PROject of Technical assistance against the Labour and Sexual Exploitation of Children, including Trafficking, in countries of Central and Eastern Europe

PROTECT CEE

International Labour Office

Rapid Assessment of Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in Romania

2003

IPEC
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

Rapid Assessment of Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in Romania

Prepared by

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Under technical supervision of FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies, Norway

for the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Bucharest, 2003

Salvați Copiii
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Foreword

Unacceptable forms of child labour persist and affect the lives of many millions of children. Some of those practices are particularly difficult to research due to their hidden, sometimes illegal or even criminal nature. Slavery-like conditions, debt bondage, trafficking, sexual exploitation, the use of children in the drug trade and in armed conflict, as well as hazardous work are defined as worst forms of child labour.

Promoting the Convention (No. 182) concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999, is a high priority for the International Labour Organization (ILO). Recommendation (No. 190, paragraph 5) accompanying the Convention states that "detailed information and statistical data on the nature and extent of child labour should be compiled and kept up to date to serve as a basis for determining priorities for national action for the abolition of child labour, in particular for the prohibition and elimination of its worst forms as a matter of urgency." Although there is a body of knowledge, data and documentation on child labour, there are also still considerable gaps in understanding the variety of forms and conditions in which children work. This is especially true for some of the worst forms of child labour such as trafficking of children, which by their very nature often are hidden from public view and scrutiny.

Against this background, the ILO through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) launched a process in 2002 to investigate the trafficking of children for labour and sexual purposes in four selected countries of Eastern Europe: Albania, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. In collaboration with the FAFO Institute for Applied Social Sciences, Norway, a research methodology manual was developed and research institutions in each of the concerned countries contracted and trained. Through the collection and analysis of primary data as well as secondary data in each country, substantive information was compiled on the specific features of the trafficking dynamics and the consequences for the lives of many girls and boys.

To the partners and IPEC colleagues who contributed through their individual and collective efforts to the realisation of this report, I should like to express our gratitude. The responsibility for opinions expressed in this publication rests solely with the authors and does not imply endorsement by the ILO.

The wealth of information contained in these reports on the situation of the girls and boys trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation within the countries concerned and across their borders will surely contribute to a deeper understanding and a sharper focus on the challenges that lie ahead. Most importantly, we hope that the studies will guide policy makers, community leaders, and practitioners to address the problem of child trafficking with determination. And help them put an end to this grave injustice that shatters children's lives.

Frans Röselaers
Director
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
International Labour Office
Geneva, 2004

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Executive Summary

As part of the first phase of its *Prevention and Reintegration Programme to Combat Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine*, the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) undertook Rapid Assessment surveys in four target countries: Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and Albania. The findings, which provide information on the contextual and environmental conditions that contribute to trafficking in children (ie under the age of 18) and the consequences of trafficking, were intended to provide a basis for the second phase of the Programme. In this second phase, IPEC would implement a comprehensive programme to combat trafficking in children in the region through prevention and reintegration measures.

This present survey provides information on the trafficking of children in Romania. It covers both external (cross-border) and internal (domestic) trafficking and includes children trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation. The authorities working to dismantle trafficking networks in Eastern and Southern Europe are confronted not only with trafficking for sexual purposes but also trafficking of children into other types of exploitation such as begging, stealing and drug peddling. In recent years another serious problem that has arisen is that of parents who exploit their own children and force them to perform different types of illegal activities either in their own country or abroad.

Regardless of the nature of their exploitation or the means by which they are trafficked, the physical, psychological and sexual abuse to which trafficked children are exposed represent a long-term threat to their well-being.

This study was conducted using rapid assessment methodology that combines quantitative approaches with qualitative research. As an exploratory method, this is an appropriate choice to investigate trafficking in children, a field about which little is known.

This report provides information on the causes and context in which children are exposed to and become victims of trafficking. Answers to questionnaires and statements made by parents and children during semi-structured interviews and focus groups confirm that economic challenges and the inability to provide a decent living are the main push factors contributing to trafficking. Most of the parents of trafficking victims who were interviewed were in receipt of state social benefits. In general, their earnings came from illegal work performed by all family members, both parents and children. These economic problems result in large part from the parents' low level of education, which prevents them from taking up employment opportunities even where these exist. This social distress aggravates and leads to dysfunction in the structure and the role of the family: the death of a parent, multiple marriages, repeated divorces, domestic violence and alcoholism.

The report considers trafficking as a process in all its stages: recruitment, transportation, working and living conditions, the way out of trafficking (exit) and reintegration of victims. In almost all cases, recruitment is through false promises, although the recruiter is not usually the person who then exploits the child. Parents and relatives who accompany the child to the destination country serve as recruiters, traffickers or supervisors of a group of children. The research also includes a description of the various types of work and sexual exploitation with which children are confronted, as well as aspects of the everyday life of children who have been trafficked.

The findings of the survey show that, of 55 children released from trafficking (34 girls and 21 boys) interviewed, 32.7 per cent had been involved in prostitution; 21.8 per cent in dancing and massage; 20 per cent in begging; 9.1 per cent in household activities or agriculture; and 16.4 per cent in other types of activities (for example working as waiters, street vending, fortune telling or theft). Half of the children worked without time off, seven days a week, at least eight hours a day. Most of the money they earned was given to the traffickers.

External trafficking accounted for 42 cases (76.36 per cent). Twelve of these children were trafficked for labour and 30 for sexual exploitation. The main destination countries to which children were trafficked were Italy (10 cases), Macedonia (six cases), Serbia and Montenegro (six cases), Spain (five cases) and Germany (three cases). The remaining children were recruited to work in other areas of Romania and were thus trafficked internally. The predominant types of forced labour performed by these children were begging and agricultural work. In both internal and external trafficking, most children were recruited with the support of friends, acquaintances and parents.

Most of the children who were released from trafficking were between 14 and 17 years of age. They had a low education level, dropped out school at an early age and came from families with socio-economic problems. The survey indicated that street children and Roma children are at the highest risk of trafficking, and that girls are mainly trafficked for sexual exploitation while boys are mainly trafficked for labour (begging, involvement in illegal activities and similar).

In most cases, children returned to their place of origin as a result of the actions of the authorities in places where they were forced to work (night-clubs, hotels, streets, etc.). However, 25 per cent of the victims were able to escape on their own or with their friends. Sadly, the children's return to their families did not bring an end to their problems. Only the children who were included in rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes really began a new life: the development of such programmes can also help to prevent the child's stigmatisation in small communities.

Because of the harsh working conditions, only a third of the children said they wanted to continue the kind of work they were doing. When asked why they would rather have stayed than return home, these children said that it was mainly because they could have earned more money.

The study also includes a description of institutions and programmes on prevention of child trafficking and assistance for trafficking victims. Where appropriate, successful practices, as well as the difficulties encountered, are underlined.

The last chapter of the report includes recommendations for policies and programme initiatives at the level of governmental institutions, NGOs and inter-agency partnerships, aimed at contributing to the development of strategies to prevent child trafficking and support victims. There is an obvious need to improve existing services and develop a monitoring, coordination and evaluation system.

1. CONTEXT TO THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN ROMANIA

Trafficking in human beings is an extreme form of transnational criminality that has increased alarmingly since the mid-1990s. The number of victims of trafficking has been estimated at hundreds of thousands, mainly women and children.

Although it is a complex form of organized crime involving well-structured criminal groups, trafficking is usually perceived by traffickers as low-risk and promising high returns. Studies have illustrated strong links between trafficking in human beings and the global trade in drugs, guns and other illicit commodities; they have also emphasized that organized crime groups are increasingly decentralized and flexible in their organization, and that this allows them to adapt to the socio-economic context of a country when necessary.[1]

Smuggling and trafficking have become a major problem in Europe, in particular since a number of Eastern European countries no longer have visa requirements for travel in Europe. International bodies and national authorities focus their attention on two forms of trafficking: trafficking for sexual exploitation and trafficking for labour. Until recently, public opinion has been more interested in trafficking into sexual exploitation.[2]

The issue of trafficking in children was addressed for the first time in Romania in the early 1990s, when the illegal adoption of hundreds of Romanian children was accompanied by illicit relocation of these children through trafficking. At the same time, economic collapse after the revolution of 1989 encouraged thousands of Romanians to emigrate in order to find work in western countries. Open borders and already operational criminal routes and networks were used for illicit people movement, alongside massive regular migration. As Romania became both a transit and a sending country for child trafficking, awareness and understanding of the trafficking process increasingly became a focus for national public institutions as well as international organizations.

Trafficking in human beings is one of the most severe and prevalent social issues in Romania and is directly related to the complex socio-economic situation of the country and the existence of a 'market' in destination countries and domestic trafficking locations.

In Romania, trafficking in human beings is associated with migration for work (both legal and illegal). Poverty, unemployment, lack of equal opportunities and limited access to information are the main factors contributing to trafficking. A lack of functional coordination at political and social levels results in a paucity of coherent social policies as far as human trafficking is concerned. At the level of political statements, however, combating trafficking in human beings seems to have been taken seriously, since it is an emerging issue in the region and is also on the agenda of the international community. At the level of social sub-systems, however, it is still a widespread problem.

It was in this context that the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and in collaboration with other relevant ILO departments (DECLARATION and MIGRANT) launched its subregional programme: *Prevention and Reintegration Programme to Combat Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine*. The participating countries are Albania, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, and the programme has two phases:

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1 Adamoli, S, Di Nicoli A, Savona E and Zoffie, P: *Organised crime around the world,* (European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control [HEUNI], Helsinki, 1998).

2 *Forced labour, child labour and human trafficking in Europe: An ILO perspective,* (ILO, Geneva, September 2002).

- The first phase aims to identify a strategy for concerted action through situation analysis and appraisal of existing responses in the participating countries through Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS);
- On the basis of the findings of the RAS, the second phase focuses on implementing a comprehensive programme to combat trafficking of children and young people in the Balkan region and Ukraine, particularly through prevention and reintegration measures.

Map 1: ILO subregional programme locations

1.1 Demographic data

Romania is a medium-sized South-East European country with a population of 21.6 million, of which 4 million (18.3 per cent) are children under 14 years of age.

Since the mid-1990s, the negative effects of transition from a central to market economy have led to a rapid and substantial degradation of the living standard for an increasing proportion of the population, especially families with children.

Since 1990, the population of Romania has been declining. From 1992 to 2002, the total population of Romania decreased by approximately 1 million (4.2 per cent), from 22,810,035 to 21,698,181. The key factors contributing to this are a falling birth rate, increased mortality rate and external migration.

The infant mortality rate continues to decline, from 26.9 in 1990 to 18.6 in 2000. This is a result of increased access to family planning services, with positive consequences for the health of the mother and child. The infant mortality rate is higher in rural areas (20.8). However, while the infant mortality rate for all the other age groups fell, the mortality rate for the segment 5 – 9 years rose from 0.6 in 1993 to 0.8 in 1998.

The Romanian National Institute for Statistics reports that, between 1993 and 1998, 120,274 Romanians emigrated, and 38,052 were repatriated. This represents the *official* number of legal emigrants according to the Romanian authorities and not the *actual* number of permanent or temporary migrants. Although 'pseudo-tourism' – people moving overseas ostensibly on vacation but in reality to work -- is notorious, there is no data to document it. Pseudo-tourists are ready to take risks: they accept to live illegally in a Western European country and to risk being caught and forcibly repatriated. These people work mainly in agriculture and construction work; a few of them are legally employed.

1.2 Poverty and unemployment

Disparities between different segments of the population have become more obvious in the same period. The economic, political and social transformation process has been followed by an explosive increase in poverty, exacerbating basic human deprivation. While in 1989 an estimated 7 per cent of the population was poor, the poverty rate reached 44 per cent in 2000 (Government White Book). The 2001-2002 Human Development report indicates that: "The economic collapse has been the main source of structural-economic poverty, but distributional poverty caused by increasing inequality in the distribution of resources and inadequate social protection also plays a significant role".[3]

The Report indicates that poverty mainly affects large households where one or both parents are unemployed, people with a low education level, the Roma population, people mainly engaged in agricultural activities, households where the main provider is self-employed, and inhabitants of rural areas. As concerns the relation between poverty and social groups, those most affected by poverty are families with more than three children, members of Roma communities and elderly women who live alone. Rural areas are more profoundly affected by poverty than urban areas. The less developed areas are found in the north-east (Suceava, Botosani, Vaslui, Iasi), the south (Teleorman, Giurgiu, Ialomita, Calarasi) and the south-east (Valcea, Gorj).[4]

Between 1991 and 2002, there were two distinct tendencies in the evolution of the unemployment rate: an increase from 3 per cent in 1991 to 11.8 per cent in 1999, followed by a decrease to 8.1 per cent by 2002. The highest unemployment rates are registered in the north-east (Botosani, Neamt, Vaslui), south-east (Braila), in the south (Ialomita, Prahova) and the west (Hunedoara). The lowest rate is registered in Bucharest (5.8 per cent in 2000). The unemployment rate among young people aged 15 – 24 years fell from 22.5 per cent in 1994 to 18.5 per cent in 2000.

The opening of borders brought not only economic, cultural and political cooperation between Romania and other states, but also the expansion of organized crime. Trafficking in human beings is recognized as one of the worst forms of transnational organized crime, with multiple factors that favour it, as well as multiple negative consequences for individuals and society as a whole.

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3 UNDP: *National Human Development Report Romania 2001-2002*, (UNDP, Bucharest, 2002).

4 *Idem*.

1.3 Education system

Although there have been many changes in relation to people's access to the education system, the transition period has had a negative impact by decreasing budgetary resources compared to needs and by increasing the cost of education for families with children, even though education is nominally free of charge.

In the school year 2001/2002, the gross enrolment rate in compulsory education was 97 per cent. The rate of continuation into secondary education increased from 88.4 per cent in 1992 to 95.1 per cent in 2000.

The drop-out rate from compulsory education hovered around 0.6 per cent between 1993 and 2001, a period characterized by many changes in the education system and increasing social disparities. Unemployment among families in difficult circumstances underlay a negative attitude towards children's education. Overall, school drop-out is decreasing, except for vocational schools, where an increase from 4.2 per cent in the school year 1993/1994 to 6.5 per cent in 2000/2001 was registered. In 2000, 2.8 per cent of children between the ages of seven and 14 were not in school.

The enrolment rate for Roma children is much lower than the average. For the age group 7 – 9 years, it is estimated that 29.9 per cent of Roma children have never attended school, while for the age group 10 – 16 years the rate is 17.2 per cent. Studies estimate that 48.3 per cent of Roma children aged 7 – 9 years will drop out school before the 4th grade.

Most of the time parents cannot afford the necessary expenses for their children to attend school. The children therefore stay home and get involved in different activities performed by the family: housework, agricultural work with their parents, bonded child labour for money or to repay debts. It is assumed that a substantial proportion of children migrate to cities and work rather than attending school. In the worst situations, children are forced to beg or are prostituted.

1.4 Children in institutions

Although one of the objectives of the Governmental Strategy for Child Protection is to decrease the number of children in residential care institutions,[5] this still remains a delicate issue in the field of child protection. In 2004, 0.87 per cent of all children in Romania live in residential care institutions (38,599 children in state residential care and 5,104 children in residential institutions run by NGOs). Since 1997, the number of children from residential care institutions placed in family-type protection has increased. In September 2002, 41,782 children were in foster families, of which some 60 per cent were in the care of relatives and 30 per cent in the care of the professional caregivers. International adoptions represented 70 per cent of the overall number of adoptions in 2000. A moratorium on international adoptions was imposed in October 2001.

Another important problem related to children in institutions is the lack of appropriate skills for an independent life. Children leaving an institution without training appropriate to their age are at risk of becoming victims of all kinds of abuse and injustice. Some 27 counties of Romania accommodate between 100 and 500 children each in state residential care, while in another 12 counties between 500 and 800 children are in state residential care. Two counties accommodate more than 1,000 children (Suceava with 1,109 children and Iasi with 1,856 children) and in Bucharest 1,203 children

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[5] In the past, a residential care institution accommodated between 100 and 300 children. They have now been turned into family-type placement centres and accommodate on average 55 children. In July 2002, there were 780 residential institutions (placement centres, family-type homes and social apartments), sheltering 43,170 children Government of Romania: *Report on the situation of children in Romania*, (Bucharest, 2002).

are in state care. The north-east region hosts the largest number of children from this age group: 5,363 children.

