being trafficked for sexual exploitation, children in Bulgaria live in poverty, coming from families with irregular incomes and unemployment. It is also very common that they were sexually abused in the family. Domestic violence towards children and women is generally considered to be a private problem and is justified as being common and normal.

Many are also the victims who were already engaged in prostitution, which, apparently, is considered in Bulgaria as a “profitable occupation” and socially accepted. From recent research findings it appears that young girls voluntarily get involved in prostitution, but then enter internal networks of exploitation and trafficking and eventually become victims of international trafficking. Recent interviews led to confirm that the victims are often offered opportunities to practice prostitution abroad, for higher earnings. Otherwise, they are sold to international traffickers by either local pimps or internal traffickers.

Notwithstanding the above, very often, adolescents who enter the trafficking cycle, have a decent standard of living and good relations with the family and peers. Despite this, they leave their studies, judging that education is not important and opt to work in order to earn good money. They are generally convinced that life in the West is always better than in Bulgaria and can be easily convinced that they will find profitable job opportunities abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Children Speak Out.

## 1.3 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN FORCED LABOUR, ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AND BEGGING

### Main profiles

The majority of children victims of trafficking or at risk of becoming victims of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in begging and illegal activities are aged between 8 and 14 years and belong almost exclusively to the Roma community. Those exploited in forced labour (mainly in agricultural work) are aged between 16 and 18 years of age. Victims falling in these three categories are mainly male.

### Recruitment

Most of the children trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in begging and illegal activities are Roma and they are recruited with the involvement of their family. They are sold or rented to traffickers by their parents or relatives who are generally persuaded to do this by other extended family members or by acquaintances. Sometimes, family members are the exploiters themselves. It seems that this happens in particular within the Kardarashi community. According to the research findings, children go through several stages of selection before being trafficked to exercise pick pocketing. At first there is a period of training which is done within the clan and just with their immediate family. Next, the successfully trained children “gain experience” in big cities and resorts in the country. Only then, children enter international trafficking networks and depart to foreign countries. Many are the cases of girls sold as brides by their families. This is considered a slavery like practice<sup>3</sup> under international standards, which is included in the definition of trafficking under the Palermo Protocol and the CoE Convention on trafficking and is prohibited by international human rights law.

*B. is an 8 year old Roma boy who can be frequently seen begging on the streets of S., a big city in Bulgaria. When people try to offer him food he will refuse and request money. His older brothers and sisters are also trained. His father and grandfather transferred to him all their knowledge and skills for begging and at the age of 5 he started to beg first in his home town and was later brought by his father to the capital -the biggest and richest city of the county. He started to beg on the streets, in restaurants, and in buses and trams.*

The number of those trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation, begging, and petty crimes who come to light, is very small, but in reality the actual proportion between the victims of sexual and labour exploitation may be different. Furthermore, there are indications of occasional “multipurpose” trafficking or shifting from one type of exploitation to another (usually from a lighter to a graver form).

### Transport and trafficking routes

Children trafficked for exploitation in illegal activities and begging mainly travel by land. They are transported using public buses or sometimes small private buses whose drivers are part of the trafficking network. Most of the time either the children’s parents or relatives travel with them, both where the adults are responsible

<sup>3</sup> UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, entered into force on the 30 September 1957, art. 1 (c) (i). (Hereinafter UN Slavery Convention).

for selling or renting children or where they are in fact exploiters themselves. The main country of destination for trafficked children engaged in illegal activities is Austria. Instead, destination countries of children involved in begging are Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands.

*“In the Netherlands prostitution is legalised. Germany is a country with an extremely open social policy for any kind of immigrants, for which right now it is clearly starting to have problems; but one way or another, things are very well organised there and a person going there who has no work, etc., is easily included in the system and can obtain social benefits, medical assistance, etc. (...) There are whole gangs there. There are many people from the Balkan region, who suddenly turn out to be involved in all sorts of such gangs of organised crime.”*

Representative of NGO at national level

*T.I.B. is a 14 year old Bulgarian girl and survivor of trafficking in human beings. She was referred to the Crisis Unit of Animus Association Foundation by a border police officer after arriving from the Netherlands at Sofia Airport. In a conversation with a clinical social worker at the Crisis Unit T. explained that she was sold to a family of Roma origin living permanently in Amsterdam by her mother and her brother who were also from the Roma community. T. was told that she was supposed to become **the Dutch family’s son’s wife but after her relatives left, her so called “father and mother in law” forced her to steal from stores and from people on the street.** According to her, she was not good at stealing and police caught her but then released her. As she could not bear living with the Roma family she escaped and for 10 days she stayed with another man but then the Roma family found her. They were very angry with her and beat her and than called her mother and asked for their money back. But T.’s family refused to return the money they received for selling their daughter and the Roma family sold her to a Turkish pimp.*

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Children in Bulgaria live in situations of discrimination and marginalisation, due to their belonging to the Roma community. Many of them are already involved in begging or illegal activities, mainly pick-pocketing, in line with the Roma tradition.

Children belonging to the Karadashi community enjoy a relatively good standard of living as does the rest of the community, whose material wellbeing depends very much from the income resulting from illegal activities. Roma children belonging to other Roma communities, instead, live in poverty which is the main factor pushing their families to sell or rent them to the Karadashi community or other traffickers. The level of education of Roma children is generally very low. They easily leave school supported in this decision by their family who prefer to use them for remunerative activities.

In general, children that become victims of trafficking lack any form of support (material, psychological, emotional) from their families, but also from the institutions and friends.

*T. is a 13 year old girl of Roma origin, who is one of six children in the family. T. grew up with her entire family. The family’s house is relatively big. The family’s main income comes from begging and thefts. About 10 years ago her father tried to open a small shop in the neighbourhood but he quickly went bankrupt. Her family is one of the most well known for their skills in begging and pick-pocketing. T. has now been placed in the home of her mother’s nephew because social services staff reported that her family environment was not good for her and that special measures needed to be taken. Nevertheless, she continues to steal and beg from time to time.*

## CHAPTER 2

# GERMANY



## 2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

### Introduction

In Germany the problem of child trafficking, and the different types of exploitation involved, is still for the most part an unknown entity. Very little to almost no information at all is available for victims in the under-14 age group. Only individual cases are reported. Also exploitation for the purpose of illegal activities, forced labour and begging has only been reported in a small number of individual cases. Finally, very little is known about child victims of trafficking of German nationality.

Perhaps due to a tradition of investigating the red-light milieu and several years of activism by NGOs and police against trafficking of women, for many years now more information on the sexual exploitation of victims of trafficking can be found. However, the exchange of knowledge and information between NGOs, law enforcement and public authorities who work on child trafficking is still at the beginning.

Hence, often conclusions drawn are little more than educated guesses. Given this state of knowledge, experts among law enforcement personnel, NGO staff or officers of public authorities do not dare to state trends, tendencies or risk profiles. However they admit that the problem is, or at least could be, larger than the few cases which currently come to their attention. In this context, one can understand the importance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's workshop in Wörrstadt on 29/30 October 2007 on collecting ideas for strategies for investigating the "dark field" of child trafficking in Germany. Many stakeholders who the research team encountered during the project acknowledge that due to shortcomings in the legal framework and lack of awareness, the problem is not yet being adequately addressed in Germany.

In light of the increasing presence in the media and in public discussion, and according to our research findings and statements of external stakeholders in the research, child trafficking for the purpose of illegal adoptions is becoming an acknowledged problem in Germany. The phenomenon of illegal adoptions is addressed under paragraph 235 of the German Criminal Code entitled "Kinderhandel", the literal translation in German for "trafficking of children". However, illegal adoptions will not be covered in this chapter on the situation in Germany as the motivation for engaging in child trafficking by those seeking children for adoption is very different from the motivation of those who profit from trafficking for sexual exploitation, illegal activities, forced labour or begging. However the phenomenon of illegal adoptions is addressed under section 235 of the German Criminal Code entitled "Kinderhandel", the literal translation in German for "trafficking of children".

Forced marriages of minors should be mentioned as a specific type of child trafficking. In recent years, numerous cases have become public in Germany. As the cultural background of those involved plays a dominant role, this phenomenon should be studied separately and therefore will not be covered in this report.

### Vulnerability factors for child trafficking

Foreign children who were identified in Germany as victims of child trafficking often have a similar personal and social background. A set of certain factors in children's lives and countries of origin appear to increase their vulnerability to becoming victims of child trafficking. Many victims have in common that in their countries of origin political, social and economical crises, violence, religious conflicts, discrimination of minorities, poverty and debt weigh heavily on families and destroy social and family structures. High unemployment rates and low incomes, especially among women, destabilise families. The level of education is often fairly low, particularly in rural areas. The number of teenage mothers has increased significantly over recent years. In former communist countries the perception that the State is sort of a surrogate family is still very prevalent amongst the population. In some traditions girls are of less value than boys. In some cultures children are perceived as

little adults and the possibility of earning money in a foreign country is seen as chance to contribute to the family income<sup>4</sup>.

### Countries in the trafficking cycle

Germany is a destination country, transit country and also country of origin of victims of child trafficking as the numbers of the "Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006"<sup>5</sup> (a short national report on human trafficking by the German Federal Bureau of Investigation) and individual case studies show. The numbers in the "Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006" seem to support the thesis of Wuttke<sup>6</sup> that the classical segmentation into countries of origin and destination countries no longer applies.

Most victims of foreign origin come from countries in Eastern and Central Europe, but there are also children from Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to *terre des hommes* there is a known route from Romania through the Ukraine, Poland, or Slovakia to Germany<sup>7</sup>. Also Austria seems to be a transit country on the way to Germany. Destination areas in Germany are normally big cities and congested urban areas. Representatives of NGOs and law enforcement personnel working in cities along the Eastern border of Germany, like Berlin, Frankfurt a. d. Oder or Hof, report of an increasing number of child trafficking cases. Cities along the border seem to be used in the trafficking cycle as entry points to Germany.

### Recruitment

The interviews conducted and the literature review paint the following picture: In many cases children get into the trafficking situation through their own families, close relatives or other persons in a position of trust. The traffickers may belong to the families themselves and be persons in a position of trust, or the traffickers may get the children's caregivers (e.g. parents or guardians) either to commit the children to their care or to sell the children to them. Sometimes the traffickers obtain the caregivers' consent on the basis of false promises for a better future for the children and/or the families. Sometimes the caregivers are forced or pressured to hand the children over to them. Often sexual abuse and violence has already occurred within the families. The contact strategy of child traffickers is in general characterised by building up of trust with the caregivers and/or the children as the initial step.

Children who live on the streets in their countries of origin are often contacted directly by the traffickers.

Representatives of NGOs who work with migrant women and/or victims of female trafficking report that some of their clients confirmed the implementation of the following contact strategy: perpetrators make contact with children in holiday areas and then bring the children on a tourist visa or as an adoptive child to Germany for sexual exploitation. *Thönissen and Meyer-Andersen*<sup>8</sup> describe a similar strategy in their study. According to *terre des hommes* paedophiles in Germany also marry women with children from poor foreign countries who are displayed in "wedding catalogues", to bring them to Germany and abuse the children sexually. The NGO "Zartbitter" in Cologne registers six to seven cases like this per year<sup>9</sup>.

Child traffickers may work on an individual basis, and are sometimes family members or friends of the victims. In other cases child traffickers belong to smaller criminal groups or to a larger criminal organisation. In Germany there are persons who act as points of contact and/or as middlemen.

### Border crossing

In some cases the child victims are listed in the accompanying adult's passport as their own children and as a consequence, they are able to enter Germany together with that adult. A different strategy used by child traffickers in order to avoid border control is to bring the children to the border and hand them over to a contact person from Germany.

<sup>4</sup> Kurzinfo Osteuropa: Kinderhandel in Osteuropa (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007 from: [http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Kurzinfo\\_Osteuropa.pdf](http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Kurzinfo_Osteuropa.pdf), pp. 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006. Accessed on 22/11/2007 from <http://www.bka.de/>.

