



**CHILD TRAFFICKING  
AMONG VULNERABLE ROMA  
COMMUNITIES**



CENTER FOR  
THE STUDY OF  
DEMOCRACY

# **CHILD TRAFFICKING AMONG VULNERABLE ROMA COMMUNITIES**

**RESULTS OF COUNTRY STUDIES  
IN AUSTRIA, BULGARIA, GREECE, ITALY,  
HUNGARY, ROMANIA AND SLOVAKIA**



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THE STUDY OF  
DEMOCRACY**

The current publication presents a study on child trafficking conducted in seven EU member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia. The study looks at three specific forms of trafficking in persons: child trafficking for begging, for pickpocketing and for sexual exploitation of boys and the way they manifest themselves among Roma communities.

The findings of the study are based on analysis of policy documents and existing statistical data, as well focus groups and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The fieldwork conducted in four of the countries, traditionally regarded as origin countries of trafficking victims, relied on participatory research methods. The active involvement of Roma organisations in the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the risk factors involved, bring knowledge back to the communities and support Roma experts' involvement in counter-trafficking policy and mechanisms.

The report examines the profiles of victims and discusses the vulnerability factors that make the Roma minority a particular group at risk. The study provides empirical knowledge on the mechanisms of recruitment and exploitation of victims in order to inform identification efforts and counter-trafficking responses. Particular attention is devoted to the policy and measures for assistance of victims. In this field, the report identifies specific gaps in assistance and the way they affect Roma victims in particular, and suggests how child victim assistance could be improved.

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## COUNTRY CODES

<b>AT</b>	Republic of Austria
<b>BE</b>	Kingdom of Belgium
<b>BG</b>	Republic of Bulgaria
<b>CY</b>	Republic of Cyprus
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic
<b>DE</b>	Federal Republic of Germany
<b>DK</b>	Kingdom of Denmark
<b>EL</b>	Hellenic Republic
<b>ES</b>	Kingdom of Spain
<b>FR</b>	French Republic
<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>IT</b>	Italian Republic
<b>NL</b>	Kingdom of the Netherlands
<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>SE</b>	Kingdom of Sweden
<b>SK</b>	Slovak Republic
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND FOREIGN NAMES

<b>ARSIS (Greece)</b>	Association for the Social Support of Youth
<b>Bettelobby (Austria)</b>	Beggar Lobby – an Austrian NGO
<b>BIM (Austria)</b>	Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights
<b>CENSIS (Italy)</b>	Centre for Social Studies and Policies
<b>CPD (Bulgaria)</b>	Child Protection Department
<b>CPS (Hungary)</b>	Center for Policy Studies at Central European University
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSD (Bulgaria)</b>	Center for the Study of Democracy
<b>Drehscheibe (Austria)</b>	A specialized crisis centre operated by Vienna municipality for unaccompanied children from abroad
<b>Ecorys</b>	An international company providing research, consultancy and management services
<b>ECPAT</b>	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes – a non-governmental organisation and a global network of civil society organisations
<b>ELIAMEP (Greece)</b>	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy
<b>ENYÜBS (Hungary)</b>	Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities
<b>ERRC</b>	European Roma Rights Centre
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUR</b>	Euro
<b>EUROPOL</b>	European Union’s law enforcement agency
<b>HIV/STD</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Sexually Transmitted Diseases
<b>ICMPD Development</b>	International Centre for Migration Policy
<b>IGA (Bulgaria)</b>	Crime Prevention Fund (Bulgarian NGO)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LCCTHB (Bulgaria)</b>	Local Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
<b>NATP (Romania)</b>	National Agency against Trafficking in Persons
<b>NEXUS Institute</b>	An independent international human rights research and policy centre
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Government Organisations
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism
<b>PiN (Slovakia)</b>	People in Need
<b>RECI</b>	Roma Early Childhood Inclusion
<b>SACP (Bulgaria)</b>	State Agency for Child Protection
<b>TAMPEP</b>	European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers – an international organization that

**THB**  
**UN**  
**USSM (Italy)**  
**VoT**

supports the health and human rights  
of migrant sex workers in Europe  
Trafficking in Human Beings  
United Nations  
Juvenile Social Service Offices  
Victims of Trafficking

# INTRODUCTION

Trafficking in persons is a lucrative crime and a gross human rights violation, which affects all EU Member States. Trafficking in children merits special attention of anti-trafficking efforts as children are especially vulnerable to trafficking, re-trafficking and victimisation<sup>1</sup> and the number of children trafficked throughout the EU is supposedly on the rise.<sup>2</sup> Investigation, protection and prevention measures for child trafficking are especially needed as the exploitation of children and violation of their rights have dramatic negative effects on children and society as a whole.