The first four years of the twenty-first century have been characterized by a constant increase in the number of disabled children. At the end of 2001, the number of disabled children was 58,688, of which 1,058 children lived in special residential care institutions. These children and their families are confronted with social stigma, a lack of specialized services and insufficient financial support. There is increasing evidence that disabled children have become victims of external trafficking, particularly for begging.

1.5 Child labour

A Rapid Assessment on working street children carried out by Save the Children Romania with the support of ILO-IPEC in 2001 revealed the difficult situation of children who work on the streets. Of 150 street children working more than eight hours a day: 44 per cent begged in difficult conditions (very low or high temperatures); most suffered skin diseases, tuberculosis, or hepatitis; 93 per cent had dropped out school, most around the age of 11; 34 per cent were illiterate; 40 per cent had poor writing and reading skills; 49 per cent had been beaten at least once; and 63 per cent were frequently insulted by their employers.

The study reveals that children are exposed to major risks of becoming involved in illegal activities such as drug peddling, prostitution or pornography. The main activities performed by working street children are:

- *Begging,* performed in different locations (subway stations, intersections, supermarkets, buses, parking areas and generally in crowded places) by singing or telling short stories about the dramatic situation of their families. Sometimes the children are accompanied by younger siblings (sometimes as young as two or three years) or puppies. The dangers of begging include extreme heat or cold, the risk of car accidents, and pollution at central intersections.

- *Car washing*, performed at intersections or parking areas, usually by teenagers. This consists of quickly washing the windscreens and lights of cars. In parking areas, it may involve washing the whole vehicle. The main dangers children are exposed to while washing cars are: accidents, inhaling noxious gases for many hours a day, and the violent outbursts of some drivers.

- *Selling merchandise,* one of the less dangerous types of work. This usually refers to selling low-priced items such as newspapers, city maps, car deodorisers and similar. Some children accompany their parents in the markets, helping them to sell fruit, vegetables and other items. Since these activities are mostly illicit, the children or their parents risk being fined by the police.

- *Loading and unloading merchandise,* one of the most hazardous forms of labour exploitation because children handle heavy weights. This has negative consequences on children's health and physical development. This type of labour is usually performed by teenagers (although it does not exclude children) in large warehouses, supermarkets, construction sites or commercial areas. Although this is a very hazardous and physically challenging type of work, it is very poorly paid.

- *Household activities,* work performed by children either for their own families or for other families to whom the children's parents may be indebted. Traditionally girls are mostly used in such activities.

- *Collection of waste products,* most common for Roma children and their families. Some of the products the children recycle are scrap iron, glass or paper. The danger of this work resides in the environment in which the children work every day: garbage fields and abandoned

construction sites.

- *Prostitution.* The short duration of the rapid assessment did not allow for the investigation of less visible or hidden forms of child labour such as prostitution or stealing.

Another study carried out in rural areas showed that more than 70 per cent of 400 children aged between six and 14 from Vaslui, Botosani, Suceava, Ialomita and Calarasi counties considered it normal for them to work. The daily activities required by their parents included cleaning the house, cooking, feeding animals, cleaning the stables, coops or pigsties, taking care of younger siblings, agricultural work, milking and chopping wood. Sixty-four children said they worked for a 'local employer', and 21 said their parents did not allow them to go to school because they needed money.[6]

Roma children's involvement in work in order to contribute to the family income is a tradition resulting in part from parents' lack of interest in their children's schooling. In the communities studied (Ferentari - Bucuresti, Calvini – Buzau County and Pata Rat – Cluj County), [7] children work in the household cleaning and taking care of younger siblings, and/or participate together with their parents in agricultural activities, the production or sale of different goods, collecting recyclable materials, working in squares/warehouses, construction or on the street (begging, washing car windscreens). Working hours range between four and 10 hours a day. Working conditions are intolerable and the risk of accidents, sickness or of becoming involved in illegal activities (prostitution, drug dealing) is very high. Of the children interviewed, 67.4 per cent went to school; 13.5 per cent had temporarily dropped out, and 19.1 per cent were not enrolled in education.

1.6. Existing data on child trafficking

Romania as a source, transit and destination country

Romania is reported to be a source country for human trafficking.[8] The US State Department's annual trafficking report[9] describes Romania as a source country primarily for women and girls trafficked to Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Italy and Turkey for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is a country of origin for child victims of trafficking. Located between the former soviet block and the countries that experienced the negative impact of transition and instability produced by war in the Balkans, Romania is also a transit country for trafficking in human beings.

Romania is described as a destination and a transit country for Moldavians and, more rarely, for Ukrainians. Romanians and Moldavians are trafficked from Romania, often first to Serbia and Montenegro, and then to other Balkan or Western European countries. Women and children trafficked from Romania have been reported in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (including Kosovo). The main Western destination countries for Romanian victims of trafficking are Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Ireland, Spain and Austria. Victims have also been found in Turkey, Canada, Cambodia, South Africa and Japan.

Almost 50 per cent of trafficked Romanian women come from the north-east of the country. Most of the people trafficked through and from Romania are brought first to Timisoara or Turnu Severin

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6 E. Stativa: *Baseline survey on rural child labor in five selected counties in Romania, 2001*, (Institute for Mother and Child Protection, Bucharest, 2002).

7 *Roma working children and their families,* (ECHOSOC Foundation, Bucharest, 2002).

8 *Trafficking in human beings in southeastern Europe*, (UNICEF, UNOHCHR and OSCE/ODIHR, Sarajevo, 2000).

9 US State Department: *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 - Trafficking in Persons Report*, (US Government, Washington, June 2002).

in western Romania; from there, they are taken to the border area around Câmpulung to cross to the former Yugoslavia and beyond. A market for humans reportedly exists just outside Timisoara.

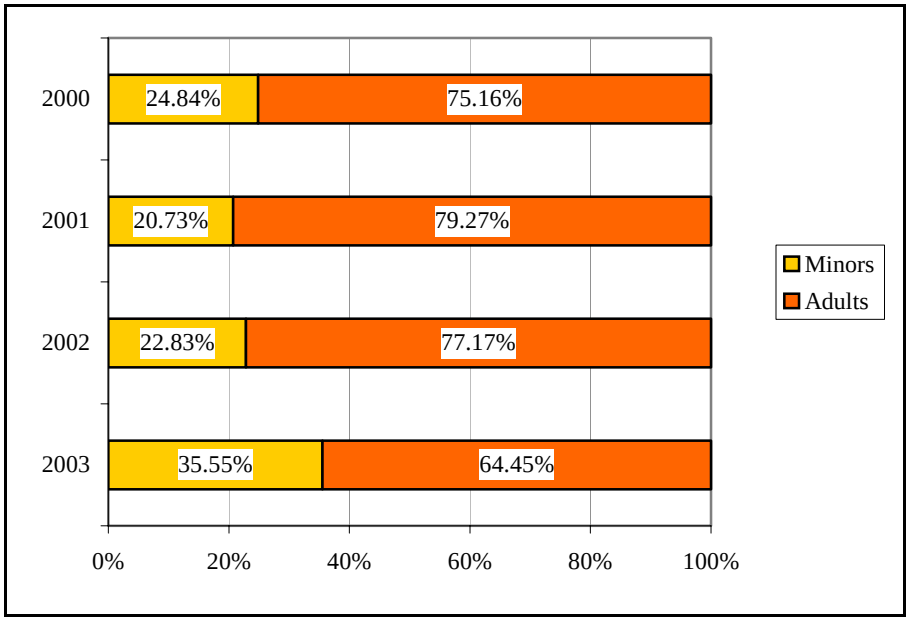
There are anecdotal reports that boys are trafficked for the European male pornography market and children for organ transplants. Apart from a very few newspaper articles, there is no concrete information or data available to substantiate these claims.[10]

In the 2001 State Department report, Romania was considered a country whose government does not make significant efforts 'to bring themselves into compliance' with standards for the elimination of trafficking, and Romania was thus categorized in Tier 3. By the 2002 Report, Romania had been upgraded to a Tier 2 country, signalling that significant efforts had been made to bring the country into compliance with minimum standards: a law incriminating trafficking in persons was adopted in December 2000; security of the borders was strengthened to monitor migration; the government was cooperating with other governments on criminal investigations; there were cases of arrested traffickers. However, services for victims and prevention programmes were noted as still needing to be developed.

Data from the International Organization for Migration

IOM Romania reports that 622 Romanian victims of trafficking in human beings were helped from 1999 to 2002. In 2002, measures to counteract trafficking in human beings were taken, in particular women and minors from/via the Balkan and Adriatic regions, and actions were taken to secure the assisted voluntary return and reintegration of trafficking victims. In 2001, help was provided to victims of trafficking and for the prevention of trafficking in women in Romania. Of the total number of people helped since 2000, 23 per cent were children. Most trafficking victims helped by IOM were between 18 and 20 years of age when they exited trafficking; their age at recruitment is not know.

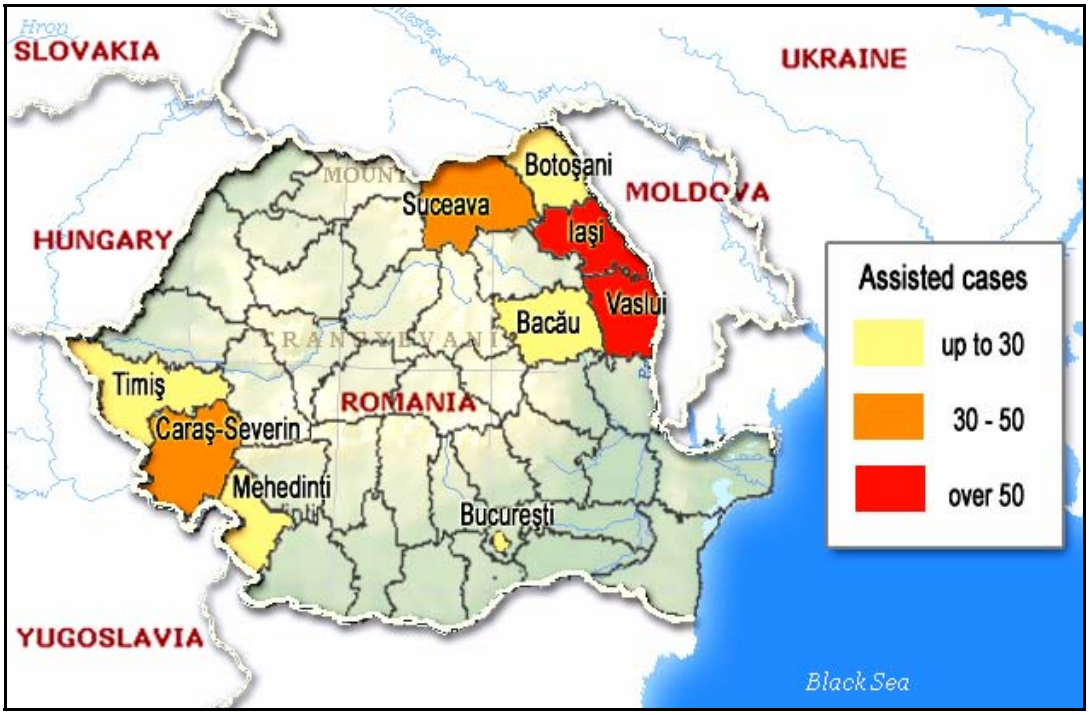
Figure 1. Distribution of IOM-assisted girls and women by age group



(Note: For 2003, only the first quarter of the year is included.)

10 *Trafficking in human beings in southeastern Europe, op.cit.*

Map 2: Counties with the highest number of girls and women assisted by IOM (January 2000 - March 2003)



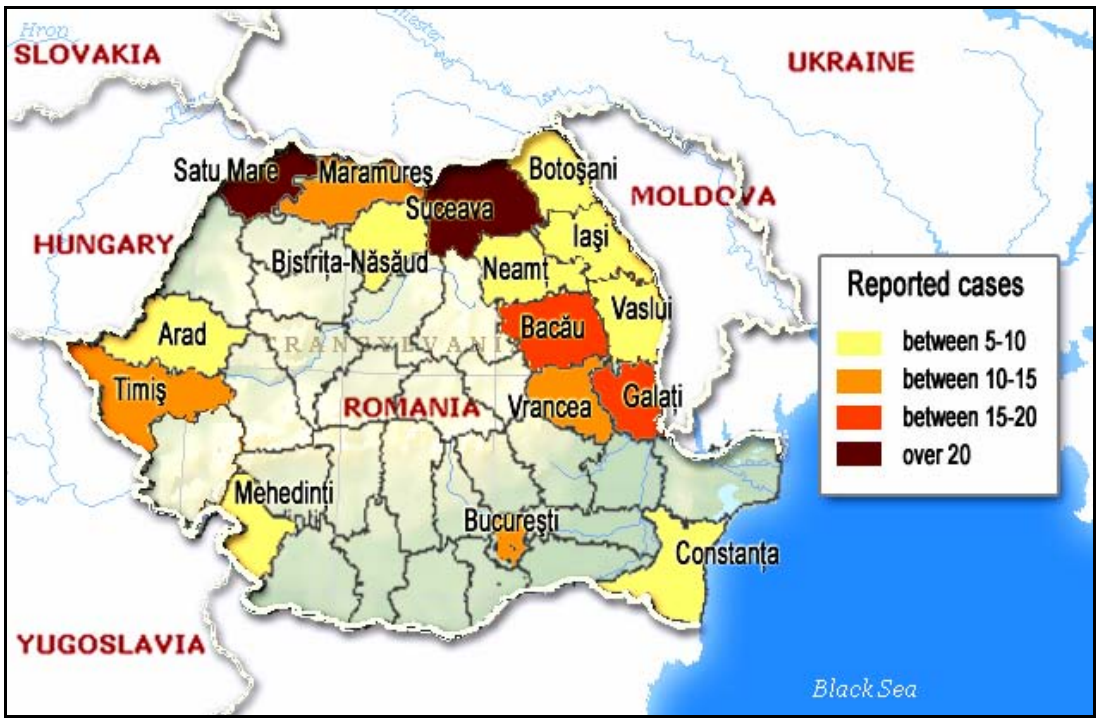
The data reported by IOM Albania shows that, in 2000, 34 per cent of the trafficking cases were Romanian and 9 per cent were minors between the ages of 13 and 17 years.

A partnership between the Ministry of Education, IOM and Romanian Patriarchy has been established in order to carry out awareness-raising campaigns in schools

Save the Children Romania – International Cases Programme

Save the Children Romania, in cooperation with International Social Service Italy, has developed a programme to help separated Romanian children overseas. The programme helped 248 children between 1 August 2001 and 31 January 2003. Most of the children came from the north of the country and from the border counties, as shown in the map below. Of the total number of cases, 71 per cent were boys and 29 per cent were girls. Most of these children were aged 17-18 years. For 22 girls there was a suspicion of trafficking for sexual exploitation and for three boys of exploitation for labour (begging, stealing). One child had been involved in armed robbery.

Map 3: Counties with the highest number of separated children reported by Save the Children Romania (August 2001 – January 2003)



Public information from the General Inspectorate of Border Police

The General Inspectorate of Border Police has made the following information available for the period January- September 2002:

In order to counteract illegal migration of Romanian citizens, the Border Police acts in the intelligence field. The data reveals that foreign citizens are also involved in illegal migration and human trafficking networks. They send invitations to Romanians (guaranteeing subsistence during their stay, medical treatment, etc.) that can be used as 'proof' of legitimate travel to a country in the Schengen area and they are effectively involved in their transportation from Romania to the destination country.