<sup>6</sup> Gisela Wuttke (1998). Kinderprostitution, Kinderpornographie, Tourismus. Lamuv. Göttingen, pp. 49 ff.

<sup>7</sup> FactSheet Kinderhandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from: <http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Deutschland.pdf>, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> A. Thönissen, K. Meyer-Andersen (1990). Dunkelziffer. Das geheime Geschäft mit der schmutzigen Pornographie. München, pp. 58 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Fact Sheet Kinderhandel in EU-Ländern (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from: [http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Factsheet\\_EU.pdf](http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Factsheet_EU.pdf).

In some cases the children travel on their own passports, but the parental consent document which allows the child to exit the country in the custody of another adult, is counterfeited. Child traffickers bribe border control officers so that they do not question the false passports or papers of parental consent. Interview partners confirm that bribery and corruption, for example, is common practice at the Romanian border when leaving the country.

Minor girls who are forced into prostitution obtain counterfeited passports that indicate that they are of age.

Some children enter Germany as unaccompanied minors. Although the children are then taken care of by public and private organisations and normally request asylum, this does not automatically end relations between traffickers and victims<sup>10</sup>. Mostly the child traffickers and the victims travel to Germany by bus, train or car. Only a small number of victims come to Germany by plane.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

External stakeholders describe that in a first step of exploitation process, prior to the children being trafficked, the traffickers seek to challenge the “normal” social structure that those children live in. The children gradually become disconnected, separated and even isolated from their families. Those children living in orphanages who lack protective family structures, can often be fairly easily disconnected from their social structures and deceived with false promises of a better future by traffickers. Then slowly “professional structures” are put in place, that is, the children have to obey the orders of their “bosses” with whom they feel a false sense of community and belonging. When the children are carried off to the destination countries, the traffickers normally confiscate the children’s personal documents. The traffickers create an ongoing dependency of the children on the traffickers and a constant situation of subjection. To that end, they take advantage of the financial dependency of the child, abuse them sexually and use threats, violence and torture. A typical dynamic of exploitation is that in the beginning the traffickers feign a sort of “paradise” to the children. After a while, step by step the methods get harder and more violent. If the exploitation takes place with the consent of the family, many victims do not perceive their situation as exploitative because of their loyalty to their families.

*Natascha (16 years) comes from the Ukraine but she looks a lot younger than she actually is. Acquaintances approached her in her home town and offered her a job taking care of an elderly woman in Germany and being her social companion. Natascha’s motivation was to earn enough money to support her family. She got a counterfeited passport, because as minor she did not have one. She came to Germany via Poland. In Germany she was forced into prostitution working 12 to 16 hours per day. When she couldn’t handle it anymore, she was 18 years and filed a complaint with the police. She got support from a counselling centre and attended a German language course. However, she could not complete the language course because she suffered from severe psychological problems.*

Victim, interviewed by a social worker in Berlin, 2006

*Anna (14 years) and Lena (16 years) from Romania were recruited separately by acquaintances of their friends in their home village. As they had seen the recruiters before, they trusted the recruiters. Anna and Lena wanted to work as waitresses in restaurants in Germany during the summer break. Motivation for them was to gain experience in a foreign country and to get to know new people. Anna and Lena were brought to Germany via Austria together with Nadja (18 years). In Germany they were sold to a brothel and were forced into prostitution. Due to their young age, lack of experience and foreign language skills they could not escape from the exploitative situation. When the police investigated the perpetrators for other reasons, the police arrested the three girls and put them in detention for deportation. At this point it was not known that they were victims of trafficking. Also, had Anna’s age been known she would have been placed in the custody of the Children and Youth Welfare Department.*

<sup>10</sup> Fact Sheet Kinderhandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from: <http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Deutschland.pdf>, page 2.

*It took a while until the three girls told their stories and were willing to give testimony against the traffickers. Immediately they were released from the detention facility and accommodated in a youth welfare project. At first, not able to handle their freedom in a foreign society, they disappeared in the milieu again. But they stayed in contact with the counselling centre. Finally the social workers succeeded in detaching them from the milieu. They attended German language classes and qualification programs on a regular basis. Today Anna and Lena live and work in Germany.*

Victims, interviewed by a social worker in Berlin, 2007

## 2.2 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### Main profile

In the context of sexual exploitation most children are forced to prostitute themselves and/or are abused for child pornography. The “*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006*”<sup>11</sup> indicates 775 criminal proceedings based on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In 62 of them, being 8% of all cases, the victims were between 14 and 17 years old. In 320 cases, victims were between 18 and 20 years old. The criminal proceedings almost exclusively concerned female victims (98,5%). The victims’ countries of origin are Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Russia, Bulgaria, Thailand and Nigeria. For the underage victims however, only Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and Slovakia are listed in the “*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006*”. In the 14-17 year old age group, almost half of the victims, namely 28 of the 62 victims, are of German nationality. Overall the statistics show the predominance of Central and Eastern European countries among the foreign countries of origin, although the specific countries vary from year to year. In editions of the “*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel*” of previous years you can also find other Central and Eastern European countries like Latvia and the Ukraine. This could be a clue as to *terre des hommes*’ insightful comment that trafficking routes and methods change and are adapted to each environment<sup>12</sup>. In general, for different reasons, for example, the lack of centralised statistics in Germany or information provided by citizens to the police on potential child trafficking cases, the *Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel* does not fully enlighten the obscure field of human/child trafficking in Germany nor does the Federal Bureau of Investigation claim to do so. Combined with the results of the project research it appears that the “*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel*” illustrates what is just the tip of the iceberg and allows good guesses for trends and tendencies to be made.

In addition to the statistics presented, representatives of NGOs and/or law enforcement personnel confirm the almost exclusive predominance of underage girls as victims and that Central and Eastern European countries are the main countries of origin. However they also know of girls trafficked from Western African countries like Nigeria and Ghana, as well as Asia and Latin America.

The research findings concerning child trafficking in Germany are still so little and so much is still unknown that no interview partner, expert, nor author of a relevant study would conclude specific risk groups at this point.

Experts, interview partners and participants of the project seminar<sup>13</sup> in Munich believe that there are also a considerable number of child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation under 14 years of age. But nothing is known about this group of children. Also for the victims of German origin no generalisation can be made. These two groups are extremely in the dark. Only individual cases are known, e.g. underage prostitutes and adult prostitutes of German nationality who hustle in Dortmund tell that already at the age of 13 or 14, parents, an uncle or a brother had sold them for money or to return favours from neighbours or acquaintances

<sup>11</sup> Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006. Accessed on 22/11/2007, from <http://www.bka.de/>, pp. 6 ff.

<sup>12</sup> FactSheet Kinderhandel in EU-Ländern (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from: [http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Factsheet\\_EU.pdf](http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Factsheet_EU.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> In the context of the AGIS project that is presented in this document a seminar took place in Munich on 27/28 September 2007 addressing the situation of minor victims of human trafficking in Germany. Thirty representatives of the law enforcement agencies, jurisdiction, official authorities and NGOs discussed issues of identification and support of minor victims of human trafficking in Germany.

who sexually abused them. There are also cases of German girls who were sold and trafficked to Holland, Greece or Switzerland for sexual exploitation. This type of human trafficking is normally linked to the red light milieu<sup>14</sup>.

## Recruitment

According to Heike Rudat, Director and Spokesperson for Women's Affairs of the Federal Association of Detectives in Germany, there are four typical recruitment strategies which are applied to female victims of trafficking<sup>15</sup> and, in the opinion of external stakeholders, at least three of them may also be true for teenage girls who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation:

- Girls are forced into prostitution without knowing anything about the "sex-job" before. Using violence, traffickers bring the girls across the borders to Germany and sexually exploit them, again using violence.
- Girls are deceived. They expect to work in Germany as cleaning ladies, dancers, etc. Once they have arrived in Germany, the traffickers tell them that they must prostitute themselves.
- Girls already work as prostitutes of their own volition in their countries of origin. After arrival in Germany the "future" exploiter changes the working conditions. They do not get the salary that they had agreed upon any longer, e.g. they do not get 50-60% of the earnings, but only 10%. They are not allowed to take breaks. They cannot refuse punters or certain sexual practices. Under such conditions the girl would seek to quit, but instead the exploiter forces her to continue.
- The fourth strategy is through marriage, meaning that a woman of foreign origin marries a German man who then forces her into prostitution in order to "contribute to the family income". This strategy may not be so applicable to females under 18 years of age. However, it could be true for girls who have just turned 18 years or for the children of the married women who they bring into the marriage.

Other experts report that among child victims three main motives for leaving their countries are emerging:

- a certain degree of adventurousness, the wish to experience something new,
- the wish or the need to earn money for themselves and for their families and
- a romantic relationship with the perpetrator. Perpetrators behave according to these motives and present themselves as enabler of chances or as romantic partner.

In the "*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006*" Germans dominate the group of suspected traffickers and exploiters. About 18% of these Germans were born in other countries, e.g. Turkey, Poland or Kazakhstan. Besides this the countries of origin or countries of birth are similar to the nationalities of the victims. In cases where the child victim is of German nationality the suspected trafficker is normally also German. Romantic relationships, financial dependencies or family relationships often play a role prior to the exploitative situation.

A special situation can be found in the border region between Germany and the Czech Republic. German men pay for sexual services of Czech children. These children often come from very poor families. Parents, other relatives or organised gangs of pimps offer the children to clients, in some cases even directly and openly on the street. In 1999 the Czech police registered 1150 cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children outside their own family. Through prostitution, the children can earn a living for their families. Generally these children do not attend school. Child prostitution also takes place in areas where police are present. For example, in Cheb, a small Czech town of 36,000 inhabitants, you can find 98 night clubs, sex houses and sex apartments<sup>16</sup>.

## Transport and trafficking routes

In addition to the information given under the general overview and the main profile it can be stated that the number of countries of origin has increased. The

<sup>14</sup> FactSheet Kinderhandel in und nach Deutschland - Fallbeispiele (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from: <http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Kinderhandelsfaelle.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Heike Rudat (2007). An die Grenzen stoßen - Schwierigkeiten bei der Bekämpfung des Menschenhandels. Accessed on 22/11/2007, from: [http://www.gegenfrauenhandel.de/download/20070308\\_Rudat.pdf](http://www.gegenfrauenhandel.de/download/20070308_Rudat.pdf), pp. 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Kurzinfo Osteuropa: Kinderhandel in Osteuropa (n.d.). Accessed on 16/02/2007, from [http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Kurzinfo\\_Osteuropa.pdf](http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/site/uploads/media/deutsch/Kurzinfo_Osteuropa.pdf), pp. 2-3; and Cathrin Schauer (2003). Kinder auf dem Strich. Horlemann. Bad Honnef.

trafficking routes often go through several countries and include several stops and changes of transportation. Within Germany the girls are often exchanged between traffickers and move from one "Bundesland" to another. A precise overview of main trafficking routes is not available.

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Prostitution takes place in bars, brothels, in private apartments, on the street and through house and hotel agencies. House and hotel agencies work on the basis of cell phone numbers that are advertised in the press. Also the Internet and short message service (sms) are used for procuring sexual services. Prostitution in homes or hotels are harder to detect and to control. Therefore it is the ideal setting for sexual exploitation of victims of trafficking, especially if the victims are in Germany illegally. Traffickers exploit the helplessness or the plight of the victims and use physical and/or psychological violence and threats against the victim or their family members in the country of origin.

In Germany no so-called "godfather" of the red light milieu exists. Local bosses for single regions or cities have business-like relations with each other. Ethnic backgrounds and criminal acts such as blackmail or requests for protection money are characteristic of these groups.

