



# In Brief



## Child Trafficking in EU countries

### General Trends / Facts

- Child trafficking works according to the well-known market mechanisms of supply and demand.
- All 44 member states of the Council of Europe – including 20 from Central and Eastern Europe – are directly affected by human trafficking: as countries of origin, transit or destination.
- World-wide 800 000 to 900 000 people are trafficked across international borders
- Unaccompanied minors in the EU states come from more and more countries of origin - mainly from Central and Eastern Europe (Moldavia, Romania and Ukraine), Africa (Nigeria and Sierra Leone) and Asia (China, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka)
- Human trafficking is one of the most profitable and fastest growing criminal activities world-wide, both regarding financial profit and the number of offers.
- Interpol assesses the profits from human trafficking in Europe alone at several billion US dollars a year. The traffic in human beings is, after drug and arms trafficking, the third biggest illegal business activity.
- The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) estimates that in 1997 approx. 175 000 women and girls were trafficked from Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR successor states, mainly to other OSCE states. Destinations were primarily the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.
- Trafficked women and girls come primarily from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States. Also from Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belarus, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, the states of the former Yugoslavia, Moldavia, and Georgia.
- People are trafficked mainly from the poor countries of Southeast Europe to the EU states.
- The EU accession countries like the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are, being relative prosperous and geographically close, the prime destination and transit countries for human traffickers.
- In several European countries most of the unaccompanied boys are between 16 and 18 years old. They come primarily from Afghanistan, China, Iraq, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia.
- In Germany, above all in the cities of Munich, Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt, there were between 5000 and 10 000 unaccompanied children, 90 to 95 percent of them male. In the mid-80s these children came from 5 to 10 different countries, while today they come from about 30.
- In the Netherlands the number of unaccompanied children has been clearly rising for years: in 1996 1562 children reported to the authorities, while in the first nine months



of 2000 there were already 4835. From 1996 to 2000 the children came mainly from China, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Angola.

- In France 122 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in 1997, in 2001 the number was 789. This figure, however, only covers the children arriving at the airport Roissy/Charles-de-Gaulle. IOM assumes that the number for France is about 1000 higher.
- In Italy the organisation Save the Children counted 7823 unaccompanied children between June 2000 and November 2001, almost 4000 of them from Albania, followed by children from Morocco and Romania. In July 2002 the Albanian government reported 6075 unaccompanied children in the neighbouring states (3971 in Italy and 1730 in Greece). According to the police at least 2800 of these children were being exploited as drug couriers, thieves or prostitutes.
- Trafficked children in Greece mainly come from Albania, but also from Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia. For some time now they have also been coming from Iraq.
- The majority of street children in Greece are Albanians. Child trafficking has concentrated on Athens and Thessaloniki. terre des hommes estimated the number of street children in the big Greek cities in December 1999 at approx. 1000. According to the figures given by the Athens police, about 300 children were picked up for begging, 90 percent of them being Albanians.
- In 1997 1600 minors were sexually abused in Greece. Of the 15 to 18-year-olds 90 percent were female. 400 children between 12 and 14 were offered to paedophiles. Of these mainly male children 75 percent were Albanian.

### **Causes of child trafficking:**

- In Eastern Europe these are serious political, social and economic crises, civil war, religious or ethnic conflicts, persecution and discrimination against minorities, high unemployment and high crime rates.
- Children often come from broken homes. Social and educational spending on children is often regarded as a luxury. Many children are left to themselves. Often the families expect their children to support them financially from abroad.
- Victims of child trafficking who return to their home country are often ashamed to talk about what they have been through. That arouses false hopes among other potential victims.
- There is a growing demand for young women and girls and for unprotected sex.

### **Problem Statistics/Data**

- Data about child trafficking in Europe is only recorded in EU member states. However, there are no uniform registration methods in individual countries or at the international level.
- E.g. in Germany and France these methods differ in ministries, organisations and sometimes even within regional authorities. There are no centralised statistics. That leads to a loss of reliable data.
- Most information is about trafficking, mainly in women, for the purpose of sexual abuse. Minors are often not covered separately in these statistics.