In most cases there are also middle-men (Romanian, Yugoslavian, Austrian, Dutch, Italian and others) who recruit potential workers by promising them jobs, medical treatment and other 'services' or indeed by telling them what they really will be involved in, for example begging or prostitution. The workers make the necessary arrangements at their own expense to legally obtain passports and healthcare insurance, invitations or the money required when leaving the country.

Once at the final destination, the 'workers' are handed over for exploitation to night-club owners (Spanish, Austrian, Greek or Italian) or to others (Romanians or foreigners living legally in those countries). The people trafficked for sexual exploitation or for begging end up in Spain, Italy, Greece, France, the Netherlands and Austria.

In the first nine months of 2002, 88 migration and human trafficking routes were identified, acting on Romanian territory.

From the beginning of 2003 until the time of writing, 41 networks engaged in human trafficking had

been identified, and 68 girls from Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine had been intercepted. Generally they were the victims of recruiters; one child was to be transported for prostitution in Western Europe. In all of the cases, it was established that the women were transported by middle-men to the destination countries, where they were handed over to night-club owners. The method used was to declare the purpose of their travel as tourism to the Schengen area (mainly Spain, Italy, Greece and Austria) so that they left the country legally.

In 2002, a new aspect of trafficking in human beings was noted: the trafficking of disabled people for begging. In most cases, the recruiters are Romanian citizens who promise to take the people with physical disabilities to the Schengen area, where they can earn important amounts of money by begging. There are also foreign citizens who send invitations for stays abroad or medical treatment, and who help to transport the victims. Many such cases have been revealed. In one case, 21 disabled people, including three minors, mostly Roma, were to be taken for exploitation to France, Portugal and Spain.

Between July and September 2002, as a result of counter-trafficking measures taken, the border police identified and stopped 175 people attempting to leave Romania for a purpose other than tourism, respectively begging and illegally working in countries such as France, Italy and Spain.

Liaison officers have been sent to target countries such as France, Austria, Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic to tackle problems posed by (un)accompanied minors on the territory of other states. These children have generally been trafficked and may have committed offences in the destination countries. To manage this issue effectively, the government has signed an agreement with France. Romanian and French police have set up a joint working group to deal with the situation of Romanian minors in France and conduct joint investigations to identify the networks involved in trafficking disabled people for begging, the routes these networks use and the methods they employ for crossing the borders to destination countries. On the basis of available data, between 2001 and 2002, hearings were conducted with as many as 639 returned minors. Hearings are still being conducted. A statement analysis has led to the conclusion that several networks recruiting and trafficking minors to EU countries are operating in Romania. The reason behind these networks' preference for minors is that, in the event they are caught, minors cannot be held criminally liable and, most often, they are not repatriated.

Data provided by the General Division for Combating Organized Crime and Antidrug shows that 192 separated children were repatriated from other countries in 2001 and 205 in 2002. Of these, some 25.3 per cent admitted they had been trafficked.

Case study 1: A 14 year-old boy trafficked to Germany

C. is 14 years old and lives with his three brothers and one brother's wife and children because his parents have gone to Spain to work. The older brother and his wife take care of the younger children. He has another sister, but she doesn't live with the family. She is a prostitute and her family has no contact with her.

C. went to work abroad with his parents twice. When asked about his life before being trafficked, he says they were very poor, although his father had worked abroad before. This is why the children had to work. He remembers that he and his brothers collected bottles and glass jars "to sell for bread" and his older brothers washed cars. Their living conditions were precarious. He says that, despite their poverty, the relationship between the parents and children was very good. One of the bad things he remembers is that often they worked in extremely low temperatures and sometimes they had nothing to eat. A positive thing he remembers is that sometimes he had pocket money (when he did not give his parents all the money he earned).

C. found out he was supposed to go abroad only a few days before he was to leave. When his parents told him he would join them he was happy because he thought they would be able to build a house for themselves with the money they earned, "to have a place of our own and not live on the streets anymore". He says he was not forced to work.

The whole family went to Germany: his mother, his father, five brothers and the brother's wife (all six children were minors). They crossed the border illegally, following the routes his father knew. After they crossed the border, their father stole a car they used for the rest of the trip. He does not remember many details about the trip, not even where they lived in Germany. He says they lived in a Red Cross shelter with other Roma families that had come to work with their children. They had free food, clothing and shelter.

Both the parents and the children worked picking fruit for a private entrepreneur. They lived in different German cities for a year and a half. Late in the interview he admits that, in fact, his mother and the younger children begged on the streets. Only their father and the older brothers worked in fruit picking. After eighteen months, they turned themselves in to the German authorities and were sent back to Romania.

About a year after their return to Romania, C., his parents and a younger sister went to Switzerland. This time, they crossed the border legally and travelled by train in good conditions. They lived in a deserted house illegally, but they never had any trouble with the authorities. He begged with his mother and his younger sister on the street. Their favourite begging places were museums. They earned considerably less money than in Germany. That is why they often ate bread with sugar or just bread. When they realized they were not able to earn a living, they returned to Romania.

On return, he was enrolled in school by his parents. He was nine years old. He dropped out after just a few weeks. Now he lives at home with his brothers and works occasionally. He takes care of a neighbour's animals together with another child. His parents have gone to work in Spain. They sell newspapers "which they buy for five pesetas and sell for 10 to 15". C. would like to work abroad again because he earns more than in Romania.

2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL POLICIES ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

2.1 Overview of legislation on trafficking in human beings[11]

The Romanian National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings consists of three laws:

- Law on preventing and combating trafficking in persons No. 678/2001,
- The National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, adopted through Government Decision No. 121/2001;
- Government Ordinance No. 112/2001 on punishment for several offences committed outside the country by Romanian citizens or stateless persons with residence in Romania.

Romania has ratified and translated into national legislation international agreements in the field of trafficking:

- Law No. 470/25.09.2001 for ratification of the *Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (2000);
- Law 565/16.10.2002 for ratification of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* and the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted on 15 November 2000;
- Law 203/15.09.2000 for ratification of the *ILO Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182).*

The Romanian Constitution provides in Article 20, paragraph 2 that in case of "…any inconsistencies (…) between the covenants and treaties on fundamental human rights Romania is a party to, and internal laws, the international regulations shall take precedence". This means that legal provisions of the international documents ratified by Romania are part of the national legal framework and have priority over the provisions of national legislation.

2.2 Law on preventing and combating human trafficking

Among recent progresses made that aim at enhancing the capacity of structures to fight crime, especially related to trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, a law dealing with trafficking in human beings was adopted by the Romanian Government. Law 678/2001 on preventing and combating trafficking in persons is in line with the most recent European legislation and with the *Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (known as the Palermo Protocol). Government Decision No. 1216/2001 establishes the framework to coordinate the activities of authorities concerned with trafficking in human beings.

In relation to witness protection, Law 678 is considered to include all the necessary elements for actions that protect victims' rights.

Article 12 of Law No. 678/2001 defines trafficking in persons as recruitment, transportation,

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[11] This overview of legislation is not and does not claim to be exhaustive as regards present Romanian legislation applicable to trafficking in human beings and especially in children.

transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person, by means of threat, violence, or other forms of coercion, kidnapping, fraud or deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. This is the definition given in the Palermo Protocol.

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person aged between 15 and 18 for the purpose of exploitation constitutes the offence of trafficking in minors. If the person age is less than 15, the punishment is increasing (Article 13).

Under Law No.678/2001 on preventing and combating trafficking in persons:

- various forms of trafficking in human beings, as well as exploitation, are criminalized and severe punishments are provided for; punishments are more severe when the trafficked people are under-age or when trafficking results in the victim's suicide or death;
- actions of the organizers, guides and carriers are criminalized, as well as situations where offences are committed by people who are part of groups organized for this specific purpose;
- special provisions exist regarding protection, physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration of trafficked people;
- procedural issues are regulated, including those concerning the use of modern investigation techniques to detect activities of trafficking in human beings;
- provisions on international cooperation are included;
- the position of liaison officer within the Ministry of Interior and liaison magistrates at the level of prosecutor's offices with the court has been created; this is important from the perspective of Romania's joining the EUROJUST network.

Methodological norms for the application of the law came into force on 31 March 2003. All trials related to trafficking had been judged up to that time as infringements related to pimping. This had serious implications for victims of trafficking, who were accused of prostitution if they refused to testify against the traffickers. The General Division for Combating Organized Crime and Antidrug now operates under Law 678 and it is expected that trafficking-specific cases will be brought to trial soon.

2.3 National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

A *National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings* (NPA) was adopted by the Government in 2001. The NPA establishes an institutional framework and lays out the responsibilities of concerned State institutions and partners for implementing the Plan. The institutions responsible for implementation of the NPA are government agencies, implementing partners include the Stability Pact, OSCE, the Council of Europe, Delegation of the European Commission, the United Nations and other international agencies, and Romanian NGOs. NGOs are considered to play an especially important role in the rehabilitation and socio-professional reintegration of victims.

Several steps have been taken in implementing the NPA: An Inter-ministerial Working Group for coordinating and evaluating activities for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings has been established; and the responsibilities of the General Division for Combating Organized Crime and Antidrug in the field of trafficking in human beings have been enhanced.

The actions envisaged by the Romanian Government for combating trafficking are regulated

through Government Decision No.1216/17.12.2001 on the adoption of the National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. This legal document establishes the framework for actions relating to:

- information and awareness raising on trafficking and the dangers it involves;
- improving the social and economic situation of people at high risk of becoming victims of trafficking;
- a communication strategy to combat trafficking in human beings;
- return, assistance and social reintegration of victims;
- protection for victims;
- enforcement of new legislation in the field;
- international and regional cooperation in fighting this phenomenon.

All the activities set out by the NPA will be carried out with the direct participation of communities, intergovernmental and international organizations, and NGOs. In enacting the NPA, Romania has adopted a global approach, involving in implementation many state institutions and key actors of civil society.

The NPA focuses on the following activities:

- Research and evaluation: identifying vulnerability factors and at-risk groups, and identifying legal and institutional gaps in the protection services for these groups;
- Awareness raising: activities targeting the public and groups at risk and provision of education to the groups at risk;
- Improvement of economic and social conditions of people at risk: identifying and combating social or work inequalities through the implementation of legal provisions in this respect.
- Assistance, return and social reintegration of victims of trafficking: including certain guarantees as to the right of return to the country of origin, physical and psychological rehabilitation;
- Legal reform: evaluation of current legislation, harmonization of national legislation with EU legislation;
- Law enforcement: the training of specialists responsible for enforcement of the new instruments in this field, improvement of the technical means to combat organized crime, security of Romanian borders;
- International cooperation and coordination: design of common projects and participation in international cooperation projects in the field of investigation of crimes related to trafficking.

Although the NPA includes provisions to develop rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking, these have not been put into practice because funds have not been allocated to them in the budget.

2.4 Other laws related to trafficking

In addition to consolidating the legal framework, the government has also moved to reform law enforcement bodies and institutions so that they can better respond to the new challenges, national and regional, and correspond with their counterparts in the EU. In this regard, the national police and the Romanian border police have acquired new responsibilities that allow them to strengthen and improve their activities at national, regional and international levels.

A series of laws has resulted in a substantial and profound transformation of the police force: Law No. 104/2001 on the functioning and organization of the Romanian Border Police, Law No. 218/2002 on the functioning and organization of the Romanian Police, and Law No. 360/2002 on the policeman's status, represent important progress in bringing Romania into line with international standards, and are in full compliance with measures concerning national security and public order adopted in the EU Member States.

The Governmental Emergency Ordinance No. 105/27 June 2001 regarding the State Border of Romania includes sanctions for violation of the law. Article 77, paras. 4 and 5 include the following provisions related to minors:

- Paragraph (4): Punishment by prison is to be applied to minors only if they are 16 years of age; in this case, the punishment provided by this ordinance is reduced to half of the regular punishment;
- Paragraph (5): In the case of minors under 16, the general provisions regarding the protection of minors are applied.

Government Ordinance No. 112/03.09.2001 relating to the punishment of offences committed outside Romania's borders by Romanian citizens or by stateless people resident in Romania includes:

- punishment for illegal crossing of the borders (article 1);
- punishment for harbouring, transportation and guiding people in order to cross illegally the borders of a foreign state (article 2); and
- establishment of associations for these purposes and joining/support for such associations (article 3).

People convicted under articles 1-3 may have their application for a passport denied or may be suspended from the right to use a passport for a period of five years.

Another important step was taken in October 2001, when international adoptions were suspended until a new law enters into force. It is expected that the Government will adopt a Law on Child Protection in 2004.

Case Study 2: A 13 year-old boy trafficked to Europe

G. is a young boy who says he is 13, but looks older. He is shy and scared, perhaps because he has burn marks on his right forearm, and his left forearm has been amputated. When asked what happened, he says he had an accident when he was very young; all he remembers is that he got burned by the stove and electrocuted himself by sticking his fingers in a power outlet.

G. says he was born in a normal family near Tulcea. His father worked. Shortly after his birth, his family returned to their native town near Craiova. When he was very young his father died and his mother, who had no income, left him. He heard nothing of her after that. He ended up on the streets and wandered the country and settled for a short period of time at Basarab railway station in Bucharest.

After his return to Craiova, he continued to live on the streets until he was ten, when a 'gypsy' recruited him and two other people 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 people, where he was treated well for about two months. During that time he was photographed and was told he would go to Italy "to earn some money". He says he agreed because he was too young to understand what that meant. Later he found out that the gypsy had obtained fake identity papers saying he was his son.

They left the country easily and went to Italy to live with one of the gypsy's brothers in an apartment with his family and a 19 year-old girl whose leg had been amputated. The three adults taught him what to say to get money and sent him to beg under their strict supervision. He worked all day, but not every day. He says he was treated better than the girl, that he ate the food the gypsies cooked and that he didn't earn as much money as he was expected to and played instead of begging. He was threatened, left hungry and beaten.

Almost a year later, they all went to France, where they lived in a deserted house. There too 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 whose destination he did not know. He reached a railway station in Brussels where he spent a few hours before being taken into police custody.

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

Although he says he liked the centre very much because he learned foreign languages and attended carpentry classes, he was tempted by the money he earned on the streets: "Someone once gave me 50 Euros, but usually people give me two or three Euros". He made a lot of friends and would have liked to live there. "I was 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 says he does not know what he would like to do in Romania, but he certainly wants to go back to Europe, especially because he is alone. He has not heard anything from his mother and does not want to see her or talk to her; his sister is married with two children and cannot take care of him, "...at least that's what I think".

3. PROFILES OF TRAFFICKED CHILDREN AND CHILDREN AT RISK

3.1 Profile of the victims

The children who are trafficked, both girls and boys, have generally the following profile:

- They are between 14 and 17 years of age;
- They come from families with socio-economic problems (dysfunctional families, history of abuse in the family, alcoholic parents, poor or average families, low level of education in the family);
- They have a low level of education (dropped out of school or attending only compulsory education);
- They have a negative perception of their chance to achieve something in their country of origin because of their low level of education and the economic difficulties in the area they come from;
- They harbour a false perception of what life is like abroad (the so-called 'mirage of the Occident' effect);
- They come into contact with and believe successful stories of emigration.

Most trafficking victims are women and girls who leave the country after being recruited by a trafficking network or sold by their relatives, friends, or people they know.

In the case of unaccompanied minors abroad, most are boys who go to work abroad. They usually leave the country by themselves, but some are recruited and forced to leave the county. A large number of the unaccompanied children end up as victims of trafficking.

The trafficking networks in Romania have become 'specialized' in different types of victims, according to age, sex, and physical condition. Since 2002, the police have discovered that children with disabilities also become victims of trafficking for labour exploitation.

3.2 Profile of the trafficked children surveyed and their families

Most of the 55 surveyed children released from trafficking were girls. Two-thirds of them were adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18; the rest were younger, between 12 and 15 years.

The children released from trafficking were in the following cities when interviewed:

- Bucharest -- 28 children
- Pitesti -- 4 children
- Iasi -- 15 children
- Suceava -- 8 children

The children all came from difficult circumstances and were consequently vulnerable to trafficking. Most came from urban areas (Bucharest, Iasi, Suceava), which suggests that most push factors are to be found in cities.