*My name is Ana (name is changed) and I am 18 years old. I have been living in Germany for 1 1/2 years now. I was born in Romania. My parents got divorced when I was one year old. Up to my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday I was raised by my grandmother in a small village. Then I lived in my father's family so I could attend school. But our daily family life was full of fights and conflicts. Although my father was against it, I got in touch with my mother. I wanted to live with her. It was important for me to help her because she suffered from multiple sclerosis. Life with her was not easy either. Her husband did not accept me. Finally my mother sent me away. And I ended up in the streets. There I met a woman who took me in and offered me a job in a supermarket in Italy. At this point I was 16 years old and still a minor. In order to get my passport quickly, she made use of her good contacts with a notary and the police. I lived with her until my passport was ready and two friends of her brought me to Italy. The journey to Italy was quite easy. At the Romanian border the men paid 50 Euros so they could take me across the border without the consent of my parents. In Italy I found out that I was not going to work in a supermarket but had to hustle. In the beginning I refused, but when they beat me and starved me, I finally accepted what they forced me to do. After several months, when the police raided the apartment, I managed to escape to Romania. I lived there in an apartment until the trafficker found me. They brought me back to Italy. In Italy they destroyed my passport and sold me to an Albanian trafficker. He brought me to Germany. At a central station in Germany the police checked us. As I was without a passport, I was arrested, but my accompanier was permitted to leave. I was in jail for one month and sentenced for my illegal presence in Germany. I did not tell the policemen my story because I was afraid of the Romanian trafficker. I thought they would let me go. When I realized that they would deport me to Romania, I was desperate. Finally I got in touch with a woman of an NGO whom I trusted and I told her my story.*

Victim, interviewed by a social assistant in Munich, 2006

*Zdenka and Wera (both 15 years) are orphans from the Czech Republic. They were approached in their country of origin. The recruiters engaged both girls in romantic relationships. After a while they asked the girls for their help with a project in Germany. The girls followed the men to Germany where they worked in a brothel. The men were their pimps. When the police arrested the girls, they did not want to leave the milieu, but wanted to continue with prostitution out of love for their pimps. Zdenka and Wera denied to give testimony against their "friends". Shortly after that they were brought back to their guardian in the orphanage in the Czech Republic.*

Victims, interviewed by a social worker in Berlin, 2006

## 2.3 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN FORCED LABOUR, ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AND BEGGING

### Main profiles

Illegal activities committed by victims of trafficking in Germany consist primarily of theft, drug dealing and drug smuggling. The age of the children used for illegal activities is normally between 8 and 14 years, thus under the age of criminal consent. In general boys are recruited. They often come from Central and Eastern European countries such as Romania and Albania. External stakeholders report that Albanian families encourage their children from the age of 14 on to work in another country and to support the family financially. The children become indebted to traffickers for their travel to the country of destination. There are also cases of adolescent boys from Africa who have been arrested for illegal activities like drug dealing. However, it is not clear if they are victims of child trafficking.

Roma children from Bulgaria are known as “Klau- und Bettelkinder” (meaning “children who steal and beg”) in larger cities. They often live with family members in Germany. The extent of trafficking and exploitation is not yet clear.

The “*Bundeslagebild Menschenhandel 2006*” explains that so far there is very little knowledge on human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour. Exploitation in this context is to the detriment of foreigners with no legal immigration status and occurs in the catering trade, e.g. Asian restaurants, or in private households, e.g. as Au-pair or as embassy staff. The workers are recruited in their countries of origin via advertisements in the media. Often the exploiter and victim know each other beforehand. However, the statistics do not indicate the number of cases or age groups involved. It is not clear if minors are affected, however one could validly conceive that adolescent boys and girls are also recruited and exploited.

### Recruitment

Besides the information given under the general overview and the main profile, no further detailed conclusions can be drawn from the results of the project research.

In general, children under 14 years of age who commit crimes are not recorded which diminishes the possibility of collecting relevant data on child trafficking for the purpose of illegal activities. Generally begging is allowed in Germany. Under certain circumstances it can be an infringement but no crime in itself, unless it involves trickery. Therefore there are no records of numbers of child beggars either. The criminal investigation of forced labour in Germany is only just beginning. Publications by the Federal Bureau of Investigation still lack numbers and detailed information in this regard.

### Transport and trafficking routes

Main areas for criminal activities are the big cities and congested urban areas in Germany, such as the Ruhr area, Stuttgart, Hamburg and Berlin. Participants from Hamburg at the project seminar in Munich reported individual cases where as soon as the policemen noticed illegal activities or begging of minors and started to investigate, the suspects left the city and disappeared.

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Looking at known individual cases, it could be assumed that a large number of victims come from very poor families in very poor countries/regions, and that either the victims themselves or their parents/guardians knew what kind of occupation awaited them in Germany. However, in general they are not aware of the actual working conditions and exploitative situation. Often the victims do not have a legal immigration status in Germany. Therefore they are very vulnerable, helpless and easy objects of exploitation.

*My name is B. and I was born in India. I am about 18 years old (I do not want to indicate my exact date of birth). I have 5 siblings and my parents are old and sick. A relative of ours has been living in Germany for many years. He asked my father if I could come to Germany and help him with his work. I only needed to pay for the trip. My application for a visa was refused. As I was underage, my only option was to enter Germany illegally. In order to pay for the trip, my parents had to get into debt. Together with three other young men I left my home village: first by bus, then by train. In between each leg of our journey, we waited for the smugglers, sometimes for up to two weeks, without money and without food. It was cold and we lacked warm clothing. In order to get something to eat, we stole food. Nine months later we arrived in Germany and I immediately applied for asylum. My relative told me what I needed to tell the officer so I would get asylum status. We live in a shelter for asylum seekers, but work for my relative, sometimes 12 hours per day. He pays us little money. With this salary I cannot pay back our debts. When we try to talk to him about our situation, he threatens that we will go to jail. Sometimes I hope that my application for asylum gets refused and that I can return to India.*

Victim, interviewed by a social assistant in Munich, 2007

## CHAPTER 3



ITALY

## 3.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

### Vulnerability factors for child trafficking

It is difficult to generalise about vulnerability factors for child victims of trafficking to Italy given the diverse countries of origin of those involved. Those who are trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in prostitution may be more vulnerable if they are involved in prostitution in their country of origin. However for others, it may be the simple fact that they come from a low socio-economic background, or a marginalised, disadvantaged community or group, whose poor living conditions may prompt their family to send them abroad to earn money, or may prompt the child to depart, often at the encouragement of traffickers who are entrusted with the necessary arrangements.

This is true also for those who are trafficked for forced labour, begging or illegal activities. For example, children with physical impairments or deformations are particularly vulnerable to recruitment in their home countries for exploitation in begging abroad.

However there is another dimension to these forms of exploitation to be considered when a child travels independently. In this case they may not necessarily have suffered emotional or financial hardship in their country of origin, although some do choose to leave due to family and social problems. The child's vulnerability to exploitation and possible internal trafficking actually arises when they find themselves in Italy without money, connections, or a regular immigration status. In this situation they are most likely to be taken advantage of by exploiters who involve them in begging or illegal activities.

*I'm from Casablanca; I'm 17 years old, but I've been in Italy for 4 years. I ran away from home and at the port, I hid in a truck which came ashore in Italy. From there, I travelled around for a few weeks, then I met some young guys who came from my city. They introduced me to P. who helped me find a place to sleep and asked me to work for him. They would give me a bag full of hashish which I had to carry on the train to Padoa. An adult was always behind me, and would only intervene when the delivery was made. At that time, I also smoked a lot of hashish and managed to send a bit of money home, but not much. The fourth time I was sent to jail, I couldn't handle it anymore and decided to speak to a social worker then a Magistrate who helped me have an independent life and not go back to P.*

S., a child exploited in illegal activities

Older adolescents, however, may be exploited in agricultural work where, in addition to the gruelling work conditions, due to their age and lack of connections they risk being confined to their work places and thus deprived of their liberty.

Special mention must be made of the particularly critical situation which members of the Roma community face. Children from these communities are not generally victims of trafficking, however those who are amongst the poorest families and/or separated from their parents, are especially vulnerable to exploitation for the purposes of begging, illegal activities, and both male and female prostitution.

## 3.2 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### Main profile

Prostitution, both on the street and from private premises, is the most common form of exploitation for both male and female children, almost all of whom come from abroad. The methods of recruitment, transportation, trafficking routes and living conditions both during travel and on arrival are varied and tend to differ according to the country of origin of the victims.

Female prostitution involving foreign children, adolescents and those who have just come of age, is almost always linked to internal and international trafficking and severe exploitation, the main targets being:

- Adolescent girls and those just come of age, from Nigeria and Cameroon;
- Adolescent girls and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova, and even Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Albania, Serbia and Croatia.

Furthermore, there are groups who are less likely to have been trafficked into Italy, however are at risk of trafficking or exploitation once they arrive. This is a characteristic of male prostitution involving foreign boys, adolescents and those just come of age, and distinguishes it from female prostitution described above, which generally presents a greater degree of exploitation, and higher risk of trafficking. The main profiles are:

- Boys from Romania, of Roma origin;
- Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova;
- Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova, of Roma origin.

### Adolescent girls and those just come of age, from Nigeria and Cameroon

Adolescent girls from Nigeria are trafficked to Italy almost exclusively for the purpose of exploitation in prostitution. They are generally forced to prostitute themselves on the streets in order to pay back a sum of €30-50,000 and regain their liberty from the traffickers. This usually takes from three to five years, during which time they are also obliged to pay other unreasonable bills for food, clothes and accommodation, for which they depend almost entirely on the trafficker and/or pimp.

#### Methods of Recruitment

Most are from Benin City and recruited by traffickers there who make false promises regarding the work they will undertake in Europe. The traffickers may mention the payment of a debt, however never the actual amount that must be repaid. Sometimes the girls are made to sign a contract and perform certain religious rituals to seal their commitment, both to the trafficker and their community.

There is also an increasing number of adolescent girls and young adults who are recruited by Nigerian traffickers from Cameroon. They are usually students who are not in a bad financial position, however they are tricked into travelling to Italy to continue their studies or just for a holiday, where they are instead forced into prostitution.

### Transport and trafficking routes

The trafficker may accompany the girl from their home to Italy by land then by crossing the Mediterranean sea. However at the border they declare no connection to the girl, who is likely to be treated as an independent traveller or unaccompanied minor. Otherwise, the trafficker will arrange a flight for the girl who may travel on her own, but who is more often accompanied by a female trafficker. Identity documents are arranged by the trafficker which are not false but may be in the name of another person.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Those who are trafficked by sea are likely to be sexually abused prior to their boat departure by the trafficker accompanying them by land. The traffickers begin conditioning the girls for what may come by instilling fear and submission.

When travelling by plane, their own lack of papers and knowledge about arrangements makes them dependent on the trafficker and, given their expectation of normal working conditions in the country of destination, grateful to them.

Once in Italy, the girls are subject to regular and continuous prostitution on the street, at first closely followed by a female pimp or another victim, with whom they usually live, together with other victims. The pimp tends to isolate the victims, on whom they are forced to depend (and pay) for food, clothes and accommodation. They develop an exaggerated fear of the Police, based on stories which are usually false and warnings by the pimp to always give a false name and state they are adults. Furthermore, the pimp interrupts any conversation between the girls and social workers, answering questions for them and preventing them from taking any information provided.

Despite this, the relationship between the victim and the pimp is an ambiguous one. The girls feel obliged to keep the agreement made regarding the debt to be paid, and usually treat their exploiter with respect, calling her by the name "Madame" for example. This respect, however, may wane if the Madame is unreasonably violent or openly deceitful. At this point, if the victim attempts to rebel and break the agreement, the response from the Madame, backed by the trafficking network, may be extremely violent.

After a certain amount of conditioning, when the girls begin to accept their role, the Madame may also entrust some of her activities to them, such as monitoring of newer victims. This means that if they come in contact with law enforcement agencies, they are not only investigated for giving false names or having false documents, but they may also be accused of exploiting other victims in prostitution.