While there is some empirical evidence on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation of women, other forms of trafficking have not drawn much attention of researchers, academics and policy makers. This means that victims of exploitation fall outside the radar of identification and thus cannot access the available assistance. Having this in mind, a consortium of seven partner organisations<sup>3</sup> sought to explore three specific under-researched forms of child trafficking in order to contribute to the knowledge on how and why children fall prey to exploitation. The three forms studied are child trafficking for the purpose of begging exploitation, child trafficking for the purpose of pick-pocketing and child trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation of boys.

Expert opinions and previous studies reveal a significant overrepresentation of Roma children among the victims of trafficking for begging and pick-pocketing. While trafficking for sexual exploitation of boys is the most hidden and least studied phenomenon, victim caseloads in Bulgaria, one of the two main source countries of trafficking victims to the EU, reveals that one fifth of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation are boys. This factor, together with previous field observations of vulnerabilities of prostituting Roma minors to child trafficking, determined that sexual exploitation of boys would be the third form of trafficking to be studied.

The overrepresentation of Roma among trafficking victims calls for specific attention to be devoted to the vulnerabilities of Roma persons to child trafficking, as well as to the mechanisms of recruitment and exploitation of Roma children from vulnerable Roma communities. The study is not

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<sup>1</sup> A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from 2010 shows that of a 79 sample re-trafficking cases, 84 per cent involved children or young adults under 25 years old. IOM, *The Causes and Consequences of Re-trafficking: Evidence from the IOM Human Trafficking Database*, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> EUROPOL Press Release: Children Trafficked and Exploited inside Europe by Criminal Gangs, The Hague, the Netherlands 11 January 2011; available at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/press/children-trafficked-and-exploited-inside-europe-criminal-gangs-501>, last accessed June 11, 2015

<sup>3</sup> CSD – project leader (BG), Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights /BIM/ (AT), Censis (IT), Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy /ELIAMEP/ (EL), Center for Policy Studies at Central European University /CPS/ (HU), People in Need /PiN/ (SK) and Soros Foundation Romania.



based on a hypothesis that Roma are key actors in the criminal networks recruiting and exploiting victims of trafficking. Rather, the assumption of the research partners was that grave human rights violations resulting from exploitation for trafficking affect disproportionately members of the Roma minority. Thus, significant efforts on behalf of researchers and policy makers are needed to redress human rights violations, devise targeted prevention strategies and offer effective and adequate assistance to Roma children victims of trafficking and their families.

Against the background of limited data and high sensitivity of the topic of trafficking in persons among Roma as a group of risk, **participatory research methods are best fitted to gather knowledge on the phenomenon of child trafficking.** Participatory research, ensuring that Roma experts take part in the formulation and conduct of qualitative research, minimise the risk of stigmatisation of Roma communities by ensuring sensitivity of the research instruments and also by providing a highly contextualized analysis. Last but not least, participatory methods are also useful in bringing knowledge back to the communities on how they can protect themselves from trafficking and exploitation.

The fieldwork conducted in four of the countries, traditionally regarded as origin countries of trafficking victims, relied on participatory research methods. The participatory methods allowed to raise awareness on the risk of trafficking in persons among members of the community taking part in the research, to identify risk factors to exploitation as perceived by the communities, as well as to gain access to and trust of members of the communities who had been victims of exploitation. Specific attention is thus devoted to how participation of the Roma communities could be channelled in counter trafficking efforts, and specifically – in providing assistance to child victims.

# TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

## **Trafficking in persons**

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

“Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities or the removal of organs.

*Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, hereafter **Directive 2011/36/EU***

## **Child**

Any persons below the age of 18.  
*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

## **Vulnerability**

A position of vulnerability occurs when the person has no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved.