Boys were more exposed to internal trafficking. Girls were more often involved in external trafficking and were mostly trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Eight of the 55 released trafficked children said they belonged to the Roma ethnic group.

The children trafficked for labour exploitation were aged from two years (the case of a little girl begging on the street along with her mother) to 17 years. Most of the children had parents; four children came from groups of children permanently living on the streets.

The children trafficked for sexual exploitation were aged between 14 and 19 years. In some cases, the economic situation of the families could be described as average, but these families did have many children. Only in a few cases did the children come from really poor families. However, all the families were characterized by professional and material instability because of a lack of prospects. All the girls who were trafficked said that they seized the chance of 'a better life'. A high percentage of girls came from small towns that offer no opportunity for employment or a career. Most of them wanted to change their life by accepting a job and earning more money, to be admired and valued by family and friends.

Among the trafficked children, some end up in this situation because of their desire to work, regardless of the local or family context. In other words, another category of trafficked children is characterized by a desire to experience the things they heard about from other children.

Children who can see no future prospects where they live are at higher risk of trafficking than others.

Most victims come from families with at least three children, confronted with important financial problems to which relationship problems are also added. In fact, children define themselves as coming from poor families, probably repeating their parents' words when questioned by the authorities about trafficking.

One child in the survey came from a state residential care institution, but at the time of his recruitment he had been living on the streets for several years, without any information about his parents' identity.

Most of the parents surveyed came from Roma communities in Bucharest, Iasi or Suceava. In their opinion, their ethnic origin represents another major obstacle to finding a job, an obstacle they are very aware of and which they consider as a social stigma. This feeling of 'social inferiority' gets stronger with every experience of social failure, and it is eventually passed down to children and becomes part of their thinking and social behaviour.

Box 1: Parent of a trafficked child from Bucharest

"You know, we are Roma, gypsies, and people don't want too much to hire Roma."

In the case of parents who migrate with their children, there does not seem to be a direct correlation between family conflict and/or abuse and the incidence of families involved in trafficking. The essential factor that pushes parents to emigrate or to consenting to their children working abroad is the family's perception of their economic status and prospects in the country of origin.

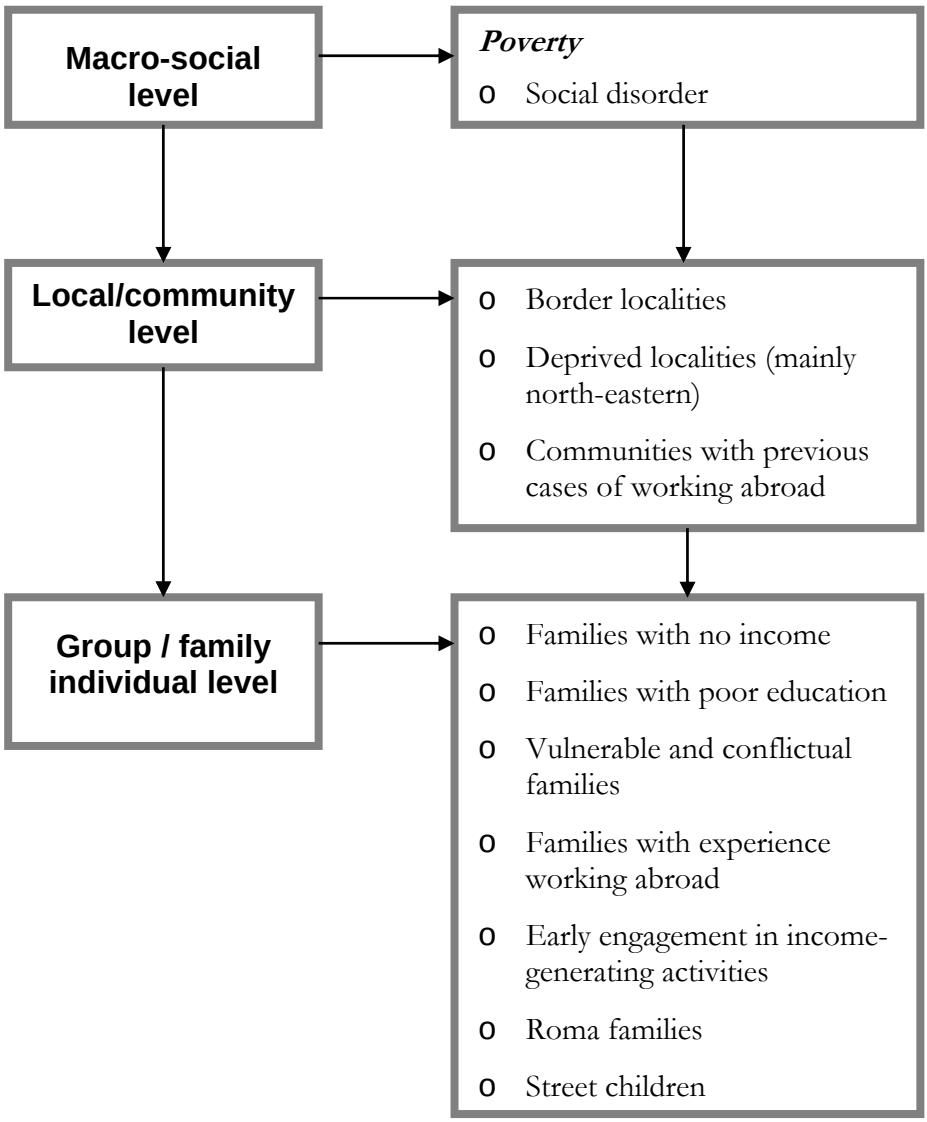
In many situations, the parents' educational level is low and they lack a permanent occupation.

3.3 Factors influencing child trafficking

Many factors lead to an increase in the number of trafficked children. The ever-declining socio-economic conditions in which many Romanian families live certainly play a part. These are factors specific to the countries in transition, which are confronted with a growing number of social and economic problems. Another factor that favours and decisively contributes to increased exposure to trafficking is the local context (the community). Group/family and individual factors are also relevant.

In addition to the difficult living conditions of families, a number of other family-related factors contribute to the vulnerability of children to being trafficked. These include a weakening of family relationships and family violence which has direct implications on the child's decision to drop out of school early and seek income-generating activities.

The following scheme presents a possible pattern that may explain trafficking in children in Romania:



Family or macro-social level

Although poverty affects a large part of the Romanian population, some areas – Suceava and Iasi in the case of the areas surveyed for this study -- are more severely affected. These are the areas from which most child victims of trafficking come. Family poverty in these areas is mostly a result of the lack of a permanent income-generating occupation, which leads to poor living conditions and the impossibility of providing for basic family needs, such as food.

Box 2: A mother interviewed in Iasi

"Our family has nine members: parents and seven under-age children. The family income consists of the child allowance, welfare benefits and my husband's income as a day labourer – he is a house painter."

Family relations are marked by the concern for survival, with parents believing that children should contribute and help them to overcome the family's problems.

Income sources differ, but most of them consist of child allowances and welfare benefit based on the minimum guaranteed income law. As for the parents' occupations, 22 children released from trafficking came from families in which only one parent was employed, four parents worked in agriculture and five were self-employed. Most of the children lived with their family or friends; one child lived on the street.

Basic nutrition and clothing were a problem for many of the trafficked children; their parents were unable to provide for them. Sixty per cent of these children were inadequately fed, while 74 per cent did not have proper clothing.

The family situation of children who had never been trafficked but who are at risk of being trafficked is similar to that of trafficked children. Most of the children interviewed lived with their families (20 out of 21); one lived a state residential care institution. Another relevant aspect is the structure of the families: only 11 of the 21 children had both biological parents. Two of the children were raised by their grandparents.

More than half of the families did not have a regular source of income, either from primary sources or through redistribution, such as salaries or pensions. They lived on welfare benefits or money from occasional/seasonal work.

Often the children interviewed spoke of the commitment of the entire family to escape poverty or to be "as fortunate as our neighbours who have just come back from Germany and who have built houses for themselves with the money they earned there". Additionally, most of the trafficked children had previously 'worked' on the streets of Romania (begging, stealing), with or without the consent of their parents. To these children, working abroad was perceived as 'progress', or as a new and more effective way of earning their living, a way to build a future.

Children who attended the group discussions said they believed that children who work or who leave the country do so because they come from poor families and because they want to earn a living. Some of them want to support their families; others want to be independent of their parents. Some leave willingly while others are sold, threatened or forced to leave.

Vulnerable families

In many of the cases in the survey, family relations were relatively good and there were no disputes that prompted a child to leave his/her family. However, some of the interviewees indicated that children ran away from home because their parents (especially fathers) drink and physically abuse them, for example through frequent beatings. The 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 of the families of children released from trafficking displayed a series of dysfunctions that are considered to favour trafficking.

The parent-child relationship was described as superficial, parents being emotionally 'absent'. Fathers in particular were described as very authoritative, alcoholic or absent. In some cases, children ran away from home because of physical or sexual abuse by their fathers. The level of education of these children was higher than that of the victims trafficked for labour. When children run away from home, their risk of becoming trafficking is greatly increased.

A third of the families were single-parent families. A significant number of the children deemed to be at risk were living in single-parent families, and such families should be targeted with interventions for preventing trafficking. Children from single-parent families are also likely to attend school irregularly and to enter work early.

Family problems, conflict between parents, or experiences such as the one presented below have a devastating impact on children.

Unless children are included in rehabilitation programmes, their normal development is likely to be affected by psychological trauma. Children from these families want to live away from their parents; most of them want to live on the streets. Street children's vulnerability exposes them to the risk of being trafficked.

Box 3: Children interviewed in Bucharest

C lost her mother in 1991, when her father killed her in front of the children. Her father was imprisoned and due for release in 2004. Three of the children were placed in the care of an aunt on the father's side who lived in the countryside. Since their mother's death, all three children have lived on the streets of Bucharest, returning to their aunt during the winter. 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 in 2001 and C. has often come to Bucharest to live on 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 she has no way to earn her living, C. is at high risk of being trafficked.

Early school drop-out

Most of the children surveyed who are considered to be at risk of being trafficked go to school (19 out of 21), but only 15 attend school regularly. Four children go to school only occasionally, and this increases the risk that they will drop out of school.

Both parents and children explain drop-out as a result of financial problems that do not allow them

to pay for school supplies. Also significant, however, is the parents' lack of interest in their children's education. Parents justify their lack of interest in education by the fact that, despite completing compulsory education and vocational school, they could not find a regular job with a decent salary to allow them to live without major financial problems.

Box 4: A child from Bucharest

M. comes from a modest family consisting of both parents and four children (three girls and a boy). The parents are employed as pavement sweepers at the municipality. Their dwelling, which is owned by the state, is in a precarious state of hygiene. The girl's family could be also characterized by a total indifference of its members towards education. There is no cooperation at any level; each of the family members is independent financially and especially emotionally. M's education is not completed yet. She completed compulsory school and attended for a year an apprenticeship school in tailoring but, because of financial problems and because her parents did not support her, she dropped out.

Dropping out of school at an early age is determinant in the likelihood that children will end up on the streets and there be at high risk of being trafficked. Belonging to delinquent groups and anti-social behaviour also increases vulnerability to trafficking.

More than half of the trafficked children surveyed were not attending school at the time they were recruited. The survey revealed that:

- four children were never enrolled in school (two boys and two girls);
- 26 children did not complete compulsory education (8 grades) (12 boys and 14 girls);
- seven girls completed compulsory education;
- 12 children did not complete high school (three boys and nine girls);
- one boy graduated from high school.

There is little variation by sex, which is also characteristic for the educational system and the attitude towards education in Romania. However, the school enrolment rate for the Roma population is considerably below (70 per cent) the national rate (98 per cent in 2002).[12]

Early entry into work

Another aspect to be considered is children's entry into work. Three surveyed children considered at risk of being trafficked worked on a regular basis, and 11 worked occasionally. The types of work they performed were: housework for neighbours, carrying merchandise in markets, cleaning shops and sidewalks, selling recyclable materials (cardboard and scrap iron), selling different items at intersections, washing cars. Some of the girls worked as cleaners or took care of neighbours' or relatives' children, while some of the boys worked in agriculture, construction, or in warehouses.

Most of the families did not have a regular source of income and the children were engaged in income-generating activities, half of them working at least eight hours a day.

12 EFA Global Monitoring: *Education for all. Is the world on track?,* (UNESCO, Paris, 2002).

Twenty-one children released from trafficking had worked before being trafficked, while 33 had not. The types of work the children performed before being trafficked were:

- agriculture for the family or neighbours (hoeing or feeding and taking the cows to pasture);
- housework for neighbours (cleaning and taking care of children);
- loading and unloading merchandise in markets and warehouses;
- begging together with their mothers or younger siblings in different downtown places or on trains;
- unskilled work in construction.

Children who have already entered some form of work and who are familiar with physically challenging tasks are more likely to be tempted to move on to other forms of work out of the city or in another country. It is understandable for working children to want to work somewhere where it is easier for them to earn money, at least from their point of view.

Parents' and children's attitudes towards trafficking

Parents' attitude towards trafficking is an important factor that favours or prevents children from being trafficked. Many Romanian parents' attitude towards this worst form of child labour is of acceptance, justified by the idea that children should contribute to their family income. A mother who begged in Germany with her two children said she was not ashamed to beg and that begging is "better than stealing or robbing". Although she was prohibited from entering Germany again, her greatest wish was to go back there and take her children with her because "life is easier over there and children have a better life".

Children generally accepted the traffickers' proposals because they were people they knew, either relatives or parents.

Children are also generally willing to work abroad. Most of the children surveyed had information that it was advantageous to work abroad, at least from a financial point of view. They saw working abroad as the only alternative to their problems and so ignored the risks and obstacles of such an undertaking.

Box 5: Boy from Bucharest

"I didn't go back to school after my return from abroad. I kept on working in Bucharest occasionally. I wash cars, load and unload merchandise to earn pocket money. I want to go back and work abroad and I am waiting for my parents to send me money to get a passport and pay for the travel arrangements."

However, when children become victims of traffickers outside the family, the parents' attitudes change radically. In such cases, trafficking is described as a trauma they hope never to suffer again. Sexual and physical abuse, being the slaves of foreign adults in a country whose language they do not understand, and being away from family and friends are traumatic memories for children. Parents of kidnapped or trafficked children think that the perpetrators should be severely punished.

Unfortunately, there are cases of children who would go back willingly. Despite the abuse to which they were subjected, three children released from trafficking (out of 27 children interviewed) said they would go back to work abroad once they could afford to pay for a passport "because you can make a lot of money there". This attitude is explained by the problems the children had to face when they returned to Romania, including poverty, school failure and a lack of hope for the future.

From the questionnaires used to survey children at risk of being trafficked, 17 of the 21 respondents said they wanted to work abroad. They even mentioned some fields of activity they might work in, including: construction, tour guide, IT engineer, factory or agriculture worker, strawberry-picker, pizza delivery, truck driver, blueberry or pear gathering, sweets seller, shop assistant, house painter. One child mentioned stealing as a job. The countries the children are tempted to go to are usually Western European countries, the most frequently mentioned being Italy, Spain and France. Other countries the children mentioned were the Netherlands, Belgium and the Unites States.

3.4 Groups at risk

The group discussions and individual interviews with children and parents, as well as those with relevant social actors, indicate two major groups at risk: street children and Roma children. These children also figure among the families described as living in difficult circumstances.

Street children

Street children are one of the major groups exposed to trafficking.

Street children, who are usually aged between 12 and 16 years, said that they ran away from home because of their parents (especially their fathers) who drank alcohol and beat them on a regular basis. They were also sent out for begging or stealing. Their parents had no permanent jobs; they worked in occasional or temporary jobs or begged accompanied by their children. All the children living on the street had run away from home more than four years before the survey. They sniffed glue on a regular basis.