*My name is J. I come from Benin City (Nigeria) and I'm 17 years old. I arrived in Italy last year with M, a Nigerian woman who is well-known in my city and who has been living in Turin for many years. M had suggested I go to Italy to work in a factory and my family agreed to it. We signed a contract and performed a religious ritual to confirm our reciprocal trust in each other. I came to Italy by plane with another adult woman's passport who had a similar face to my own. Once I arrived, M told me I would have to prostitute myself in order to pay her back 50,000 euros - she threatened me and hit me. On the street, I was even stopped by the Police who decided I was an adult, sent me to a detention centre (CPT) then deported me to Nigeria. I was kept at the airport until a friend of M's who, 2 months later, brought me back to Italy and told me that the debt had risen to 20,000 euros. Six months later, with a client's help, I ran away and went to the C association, with whom I would often stop and talk while working.*

J. victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation

## Adolescent girls and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova (also Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Albania, Serbia and Croatia)

### Methods of Recruitment

Adolescent girls mainly from Romania and Moldova, but also from all the countries mentioned above, are attracted to the possibility of travelling to or finding work in a Western European country. In their country of origin, possible recruiters for trafficking are many and varied, from acquaintances to boyfriends or flings, female friends to family members. They are often enticed by false promises of finding a normal job, going on a holiday or, for those who are almost adult, assistance in engaging in independent, short-term prostitution (usually only if they are already involved in this activity).

There are however cases of kidnapping, at times even involving sleeping pills. The girls are usually sold by the kidnappers who are fellow countrymen, to traffickers. Often Albanian traffickers are involved in this operation. Sometimes this cycle of kidnapping and sale occurs in Italy while the victims are being exploited for prostitution or even after they have managed to escape from it.

### Transport and trafficking routes

The girls are usually trafficked to Italy by car or bus (especially Romanian girls) with false identity documents and/or custody papers, or by foot with the help of a *passieur*. Often they travel in a group with people who have nothing to do with the trafficking, however accompanied by the trafficker who may be Albanian. Prior to Italy, Romanian or Moldovan girls may have been trafficked to Spain or other European countries for a short time, to work in night clubs.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

In Italy, these victims engage in prostitution on the streets and in apartments. It is rare that they are employed in night clubs, however this may occur once they have come of age. Those who work on the streets are involved in continuous prostitution in the same place every day, however they periodically change areas or cities. If they work in an apartment, it is almost always the place where they live with their pimp.

The victims are subjugated by the trafficker by psychological means more than physical violence, including verbal abuse, emotional manipulation, confiscation of their passport and constant monitoring. This causes the girls to lose all self-confidence and any faith in themselves. The sense of loss is then compensated by an unnatural emotional dependence on the trafficker, fed by their feigned affection for the victims. Furthermore, there is a false perception of trust created by the fact that the trafficker allows the victim to retain much of their earnings, and negotiate with them on the amount.

Similar to the situation for Nigerian victims, under the direction of their pimp, they may also be caught "exploiting" other victims by law enforcement agencies. It is hard for the girls to then decide to leave once they become to identify with the role of prostitute and feel guilty about it. The pimp is wary of prolonged discussion with clients, and will impede contact between the victims and social workers, especially on the street.

Conditions are worse for those girls forced to prostitute themselves in apartments. They have almost no contact with the outside world apart from their clients who are engaged by the trafficker through advertisements in local press or word of mouth passed on by friends and former clients. After a while, the pressure sometimes causes these victims to turn to self-harm, and if they make contact with people outside, they may have difficulties relating and behave inappropriately.

## GROUPS AT RISK

### Children from Romania, of Roma origin

*D., 12 years old, is part of the Roma community from Craiova. The Police discovered that D, who was living in an unauthorised Roma camp with his father and older brothers and sisters, had been the victim of sexual abuse for months at the hands of Italian men and in agreement with his father. The paedophile would go to a place near the camp then make contact with the boy's father from outside, who would bring the boy to him. The father would be paid to allow the man to abuse his son, who would ask to be put in touch with other children. The child seemed to lead a normal life inside the camp, though he was particularly isolated given that for various reasons he never went outside the camp nor to school. The abuse only stopped after intervention by the Police.*

Social Assistant, Rome, 2006

#### Methods of Recruitment

Children from Romania of Roma origin usually come to Italy as part of a decision by the whole family to migrate together, and it is rare that they are victims of trafficking. However, once in Italy particularly boys may be made to prostitute themselves by adult family members supposedly responsible for their care, who keep all the earnings that the child makes. They may even be exploited by brothers or sisters or other young family members already involved in prostitution, who engage them on request from clients.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

In Italy, the children who are most vulnerable to this kind of exploitation come from the weakest families in illegal Roma camps, that is, those who live in the severest economic hardship and face the harshest interpersonal and family problems. They are subject to irregular and sporadic abuse by Italian male clients, who, in agreement with the exploiter, arrange to pick them up from the place where they are living and immediately return them there afterwards. There are some cases where these children are transferred for a short time to other Roma camps in other Italian cities for this same purpose, such as Milan, Rome and Naples. They may also be exploited in begging.

### Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova

#### Methods of Recruitment

Male prostitution by foreign children is on the rise, and the boys involved are mainly from Romania and Moldova. They arrive in Italy by themselves looking for work or adventure, and without incurring any debts. The risk is that once they engage voluntarily in prostitution, they risk exploitation in illegal activities and begging, and possibly even trafficking or vice versa: that is, a victim of trafficking for exploitation in illegal activities and begging but who does not perform particularly well, may be forced into prostitution by their traffickers.

#### Transport and trafficking routes

These boys usually travel by car or coach, or they cross the border by foot with the help of a *passeur*. They often have false papers from their parents giving guardianship to someone in Italy.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

When they first arrive in Italy these boys have no family ties and engage in casual prostitution in various cities in order to support themselves. They often find clients at train stations, parks, public squares, porn cinemas, internet cafés, massage parlours and saunas. Having no fixed abode, however they often become reliant on clients at whose homes they are able to rest and freshen up.

They often turn to crime in order to survive, and may be arrested for stealing money or valuable objects from their clients, and the consequences are worse where they use violence in the attempt.

### Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova, of Roma origin

#### Methods of Recruitment

They arrive in Italy looking for adventure or work, freely and without incurring any debts. It is unclear why they choose to become involved in prostitution, but generally they do so while engaging in begging and petty theft as well, hence the risk of exploitation.

#### Transport and trafficking routes

They may have arrived with their family, or in fact bringing their own young family, at a certain point in time, as part of a decision by the whole family to move to Italy. They sometimes travel independently, in which case they tend to rely on and receive support from the Roma community in Italy.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Living alone or with their family in illegal Roma camps, in some cases even with their wife, children and in-laws, these boys undertake casual prostitution at train stations, parks and public squares. They have a strong connection to the Roma community, and when they travel, they tend to rely on Roma in other cities. They also return on a regular basis to their country of origin.

## 3.3 TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

### Main profiles

Exploitation in illegal activities is not a well-known phenomenon in Italy, and victims are not often identified as such, thus missing out on the support necessary for their protection and rehabilitation. Children of different ages and nationalities are recruited and directed to steal and deal drugs by individuals who keep some or all of the earnings. Depending on the nature of the relationship between the adult and the child, this may result in a situation of trafficking, exploitation of varying degrees or simple acts of complicity where the adult exercises no particular control over the child and takes no advantage of them.



Cases of international trafficking are of particular concern, and have been identified amongst the following profiles:

- Children from Romania, of Roma origin
- Adolescent boys and girls from Romania, of Roma origin
- Adolescent boys and those just come of age from Senegal or Gabon
- Adolescent boys and those just come of age, of North African origin

Other foreign children may be at risk of exploitation, though not necessarily trafficking, once in Italy, including:

- Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova
- Adolescent boys and girls from Romania, of Roma origin
- Adolescent boys and those just come of age (in some circumstances even children), of North African origin

### Children from Romania, of Roma origin

Often involved in theft and pick pocketing together with members of their family, depending on the dynamics of the situation, but keeping in mind their age, boys and girls of Roma origin are very often involved in a situation of exploitation and in many cases trafficking. The common characteristic which the children share is that they are likely to be under 14 years of age, that is, under the age of criminal consent, hence not punishable with imprisonment if caught while stealing, and generally working under the direction of an adult who plans their criminal activity. Further, the child may lack strong family ties in Romania, such as those who live in orphanages, or they may be in the care of guardians. Where they live with their family, they are usually in a situation of financial hardship.

*M. is a Romanian child from the Roma community of Calarasi who has suffered exploitation at the hands of a Roma man, R., from the same city. This man contacted the family whom M had been living with for 10 years in Romania, and convinced them to give him custody of M for a few months in Exchange for approximately two hundred euros followed by further periodic payments. R explained that the child would be involved in theft in Italy, but that he could not be arrested and he would be treated well. Once they arrived in Italy (by car), they lived in several unauthorised Roma camps, and in particular M suffered unhealthy living conditions and isolation. M was used for theft, mainly house burglary, under R's guidance/direction, who did not, however, participate in the crime. The child was caught more than once, and sent to several reception centres for unaccompanied minors until finally with the help of a psychologist he revealed what was happening to him.*

Social Assistant, Milan, 2006

#### Methods of Recruitment

Roma children are often recruited in their country of origin, in agreement with their family, who profits from their exploitation. The trafficker makes a deal with a child's parents, guardians or in some cases the head of the orphanage where they live, who in most cases are aware of what awaits the child, though not the conditions they will be forced to live in. The agreement with the trafficker is usually sealed with the payment of a sum of money for guardianship of the child, and on the promise that regular returns from their activities will be sent to the family.

#### Transport and trafficking routes

The trafficker usually enters Italy by car with the child and the necessary guardianship papers.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Once they arrive in Italy, the children are involved in criminal activities such as pick pocketing and house burglary. They work in groups, and suffer violence and threats from the trafficker who is usually a Romanian adult of Roma origin. Their living conditions are extremely unhealthy, and they may be isolated from the Roma community in the camp given a lack of family ties. Furthermore, they are also pressured by their families who call to encourage them in their activity, in light of the money they stand to earn from it.

When the children are stopped by the police, if they are taken to penal facilities for minors, the traffickers seek to retrieve them presenting false guardianship papers or documents proving their parental status. If this occurs to several children in a group, the exploiter is likely to move them to another city, like Milan, Rome, Naples, Verona, Pescara, or Florence.

Due to their constant contact with the street, these young victims are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse. They may also be the victim of sexual abuse, where the trafficker/exploiter uses them, or forces them, on a regular or casual basis, to prostitute themselves (see profile above regarding "trafficking for sexual exploitation").

### Adolescent boys and girls from Romania, of Roma origin

As for the Roma children described above, in Italy not all Roma adolescents are victims of trafficking or exploitation. In fact, adolescents are more likely to engage as a group in illegal activities without adult supervision and share the profits evenly between themselves. However the situation is quite different when trafficking occurs.

#### Methods of Recruitment

An adult may recruit adolescents, usually male, from the Roma community in the country of origin, in a deceitful way by inviting the youth to follow him to Italy to engage in high-profit criminal activities, such as theft, but in an independent way. The trafficker obtains the family's consent with the payment of a sum of money.

#### Transport and trafficking routes

Traffickers bring adolescents to Italy by car or by bus in a group. Their documents are not usually false, though guardianship papers from families may be. Where a youth travels on his own, he may have correct papers giving guardianship to the driver of a coach and the person waiting for them at the place of destination.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

In these cases, traffickers in Italy tend to use constant threats and physical abuse to keep the adolescents, who work as a group, in line. They live with the exploiter in illegal Roma camps where living conditions are quite poor, especially given that the victims are without family or other contacts within the host community, and the earnings are kept almost entirely by the trafficker, who also confiscates their passport.