- Statistics often only relate to Eastern European countries like Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Belarus, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia or Latvia. Many more countries are involved, however.
- Therefore: the system of data collection and collation must be greatly improved and unified in the individual countries and also internationally in the whole of Europe.

## **Goals of child trafficking:**

### **1. Prostitution / sexual exploitation of children**

- Child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is increasing.
- 120 000 women and children from Southeast Europe are sold annually into EU states. Most of them are smuggled via the Balkans. Up to 80 percent of the people smuggled out of Albania are under 18.
- In Italy there are between 20 000 and 30 000 foreign prostitutes. Social organisations estimate that 16 to 30 percent of prostitutes are minors. The majority of girls come from Albania, Nigeria and Moldavia. Girls of these nationalities are increasingly to be found in Belgium and the Netherlands as well.
- Spain is increasingly developing into a destination for trafficking in women and girls. According to the Spanish authorities, the number of criminal networks involved in human trafficking doubled from 1990 to 1999. (Comité Contre l'Esclavage Moderne, CCEM, S. 33)
- France and Italy are the main destinations for girls from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Togo (CCEM, S. 39).
- France: According to Unicef, 8000 children under 18 are victims of sexual abuse (counting French and foreign minors together).
- Germany: New methods of paedophilia include the adoption of children. Also women from poor countries allow their photos with their small children to appear in matchmaking catalogues. Men marry the women and abuse their children. In the Cologne counselling centre Zartbitter such cases occur six or seven times a year.
- Netherlands: Child trafficking for the purpose of sexual abuse is increasing, for reasons that are not entirely clear. In 1997 terre des hommes estimated that 300 to 400 Nigerian girls under 18 were working in the Netherlands as prostitutes.
- 80 percent of all people trafficked from Albania are girls under 18.
- The price of a woman on the market of Timisoara, Romania, is about 30-120 pounds sterling (44 to 174 Euro). In the destination country it is ten times as much.
- The number of all those working in illegal sexual services in the EU is between 200 000 and half a million. Two thirds come from Eastern Europe.
- Approximately 120 000 women per year are trafficked from Eastern to Western Europe each year. Many women from the Soviet Union successor states enter the EU states via the EU accession countries.
- *The example of child trafficking from Nigeria to the Netherlands*  
Child traffickers to the Netherlands have contacts to people working in the Dutch embassy in Nigeria. For 6000 to 10 000 guilders the dealers receive visas for the Netherlands without the children having to present themselves personally to the Dutch embassy in Nigeria.

In order to escape poverty, girls and families believe the promises of the child traffickers of a job in a restaurant in Europe. In the presence of a voodoo priest the girls promise to pay 50 000 guilders to their dealer. The faith in voodoo is so strong in some places in Nigeria that the girls are not prepared to flee even if they have to earn the money as prostitutes.

- *The example of child trafficking from Albania*

Albania is the Eastern European country most strongly involved in the sex trade. Dealers lure women and children with false promises about marriage or jobs abroad. The baits are often offered by friends or relatives. Sometimes the victims are simply abducted and sold in order to earn money as prostitutes in Western Europe. The price for a girl trafficked to Italy is between 2500 and 4000 US dollars, 10 000 dollars if she is a virgin. Albanian dealers tend to be lone traders and are regarded as extremely violent.