In order to survive on the streets, the children are constantly looking for ways to earn money. They said nobody offered them a job and they had to find some themselves. They asked shop owners at market places for work loading and unloading merchandise or as cleaners. These activities are not paid much, but enough to survive. "They could not have paid me more for that kind of work," one child said.

Another child said he had never tried to find a job and that he would rather beg or steal instead of working for a shop owner. This child had been on a trip to Austria under the auspices of a humanitarian organization.

Another child said that a woman promised his friend some food and a place to sleep, but she actually recruited him for begging. She lived in a two-roomed apartment in Constanta and had two other children living with her and begging for her, a girl and a boy. After a week, the two boys ran away.

Children living on the streets come into contact with many different people and their exposure to being exploited, including through being trafficked, is high.

Roma children

A number of Roma families were interviewed in Bucharest as part of the survey. In general, they do not own a house (generally, rent prices are prohibitive in Romania); have no regular job; live in disorganized families (divorced, separated, concubines); have between four and 11 children; and have a low level of education.

Social workers found Roma children working on the streets in different areas of Bucharest. The parents said they had never tried to find jobs for their children in Romania or abroad and their children worked now and then because of the poverty of the family.

One mother said that she had never tried to find her children a job abroad because they were too poor and had no money for transportation and passports. She also said, though, that she would have nothing against her children working abroad provided they were accompanied by their parents.

The parents attending the discussion groups believed that their children were indeed exposed to trafficking because they belong to a disadvantaged social category and so the children easily could be tempted with promises of better living conditions. The only thing protecting the children from being trafficked was the parents' attitude towards them. However, Roma children's engagement in work places them at a high risk of being trafficked.

3.5 External trafficking versus internal trafficking

Out of a total number of 55 children interviewed who had been released from trafficking, 42 had been trafficked abroad and 13 had been trafficked within the country.

The children trafficked internally were recruited to work in other parts of the country mostly in begging and agricultural work. Cross-border trafficking was both for sexual exploitation (30 children) and for labour (12 cases). In the case of both internal and external trafficking, the children had generally accepted the traffickers' propositions because they were people they knew.

External trafficking

Of the children trafficked abroad, 35 children had been trafficked once, while seven had been trafficked at least twice. The main destination countries were Italy (10 children), Macedonia (six children), Serbia and Montenegro (six children), Spain (five children) and Germany (three children). Before reaching the destination country, the children also crossed the border of other countries including Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy and Macedonia.

Box 6: Girl from Pitesti

"In November 2001, when I was 17, I was offered a job as a chambermaid in a Serbian hotel. I crossed the border at night, by foot, with two other people. These people sold me for US$1,000. I was hired out in a bar, where I was forced to prostitute."

Most of the children made plans to work abroad with the help of someone they knew. They were rather excited about going abroad and ignored the obstacles they might encounter on their way to the destination country or upon arrival.

Internal trafficking

Thirteen children were recruited to work in other areas of Romania, mostly for begging. They started working between the ages of 12 and 17. The counties the children went to work in were Alba, Brasov, Iasi, Suceava, Timisoara and Valcea, as well as Bucharest.

A characteristic of internal trafficking is that the children are generally accompanied by their parents or close relatives.

Case Study 3: An accordion player trafficked to Italy

The I.M. family lives near Bucharest and is made up of five members: parents and three children aged between 12 and 17. Both parents are employed and also do the housework. The father plays the accordion and has taught his children to play too. The older borhter, who is 17 years old, occasionally performs at parties, along with his father. The boy said that family relations were good and that neither of his parents had ever considered leaving or sending their children abroad to work.

At a party, after the boy had performed, his father was approached by a man who said he was delighted with the performance and suggested that the boy should sing abroad to get rich and be successful. The family was then approached by the traffickers, who seemed reliable people and who promised that he would earn a lot of money abroad playing the accordion in restaurants owned by their business partners.

Eventually, the family allowed the child to go to Italy. The traffickers had assured them that "all the arrangements are made" over there. They also paid for the passport and transport. Two months passed between the time they first met and the boy's departure. The toughest decision they had to make was to accept the proposal.

The boy left Romania legally on a tourist visa, by bus, accompanied by two of the traffickers. The travelling conditions were good. At customs, the guide provided money for those who did not have the required amount to be allowed to cross the border and they paid it back at the end of the trip. Throughout the trip, the boy had no idea what would happen to him in Italy.

Once they reached Italy, the boy was taken over by another network that forced him to sing in the streets, at market places and in transport hubs. They also took his identity papers from the traffickers. He lived in a one-storey house, but did not know who the owner was. He supposed it was a rented house because the front was well kept while the backyard was always dirty. Although he was not obliged to earn a specified amount of money every day, the traffickers beat him often because they considered he did not do his best to earn more money.

The boy wanted to escape but it was impossible. He could not go to the police because he did not speak Italian and because one or two members of the network always supervised him. Before the boy performed in a certain place, they made sure there was no risk of being caught by the police or other authorities.

The family was completely unaware of what had happened to their son because the child was not allowed to contact anybody. Since the traffickers had promised the family to keep in touch and they had not heard from their son for a month, the parents grew worried and started to look for the traffickers. They had been promised money by the traffickers but were deceived. The traffickers offered to help the parents to bring their child home but they asked for US$1,500 for this 'service'. The family did not have the money and had to sell their animals for about $700 and for the rest give their car to the traffickers.

After they had received the money, the traffickers brought the child back home. He was afraid to go with them because they had sold him before, but he was persuaded when they spoke to his parents on the phone.

The family would like the traffickers to be punished for what they did to their son, but they are afraid to go to the police.

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND TRAFFICKING ROUTES

4.1 Trafficking for labour and for sexual exploitation

An analysis of 27 semi-structured interviews with children released from trafficking and 14 interviews with parents (of children released from trafficking and children still in a situation of trafficking) suggests that there is a clear difference between trafficking for labour/economic exploitation and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. These two trafficking events are marked by differences in the means used, the destination countries, intervention of the authorities, law enforcement, and social categories or ethnicity of the children.

Although the media have been reporting cases of children begging in Western European countries for several years, the trafficking of children for labour exploitation has appeared as front-page news or as the subject of sensationalized TV reports only since 2001. This is partly a result of the alarming increase in the number of children begging on the streets of Western European cities. The causes of this increase are the economic and social problems that sending countries are facing. It has been noted that almost half of all Romanian families live below the poverty line and most no longer benefit from the support of state social services. NGOs cannot meet present social protection needs.

As soon as visas for Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic were no longer required, these countries quickly came to be used as transit routes to countries in the Schengen area. Since 2002, Romania has the same visa-free policy for travel to EU countries and thousands of people have left the country to look for a job abroad. They include families who, adults and children, engage in different types of work or illegal activities that allow them to earn much more than they would earn in Romania.

There is currently no study on cases of children from other countries trafficked for labour in Romania. However, a number of press reports have documented cases of children from the Republic of Moldova being trafficked to work in agriculture in Romania. It is also possible that some cases of trafficking for labour occur in border areas (Iasi and Botosani counties), given existing routes for trafficking for sexual exploitation.

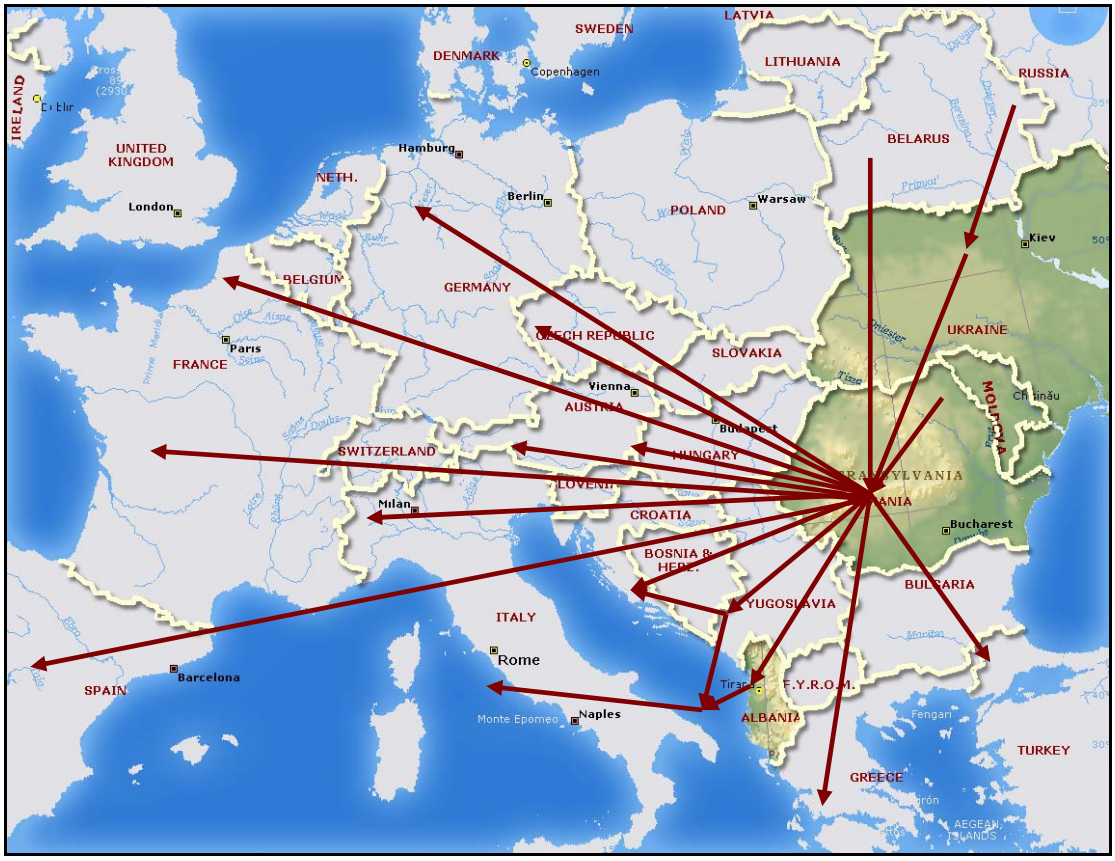
Map 4: Main routes for trafficking for labour

The main destination countries of children trafficked for labour are reported in the media to be France, Spain, Belgium, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria and Italy, where children are forced by their parents or others to beg or steal. Because traffickers travel by bus or train, they are obliged to stop in some of the countries they cross. Consequently, some of the children interviewed talked about long stays in Hungary, Slovenia or Poland (transit countries), before reaching Western Europe.

The removal of visa formalities for the Schengen area has allowed the development of networks that place victims in different locations in Western Europe to be sexually exploited. However, information on the involvement in prostitution of Romanian nationals exists only for Spain and Italy, although cases have also been found in Belgium, Luxembourg and France. Free movement through the Schengen area could also lead to a change in destinations, since traffickers prefer Western European countries because they are more profitable than the Balkan area, where existing networks have a large number of intermediaries and therefore lower profit margins.

Although there is no official evidence of foreign victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation to Romania, the survey respondents reported that some victims who transited Romania had ended up being exploited in this country, suggesting that Romania could also be a destination country. The number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation into Romania is not known. However, internal trafficking for sexual exploitation is likely to be increasing, since prostitution is growing visibly in the major cities.

Map 5: Main trafficking routes for sexual exploitation



4.2 The trafficking process

Recruitment

Both family members and other people are involved in the preparatory stages of trafficking before children leave the country. Most of those dealing with the arrangements are acquaintances, friends or third parties. Recruiters facilitate the issuing of identity papers needed for travel and even cover a part of the costs. They also give children useful information on how to overcome different obstacles at the border or during transportation. The survey revealed that:

- 15 children left with the help of acquaintances;
- 10 left with the help of friends;
- 7 left with the help of their parents;
- 10 left with the help of other parties;
- nine were kidnapped;
- four left on their own or through travel agencies.

There is no particular pattern relating to the way the children leave their community. What is important is that the parents are less involved than other parties. Children who were recruited from their homes said the traffickers had told their parents about their intentions and the parents agreed to send them to work. Some parents trafficked their children themselves and sent them to work.

Children were recruited by people who seemed kind and concerned about their welfare. One of the children said: "That woman came one day and told me: Why don't you come with me? I'll give you food, clothes and a place to stay".

Children recruited from the streets or other places said they agreed to go with the trafficker because they hoped to have a better life. In this case, the traffickers did not offer any money or goods before departure.

Approximately 65 per cent of the children who were trafficked abroad left the country by crossing the border legally. The high incidence of those who crossed the border illegally (approximately 35 per cent) is explained by the fact that these children left with parties other than their parents or relatives.

The recruiter -- the person who either suggests or organizes trafficking -- was generally a family member or a close acquaintance of the parents. In the case of children trafficked for labour, all the recruiters were Romanian nationals and were not necessarily part of a network extending to the destination country. In some cases, victims were reported to have been turned over to a network once they reached the destination country, or to have been recruited anew after their arrival.

The methods used by the recruiters vary considerably depending on the purpose for which the children are trafficked, their age, sex, and in the case of teenagers, the reason why they accept to travel or migrate to the destination country. Parents take on the role of recruiters when they decide to leave the country and also assume the role of traffickers, transporters, supervisors and debt-collectors. In this case, the recruitment is in fact a carefully designed plan to find the necessary resources to pay for travel arrangements, including the itinerary and the transportation to get to Western Europe.

The decision to leave usually belongs to the entire family, which only discusses the positive aspects and the profitability of such an extreme solution. Children are unable to dispute their parents' decision and are often already accustomed to moving from one place to another. Children are therefore not frightened by the prospect of going to another country, especially if they are to be accompanied by their parents. In some cases, one of the parents (generally the father) will have previously travelled abroad and be familiar with the route and the ways to cross the border. Often parents decide to take their children with them because they have already made one successful trip alone.

The uncle of a trafficked child said: "Business is good in Spain; I need more children". This man urged his relatives to send other members of their family to Spain. There were cases of 'transporters' who were responsible for helping the children to cross the border at the request of a parent or a relative in a Western European country (Spain, France). This service cost between US$300 and $1,000. 'Transporters' are described as reliable individuals.

In other cases of children trafficked for labour, the recruiter is a relative or a person who enters the family's circle of acquaintances with the specific purpose of "getting children"; the recruiter openly discloses his intentions for the child. In only four of 13 cases surveyed did the recruiters keep the real purpose of their proposal secret. In two cases, the recruiter was a simple intermediary between the child and the 'transporter' responsible for helping the children to cross the border.

Box 7: Two boys from Bucharest

"My parents got money and lumber, but I don't know how long I am supposed to stay there. I didn't want to go, but my parents had already made the deal."

"Nobody asked for our opinion. We were told: 'We're leaving!' and a few days later we locked the house and left."

There are also cases of teenagers who decide to leave on their own under the influence of the gangs to which they belong. They are introduced to adults who facilitate their departure or even accompany them to the destination country (the favourite country in this case being Italy). All the children interviewed said that they eventually had to give up because they could not handle the sense of insecurity or the pressure of having to repay their debts (money spent by traffickers on transport or identity papers).

Of the 55 children who had been released from trafficking, nine had been kidnapped from the street. The victims were children who had been abandoned on the streets and who were picked up in crowded areas of the capital where they begged.

The recruiter network for trafficking for sexual exploitation comprises more people and is better organized to overcome the legal barriers and difficulties related to transportation. In this case, the recruiter may be any member of the family, a relative (for example the victim's cousin or uncle), an acquaintance or a close friend. In a few cases, the recruiters were the lovers or fiancés of trafficked girls. Trafficking begins with a proposal to work abroad. The usual story is that a wealthy friend of the trafficker's who lives abroad needs a nice person for an honest job, for example as a baby sitter, an agricultural worker, a weaver, a caretaker, or someone to work in clothing and footwear factories. Some girls are promised a job as dancers but end up being trafficked into sexual exploitation; these girls are victims, just like any other victims of trafficking. The recruiters do not offer any guarantees, but they promise to solve the problem of the documents needed to travel abroad. They also take on the responsibility of paying for the trip from the very beginning, to be reimbursed whenever possible, not right away. In one case documented, the recruiter himself was unaware of the real intentions of the intermediaries in Romania or abroad.