The victims are mainly involved in pick pocketing and house burglary, as well as break-and-entering in shops. If they are taken to a reception centre for unaccompanied minors, the trafficker usually rings to convince them to leave, or if the child has left the group voluntarily, the trafficker may ring their parents who then convince the victim to return to the group.

*My name is C, I am Roma and come from Calarasi. I came to Italy with a 35-year-old man called T when I was 13 years old. I met him when I was living in Romania and had some problems with the police because I had been stealing. T said he would take me to Italy where we could steal together for a bit before coming back to Romania. We went by car and lived in a small illegal camp. He lived in a caravan and I stayed in an abandoned house. I used to steal wallets and mobile phones on the bus, at the markets and in the subway. T told me what to do and how, and he would keep all the money. He would beat me a lot, for no reason and if the police caught me he would come and get me. Two years later I realized that T wasn't so strong, so I decided to leave with some older Roma friends who helped me.*

C. a victim of trafficking in illegal activities

## Adolescent boys and those just come of age from Senegal or Gabon

### Methods of Recruitment

Not much is known about the trafficking of adolescent boys from Senegal and Gabon, but it is on the rise. It seems to be controlled by Mafia-type organisations who recruit boys in their country of origin, by deceit or with threats, and organise their (illegal) travel to Italy.

### Transport and trafficking routes

They arrive illegally by boat across the Mediterranean or with false documents by plane.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

In Italy, these victims are involved in drug dealing on the streets and transportation of heavy drugs such as crack, cocaine and heroin. They are under heavy control from the traffickers and subject to threats and violence, as well as enforced group bonding. To that end, they live with others from the same country, with whom they generally work. The adolescents have a reasonable standard of living and the apartments they live in are comfortable. They are almost always without identity documents and in order to evade police investigation and immigration controls based on fingerprint recognition, the traffickers disfigure the victims' fingers using abrasive substances.

## Adolescent boys and those just come of age, of North African origin

This constitutes another mixed group, in that some adolescent boys from North African countries are exploited in Italy in illegal activities, while others are recruited in their country of origin and trafficked to Italy. Here we will discuss actual victims of trafficking, who are rare compared to the number of cases of exploitation without trafficking which will be discussed at a later stage.

### Methods of Recruitment

The victims are usually recruited in their home country by people who are known to their family and who have been involved in illegal activities in Italy already for many years. In some cases they are encouraged by their family, particularly their father, who is aware of the activity that they will be engaged in. The trafficker takes care of their travel expenses, but once in Italy immediately requests repayment, thus forcing the boys into crime, particularly drug dealing and theft.

## Transport and trafficking routes

If travelling by plane, the victims use false documents, but are usually accompanied by a woman with her documents in order. They may also arrive in Italy after taking a boat from their home country to Spain and travelling overland, or arriving directly in Sicily by sea, in which case they travel without a passport.

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

The exploitation begins as soon as the boys arrive. They are made to deal drugs and often to steal under particularly dangerous circumstances given their exposure and thus risk of being caught. That is, they are required to courier large quantities of drugs or intervene at the moment of delivery to the client, and all this in exchange for very little earnings. This exposure to drugs means that it is likely that they become addicted themselves to heavy drugs, which also help reduce their perception of danger.

To control their victims, the trafficker uses a mechanism of inducement and blackmail involving the glorification of the sense of belonging to the group as well as threats of violence. Furthermore, the boys are held personally responsible for what they are made to sell or transport, meaning that if the police ever catch them and confiscate the goods or drugs in their possession, not only are they liable for the relevant crimes they have committed, often treated very severely by the law, but they also incur a debt to the trafficker which must be repaid.

The victims are even more vulnerable due to the fact that they find themselves in Italy with no language skills, little possibility of going home nor of regularising their immigration status once they come of age. They become trapped in a situation where the distance and their family's expectations of financial gain impedes their return, but their lack of passport, job or education means that the avenues to legal immigration are practically none. It does not take much for the exploiter to convince them, if they are ever taken to a reception centre for unaccompanied minors, to leave and go back to the group.

## GROUPS AT RISK

### Adolescent boys and those just come of age, from Romania and Moldova

#### Methods of Recruitment

Adolescent boys from Romania and Moldova may be contacted by friends already involved in small criminal groups or an exploiter while in their countries of origin, who invite them to Italy. They sometimes promise short-term work for the boy, though often the invitation is to engage in petty crime in full autonomy.

It may also happen that a boy who comes to Italy in search of adventure or work opportunities, comes into contact with other youths from their own country and are tricked, or are susceptible to their offer of friendship, and agree to join in some illegal activity with them. The meeting may be a random occurrence, or it may take place in the context of the penal circuit, where the boy would have been caught for minor acts of theft (probably necessary for his survival).

#### Transport and trafficking routes

These Romanian and Moldova boys travel independently by car or coach to Italy. Since Romania joined the European Union, Romanians can now travel to Europe legally, therefore most boys enter Italy legally with their own passports and custody papers for the driver of the coach and someone at the place of destination,

provided by their parents, who normally stay in contact, not expecting money to be sent home.

Moldovans and some Romanians, resort to illegal border crossings without papers by foot or by hiding inside trucks (with the driver's knowledge, depending on the situation).

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

At first, when the boys join the group they are not immediately aware of the conditioning that will take place. The adult in charge gradually works on the boy until he is completely subjugated. The victim is induced and directed to perform criminal activities in a gang, such as pick pocketing, and home and shop burglary, particularly of clothes and electronics shops, organised by the exploiter thanks to their superior knowledge of the territory. The exploiter provides a comfortable lifestyle for the victim who lives with them and the gang in an apartment.

Though the exploiter keeps most or all of the earnings from the victim's activities, they allow them to drive cars, drink, take drugs and go clubbing. The victim can also count on a good lawyer should they get into trouble. In return the exploiter expects loyalty to the group, and that the hierarchy be maintained. In this context, the lack of family ties is replaced by a strong sense of group spirit further instilled by certain stratagems. The exploiter may take away their passports for "safe-keeping", and use violence in a symbolic rather than a gratuitous way, to teach the victims a lesson, for example. However, that lesson may be a slap on the face or it may be a deliberate cigarette burn. If or when the youth comes to know the territory better they tend to extract themselves from the exploitative situation, however it is not likely to be an easy process. If the victim, or others from the group are caught by the police, they are all likely to move together to another city, such as Rome, Naples, Verona, Pescara, or Florence.

*My name is G. and I'm 18 years old. I come from Moldova and I arrived in Italy with a friend 2 years ago. We had heard that Italy was a land of opportunity, so we left in search of adventure there. I persuaded my mother to sign papers which gave custody to a relative of ours in Italy, but I never went to see this relative. As soon as I arrived in Italy by coach, I went to Rome then Pescara. I managed to get by for a while on my own, then I met B, a 30 year old Romanian man who had put together a group of boys. For a year we shoplifted together, and twice I ended up in jail. The second time I was locked up for 7 months because B couldn't find me a good lawyer. While in jail, I decided to follow a programme offered by the DM Association on the suggestion of a tutor working in the jail called G. I was put on trial custody with them and things worked out well. Today I am out of jail and have a job.*

G, victim of exploitation in illegal activities

## Adolescent boys and girls from Romania, of Roma origin

### Methods of Recruitment

Adolescents of Roma origin from Romania are at risk of being recruited in Italy by adults or by older peers to commit crimes such as theft etc, similar to the above profile of youths from Romania, though not as common.

### Transport and trafficking routes

These youths normally travel overland as part of a family group, and live with the strong support of the Roma community in the country of destination.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

They usually live in unauthorised Roma camps, and tend to get involved in stealing in an independent way. However, it is not rare that they would give away part of their earnings to other youths or those just come of age more expert than themselves, to obtain tips and assistance. They may also mix criminal activity with less organised begging and prostitution to earn money. The risk is that someone may take advantage of them, and that they may find themselves in a situation such as that described above for adolescents from Romania and Moldova, or those of Roma origin who are actually recruited from their country of origin.

## Adolescent boys and those just come of age (in some circumstances even children), of North African origin

Further to the description of those victims of trafficking from North African countries, there are another group of adolescent boys, and sometimes even children, who are exploited in criminal activities. As highlighted in S's story in the introduction, there are children from North African countries who freely decide to travel to Europe by themselves in search of adventure and fortune. Given their difficult backgrounds, social and family life, they may have had some experience with living on the streets, and often use soft drugs such as glue on a regular basis. They leave without telling their parents, where present, of their intentions and travel without documents nor a clear idea of their destination.

Other children who are sent abroad by their parents mainly come from the Khouribga and Beni Mellel areas, and are not from particularly poor or troubled families. In fact, their parents usually pay €3-7000 for the travel arrangements. They usually obtain names and numbers of family or friends to contact in Italy on their arrival, even though often they prove to be of little assistance.

### Methods of Recruitment

Adults whom these boys encounter in Italy take advantage of their vulnerable state and by deceit, or the creation of false ties of friendship and respect, engage them in drug dealing and theft. Their vulnerability arises from their lack of connections, Italian language skills and sufficient funds to support themselves, which means that they are aware of no real alternative but to turn to crime in order to fulfil their dreams of a "Western" life and to be able to send money home. They do not find reception centres for unaccompanied minors a valid alternative, and often run away from them after which they come into contact with those adults whose offer of a way to make money is too good to refuse.

### Transport and trafficking routes

As mentioned above, there are two distinct groups of adolescents who are found in Italy, and they arrive in different ways. Those who run away from home, such as in the example of S., normally depart from port cities such as Casablanca or Tangeri and, unbeknownst to the captains, arrive as stowaways on commercial ships travelling to Europe. Those sent to Italy by their parents often arrive by boat, and come ashore at border areas, such as Lampedusa. However there are also boys from Morocco who travel by boat or plane accompanied by a woman who has valid identity documents and the right to enter Italy, but false guardianship papers for the child.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

The boys who arrive may harbour a strong desire to earn money and lead a consumer lifestyle typical of European society, but at the same time they feel lost

and frustrated, especially as they do not speak the language nor understand the law and ways of society. Once they are recruited and exploited in drug dealing or theft, they regain a sense of belonging to a group, even though they are at the mercy of the exploiter and have no fixed abode. In addition, they are at risk of getting caught by the police for the serious crimes they are induced to commit and often become addicted to the drugs which they sell. Their lifestyle, though somewhat comfortable, is precarious.

## 3.4 TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN BEGGING

### Main profiles

Children involved in begging in Italy are almost exclusively of Roma origin. They are generally not the subject of exploitation, as they beg alongside their parents or other family members who all contribute to the family income and the family's survival. Furthermore, adolescents tend to act autonomously though still in the family setting.

Putting aside the legal and ethical questions concerning parents who expect or allow their children to beg, here we focus on those children who are forced to beg under such conditions as leave no doubt as to the intentions of the exploiters: to profit from the child, and take advantage of their vulnerable state for their own benefit. In this case, Roma boys and girls from Romania or former Yugoslav countries are most at risk of exploitation from adults with whom they have no family ties, and particularly those children and adolescents with severe physical disabilities.

### Roma boys and girls from Romania or former Yugoslav countries

#### Methods of Recruitment

This profile is similar to that of Roma boys and girls who are recruited for exploitation in illegal activities: an adult "recruits" a child from a poor family or without strong family ties by paying their parents, guardians or even the head of their orphanage where they live, a sum of money for guardianship of the child, or sometimes, in the case of orphanages, for adoption.

#### Transport and trafficking routes

The exploiters generally accompany the child, or several children together, to Italy by car or coach. At the border, they claim to be a close relative, and provide theirs and the child's true identity documents and guardianship or adoption papers.

#### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Children exploited in begging generally suffer poorer conditions than those with whom they live in Roma camps. They are under great pressure to beg, both from the violence they face from the exploiter, and also the psychological pressure from families back home who expect money to be sent, or where the exploiter fraudulently claims that this is the case.