*Directive 2011/36/EU*

## **Roma**

The text of this Report seeks to comply with the European Commission and the Council of Europe’s adopted usage of the term ‘Roma’. The term ‘Roma’ in this Croatian RECI+ Report, in common with the inherent definitions used widely in publications by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and other international institutions, refers to a diverse community of related groups that would include, but not be limited to, Roma, Sinti, Manouche, Gitano, Resande, Romer, Romanlar, Domlar, Lomlar, Kaale, Egyptians, Ashkali, Tattare, Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Mandopolini, Ghurbeti, Beyash (Bajaši, Rudari/Ludari), Jevgjit and many others that are understood to be part of the wider Roma populations across Europe and beyond. By using the term ‘Roma’ it is understood that the Sponsoring Agencies and the authors intend no disrespect to individual communities. Readers should note that the usage of the term is not intended in any way to deny the diversity that exists across both Roma and Traveller groups. It is to be noted that a significant and growing Roma middle class exists, which participates fully as citizens in the countries and societies in which they live without sacrificing their ethnic and cultural identity. For readability purposes, the adjective ‘Roma’ will generally be used, in particular when referring to the Roma people as a whole or to groups or individuals, e.g. Roma child, Roma families. The adjective ‘Romani’ will generally refer to languages and culture.



# 1. DATA AND TRENDS

Data on trafficking in human beings is marred by several deficiencies, challenging significantly any discussion based on quantitative empirical knowledge.

The most significant shortcoming of official data on child trafficking is that it reflects only cases of registered victims, as typically provided through the registry of victims **identified in criminal proceedings**. This data is not only uninformative, as regards to the socio-economic and ethnic background of the victim; it is also **misleading in terms of reflecting the actual size of the phenomenon**. For instance, in Austria, according to the Ministry of the Interior's statistics on filed cases with the police, both in 2012 and 2013, only three victims of trafficking have been below the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in Slovakia, in the past three years, there have been only 9 child victims of human trafficking identified all together, whereby in 2014 there were no victims identified. Hungary reports only 21 child victims between 2010 and 2012 and no child victims of trafficking repatriated from other countries; while in Greece, totally 34 Greek and foreign child victims have been identified between 2011 and 2013. Italy, primarily a destination country for trafficking victims, reports 8 and 16 cases of child victims of trafficking for 2012 and 2013 respectively. More significant numbers of minors have been identified as victims of trafficking only in Bulgaria and Romania – 67 and 300 children respectively in 2013.

Nevertheless, the figures for Romania and Bulgaria also could hardly be perceived as representative of the real scale of child trafficking phenomenon. According to a Bulgarian anti-trafficking official, they rather represent “the top of the iceberg”. Generally, trafficking in human beings is a hidden activity like any criminal offence, and hence, identification of 100 % of the victims is not possible.

Data on THB as a whole and on child trafficking in particular are not only incomplete but also incomparable across the EU member states, despite of the adopted common EU policy framework. As identified in the Eurostat Statistical Working Paper “Trafficking in Human Beings 2015”, direct comparisons between the member states are not possible due to the significantly varying registration systems and legal definitions of the EU countries<sup>5</sup> that still exist in spite of the existence of the Directive 2011/36/EU and EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012 – 2016. The above-mentioned data, as well as the data in the table below collected from national authorities and revised by Eurostat, could only illustrate these conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> Bundesministerium für Inneres, Kriminalitätsbericht 2012, and 2013, available at [http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi\\_service/start.aspx#t\\_download](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_service/start.aspx#t_download)

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat Statistical Working Paper “Trafficking in Human Beings 2015 Edition”, p. 15, [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat\\_report\\_on\\_trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings\\_-\\_2015\\_edition.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat_report_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_-_2015_edition.pdf)

**TABLE 1. NUMBER OF CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING (IDENTIFIED AND PRESUMED) REGISTERED BY THE POLICE, NGOs AND OTHER AGENCIES, BY GENDER**

		Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
<b>2010</b>	Male	0	3	:	1	:	37	1
	Female	2	93	:	3	:	270	1
	Unknown	0	0	17	0	:	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2011</b>	Male	0	10	:	4	:	30	0
	Female	2	60	:	8	:	289	1
	Unknown	0	0	13	0	1	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2012</b>	Male	1	11	4	0	18	43	0
	Female	5	55	11	5	173	327	3
	Unknown	0	0	:	0	2	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2010 – 2012</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>6</b>

: Data not available

**Source:** Eurostat Statistical Working Paper "Trafficking in Human Beings", 2015 Edition. ISSN 2315-0807.

Some improvements in terms of availability of data, however, could be observed as a result of the efforts for achieving greater comparability and disaggregation of data at European level. One of the examples is the situation of Italy. Different authorities and organisations in the country provided data on victims of THB, along with the officially registered victims under articles 600, 601 and 602 and 416 of the Italian Criminal Code. Until 2010, this information on "presumed victims" was not disaggregated by gender and age. In 2011, gender disaggregation was presented to Eurostat, and in 2012 it was further detailed by age disaggregation allowing extraction of children from the general group of victims.