## **2. Economic exploitation of children:**

- There is hardly any data about human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation through work. Little is known about the type of work done by minors in the countries of destination. In the Netherlands they mainly work in restaurants and shops belonging to their fellow countrymen. This method is particularly widespread among Chinese child traffickers.
- In Belgium children mainly have to work in sweat-shops and restaurants, Turkish bakeries and Pakistani night clubs.
- In France children, mainly from China, work in sweat-shops and children from Sierra Leone as prostitutes.
- In Spain Roma children from Portugal, Romania or other Eastern European states are put to work as beggars.
- In Belgium and France children work as domestics for diplomats from the same country of origin: wages are under the subsistence level, children have working hours of from 13 to 18 hours seven days a week and are inadequately provided with living space and food.
- The French NGO CCEM knows of 300 cases of illegal domestics, mostly from Africa and Asia. One third of them are minors, all of them girls. 80 % of them come from West and Central Africa, 60 % of them are between 10 and 15 years old and 15 percent are under 10. One fifth of the “employers” are diplomats or employees at embassies.

## **3. Adoption**

- In Germany there have been signs of a rise in illegal adoptions and trafficked children since the early 1980s.
- Since 1989, 50 percent of all adopted children in Germany have come from Eastern Europe, mainly from Russia, Moldavia and Romania.
- One quarter of all adoptions from abroad have a commercial or criminal background.
- Child traders persuade pregnant young women with money and gifts to give up their child straight after birth. Sometimes the children are abducted,

- According to terre des hommes, in Albania a couple sold its four children for the equivalent of 290 US dollars each. Another method is that a pregnant woman is approached with the story that a woman abroad would like to adopt and pay for a child. The expectant mother receives false documents and is supposed to have the child in Greece. She is operated on in the hospital there. When she comes round after the anaesthetic the doctors tell her that her child is dead.
- With attractive, fertile young women from Eastern Europe dealers can get 5000 to 6000 US dollars per woman in Italy.
- The medium for private placements is often the internet. Children can be bought this way for 10 000 to 20 000 US dollars. A child from Moldavia can be adopted for about 3500 US dollars.

#### **4. Criminal offences/illegal activities**

- In Italy and Greece children end up in the informal economy having to earn money as beggars, street-dealers or car-window cleaners.
- Albanian families, particularly from rural areas, encourage their children from the age of 14 to work abroad and thus to support the family. To pay for their transport the children have to go into debt, which they pay back through working in gangs of beggars.
- The Greek government estimates the number of unaccompanied Albanian boys in the country at 3000. This figure is probably much higher in the summer. Children belonging to the minority of Sinti and Roma are the most trafficked group. The Albanian NGO Help for Children suspects that there are 1000 Albanian children in Thessaloniki alone.
- Forms of exploitation: begging, washing cars, selling religious greeting cards, flowers and towels. A child on the streets of Athens or Thessaloniki earns 30-50 Euro a day and has to give the money to their abusers.
- In Italy Albanian children, in particular, are used as drug couriers – by abusers who are themselves only between 20 and 33 years old.
- In France and Germany the child thieves are mostly from Romania. In Germany they steal up to 1000 euros per day.
- In 1998 Romanian gangs took 250 children from Romania to Germany to use as child thieves. The children are sometimes bought directly from poor families. Investigators quote sums ranging from 250 to 500 euros per child.
- In 2001, 3000 unaccompanied minors caught begging or pick-pocketing were taken into custody, in some cases several times.

#### **The child traffickers**

- Organised networks and individuals are involved in child trafficking.
- Dealers adapt their methods and trade routes flexibly. That makes the prosecution much more difficult.
- Chinese networks do not care whether the trafficked persons are minors or adults, as long as they pay the “transport costs“, generally between 20 000 and 30 000 euros, and pay them off in the country of destination over a period of years through illegal work.
- Eastern European networks come mainly from Albania and Romania.

- Italy's child trafficking is in the hands of Albanian, Russian, Turkish, Nigerian and Chinese criminal networks.
- In Africa the most active networks are Nigerian, with some Ghanaian ones.
- There is a Belgian-Turkish organisation specialising in arranged marriages between Turkish immigrants and Belgians

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For further information on child trafficking in, log on to the terre des hommes' web site at [www.tdh.de](http://www.tdh.de)



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