They are therefore forced to beg for many hours a day, using extremely stressful techniques such as staying in the same place and in the same position which may be particularly painful or tiring, for example kneeling. They may also be made to beg whatever the weather and obliged to earn a minimum daily amount, on pain of physical abuse or mistreatment from the exploiter. With reference to earlier profiles of trafficked children of Roma origin, they are also at risk of sexual exploitation and exploitation in illegal activities.

If they are taken to a reception centre for unaccompanied minors, the exploiter may go there with papers showing that they are a parent of the child to obtain guardianship or they may ring the family to encourage them to convince the child to leave the centre and return to the exploiter.

*D. was an 11 year old Roma child from Romania who arrived in Italy 18 months ago. An alleged uncle, P, also from Bucharest, brought him by car. D's parents gave this acquaintance custody of him in exchange for a percentage of the profits deriving from their child's begging. Once in Italy, P forced the child to beg alone for hours on end, without providing any protection for him, until he reached the minimum daily intake required. P systematically hit and threatened the child, making him live in conditions much inferior to his own. It was D's poor state which prompted social workers to intervene, leading them to discover that he was in Italy with no family protection. Thus the procedures necessary to stop his exploitation were activated.*

Social Assistant, Pescara, 2006

It is also worth mentioning the case of those Roma children who are recruited due to a physical disability which is exploited when begging in Italy. They are more likely to be tricked into going with a trafficker promising surgery or medical treatment abroad. These cases demonstrate a greater level of organisation and systematic exploitation, with more than one trafficker involved and a deliberate lack of medical attention (or even physical abuse), in order to worsen the victim's appearance.

## 3.5 TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN FORCED LABOUR

### Main profiles

Exploitation of child labour in Italy is not often linked to trafficking, but tends to occur once a child arrives in Italian territory. Where that exploitation leads to a restriction on a child's freedom of movement such as confinement to the workplace, this can be considered trafficking, and in some cases enslavement, though the latter is beyond the scope of our report.

There are rare cases of international trafficking, for which boys from Bangladesh and India working on farms are the main victims, however they are more likely to be at risk of exploitation and even trafficking once they have arrived in Italy, as are boys of North African and Sub-Saharan origin, employed in agricultural work.

We note that exploitation is not defined simply by an employer's lack of adherence to and respect for labour agreements and worker's rights, but by their calculated abuse of a child's vulnerable state and taking advantage of their inability to refuse.

## Adolescent boys from Bangladesh and India working on farms

### Methods of Recruitment

As noted above, cases of recruitment by fellow countrymen for work on farms in Italy while still in their country are rare, but do occur. They are more often recruited through acquaintances from their country of origin in Italy particularly in cattle and sheep farming. The job they are offered is only described in vague terms at best, and sometimes they may be lied to about the actual work involved. Given they are usually new to the country and with poor language skills, they are vulnerable to any assistance offered and willingly accept the work.

### Transport and trafficking routes

Usually these boys travel independently looking for work, however with some part of their travel arranged by smugglers. This may assist them to obtain tourist visas and travel by plane directly to Italy, or they may arrive in other European countries and cross the border by foot.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

These adolescents must work very long hours for very little pay. They are expected to live on the farm, and given the lack of free time, they become isolated. They are not able to learn the language and thus they do not know how to escape from the exploitative situation.

## GROUPS AT RISK

### Boys of North African and Sub-Saharan origin, employed in agricultural work

*My name is V and I come from Senegal. I'm 19 years old and have been in Italy for more than 2 years. My parents paid 3500 euros for my travel: by bus and foot to Tripoli, then by boat to Lampedusa. On my arrival in Italy, they did some tests and stated that I was an adult. They kept me in an immigration detention centre (CPT) for 60 days then they gave me an expulsion order before releasing me. So I had to live in hiding, and some fellow countrymen advised me to go to a small country town in Puglia. I lived in terrible conditions there with large number of other foreigners in an abandoned building. Every morning, we would go to the main square and wait for a man to come and offer us work tomato-picking in exchange for a percentage of our pay. We would work 15 hours a day for 30 euros, with only one 20 minute break allowed whatever the weather. We were abused, sometimes hit and they would regularly threaten to call the police who would immediately deport us. I am still without a permit of stay (permesso di soggiorno) and try to get by, avoiding where possible this kind of extreme exploitation.*

V., victim of exploitation

### Methods of Recruitment

These boys are recruited for agricultural jobs in Italy by a supervisor (Caporale) who takes advantage of the child's needy state.

### Transport and trafficking routes

Those who come ashore in Spain by boat, then arrive in Italy by land generally without a passport. However others pay a fee to travel directly to Italy on rickety

boats, and come ashore somewhere on the Sicilian coast. They then travel to Puglia or Calabria, or they stay in Sicily, for work.

### Living conditions and forms of exploitation

Agricultural work which generally requires immigrant labour, is that which takes place in the harshest conditions. Furthermore, the supervisor forces workers to keep a fast pace with verbal and physical abuse, while giving them very little pay and taking a percentage of it for themselves. They work very long hours and are prevented from taking breaks, whatever the weather. The living conditions are dire, with children forced to live with adult workers in abandoned buildings.

## CHAPTER 4

# ROMANIA

## 4.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

### Vulnerability factors for child trafficking

Several are the factors increasing the vulnerability of children to trafficking. Although many of them can be equally identified for all forms of exploitation, peculiarities also exist.

For example, according to the research findings, it is very likely that children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation have already suffered abuses within the family environment and had eventually decided to escape from such violence. Unfortunately, once they are on their own, they become more vulnerable to trafficking. In other cases, children do not have a strong sense of belonging to their family and feel that their parents or those adults responsible for them do not really care. Nor do they have a group of friends, which accentuates the feeling of personal failure and loneliness. As a consequence, they easily get close to people that apparently offer them love and attention, including recruiters and traffickers.

*“When I was 15, my father wanted to abuse me. I ran away from home, I was fooled by some guys in the neighbourhood, who raped me and then sold me to a woman who was involved in prostitution.”*

A.N., 18 years old, trafficked child

*“I was living with my brother, my mother and her husband in a village near Bacau County. I was studying in a high school in the 12th grade. Every day, I would walk for about 5 miles from home to my high school and back. My mother’s husband drank alcohol all day long and every time he got drunk he sexually harassed me. My mother knew about this and did nothing.”*

Declaration of a victim assisted by Save the Children

On the other hand, in the case of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in forced labour and services, also including exploitation in illegal activities and begging, child victims come from households where family relations were relatively good and the child was not encouraged to leave the family because of disputes with parents or violence. Despite this, it is very common that children later becoming victims of trafficking for this specific purpose of exploitation, were strongly encouraged or forced to beg or commit illegal activities by their parents who generally had no steady jobs and frequently begged together with the children.<sup>17</sup>

Poverty and unemployment also constitute risk factors of trafficking for all forms of exploitation: children from poor families consider the opportunity to work abroad as a good chance to earn more money and support themselves and their families. Therefore, they become more vulnerable to false promises of good job opportunities in destination countries.

*“I was living with both my parents and my relationship with them was neither good, nor bad. My family was poorer than those of the majority of my friends and classmates. My parents didn’t have a stable income and we lived only from the allowances of my 9 brothers. In my family conflicts were common and my father was an alcoholic. When I left, we were going through a crisis because we no longer received aid from the City Hall.”*

A.M., 17 years old, trafficked child

*“Family environments are characterized by poverty, moral and educational deficiencies, alcohol abuse, violence, lack of communication”.*

Representative of National Agency Against Human Trafficking, Craiova

<sup>17</sup> Forced or compulsory labour means “work or services exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”. ILO Convention concerning forced or compulsory labour (Convention N. 29).

In most cases a low level of education also increases the vulnerability of children to trafficking. As a matter of fact, most of the trafficked children interviewed had a very low level of education and decided to leave school to work abroad, dreaming of becoming financially independent and successful by following the positive example of a person who had emigrated. The mirage of wealthy foreign countries contributes to increase the child’s trust in the recruiter and in their stories.

Romanian separated children on the territory of other states are a category of children at great risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Without support from their family, they are vulnerable to trafficking for both sexual exploitation and exploitation through labour.

It is important to note that when teenagers in placement centres turn 18, they also become a group at high risk of trafficking. As adults, they can no longer live in the those centres run by the Child Protection Department, and if they cannot or do not wish to be placed in “social apartments” they leave the placement centre with no access to alternative accommodation or further institutional protection. Therefore, they are susceptible to offers of work and accommodation, becoming easy targets for traffickers.

*“I had lived in the placement centre since when I was a little girl. My parents died and no relative wanted to take care of me. The day I turned 18 I ran away from the placement centre and stayed for a few days on the street where I was rapidly accosted by traffickers who arranged my departure to a foreign destination country”.*

D.I., trafficked girl

### Border crossing

In Romania, the law (Law no 248/2005 on conditions applicable to Romanian citizens travelling abroad) prohibits children from leaving the country without adult accompaniment. At the border, children under 18 years old who hold individual passports must present (as they leave the country) declarations from their parents or other legal representative responsible for their upbringing, care or supervision, witnessed by a notary, permitting them to leave the country. In the case of children travelling on one of their parents’ passports, the accompanying parent must present the legal agreement of the other parent to the border police officers. If a child’s parents are divorced and the child was entrusted by way of a court decision, to the parent accompanying them abroad no such agreement is required.

In most cases it seems that trafficked children exit the Romanian border legally. As a matter of fact, since 2002 Romanian citizens have not required a visa to travel within the Schengen area and since 2007, when Romania became member of the European Union, travelling to other EU Countries has become even easier. Nonetheless, according to the research findings, when the victim is very young, the probability of illegally leaving the country is much higher, because to do that legally requires a great number of documents. When children cross borders legally, they explain that they are leaving the country either for tourism or for visiting relatives or friends. Even though the border is crossed legally, there are cases in which false documents are used, especially in the case of children who can (because of their physical appearance) pass as adults (18 years old and above). Many children trafficked to Western European countries (for example France, Italy or Spain) are accompanied by family members who are the traffickers themselves.

## 4.2 TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### Main profile

The majority of child victims of trafficking or at risk of becoming victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are girls, aged between 15 and 17. Despite this, it seems that the request for children of a younger age is increasing (girls aged between 12 and 14). They come from either rural areas in poor regions, such as Moldova, Muntenia, Dobrogea, Transilvania and Oltenia, or urban agglomerations, such as Constanța, Galați, Buzău, Brăila, Iași).

### Recruitment

Most frequently, children trafficked for sexual exploitation are recruited by acquaintances or friends and are promised jobs abroad (usually as a babysitter, waitress or housekeeper). Sometimes the parents themselves or relatives are involved in the trafficking of children, giving their written permission to leave the country, even though they know what will happen. Children are approached by the recruiters in diverse locations, such as discos, the street, but also schools and the family home.

*“In a lot of cases the sale is facilitated by the children’s parents themselves. They either don’t realise what is going to happen, or they do it consciously. Sometimes, children that come from an institutionalised environment are also sold, and the sale is facilitated by the representatives of the institution”.*

Social Assistant, Transit Center Timisoara

*“I was living with my grandmother as I was had very bad relations with my mum. She remarried and has another daughter. I also hadn’t heard anything from my father for 5 years. I was a student in the eleventh grade and I received a proposal from a classmate, to go to work abroad. The boyfriend of that classmate took care of all the formalities. I later found out he was the recruiter and I became a victim of trafficking”.*

M.C., trafficked child

*“I met a girl and we shortly became good friends. Together with her I left for Italy, to get a job as a babysitter, wanting to become financially independent. We were taken by car to Italy where we met an Italian who gave us false documents to get to Ireland”.*

Elena C., 16 years old, trafficked child

Most of the time recruiters organise the departure in a very short timeframe (2-3 days) after approaching the victims, so as not to allow them to think too much about the offer or to talk to other persons who might stop them.