In many of the surveyed cases, the recruiters were in charge of transporting the victims to the borders, where they were taken over by other individuals. In some cases, it was the recruiter himself (in general when the recruiter was a close acquaintance of the victims) who transported the victims to the destination country.

Although the victims are often blamed for being naive or too hasty in accepting proposals of work abroad, their decision should be understood as a desperate attempt to change their lives. "I took my chance. I couldn't go on living with my parents in that poor village. I wanted something different."

Transportation and transactions

Buses belonging to specialized travel agencies, trains or illegal crossing of the borders on foot are the most common means of reaching the destination country. Buses have become the favourite means of transport for both transporters and parents trafficking their own children for labour.

In the case of children trafficked for labour, the survey revealed that drivers provided the parents with information, advice or tips about the possible obstacles or risks when crossing the border. At the same time, children reported that parents or recruiters only used certain companies recommended by those who had already managed to get to the destination country. In many cases, traffickers used several different transport companies on their way to the destination country. They travel first to one of the capitals of the neighbouring countries (Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia) and then take a bus belonging to a local transport company. In this way, they avoid the strict inspection of travel buses coming from Romania. Travelling by train is common for trafficking to Italy.

The illegal crossing of the Romanian border to a neighbouring country is usually done with the help of 'specialized guides'. The guides, recruiters and transporters are important intermediaries between the victim and the traffickers in the destination country.

Survey responses indicated that traffickers do not consider the Romanian border as a serious obstacle. The permeability of the border is demonstrated by the case of two adults (one of them was

the child's father) and six children who managed to cross the border between Romania and Serbia without the help of a guide, based only on the previous experience of one of the adults. The illegal crossing of the border is less frequent, however, since Romanian citizens no longer require a visa for the Schengen states. However, people who are not allowed to leave the country because they have a criminal record still use this route.

In the case of trafficking for sexual exploitation, the transporters are usually intermediaries between recruiters and traffickers. They know all the details of 'the business' and encourage the victims en route to the destination country by telling them that the working conditions are excellent and profitable. The victims usually describe the trip as relaxed, friendly even. On reaching the destination, the victims realize for the first time that they are about to be forced into prostitution. Destination countries identified in the survey were Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Turkey, Syria, Italy, the Arab Emirates and the Kosovo region.

Either in Romania or in the destination country, there is a host family where the girl is accommodated. This family is to sell the girl the first time. The host family usually consists of a man and a woman with children, so that the girls do not become suspicious. The selection process occurs here. The host family is the link with owners/pimps and it arranges for various owners/pimps to come to select a girl. The girl is invited to have coffee with the family and 'a friend' at the house. Owners/pimps speak languages other than Romanian when they come to the host family. If the owner/pimp decides to purchase the girl, the host family tells the girl to go with the pimp. It is only when they reach the workplace (generally a bar) that the girl realizes what her 'job' will be. She has to dance, drink and be available for selection by clients to whom she has to provide 'services'. Bodyguards keep the girls inside so they cannot leave.[13]

The victims are sold for between $300 and $1,500. Their identity papers remain with those who buy them. At the same time, the victims are reminded about their debt to the transporter. Even if they manage to pay their debts, they may be sold over and over again, the cycle of abuse and exploitation continuing.

Any attempt to escape is doomed to fail because the security personnel of the bars closely supervise the victims. The role of these bodyguards is not to protect but to prevent the victims from escaping. The victim's only way to escape is to call the police or her family. In some cases, the victims are released during police raids resulting from reports by clients.

Most of the girls who are sexually exploited abroad refuse to file charges against their recruiters because they are afraid of the traffickers and their relatives. They also fear reliving their traumatizing experience. They often turn to NGOs for psychological counselling or material support.

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[13] Reaching out (NGO): *Standards for establishing shelters for the victims of trafficking*, (no place of publication, February 2002).

Case Study 4: A girl trafficked into sexual exploitation in Italy

E. is now 18 but, while still a minor, she was a victim of trafficking, sexually exploited, physically and emotionally abused.

E.'s family is poor and consists of 16 members: parents, grandparents, six brothers, some of them with their own wives and children. They live in a simple house with two rooms and a kitchen, in a village 200 km from Bucharest. The only work they can find is carrying goods and cereals on their wagons. This is very badly paid and they can afford only some bread and oil. Because of their circumstances, E. completed only two grades and then dropped out of school. She earned some money helping neighbours in the field or in other work. There were often fights in E.'s extended family because of the financial situation.

As an adolescent, E. started to realize that people she worked for were rich villagers who had relatives in Italy or Yugoslavia. She met her boyfriend, F., in her village. He is 25 and worked for some time in Bucharest in a mineral water factory before he was fired. They felt very strongly about each other, united by their poverty. They promised each other "endless love and many children that won't suffer from poverty". They had great dreams.

In September 2001, E. was working for a wealthy family in the village. Only the wife was at home, since the husband and children were in Italy "to work". The woman had a big house, modern furniture; she was classy and had money. E. helped her with the housework for more than six months. One day, the woman showed her photos from Italy with her husband, well dressed, on cruise ships or driving luxury cars. A few days later, she asked E. if she would like to go to Italy, as her husband had a bar and needed help. E. said she would like to, but wanted to be sure that the offer was serious, because she did not want to go there and be forced to do shameful things.

E. had seen TV news reports with horrible stories of young girls like her being forced to prostitute abroad. The lady told E.: "we've know each other for a long time and I wouldn't do such a thing, I also have children". E. spoke to her parents and F. and asked their opinion. They agreed that she should leave and work in the bar in Italy, as they knew the family and trusted them. Once the decision was taken, the woman prepared a passport and tourist visa for E. and arranged the travel.

E. and the woman took a bus to Italy. It was full of tourists. At the Italian border, the woman told E. that she would go to visit some friends in another town for a week. E. should meet her husband when she got off the bus and, in a week, they would see each other again.

In a small town in Southern Italy, E. was met by the woman's husband, who took her to his 10-roomed villa. He told her that she would not work in the bar from the very beginning. She had to rest for few days in order to be "fresh and fully prepared for work".

The first night, they had dinner together and the man paid her compliments about her appearance. The next day, different men appeared and examined her from top to bottom, but they were not speaking Italian. E. did not understand very much, only their body language. On the third day, two men around the age of 50 came to the villa. E. was raped by all three men and then was subjected to perversions (anal and oral sex, group sex). This was the first experience of this kind and the shock was profound. Then five similar days followed, with other men, three or four every day. She received no money, only clothing and food.

On the eighth day, E. was told by the Romanian man that they would go together to a forest in the neighbourhood to find more clients, wealthier ones. E. did not argue. She realized that she could escape only by pretending she liked what she did.

After two days in the forest, E. asked the man to take her to the city because she needed new and smarter clothes, and make-up to attract the clients. The man agreed and they went shopping. It was a clever move, because, when the man got annoyed that E. was trying on different clothes, he let her go into a small shop alone and waited for her in front of the shop. When she was alone, E. called out to the shop assistant: "Police, police…!" The woman immediately called the police who took just three minutes to arrive. The trafficker was arrested right in front of the shop.

E. was also taken to the police station for a statement and then she was handed over to IOM Italy. The IOM shelter hosted her for a month during the trial in Italy. The trafficker was convicted. E. was repatriated and entered a long-term psychotherapy programme. She was threatened with death several times by the wife of the trafficker, but she is under the protection of the local police.

She wants to marry F. but she has not had the courage to tell him the truth of what happened to her.

5. WORKING CONDITIONS AND OTHER EXPLOITATIVE OUTCOMES OF TRAFFICKING

5.1 Activities performed by trafficked children

The survey of children who had been released from trafficking showed that, in the majority of cases, the children had ended up in a different job to the one they were initially promised. As a rule, the girls were exploited in prostitution networks, although they had been promised a job in a restaurant. Most of the boys were forcibly put to begging, street vending, household work, agriculture and theft.

Figure 2: Activities performed by the children released from trafficking

	Sex		Activities				
	Boys	Girls	Begging	Massage, dance	Sexual exploitation	Labour (Housework, agricultural work)	Other (waiters, street vending, fortune telling, theft)
No.	21	34	11	12	18	5	9
%	**38.2**	**61.8**	**20**	**21.8**	**32.7**	**9.1**	**16.4**

As shown in Figure 2, the main activities in which the children were engaged were begging, sexual exploitation and dancing in disco bars or night-clubs. The answers regarding dancing or massage were linked in many cases with sexual exploitation. None of the children who were victims of internal trafficking said they had been forced into prostitution. The types of forced labour performed by these children were begging and agricultural work. The incidence of stealing, another illegal activity children are forced to perform, is understated because traffickers teach the children or force them to say that they beg, and do not steal.

5.2 Working and living conditions

The working conditions of the children trafficked for labour are mostly related to the children's begging or stealing in crowded places. Sometimes children are chosen for their appearance, and disabled children are preferred. Some children said they would practise different postures or gestures meant to arouse the sympathy of passers-by. Some of the children are actually trained to steal and eventually come to believe that stealing is a gift: "Not everyone can do it".

Half of the children worked seven days a week, at least eight hours a day. Most of the money they earned was taken by the traffickers.

Most children admitted they used to do the same thing in the Romania before they left, but not as often as they did abroad. There were also cases where children were forced to work in agriculture, picking fruit or vegetables (Germany, Spain, Austria), to sell flowers or to engage in fortune-telling together with their mother.

Box 8: Boy from Bucharest

"When I went to Germany with my parents and my brothers, we worked in agriculture, picking fruit. We worked from eight in the morning to six at night, and then we ate, washed and fell asleep in a minute. There were many children there who worked with their families."

Because of the risk of being caught and repatriated, children were forced to work almost without stop. Work started immediately upon reaching the destination country and children were deprived of any freedom, being under constant supervision. In some cases, they were forced to sleep in the very places where they begged. Most of the children who were forced to beg complained that their parents insisted they beg on a daily basis, 10 to 12 hours a day.

Regardless of the form of exploitation in which they found themselves, the children endured harsh living conditions in the destination country. They were deprived of a proper place to live (very crowded shelters with more than two adults in the same room), adequate food and rest time. Because they were closely supervised by their parents, they were not able to apply for or benefit from social services provided in these countries. The children were not allowed to speak to 'strangers' and a member of the family or the group of traffickers supervised them almost all the time. The children generally worked on the streets, exposed to the risks of street life. Food was a reward for efficiency in collecting money and withholding of food was a punishment when they were not efficient. Violence was another method used to break down children's resistance or to increase their efficiency.

The living conditions were described by all the children as precarious (tents, trailers, insalubrious or deserted houses, basements). The children were sheltered in trailer parks, refugee camps or insalubrious rooms offered by the 'employer'. Under constant supervision, the children were unable to play or to make friends. Their contacts with other people were restricted to work. The children were forced to earn a certain amount of money every day, otherwise their traffickers would use physical violence as a mean of persuasion and intimidation. Even the children working for 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 their parents or their bosses, but some children did not even know the value of the money, either because of their young age or their poor level of education.

Box 9: Girl from Iasi

"When I arrived in Pancevo, I received a fake passport and I was sold to a Serbian trafficker. He took me to Belgrade, where he raped me and forced me to prostitute in a bar. Because I resisted and at first refused to prostitute, he beat me almost to death and injected me with heroin."

All the children who had been sexually exploited described the living conditions as more difficult than at home. They lived in barracks or in very small rooms were they were supposed to sleep and also entertain their clients. The only rooms the girls were allowed to stay in for longer periods of time were those they shared with other girls and in the bar. The traffickers did not provide them with protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), although sometimes clients used condoms on their own initiative. The girls were at high risk of becoming sick or getting pregnant.

None of the girls received health care assistance when needed. In such situations, the victim was usually sold as quickly as possible. Most of the victims were found to have STD infections upon their return to Romania.

The girls were physically abused and were sometimes severely beaten for refusing clients. In a desperate attempt to escape, several girls even asked the clients to help them to escape or to contact the police. But these initiatives turned against them when their bosses learned about their intentions and threatened to kill them. Witnessing other girls' abuse by the traffickers was also traumatizing for the girls and made them doubt even more that they would ever escape.

On average, the victims were forced to provide sexual services for 10 hours a day and whenever requested by clients. The money the girls were allowed to keep hardly covered their personal needs and they were seldom able to save money to repay their 'debt'. The first thing the victims are told upon reaching the destination country is that they are indebted to the trafficker and they are expected to repay them to be released. It is obvious that the debt is impossible to clear; indeed it grows as the costs of accommodation, food, clothes, and fines for refusing clients are added to it. With no identity papers, sexually abused, physically exhausted and suffering from various diseases, the girls are trapped in a cycle of trafficking. Most of the victims ultimately show rejection of and opposition to men; they do not want a relationship because they no longer trust men. This state is known as 'cognitive distortion' -- a result of the trauma of repeated sexual abuse, exacerbated by physical and emotional abuse.

Case Study 5: A girl trafficked into sexual exploitation in Kosovo

S. is 19. She comes from a poor family, with a low education level. They lived in a village near Pitesti. She has an older sister. Her mother and father separated when S. was very young. Her mother married again: a violent alcoholic who never worked.

The two girls were placed in residential care immediately after the death of their father. S. lived there until she was 18 and was then sent home because there were no other options. S. shows the typical behaviour of a child raised in a residential care institution: she is not self-confident, speaks in a whisper, has no confidence in her own capacities and abilities, especially as concerns decision making. She rocks back and forth (a characteristic of emotional-attachment disorders), has problems in relations with strangers, and does not have high expectations. She only wants to get a job as a cook, because during her stay in the residential care institution (where she was interviewed), she had been trained. She sees nothing else in her future. She does not want a family because she does not want to have a relationship with a man after the experience she had.

In S.'s case, the trauma caused by her trafficking history is linked to the trauma she suffered when she returned to her family home and met her step-father and experienced his violent behaviour.

S.'s sister suggested they leave together for Italy, to work picking oranges. This seemed the only solution to escape the hell that was home. S. did not think twice because she was confident in her sister who had been several times to Turkey.

This time they took another path: to Kosovo. They crossed the border illegally, with a Romanian man. They were transported by boat along the Danube and then, from the Serbian border, they travelled by car. In Serbia, they were put up for one night in the villa of a Serbian trafficker. In Kosovo, they were sold to a local bar owner, aged around 45. After two months they were re-sold to another bar owner, where they stayed for another four months. In both places, S. was forced to have sexual intercourse with three or four clients every night. She received a small amount of money, while the owner took the rest. She was given food and sometimes clothing. In the bar, there were also other girls prostituting, including minors, of different nationalities, but most of them were Moldavians. S. said: "They were not in my situation. They were having sex because they wanted to!"

S. spent six months in Kosovo. One night, the local police raided the bar. She had no identity documents and was arrested. She made a full statement to the police. During the trafficker's trial, S. was in the care of the IOM office in Kosovo. She stayed in the shelter and received health care services, but she had no legal counselling and was not accompanied to the police or in court by a psychologist or a social worker. She was repatriated with the help of IOM Kosovo and IOM Bucharest.

6. THE PROCESS AND CONDITIONS OF WITHDRAWAL AND REINTEGRATION

6.1 The way out of trafficking and reintegration

The children surveyed managed to escape trafficking as follows:

- 18 were released as a result of police raids;
- 14 children ran away;
- five were arrested and repatriated;
- five escaped with the help of others;
- 13 children returned with their parents or relatives who were sent back by the authorities in the destination countries.

Of the 55 children released from trafficking, 34 returned to where they left from; three of them were taken into the care of NGOs. In general, the children returned to the same problems they had left behind, including problems of lack of food and clothing. Only a few children returned to school. Twenty-five children were still engaged in income-generating activities. These children are at a risk of being re-trafficked.

The survey indicated that return to the country of origin is, with few exceptions, the result of action by the authorities of the destination country. However, many children (and parents) said that they were able to beg or steal for months before being caught. The reasons for this might indicate slow action on behalf of the authorities or it may be that an increase in the number of trafficking cases has overwhelmed the human and material resources allocated for the prevention and elimination of trafficking.

