



# In Brief



## Eastern Europe: Child Trafficking in Eastern Europe

Investigation Report Dagmar Thiel, October 2001  
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### Economic Development in Eastern Europe

- There were nine sovereign states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 1989; today there are 28.
- Difficult economic crisis after the sudden transition to a market economy. Large parts of the population impoverished.
- Wars and civil wars in the Balkan region, Tadschikistan, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Chechnya, Azerbaijan and in Caucasus.
- In comparison with worldwide figures, the percent increase in poverty is the most evident in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The number of the poor increased from one million to 24 million between 1987 and 1998. These people live on less than two dollars a day.
- Poverty related diseases such as diphtheria and tuberculosis have assumed epidemic proportions. The Chernobyl reactor catastrophe (1986) has left almost a million children suffering from radiation injuries. The number of the AIDS-infected increased from 420,000 to 700,000 between 1999 and 2000.

### The situation of children in Eastern Europe

- The living conditions for the majority of the approximately 150 million children in the East European states and in the former Soviet Union have worsened since 1989.
- Social security contributions for children are being increasingly regarded as a luxury.
- Expenditure for education has been perceptibly reduced. In 1996, the number of youngsters attending secondary school in the states of the former Soviet Union had decreased by about 1.6 million as compared to 1989. The teachers are poorly educated and paid at irregular intervals.
- Children of ethnic minorities, especially Roma children, have to frequently suffer discrimination.
- The number of orphans on welfare is increasing. In Russia alone there are about 620,000 such children with parents who are still living but who do not take care of them.
- Children are often left to fend for themselves and have to earn money for themselves and for their families.

### Factors that favor child trafficking

- Armed conflicts, poverty and debts burden families; social and family structures are destroyed.
- Unemployment, especially in case of women, low income.
- The level of education especially in the rural areas is low.
- Expensive contraceptives, increasing numbers of teenage mothers.



- In the former communist states the habit inculcated by the old system of viewing the state as a substitute family continues to be widespread.
- Traditional attitudes that young girls are less valuable than boys.
- Families look upon children as little adults. The parents consider the passage to a foreign country as an opportunity for the children to earn money to support the family.
- Great demand for sex with young healthy girls.

### **Child Trafficking in general**

- There are no detailed figures on child trafficking.
- The OSZE estimates that 200,000 individuals are trafficked from Eastern Europe to Western Europe each year. The destination countries are mainly in Western Europe but also include Turkey, Greece and Israel.
- According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), human beings are trafficked not only in the countries in Western Europe but also from one East European country to another. The destination countries for people from the poorer states are mainly Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland.

### **Persons who are involved in child trafficking**

- Offenders who work individually and organized gangs from all over Europe
- Parents
- Relatives/Friends
- Teachers in schools/Employees at the orphanages
- Prostitutes
- Local guides /boat operators at the border/Taxi drivers
- Corrupt officials/Border officials

### **Child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation**

- 80 per cent of the young women and girls who are brought to Germany by smuggling rings are from Eastern Europe.
- The children being forced into prostitution are younger than ever. In particular, the number of young boys in the sex market is increasing.
- The number of unaccompanied minors who are smuggled in the EU for the purpose of sexual exploitation is showing a marked increase. The children come from an increasing set of countries: mainly from Moldova, Romania and the Ukraine.
- Example - Albania  
In Eastern Europe, Albania is the country that is most involved in the sex trade. Traffickers lure women and children with false promises of marriage or jobs as waitresses or dancers. The seducers are often acquaintances or relatives. Some of the victims are simply abducted and sold to earn money as prostitutes in Western Europe. The price for a girl trafficked to Italy ranges between USD 2,500 to 4,000; the price can go up to USD 10,000 if the girl is a virgin. Albanian traffickers are usually offenders who work independently and look after all the aspects of the business. They recruit victims, force them into prostitution and make huge profits. Albanian traffickers and pimps are extremely violent. The individual offenders and gangs transport the young girls from the Albanian coast to Italy with the help of speedboats. A passage costs between USD 700 and 1,000. The boats are also simultaneously used for smuggling drugs and weapons and the young girls are used as couriers.
- Example - Czech Republic  
Child prostitution is rampant in the border areas of the Czech Republic and the customers are predominantly German men. The victims mainly come from impoverished families; it is usually the parents, other relatives or organized gangs of pimps that "make the children available" for commercial misuse. In 1999 the Czech police registered 1,150 cases of