In some cases, trafficked children are already involved in prostitution and are offered jobs abroad implying “innocent” sexual activities in private clubs or massage parlours, or are promised higher earnings from practising prostitution abroad. Some of the trafficked children interviewed said they were sold to traffickers by local pimps.

Another recruitment manner, used to a lesser extent in the case of children, is represented by the advertisements in the press for job offers abroad. These announcements address a broad age bracket, but especially girls over 16 years of

age. The advertisements are appealing from three points of view: they offer a job in a Western European country (usually Italy, Greece, France, Spain), the main requirements refer to physical appearance and not professional background and level of education, and the salary offered is much higher than what can be earned in Romania.

These advertisements may also come from matrimonial agencies. Girls leave the country convinced that their future husband waiting for them beyond the border (a person that they believe they have seen in a photograph or with whom they have corresponded for a short period of time) will offer them a better life.

Kidnappings represent a rarer method of recruitment than false promises of work, but they are more violent and traumatic for the victims. In these cases, the recruiter uses violence right from the start. In the case of kidnappings, the possibility of crossing the border is very low, so the traffickers resort to “guides” which, for a cost, facilitate border-crossing by avoiding check points.

### Transport and trafficking routes

The transportation means are usually the traffickers’ cars. Otherwise, taxis or public transportation (train, buses, mini-buses of specialised travel companies or plane). When children legally leave the country, the border is usually crossed at Nădlag and Borș (in the West of the country) Stamora Moravița and Arad Turnu (in the South-West) and transit through Hungary.

*“I was living only with my mother and we were facing serious financial problems. I wanted to help my mum and contacted a firm recruiting personnel to work in Italy. I was offered a job as a housekeeper. I got very close to the son of the company owner, we had a relationship and he promised to come with me and make sure that nothing would happen to me. I flew to Italy with legal travel documents. My boyfriend did not come along with me but promised that he would join me in a short while. He said not to worry because his best friend would wait for me there. When I arrived in the destination country, this “friend” was waiting for me at the airport. From there I was taken to an apartment where there were several girls forced to prostitute. When I arrived, I was subjected to numerous tortures: physical abuse, sexual abuse, and starvation because I did not want to practice prostitution.”*

Ana, 16 year old trafficked girl

The same means of transportation are also used in the case of illegal border crossing. Children are brought to the border and from there, they are taken over by another person (the guide) who knows how to avoid the check points of the border Police. Those who illegally cross the border are usually foreign adults, or adult Romanian citizens accompanying children who may be prohibited from leaving the country due to a past criminal record. In this case, a further method used to circumvent the restriction on leaving the country is that those Romanian citizens marry women with a “clean” past and take that woman’s name. This woman may be as young as 16 or 17 years old, and may also become a victim of trafficking at the hands of their husband.

In some cases, children are hidden inside the means of transportation.

*“A boy from my village whose family I knew, came to my family and proposed that I go to Italy to work decently. I asked him how we would get there and he told me that there was no problem because he would arrange everything (my passport and my transportation). From Timisoara I travelled by bus, and at the border he told me to hide in a place, specially arranged, near the bus stairs. After we had crossed the border, I made acquaintance with my pimp to whom I was sold.”*

Trafficked child



In the case of children recruited in Romania by networks of traffickers, the routes are pre-established. Depending on the network structure, trafficked children are taken over by different persons in different points of the route until the moment when they get to the person that will host and exploit him/her. There are cases in which the recruiter is not a member of a trafficking network, but finds a contact person in another country and enters for the first time in such a network. This is usually the case of children sold by their parents or relatives.

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

### A. Before leaving the country

As already emerges from the paragraph presenting risk factors, prior to being trafficked, the children's living conditions include a low socio-economic standard and poor housing conditions, where family conflicts and child abuse are frequent.

Some of the girls are sexually exploited and detained illegally in the country before being trafficked, entering a local (internal) trafficking network, and they are either sexually exploited in the streets, in apartments or clients' houses or kidnapped and included in external trafficking networks.

*"From our experience with the cases we have seen so far (both in the case of children and adults) they said that, before being exploited somewhere else, they had been sexually exploited and kept closed in apartments at Iași where they had clients."*

C.L., Social Alternatives Association, Iași

Many are the locations where children are approached and also sold, these including the street, pubs, discos and nightclubs (sometimes isolated, only known by a few people) but also schools and other institutional environments. Other places where children are sold are hotels, lorry parking, ringroads or outskirts of cities, and family houses.

### B. During period of trafficking

Trafficked children generally work in the streets, which exposes them to the risks of street life, and are mainly exploited in illegal activities, such as petty crimes, and begging but there are also cases of children forced to work in agriculture, picking fruits or vegetables (Germany, Spain, Austria) and selling flowers. Children are also exploited through labour in constructions, the preferred country being in this case the Czech Republic.

*"I was with my sister when they sold me. They tried to rape her, but recently she had suffered a surgical intervention. I told them to take me instead."*

M.A., 19 years old, trafficked child

*"I was a virgin. It didn't matter to them that I was begging them, I was crying. Three men raped me. I refused to go with the clients and my pimp beat me with the hose from the washing machine. Once, when I was cleaning the bathroom I found some pieces of putrefying human flesh and a blood-stained t-shirt. After a while, I heard that the pimp had killed a girl. I started to drink. This way I didn't feel what was happening to me anymore."*

G.B., 18 years old, trafficked child

According to the research findings, from the moment when children cross the borders and their passports and travel documents are confiscated, their liberty and freedom of movement are largely restricted. Very often, once they reach the destination countries, they are confined in closed places (e.g. are locked in apartments or not allowed to leave hotels) or closely monitored by the exploiter

on the street and coerced and controlled through the use of violence. Many of the girls who were interviewed declared that they were beaten even if they made money, and that somebody was watching them all the time. Being watched all the time, beaten and intimidated, trafficked children lose their connections with family and friends. This limits their chances to escape.

*"A girl asked what I was doing there and I answered that I was just visiting. She laughed and told me "you are beautiful and you will not stay here just because you're visiting. You crossed the border illegally and you're going to be sold". I was locked in an apartment and for a week, different men came to me. I could no longer resist. I felt so bad. My ovaries were hurting and I felt tired. I took a knife, I opened the window and ran away."*

B.S., 17 years old, trafficked child

When girls are trafficked by their "lovers", then kindness is used together with violence as a means of control and to establish a relation of dependence of the girl on her trafficker.

Usually, when the girls arrive in the country of destination, they are disorientated and do not understand what is happening. Before the departure, most of them, were convinced they would find a legal job abroad and decent living conditions. Eventually, either they are told they were trafficked or it is them who begin asking questions of the traffickers. In this case it is very likely that traffickers react violently to intimidate them.

Children are exploited and often sold in closed apartments, brothels, clubs (striptease clubs), pubs and hotels (in client's rooms)

*"In the countries of destination the majority of them were exploited in strip clubs or illegal brothels. The victims told me the sale was organised under the form of transactions, which took place in clubs or brothels. They gathered more girls for different persons to see and buy them"*

C.L., Social Alternatives Association, Iași

From the interviews of trafficked children returned to Romania emerges the fact that many of the girls are actually sold into slavery which, together with slavery-like practices, are included in the definition of trafficking of the Palermo Protocol and the CoE Convention and are expressly prohibited by several human rights international instruments.<sup>18</sup> Amongst these practices are debt bondage and any practice "whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian, to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour".<sup>19</sup>

Generally trafficked children do not understand they were purchased and that they have to pay off their debt to the trafficker or pay for the exaggerated costs incurred for their transport (including high interest rates), as well as for their food, accommodation and clothes. Once in the destination country, the trafficker informs them that he will let them go only once they have paid off the debt. From that moment, children enter a debt bondage cycle, from which it is very difficult to escape.

*"They told us: you can't do anything anymore. If you want to go home, you have to give me money because I bought you in Bucharest. If you have few hundred dollars, you may go."*

A.C., 16 years old, trafficked girl

Debt bondage is one of the main controlling mechanisms that traffickers use with victims. Very often, victims do not realise that this method is abusive and illegal, because they think that it results from an agreed transaction, based on fair or almost fair prices. Often children are also convinced that their traffickers protect them, as long as they bring an "income".

<sup>18</sup> UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 September 1966 and entered into force on 23 March 1976, art.8; UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, art.11.

<sup>19</sup> UN Slavery Convention, art. 1(a) and art. 1(d).

Once forced to provide sexual services, children are told each client's price and are given instructions on how to treat clients in order to get more money and how to convince them to buy more drinks. Sometimes, victims prefer having sex with the same men, because they know what they want and what the punishment would be if they refuse sexual relations.

The money that children are allowed to keep hardly is enough to cover their personal expenses and only in very rare cases girls manage to raise money for paying off their "debt".

*"I made money, kept it and then gave it all to the pimp."*

M.C., 18 years, trafficked child

Each time the victim succeeds in raising the money they owe the traffickers, they are sold to other traffickers, owners of hotels, bars or other places where girls are forced to prostitute.

According to the testimonies collected, if girls are virgin, traffickers rape them and tell them that this is what they are going to do from that moment on. Children are forced to prostitute on average for 10 hours a day and whenever a client requests it, and their living and housing conditions are described as inhuman. Trafficked children returned to Romania, say that when trafficked, they lived in cabins or very small rooms where they slept and worked. They said they never received medical care when they needed it.

Traffickers use alcohol and drugs to make sure that girls do not fight and are easy to manipulate. As a matter of fact, many of the girls assisted by IOM Bucharest and Save the Children Romania declared that the exploiter forced them to smoke certain cigarettes or to drink something that caused a "strange feeling".

*"You begin to believe that you cannot do anything else but take drugs or die."*

M.C., 18 years, trafficked child

Other girls declared that the clients in the places where they were exploited had guns and used drugs.

In addition, the promise of freedom is just a way through which the traffickers manipulate the girls.

## 4.3

## TRAFFICKING OF MALE AND FEMALE CHILDREN FOR EXPLOITATION IN FORCED LABOUR, INCLUDING IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AND BEGGING

### Main profiles

The main difference between sexual exploitation and exploitation for labour or other purposes is the victim's gender: girls are mostly exploited for sexual purposes while boys are mostly exploited for begging and illegal activities.

#### 1. Community of belonging and factors of vulnerability

##### Case study

*G. is a young boy who says he is 13, but he looks older, shy and scared, obviously because of his visible mutilations: his right forearm has burn marks and his left forearm was amputated. When asked about what happened, he evasively answered that he suffered an accident when he was very young; all he remembered was that he got burned by the stove and that he electrocuted himself by sticking his fingers in an outlet and his arm was amputated as a consequence of that.*

*He says he was born into a normal family nearby Tulcea and his father was working at that time. Shortly after that, his family returned to their native town nearby Craiova. When he was very young his father died and his mother, who had no income source, left him and he hadn't heard anything from her since that time. Thus, he ended up in the street and wandered about the country and settled for a short period of time at Basarabrailway station in Bucharest.*

*After his return to Craiova, he continued to live in the street until the age of ten, when a "gypsy" recruited him and other two persons, whom he later found out were the gypsy's daughter and son-in-law. They suggested he should join them and promised to help him and take care of him. He ended up somewhere in the countryside living with the relatives of these individuals, where he was well treated for about two months. During that time he was photographed on several occasions and he was told he would go to Italy "to earn some money". He said he agreed because he was too young to understand what that meant. Later on he found out that the gypsy had issued fake identity papers according to which he was his son. They left the country easily and once they went to Italy they went to live with "one of the gypsy's brothers" in an apartment where he lived with his family and a 19 years old girl whose leg had been amputated. The three individuals taught him what to say to get money and they sent him to beg in certain areas under their strict supervision. He worked all day long, but not every day. He said he was treated better than the girl, that he ate the food the gypsies cooked, that he didn't earn as much money as he was expected to (although no fixed amount of money was decided upon), and played instead of begging. He was threatened, left hungry and even beaten by them.*

*Almost one year later, all of them went to France, where they lived in a deserted house. Just like in Italy, he was forced to beg; this time they treated him worse because he did not earn as much money as in Italy. Soon after their arrival, as a result of a police raid they were taken to the police station for interrogation, but he managed to escape and took a train to an unknown destination. He reached a railway station in Brussels where he spent a few hours before being taken into police custody.*

He was taken to a residential centre for minors where he lived for “almost one year”. He said he left the centre frequently and then came back. When asked how that was possible, he said the centre had a flexible programme and the supervision wasn’t strict at all. Therefore, he could leave whenever he wanted, but he had to come back at a certain time. This programme allowed him to often beg in the streets and even live in the streets for a whole month before being caught by the police and taken back to the centre.