In most cases, the authorities are approached by trafficked children who manage to escape from their traffickers. Trafficking cases are also identified during police raids meant to identify illegal migrants.

On return to Romania, children who are not accompanied by their parents are registered in a database including information about trafficking. In such cases, the procedure consists of accommodating the child in a shelter for a limited period of time and then placing him/her in the care of parents or relatives. Cases are monitored, but children do not benefit from any special counselling or supervision to help them overcome their psychological trauma or understand the dangers to which they were exposed. Children who are accompanied by their parents and are returned by the authorities of the destination country do not enter any rehabilitation programme. Without exception, such families leave the airport or railway station without being questioned, registered or monitored in any way.

It is therefore clear that a large number of trafficking cases go undocumented and do not appear in official data. In fact, all the cases of trafficking where the parents were the recruiters, transporters and eventually the traffickers of their own children are absent from the statistics, thus distorting estimates of the extent of trafficking in Romania. It is not coincidental that several parents surveyed were very familiar with trafficking routes to the destination country; a strict registration system would allow for the prevention and even the elimination of trafficking within families.

The attitude of the community towards the families or children who have 'worked' abroad is one of envy or admiration, rather than indignation. The parents of children who had never been trafficked and who attended survey meetings did not consider that the parents who trafficked their own children should be blamed or accused, as long as they did not cause their children any harm.

The victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation generally return to Romania after intervention or notification by the local police. In two cases, the police had to use firearms against the traffickers. A single victim trafficked to Syria was released by the trafficker himself because he was afraid she would notify the authorities, but such situations are not typical.

Box 10: Girl from Pitesti

"I hate them…and my step-father is the way he is. After I came back home to my mum, he was calling me a bitch, beating me, coming up on me."

Returning home does not solve the problems. Although several victims managed to return with some money, it did not last long. The families of the victims continue to be confronted with a lack of work, poverty, and the threat of losing their house. There are no solutions to these problems. The victims usually come from small communities where people know each other quite well and this is why the victims and their families are ashamed.

Victims under the age of 18 may be placed on their return in residential care centres of the Departments for Child Protection. At this time, the only specialized centre in Romania can shelter a limited number of victims (maximum 10), so most victims return directly to their families. Some of these girls are included in therapy programmes meant to help them to overcome sexual and physical trauma and take responsibility for their choices. The girls are also encouraged to design (under specialized guidance) their own individual social and school reintegration plan.

7. ACTIONS AND PROGRAMMES TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING

The prevention and elimination of trafficking in human beings cannot be achieved by a single governmental or non-governmental institution. Running social programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking involves many legal issues. This calls for the development of lasting partnerships between the authorities and other social partners active in this field.

In Romania, social programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking are based on partnerships between NGOs, government institutions (General Division for Combating Organised Crime and Antidrug, the Customs Police, the General Inspectorate of Police, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, National Office for Refugees) and the IOM.

7.1 The response of government

The Romanian government agency empowered to take action to combat trafficking in human beings is the Ministry of Administration and Interior, through the General Division for Combating Organized Crime and Antidrug, the Customs Police and the General Inspectorate of Police.

Prevention of trafficking in human beings is approached, however, at many levels:

- The Ministry of Administration and Interior carries out prevention activities through the Customs Police: flyers containing a short description of the phenomenon and phone numbers in various countries that trafficking victims can call are distributed at borders;

- Since 2002, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, in collaboration with the IOM, has organized a regional Training of Trainers programme in the field of preventing trafficking in human beings. The teachers attending these training courses become trainers of other teachers in schools. As a result of these actions, in many schools throughout the country children are given information, videotapes and prevention guides on trafficking in human beings.

- The National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings stipulates the establishment of nine shelters for the victims of trafficking, but none has been established yet as a result of a lack of budgetary allocations for this.

7.2 The International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The objectives of the IOM Bucharest office's *Programme for assisting the victims of trafficking and preventing trafficking in human beings* are:

- combating trafficking in human beings through assistance programmes for victims of trafficking, especially girls and young women from Romania;

- raising public awareness of trafficking and prevention of trafficking in human beings;

- assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings (three stages: repatriation, pre-reintegration assistance [short and medium term] and reintegration [medium and long term]).

Repatriation services provided to victims are: assistance for repatriation, facilitating the issue of travel documents and transit visas, covering transport costs, assistance upon return to the country (airport, borders) and help with transport.

Services provided to victims within the medium- and short-term pre-integration assistance phase are: temporary accommodation in a shelter for victims of trafficking, health care assistance, psychological counselling and social assistance. To help their medium- and long-term reintegration, victims are helped to re-enter education and to benefit from training courses, professional guidance and counselling in finding a job. More than 680 victims of trafficking were helped by IOM between January 2000 and April 2003.

The IOM and the National Office for Refugees have established an Assistance and Transit Centre for victims of trafficking in women.

To prevent trafficking in human beings, IOM carried out sociological research on the exposure of young Romanian women to trafficking, and ran a number of prevention campaigns. A national awareness-raising campaign on the risks of trafficking in human beings was developed and carried out in collaboration with government partners and the media. Promotion events were also organized. An education campaign for the prevention of trafficking in human beings carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth included methodological seminars for teachers and inspectors of humanities and religion and the production of auxiliary teaching materials (video, brochure, methodological guide, information leaflets and badges).

7.3 NGO response

NGOs have responded to the increase in trafficking in human beings by developing services for victims. NGOs providing services for victims of violence and abuse are also involved in providing assistance for victims of trafficking, since they have developed the necessary infrastructure and have the specialized staff needed for this work. In parallel with campaigns for raising awareness on child abuse, these NGOs have also developed campaigns to raise awareness of trafficking. Other NGOs have focused their activity only on trafficking, developing specialized services for victims.

Twenty NGOs have been identified as developing projects on trafficking and providing services to the victims of trafficking (counselling, social assistance, psychological counselling). There are unfortunately very few shelters for victims: three in total, of which two are in Bucharest (IOM's shelter and a non-governmental one) and one in Pitesti. A new shelter was due to be opened in Iasi in 2004. Although these NGOs have specialized staff, the large number of victims and their needs call for extended services and increased financial and human resources.

Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania)

Save the Children has been running its International Cases programme since 1991 in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the International Social Service (ISS) and its branches from other countries. The programme provides social assistance services and monitors the cases of Romanian children at risk of being trafficked abroad, children who are, for one reason or another, separated from their parents, and whose physical and/or mental health is endangered. Save the Children has initiated in partnership with the ISS and the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoptions a social approach for children separated from their families who are in a foreign country. In 2002, 161 children were helped in cooperation with ISS branches in Italy (142), Germany, Switzerland, France, the US, Great Britain, Greece, Canada, Holland, Australia and Israel. Some 116 social inquiries were completed at local level and eight children were repatriated (seven from Italy and one from Greece).

Save the Children became a partner in the IOM Anti-Trafficking Regional Programme in May 2002. By implementing the programme *Children and young people – victims of trafficking,* Save the Children aims to:

- Prevent trafficking by running campaigns in schools and high schools in Bucharest and Suceava;

- Provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking from Bucharest and Suceava: psychological and social counselling and material support, specialized health care services, support to graduate vocational courses, legal assistance;

- Train specialists in trafficking in human beings from the specialized services subordinated to the Ministry of Administration and Interior.

The programme is implemented in partnership with the IOM's Bucharest office, the Ministry of Administration and Interior, the International Save the Children Alliance, local authorities and NGOs.

Social Alternatives Iasi

This NGO is involved in a number of initiatives:

- Programme for assisting victims of trafficking in human beings, funded by the IOM's Bucharest office. The aim of this programme is the psychological and social rehabilitation of victims of trafficking from Iasi, Botosani and Vaslui counties who are repatriated by the IOM. The victim assistance programme lasts from three to five months according to the victim's social and psychological needs. The services provided to victims include legal assistance, psychological counselling, health care services and social assistance. Forty-six people were helped between February 2001 and 2004.

- The Assistance and Protection Centre for the Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, funded by the IOM and Secours Catholique /Caritas France. Social Alternatives runs a transit shelter in Iasi that provides services to victims of trafficking from Iasi, Vaslui, Piatra Neamt, Botosani and Suceava counties for a limited period of time. The shelter can host 10 people and provides social services, psychological and legal counselling.

- Coalition against trafficking in women and regional awareness raising campaigns funded by USAID/World Learning – GRASP Programme. The main objectives of the programme are: to establish a regional coalition of seven NGOs from the Moldova region which act in the field of combating trafficking in human beings (Save the Children Galati, Neamt, Suceava and Vaslui branches, Activ Association Botosani, Avicenna Association Bacau); and to raise public awareness of trafficking in women.

Reaching Out Pitesti

Reaching Out (RO) was established in 1999. Its mission is to bring all victims of trafficking into safe environments, bring them back as fully functioning members of society, give them a chance to live a normal life and provide community education to prevent trafficking. RO established a shelter providing long-term assistance for victims, including health care services, legal assistance, individual planning for the future, individual and group therapy, life skills, job training, job hunting, school and vocational education, and help with accommodation upon exit.

Conexiuni Foundation Deva

Conexiuni Foundation Deva provides the following types of services to victims of trafficking in human beings: social assistance, psychological counselling, guidance to health care services for tests and treatment, legal counselling and assistance, and temporary shelter. The Foundation has two apartments to accommodate victims of trafficking. To help young victims of trafficking to find appropriate work, the Foundation signed a protocol with the County Agency for Employment and an agreement with a social service centre where girls are helped and participate in free training courses.

Avicenna Association Bacau

Since 2001, Avicenna Association Bacau has run a social reintegration project for victims of trafficking in women, in partnership with the IOM Bucharest office. The association provides victims of trafficking with free social, psychological, legal counselling and health care assistance, educational and professional guidance and support in finding a job. In its first two years, Avicenna helped more than 10 victims from Bacau County. Information and prevention campaigns are also carried out in high schools and the local university. The association also has a good working relationship with the media. Avicenna has concluded a partnership with Social Alternatives Iasi on the *Coalition against trafficking in women* and *Regional awareness-raising campaign* initiatives.

ANMRF Braila

This association provides social assistance services and financial support to victims of trafficking in human beings. People helped are guided to health care services for tests and treatment, and benefit from psychological counselling. The cases are managed in partnership with IOM. Six victims of trafficking in human beings had been helped by 2004.

SEF Foundation Iasi

SEF Foundation designs an individual social reintegration plan for every victim it helps. The services vary according to each individual plan and consist of: social assistance, psychological counselling, guidance to health care services for tests and treatment, and legal counselling. SEF Foundation also runs a school and professional reintegration for trafficking victims. Thirteen victims were helped between 2002 and 2004. These were all referred by IOM and repatriated from Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Spain.

Sinergii Foundation Timisoara

Sinergii Foundation Timisoara provides victims of trafficking with two types of service: transit and social assistance. Transit assistance consists of taking the victims from the border or the airport and accompanying them home. Twenty victims of trafficking were accompanied in 2003. Social assistance for victims aims at social and professional reintegration. The victims are also provided with psychological counselling, legal counselling and assistance and are guided to health care services for tests and treatment. The cases helped in 2003 came from Timisoara city (two) and neighbouring areas (four). All the people helped by Sinergii Foundation Timisoara were repatriated from Serbia, Italy and countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Sinergii Association Medias

Sinergii Association Medias has a counselling centre for children and young victims of trafficking. The activities carried out in this centre are: school rehabilitation of children and young victims of trafficking and raising public awareness on the phenomenon and its consequences. The counselling centre has helped 14 people repatriated from countries of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Kosovo). The victims were provided with social assistance, legal counselling and assistance, guidance to health care services and individual or group psychological counselling. To raise public awareness of trafficking and its consequences, information materials presenting the risks to which children and youth are exposed were published and disseminated.

7.4 Media Response

The media have responded well to the challenge of raising awareness and understanding of trafficking in human beings. Several awareness-raising campaigns have been carried out by the national television and other TV channels and newspapers. There continues, however, to be a problem with newspapers seeking out the sensational, presenting cases of trafficking in human

beings in a way that does not help public understanding of the risks and consequences of trafficking. There continues to be much confusion between prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation, where the trafficking victim is portrayed as the guilty party; and between illegal migration and trafficking.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

Since 2001, the Romanian authorities have adopted laws and ratified international treaties for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and elaborated policies for combating it. Bilateral cooperation agreements have also been concluded. In 2003, Romania concluded an agreement with France for developing and enforcing a strategy to put an end to trafficking in children and eliminating trafficking networks that operate in France. The border police have new procedural guidelines for identifying and responding to trafficking situations as a result of legislation being harmonized with EU legislation on national security and public order.

Despite these improvements, the enforcement process is just beginning. There are still difficulties in protecting victims during trials against traffickers, and rehabilitation programmes do not fully respond to children's needs.

Both boys and girls are trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation. Most of the information collected during the survey revealed that, in terms of external (cross-border) trafficking, boys were usually trafficked for labour[20] while girls were trafficked for sexual exploitation. There is little information about internal (domestic) trafficking, and the awareness level of the general public on the issue is low. Most children were trafficked for labour from poor areas either to agricultural areas or to big cities.

Trafficking in children is a complex phenomenon determined by a multitude of push factors in the country of origin and pull factors in destination countries. Poverty is one factor that underpins and is compounded by all the other problems encountered by families: domestic violence, weak relationships among the family members, alcoholism, social marginalization, and other social problems. Other push factors are the low level of education of parents, low wages for unskilled work and job insecurity, all of which may lead to families' becoming involved in illegal activities.

An important factor in child trafficking is the perception on the part of both parents and children that they cannot attain the standard of living they desire in their own country or locality. Children and parents perceive themselves as living in deep poverty, and the only chance for survival is leaving the country. Most of the time they look for a 'better life', a higher living standard that, with their skills and education level, they cannot hope to achieve at home.

Parents and children do not value education and do not see a direct link between the level of education/skills acquired and living standards. Early drop-out from school associated with children's engagement in income-generating activities increases the risk that the child will be trafficked. Parents believe that their children's involvement in different types of activities abroad is beneficial. The children's desire to work in order to help support their families is another element that increases vulnerability to trafficking. At the same time, most parents and children do not know what trafficking and exploitation mean. They are not aware of or ignore the risks and negative consequences on children' health, physical, psychological and moral development.

The most common means of recruitment is a false promise of work abroad from acquaintances, relatives or friends. Parents may also be involved in the trafficking process, either by giving their consent for the child to leave the country (sometimes knowing what kind of work the child will be engaged in) or by leaving the country together with the child in order to exploit or sell him/her to another exploiter in the destination country.

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20 However, media reports indicate that boys are also trafficked for sexual exploitation.

8.2 Recommendations

Policy and legislation

- Include in the legislation that regulates domestic and international transportation new provisions related to the transporters' obligation to inform border authorities about suspected cases of child trafficking;
- Approve and implement the NPAs on prevention and elimination of trafficking in children, the worst forms of child labour, child sexual commercial exploitation and child abuse and neglect;
- Establish Child Courts and a Children's Ombudsman in order to ensure a better approach to issues relating to children from the perspective of child rights and a better monitoring system;
- Allocate the necessary funds from the state budget for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (for example, to open the proposed nine shelters for victims of trafficking).

Institutional frameworks

- Develop a monitoring system of child victims of trafficking and an institutional structure to be responsible for the coordination and evaluation of activities carried out for preventing and combating trafficking in children. This structure should have also a methodological role;
- Develop a coherent system for the repatriation of child victims of trafficking;
- Develop a database of all child victims of trafficking and ensure appropriate data protection;
- Strengthen existing anti-trafficking networks and ensure that activities are carried out in a coordinated manner;
- Develop international networks for supporting the repatriation of child victims of trafficking;
- Develop the social assistance infrastructure for targeted and immediate identification of and support to communities at risk;
- Enhance the partnership between local authorities and civil society by establishing multidisciplinary local action committees to take concrete and coherent action for preventing and combating trafficking in children and for the rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking.