commercial child abuse outside the family. Some of the infants, smaller children and minors are offered directly on the streets. The children do not go to school - they are the breadwinners of the family. Many of the children have already experienced violence and/or sexual abuse within the family. Minors usually show no interest in reporting the offenders. Basically the children also go about the business of prostitution in places where the police are present. In Cheb, a place with 36,000 residents, there are 98 nightclubs, sex hotels and brothels.

### **Child trafficking for the purpose of adoption**

- Trafficking in children from Eastern Europe for the purpose of adoption started after the political turn of events in 1989. Since then, 50 percent of all children adopted in Germany come from Eastern Europe. The children are fair-skinned and are therefore in demand. There are indications of child trafficking for the purpose of adoption in Russia, Moldova and Romania.
- A quarter of all inter-country adoptions are said to have a commercial or criminal background.
- In 1999, 600 children were officially brought to Germany for adoption. However experts estimate that the actual number could be four times the estimate.
- Child traffickers target pregnant young girls who are then persuaded to give their child for adoption at birth. In particular, unmarried young girls are pressured into this or lured with money or gifts.
- Women are paid to have children for the purpose of an inter-country adoption.
- Some are deceived and told that their baby died shortly after birth.
- The illegal brokers deceive pregnant women into believing that the mothers can stay in touch with their child even after the adoption.
- There are also documented cases in which gangs abduct children from market places or with the help of fake babysitters.
- The traffickers can get USD 5,000 to 6,000 in Italy for attractive East European women who are capable of bearing children.
- In 1999, approximately 700 children were adopted from St. Petersburg; 200 by Russians and 500 by foreigners.
- The internet is increasingly being used as the medium for private negotiations. Children are available here for USD 10,000 to 20,000. A child from Moldova can be adopted for about USD 3,500. The demand is mainly from Israel and the United States.
- In Moldova the Government does not keep track of the number of children in children's homes and on the streets and a disappearance would not be immediately evident.

### **Child Trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in criminal offenses and illegal activities**

Trafficked children in Germany:

- In 1998, Romanian gangs brought 250 children from Romania to Germany to be used as juvenile thieves, called "Klaukinder" in Germany.
- The traffickers obtain these children in three ways:
  1. The children are directly bought from the families in the poor regions of North-East Romania. Investigators mention sums ranging from 500 to 1,000 German Marks per child.
  2. Families simply hand over the children to traffickers whose promises they believe.
  3. The children are recruited from the streets of Bucharest.

Trafficked children in Italy and Greece:

- Unlike Germany, children in Italy and Greece increasingly end up in the black labor market where they have to earn money as beggars, street traders or vehicle window cleaners.
- Albanian families, mainly in the rural areas, encourage their children above the age of 14 to work abroad and support the family. The children get into debt to pay for the transport and then have to work off these debts, for instance, by joining begging rings.



- The Greek Government estimates the number of unaccompanied Albanian children in the country to be around 3,000. The number is said to be higher in the summer months. The children who are trafficked are mainly those belonging to the Sinti and Roma minority groups. The Albanian NGO Help for Children estimates that there are 1,000 Albanian children in Thessaloniki alone.
- In part, the families of the children cooperate with the traffickers as they receive money each month for the services rendered by their children. Some of the children are less than seven years old.

**STOP CHILD TRAFFICKING**

**Contact & further information**

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