Although he stated he liked the centre very much, because he learned foreign languages and attended carpentry classes, he was tempted by the huge amounts of money he earned in the streets: “someone gave me once 50 Euros, but usually people give me 2 or 3 Euros”. During that period of time he made many friends and he would have liked to live there. “I was a stupid and ran away and they caught me and put me on a plane. Otherwise, I would still have been there...” When he returned to Romania, the authorities accommodated him in a residential centre for minors (Ciresarii 2).

When asked about his plans for the future, he said he didn’t know what he would like to do in Romania, but he certainly wanted to go back to France, especially because he is alone -he hasn’t heard anything from his mother and didn’t want to see her or talk to her, his sister was married with 2 children and couldn’t take care of him, “...at least that’s what I think.”

There are many factors occurring at various stages of a child’s development, which contribute to increasing his/her vulnerability to being exploited through labour. The victims come from large families (with at least three children) confronted with important financial problems. Family relations are marked by the concern for survival, parents thinking that children should contribute and help them to overcome the problems.

Most of the children haven’t completed compulsory education because their parents’ financial problems prevented them to pay any money for school supplies. In case of parents emigrating with their children, no direct correlation between family conflicts and/or abuse and the incidence of families involved in trafficking has been established so far. The essential push factor for the parents’ decision to emigrate or for their consent that their children work abroad is the family’s difficult economic status and the prospects in the country of origin. Other consequences of this context are domestic violence and/or child abuse.

Most trafficked children had previously “worked” in the streets of Romania (begging or stealing). Working abroad was perceived as a “progress”, or as a new and more effective way of earning their living.

The poverty of these families where most victims of trafficking in children come from is caused by the lack of a permanent income-generating occupation, which leads to a lack of proper living conditions and the impossibility of providing for the family basic needs, such as daily meals.

Trafficked children usually come from families that are unable to offer them a decent living. An important characteristic of these families is the large number of children. Income sources differ, but most of them consist of children’s allowances and the welfare benefit based on the minimum guaranteed income law minimum wages. More than half of these families do not have a regular source of income, either from primary sources or by redistribution, such as salaries or pensions. Instead, they receive the welfare benefit according to the minimum guaranteed income law and get incomes from occasional/seasonal work.

Basic nutrition and clothing was a problem for many of the trafficked children, as their parents were unable to provide for them.

Family situation of children who have never been trafficked, but who are at risk of being trafficked is similar to that of trafficked children.

In many cases, family relations are relatively good and there are no disputes that may determine a child to leave his/her family. However, some of the interviews indicate that children run away from home because of their parents (especially because of fathers) who drink and physically abuse them (e.g. frequent beatings). Children also complained that their parents would force them to beg or steal and emphasized that their parents had no steady jobs and worked only occasionally or begged together with their youngest children.

Many families of the trafficked released children are characterised by a series of dysfunctions that are considered to favour trafficking: single parenting (related to limited school attendance and early engagement in work), conflicts between parents or traumatizing experiences (children from these families want to live away from their parents, most of them want to live in the streets)

*C. lost her mother 12 years ago, when her father killed her in front of the children. Her father was imprisoned and released in 2004. Three of the children were placed in the care of an aunt on the father’s side who lives in the countryside. For the past 12 years, all three children have lived in the streets of Bucharest, returning to their aunt during the wintertime. C. has lived in the sewers at Dristor, Eroilor and Unirii areas, where she has been involved in prostitution and drug abuse. Her brother used to come looking for her and sent her back to the countryside. C.’s older brother got married 2 years ago and his sister has often come to Bucharest to live in the streets or with her brother’s family. They live in a rented house. Their house owner has tried to persuade her to go to Turkey to make “easy money” and escape poverty. Because of the lack of any possibility to earn her living, she is at high risk of being trafficked.*

Case followed by Save the Children Romania, 2006

Families with low income use punishment as a method of correcting their children’s misconduct more frequently, which increases the risk of the children adopting risk behaviours, such as running away from home, delinquency, drug or alcohol use etc. Such behaviours increase the risk of the children getting involved in illegal activities, such as drug peddling, being exploited for forced labour or for commercial purposes.

Taking into account the **environment** where the children involved in labour exploitation can be found, one can distinguish:

- **Children who work in the street**  
The most frequent activities of children that work in the streets are: begging, loading and unloading merchandise, washing windshields or cars in parking lots, selling flowers or newspapers and collecting wastes.
- **Children who work in the rural areas**  
The daily tasks assigned by children’s parents in rural areas include cleaning up the house, cooking, feeding the animals, various agricultural works, taking care of younger siblings, chopping wood etc. Some children work for a “local employer”<sup>20</sup>.
- **Roma working children**  
The children work around the household or participate in agricultural activities together with their parents, production or sale of different goods, collecting recyclable materials, working in markets/warehouses, construction or in the street. Working hours range between 4-10 hours a day and the children’s contribution to the family’s income is usually already a tradition.<sup>21</sup>

One can also identify locations where trafficked children are very likely to be found. These are:

- **Urban areas:** streets; railway stations; central areas; subway stations.
- **Rural areas:** isolated villages; farms; mountain areas, where animal husbandry is practiced

## Methods of recruitment

In the case of children trafficked for forced labour, including begging and illegal activities, all the recruiters are Romanian nationals and are not necessarily part of a network that extends to the territory of the destination country. According to the research findings, there are cases where victims were reportedly turned over to a network in Romania or in the destination country. Children are mainly approached on the street, at railway and subway stations and in central areas in urban settings. Otherwise, they are approached in rural areas,

<sup>20</sup> Stativă Ecaterina, IOMC, “Baseline Survey on Rural Child Labour in Five Selected Counties”, Bucharest, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Căce Sorin, ECHOSOC Foundation, “Roma Working Children and their Families-Socio-cultural Characteristics and Living Conditions”, RO Media Publishing, Bucharest, 2005.

in isolated villages and farms or in mountain areas, where animal husbandry is practiced.

Most frequently, children are recruited by the family's acquaintances or friends, with the consent of the family. It is very common that recruiters initially enter the family's circle of friends with the specific purpose of recruiting children. Once they get to know the family they usually disclose their intentions and convince the parents or adults responsible for the children that working abroad gives better opportunities to the child and the family. In some cases one of the parents (usually the father) accompanies the child to the country of destination. If this happens, it is very likely that the adult previously travelled abroad and is familiar with the itinerary and border crossing. In this situation, adults do not fully understand that the child will be exploited and rather consider they will find legal employment. In other circumstances, parents sell their children even though they know about exploitative purpose, in which case the head of a trafficking network may send part of the child's earnings to the family.

Whatever the circumstances, recruiters usually offer the family mobile phones, clothes, or jewellery already before the departure to influence their decision.

*"As recruitment methods, we identified: material promises (the trafficker buys mobile phones, clothes, jewellery) both for the victim and his/her family. Sometimes, these promises materialise in purchasing goods even when the family itself is involved in the trafficking process. For example, we had a case where the family received a horse for their written approval for the papers necessary for the child to leave the country".*

Social assistant, Transit Shelter

Different is the situation where recruiters approach the victims themselves. In this case they offer the children good jobs abroad and children accept to go with the trafficker because they hope to have a better life. In this case, traffickers do not offer any money or goods before leaving. The dynamic is the same as the one described for children trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Another case is that of teenagers who decide to leave on their own under the influence of the gangs they are part of. They are introduced to adults who facilitate their departure or even accompany them to the destination country (the preferred country in this case being Italy). In this situation, the teenagers become vulnerable to trafficking once they reach the destination country and are not victims when they leave the country of origin. Rather than trafficking, the situation is that of smuggling.

## Transport and trafficking routes

In the case of trafficking for exploitation in forced labour, both in the case of involvement of the family or when children travel alone with their trafficker or recruiter, the most common means of transportation used to reach the destination countries are buses of specialised travel agencies and trains. Parents or recruiters only use certain companies recommended by those who had successfully managed to get to the destination country. Drivers usually are well experienced and provide advice or tips about the possible obstacles or risks involved in crossing the border.

In many cases, recruiters use several different transportation companies on their way to the destination country. They prefer to travel first to one of the capitals of a neighbouring country (e.g. Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia) and then use a bus from a local transportation company. This is done to avoid strict inspections of tourist buses coming from Romania.

As happens in the case of trafficking for sexual exploitation, illegal crossing of the Romanian borders to neighbouring countries is usually done with the help of "specialised" guides. Thus, the guides, recruiters and transporters are some of the most important intermediaries for traffickers in the destination country.

## Living conditions and forms of exploitation

### A. Before leaving the country

Before leaving the country, trafficked children already used to work in the street for a long time, sometimes more than eight hours per day and in very difficult conditions (unbearable heat or very low temperatures). Many children suffered skin diseases, tuberculosis, and hepatitis as a consequence of the unhygienic conditions they are used to living in. Most of them were also involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing. The number of school drop outs among trafficked children seems to be very high. In some cases, although not as frequently as for child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, children were physically abused.

As far as Roma children are concerned, their involvement in work in order to contribute to the family income is a tradition. Children work within the household (cleaning, taking care of younger siblings) and/or participate together with their parents in agricultural activities, production or sale of different goods, collection of recyclable materials, working in squares/warehouses, in construction or on the street (begging or washing windscreens of cars). Working hours range between 4-10 hours a day. There are cases where children were exploited by their parents or relatives before being trafficked: their working conditions were intolerable and the risk of accidents, sickness or of being involved in illegal activities, such as drug dealing, very high.

*"Once they become victims of exploitation, the children come into direct contact with various criminal environments, persons with criminal records, drug or alcohol users"*

Social assistant, DGASPC

### B. During trafficking

Trafficked children generally work in the streets, which exposes them to the risks of street life, and are mainly exploited in illegal activities, such as petty crimes, and begging but there are also cases of children forced to work in agriculture, picking fruits or vegetables (Germany, Spain, Austria) and selling flowers. Children are also exploited through labour in constructions, the preferred country being in this case the Czech Republic.

Because of the risk of being caught and repatriated, children are forced to work almost without a stop. Work starts immediately upon reaching the destination country, where children are deprived of any freedom, are not allowed to speak to "strangers" and are constantly supervised by the trafficker. In some cases, they are forced to sleep in the very places they beg.

Trafficked children interviewed reported that they faced harsh living conditions upon reaching the destination countries. Their housing conditions were appalling: very crowded shelters with adults, tents, trailers, insalubrious or deserted houses and basements. They were not given proper food and didn't have enough rest time. Provision or non-provision of food is a reward for their efficiency in collecting money or a punishment in the event they are not successful. Violence is also commonly used to combat children's resistance or to increase their efficiency and dependency.

Children told the researchers that they were forced to earn a certain amount of money per day, otherwise their traffickers used physical violence as a means of persuasion and intimidation. Even the children exploited by their parents or relatives admitted that they were afraid of the beatings at the end of the day. The money they earned was given to the traffickers, but some children did not even know the value of money, either because of their younger age or their poor level of education. They also said that being controlled by the traffickers, they could not play or make friends, nor could they ask for the support of, and thereby benefit from, the social services provided in the destination countries.