Capacity building

- Develop/adapt to the local context training modules for specialists working with trafficked children and with children at risk of being trafficked;
- Develop periodic training for judges and prosecutors on victims' rights according to international standards and the CRC;
- Train peer educators to work with child victims of trafficking and children at risk of being trafficked;
- Train multidisciplinary local action committees to develop and run Child Labour Monitoring Systems for child victims of trafficking and children at risk of being trafficked.

Prevention

- Organize training courses and information sessions for teachers with a view to monitoring cases of children vulnerable to trafficking. Training courses should be based on the most recent data

regarding the occurrence of trafficking in the respective areas and the potential victims;

- Make information available to journalists on appropriate terminology and on the issue of trafficking in children so that they may better inform the public and contribute to protecting victims' rights;

- Disseminate information and facilitate public access to information on legal migration and employment modalities, necessary documents, authorized bodies, rights of migrant workers, protection, etc.;

- Inform communities at risk about available services and entitlements;

- Carry out targeted awareness-raising campaigns focused on specific issues (risk groups, community involvement, changing attitudes) and evaluate the impact;

- Mobilize local communities from both rural and urban areas (school, church and town hall, social actors who have an impact in rural areas);

- Inform marginalized youth and parents on how to find a job or get social benefits;

- Develop extracurricular activities to increase children's self-esteem and confidence in their own potential;

- Carry out awareness-raising campaigns and courses for parents from marginalized communities on the risks and legal consequences of trafficking in children;

- Conduct educational campaigns on issues like safe sex, HIV/AIDS, drug use and civil rights (in sending and destination countries);

- Empower children and young people by promoting their participation;

- Develop social services for preventing school drop-out and monitoring school attendance;

- Map risk areas and risk groups, with a focus on street children, Roma communities and communities with a high prevalence of migration for temporary jobs in the country or abroad;

- Adapt vocational training programmes to labour market demand;

- Encourage employers to employ young people and adults from risk areas and risk groups.

Support services and interventions

- Ensure confidentiality of personal data;

- Respect the 'best interests of the child' in all actions and procedures in which victims are involved, especially during the phase of return to the country of origin and throughout court proceedings against traffickers. In relation to this recommendation, there is a standing request from international organizations/NGOs for the establishment of viable witness protection programmes;

- Establish reception centres in the areas that are most affected by trafficking;

- Establish regulations for repatriation of unaccompanied children and identification of child victims of trafficking.

Rehabilitation and reintegration

- Take a 'victims first' approach to all programmes on prevention and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in children (enforcing the principles of child participation and the best interests of the child);

- Develop a continuum of services (shelters, counselling, vocational training and guidance, witness protection, education, etc) for victims and their families, in order to cover the needs in risk areas and adjust different types of assistance according to age, risks of being re-trafficked, personal needs and case history;

- Diversify services addressed to child victims of trafficking and their families at the level of the local authority in order to ensure the coverage needed and sustainability;

- Develop non-formal education alternatives for children released from trafficking;

- Enforce the role of and cooperation between school counsellors and social workers from the departments for child protection at local level;

- Increase the period stipulated by law for the rehabilitation of a victim in a shelter and ensure long-term monitoring and periodic assessment;

- Ensure free health care assistance for victims after repatriation and financial support for victims in the rehabilitation process;

- Support victims and their families in obtaining damages from imprisoned traffickers for the moral and material prejudices caused by the abuse to which they were subjected;

- Ensure community support and promote a non-discriminatory attitude;

- Promote and support both State institutions and NGOs that already work on trafficking issues to develop joint programmes.

Knowledge base on trafficking in children

- Develop research focused on: knowledge, attitudes and practices of children and parents from risk areas regarding trafficking in children; internal trafficking; child prostitution; child pornography; sex tourism; evaluation of services and prevention activities.

Destination countries

Considering the geographical distribution and the characteristics of child trafficking in Romania and in Europe, solid cooperation is needed among all key institutions and organizations involved in preventing and combating child trafficking, both at national and regional level in order to:

- Develop a system for monitoring cases of missing children and trafficked children in and outside the country;

- Include trafficked children in special protection and rehabilitation programmes during the investigation and repatriation process;

- Improve anti-trafficking legislation and procedures (ie develop child-friendly procedures for repatriation taking into consideration the child's wishes and needs);

- Harmonize social services in destination and sending countries;

- Organize information campaigns on child trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation.

ANNEX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A.1 Definitions

The main concepts used in the survey: 'trafficking in human beings', 'smuggling', 'child labour' and 'worst forms of child labour', have the following operational definitions:

Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 15 November 2000, defines **'trafficking in persons'** as

> *the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

Exploitation includes at least exploitation through prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs.[14]

'Smuggling' relates to the way in which a person crosses the border of a country illegally, with the intervention of third parties and implies a degree of consent. Smuggling is:

> *the procurement, in order to obtain, directly and indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident.*[15]

Migrant smuggling can become trafficking because the people who allow smugglers to take control of their lives become very vulnerable and are thus exposed to exploitation. In the case of children, smuggling shall be considered as trafficking, regardless of whether force, coercion and deception are involved.[16]

'Child labour' does not refer to activities such as performing light work after school, participation in legitimate apprenticeship programmes, or work for family or small-holdings producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers. Child labour is rather concerned with work that:

- prevents children from attending and participating effectively in school, or
- is performed by children under hazardous conditions that place their health physical, intellectual and moral development at risk.[17]

The **'worst forms of child labour'** include:

(a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children,

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14 The Protocol specifies that, as far as children are concerned, "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the definition".

15 *United Nations Protocol Against Smuggling in Migrants*, December 2000.

16 ILO: *Forced labour, child labour and human trafficking in Europe: An ILO perspective,* (ILO, Geneva, September 2002).

17 E.L.Chao: *Advancing the campaign against child labor Volume II: Addressing the worst forms of child labor*, (US Department of Labor Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Washington, 2002).

debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;

(b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;

(c) The use, procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties; and

(d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (such harmful work is to be determined by national authorities).[18]

A.2 Objectives and focus of the research

This study followed the methodology outlined in the *Manual for Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Balkans and Ukraine*, prepared by the FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies of Norway.

The Rapid Assessment survey aims at providing background information that in turn will facilitate the development of strategies for action in order to prevent trafficking of children and help them when they return to the community.

The survey focused on:

- The root causes and overall context conducive to child trafficking.
- The trafficking process: recruitment, transport, contacts with the authorities.
- Types of exploitative labour and sexual exploitation of which trafficked children are victims.
- The daily life of trafficked children.
- The way out of trafficking.
- Conditions on returning to the community and the process of rehabilitation.
- Life after returning to the community (reintegration, new life, stigma).

The research also included:

- An overview of Romanian legislation on trafficking in human beings.
- The social background of children who were trafficked or at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.
- The awareness of children and their parents/caretakers on trafficking and exploitation.
- A mapping of governmental or non-governmental institutions and policies that aim to prevent child trafficking and help children who have been victims of trafficking.
- Conclusions and recommendations for future action.

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18 ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999), No.182.

A.3 Respondents

Three main groups were interviewed: children, parents (or legal guardians) and relevant people/social actors (key informants).

Children

Two categories of children were the respondents for this study: children released from trafficking (55 children) and children who had never been trafficked (21 children). The children interviewed were boys and girls below the age of 18, as well as boys and girls who had been trafficked when they were under 18.

Figure 3: Sex and age distribution: Children released from trafficking

	Sex		Age		
	Boys	Girls	< 12	12-15	> 15
No. of questionnaires	21	34	1	16	38
%	**38.2**	**61.8**	**1.8**	**29.1**	**69.1**

Fifty-five of the 76 children surveyed had been released from trafficking. Interviews with these children focused on:

- Life before trafficking (occupation, child-parent relationship, satisfaction, hardships);
- Recruitment process (initial contact, people involved, the offer);
- Transaction (job, remuneration, daily life, travel), type of recruitment (voluntary, forced);
- Awareness about child trafficking, attitude of the child's family and friends;
- Journey and 'transactions' (recruiters, transporters, bosses and other intermediaries);
- Workload, living conditions and control;
- Release from trafficking (conditions for release, first destination after release);
- Living conditions after release (occupation, relation to the community of origin/parents/caretakers, trafficking-related stigma, assistance, future prospects).

Twenty-one children who had never been trafficked were also interviewed. They came from communities or groups in which they are exposed to trafficking. Street children were included in this category, as well as children from communities with a history of labour or trafficking, and children from Roma communities.

Figure 4: Sex and age distribution: Children who had never been trafficked

	Sex		**Age**			**Living with parents**	
	Boys	Girls	< 12	12-15	> 15	Yes	No
No. of questionnaires	11	10	4	12	5	20	1
%	**52.4**	**47.6**	**19**	**57.2**	**23.8**	**95.2**	**4.8**

The children who had never been trafficked were interviewed in order to understand:

- to what extent they were exposed to trafficking, approached by traffickers or forced by others;
- the mechanisms/reasons determining why these children were never trafficked;
- their awareness about trafficking; and
- their attitude towards children who were trafficked.

Parents

Three categories of parents were interviewed:

- Parents of children released from trafficking;
- Parents of trafficked children;
- Parents of children who had never been trafficked.

Among the parents of children who had never been trafficked, there were parents with children who are at risk of being trafficked. Interviews with this group aimed at exploring whether these parents had attempted to find a job for their children (a factor that may lead to trafficking), assessing the extent to which their children may have been exposed to traffickers, and their knowledge about and perception of trafficked children.

Key informants

The rapid assessment included people who, professionally or otherwise, are directly involved in the lives of trafficked children or of children at risk of being trafficked, or who have some knowledge of trafficking. They were representatives of local and central authorities, the education system and personnel of social services working with children in difficult circumstances, as well as people with relevant knowledge on trafficking. These key informants were interviewed in order to:

- get feedback and discuss preliminary findings;
- present different scenarios, situations and arguments offered by the respondents;
- request them to share information and/or their experiences;
- get information on what is being done to release and reintegrate trafficked children and to prevent trafficking, as well as information about what is efficient and what is not, about what can be done in certain situations, limitations and challenges.

A.4 Locations

The study was conducted in four counties: Iasi, Suceava, Arges and Bucharest. These locations were

chosen because:

- The main cities in these counties have social programmes for working street children and for girls who were victims of trafficking for sexual purposes;

- the capital city of Bucharest, as well as Iasi and Suceava counties, can be considered as 'recruitment centres' for traffickers given that most trafficking victims are recruited in these cities;

- Bucharest and Iasi county are main transit points for traffickers (Iasi is a transit point for the Republic of Moldova; Bucharest is a transit point for Western Europe and the Balkans);

- these locations face severe economic difficulties except for the capital, which is a paradise for beggars and pimps.

Bucharest, the capital of Romania, is situated in the south-east. It has a population of 2,016,000, of which children up to 15 years of age represent 19.3 per cent. The poverty rate is the lowest compared to other major cities (19.81 per cent), but includes some half a million people. At the same time, the human development indicator for Bucharest is the highest in the country, and this is reflected in the schooling rate for the first levels of education (primary and lower secondary): 90 per cent compared to a national rate of 81 per cent.

The capital of Romania is an economic centre with satisfactory development prospects. Investment has been higher here than in other cities or areas of the country. It is a city with a real chance of economic growth. However, it should be mentioned that Bucharest is also a 'collector' of disadvantaged categories of the population (homeless families, homeless children, Roma ethnic minority, unemployed) and a social area with a high delinquency rate.

Pitesti is situated in the east of Muntenia (the southern region of the country), 70 km from Bucharest. The old settlement of Pitesti lies on the bank of the Arges River and has almost 200,000 inhabitants. The main residential town of Arges county, it is the largest economic centre of the county and the location of the NGO Reaching Out's assistance programme for repatriated victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The city has economic opportunities in the automobile and fabrics industries.

Iasi is the most important town in Moldova, an area situated in the north-east of Romania. The area has a poverty rate of 40.61 per cent, the highest in the country. Two-thirds of Romania's poorest villages are situated in this area. Not surprisingly, Iasi is a major stop-over on the internal migration route from rural areas in the east. The IOM Mission in Romania reports that Iasi county accounts for the highest number of repatriated victims of trafficking helped through its programmes: 93 girls and young women out of 696 cases helped during the period January 2000 – May 2003.

Suceava is located in the north-east of Romania and is bordered by Ukraine. The municipality of Suceava is the county's main city and has a population of 120,000. The poverty rate is 33 per cent in this area and the most affected people live in villages. Many reports mention this county among areas with a high number of victims of trafficking, and trafficking networks are known to operate there.

Map 6: Area surveyed

A.5 Data collection tools

Data were collected using:

- questionnaires administered to children released from trafficking and children who had never been trafficked,
- semi-structured interviews,
- group discussions.

The description and analysis of child trafficking is based on:

- standardized information provided by the questionnaires,
- qualitative information from semi-structured interviews and group discussions,
- existing information, the findings of prevention programmes on trafficking and programmes for the reintegration of trafficked children.

Standardized information: the questionnaires

The questionnaires provided information about:

- profiles and categories of trafficked children, attitude towards work offers, recruitment process, parents' attitudes towards children, etc.
- associations of certain particularities, such as the parents' social status and the willingness to get a job outside the community, the level of education and awareness.

Qualitative information: the semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews offered more detailed information than the questionnaires and allowed researchers to take into consideration the particularities of each respondent and the specific details that contributed to an accurate description of the whole trafficking process. Interviews were conducted in all four locations.

Qualitative information: the group discussions

Group discussions contributed to clarifying opinions and ideas through debates, testing the preliminary findings and hypothesis, receiving different types of feedback at the same time, and approaching relevant issues that were not included in the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews.

Difficulties were met in conducting group discussions with parents of children released from trafficking. Most of the group discussions were conducted in Bucharest and Iasi, where the social assistance services for street children facilitated contact with the children and parents.

Figure 5: Tools and respondents

	Questionnaires	Semi-structured interviews	Group discussions
Children released from trafficking	55	27	2
Children who had never been trafficked	21	8	4
Parents of children released	-	10	1
Parents of trafficked children	-	4	-
Parents of children never trafficked	-	8	3
Key informants	-	5	-
TOTAL	**76**	**62**	**10**

The tools were developed and corresponding categories of respondents were selected based on pre-testing of the research tools in Moldova, other local relevant fieldwork and consultations during a training workshop for researchers that took place in Budapest (28 October - 1 November 2002).

A.6 Difficulties encountered

The first problem encountered was the difficulty of identifying the respondents for this study. In Romania, the monitoring system of entries and exits for trafficking is little developed and so the data provided by the public institutions in charge are fragmented and inconclusive. No government institution has clear-cut information on internal and external people movement that would allow for a legal and statistical categorization of trafficking in human beings. Moreover, at the time the interviews were conducted and the questionnaires applied, there was limited awareness of trafficking in children for labour exploitation.

Another problem faced by the research team was that respondents were reserved or afraid to discuss such a delicate issue. Some refused to discuss details that were crucial for the research (information on traffickers and authorities they had contacted). A few of the respondents were unable to complete more than three-quarters of the interview, as this is a long process and children get bored after half an hour. However, most of the children who were accommodated in rehabilitation centres or emergency residential centres at the time of the interview agreed to answer to all the questions in the questionnaire, probably because they had previous experience with interviewers.

There were also difficulties concerning the respondents' understanding of trafficking. It was difficult for the research team to make the respondents understand what trafficking means, although explanations were provided. For instance, the parents of children who were trafficked into begging, labour or theft did not see that as trafficking because they said their children were under their constant 'care' and supervision. Many children were not able to distinguish between a journey, money and exploitation, and trafficking seen as a complex, illegal process.

Additionally, the limited number of respondents did not allow general conclusions to be drawn about child trafficking in Romania. The survey can nevertheless provide insights into the conditions

under which trafficking occurs and the factors contributing to its growth. It also contributes to the design of pilot programmes aimed at preventing child trafficking and reintegrating those who have exited trafficking.

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