The existing statistics can hardly reveal an accurate picture of the size of the child trafficking phenomenon and **significantly undermine any efforts to counteract trafficking and provide assistance to many children** who may be victims of exploitation. Some of the countries, as Bulgaria, for instance, do not report presumed but only identified victims, because the term "presumed victim" is not stipulated in their legislation<sup>6</sup>, or due to other reasons, including lack of proper cooperation with facilities and organisations providing assistance. In fact, only five EU countries reported separate figures for identified and for presumed child victims

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat Statistical Working Paper "Trafficking in Human Beings 2015 Edition", p. 80, [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat\\_report\\_on\\_trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings\\_-\\_2015\\_edition.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurostat_report_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_-_2015_edition.pdf)

to Eurostat; and among them only Hungary participates in the current research. Where it is available, the difference between identified and presumed victims is alarming of the numbers of children who may have not accessed assistance. According Austrian Task Force Report 2012, the *Drehscheibe* in Vienna dealt with a total of 315 unaccompanied minors in Vienna from 2009 to 2011, of which 118 cases of children below 14 years were initially considered potential cases of child trafficking.<sup>7</sup> However, only in three cases such presumption could be confirmed.

The low numbers of registered child victims of trafficking reflect both the challenges in **identifying situations of trafficking**, the **limited efforts to investigate** this type of crime and the **problems in persecution along trafficking legislation**. Problems in identifying situations of trafficking are related to the fact that in many cases, children do not consider themselves as subject of exploitation, especially when family members are involved and in situations when their activities (begging, pick-pocketing, prostitution) are a source of family income. Research from Slovakia, Italy and Greece reveals that stereotypes against the Roma and institutional inertia leads to looking away from cases of child begging, which are perceived as “culturally ingrained” practices. In Bulgaria, vested interests and corruption of officials by wealthy families operating pick-pocketing networks leads to very few investigations into this type of criminal activities. Across all countries, institutional homophobia turns a blind eye on boy and transvestite prostitution, causing possible exploitation and coercion to remain uncovered.

Across the EU countries studied, **judicial authorities are reluctant to prosecute for the crime of trafficking**. Prosecutors hardly use the trafficking legislation but rather turn to other provisions of the penal law, related to the crime committed, such as stealing, pimping, aggressive begging. For instance, an official in Austria reports of a 13 year old girl who has already 400 cases of pick-pocketing filed with the police, but no investigation for trafficking was launched. Not applying the trafficking legislation also means that children are not being able to benefit from the non-punishment clause in line with the Directive 2011/36/EU and from assistance provided to victims.

While child trafficking data can hardly indicate the extent and gravity of the problem, **proxy data gives a better perspective** on children who may be at risk of trafficking and among whom there might be actual victims, who fall outside the radar of investigation.

Data on begging children can indicate risk of trafficking or potential unidentified trafficking cases. For instance in Greece, in the year 2010 alone, ARSIS street-workers approached 191 foreign children in the streets of Thessaloniki begging or carrying out auxiliary to begging activities such as selling handkerchiefs, flowers, candles or playing music alone

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2. Österreichischer Bericht zur Bekämpfung des Menschenhandels 2009 – 2011 – Umsetzung des Nationalen Aktionsplans zur Bekämpfung des Menschenhandels von Jänner 2009 bis Dezember 2011, p. 7, <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/aussenministerium/aussenpolitik/menschenrechte/schwerpunktt Themen/kampf-gegen-menschenhandel.html>.

or accompanied by their mothers. In addition, data from the juvenile justice system can indicate potential cases of trafficking, which were not investigated and persecuted as such. In Italy, data provided by the Juvenile Social Service Offices<sup>8</sup> (USSM) shows that among 342 non-Italian Roma<sup>9</sup> juvenile offenders who received assistance in 2012, 90 % were under the age of 18. The majority of these children were involved in thefts<sup>10</sup> (64 %), robbery (8 %), receiving of stolen goods (5 %) and other crimes that caused strong suspicions of exploitation. In the *Drehscheibe* Vienna, in the year 2013, a total of 202 children were admitted to the institution, of which 136 foreign children, predominantly from Eastern Europe and not seeking asylum. Children admitted to the *Drehscheibe* who were in conflict with the law committed offences of pick-pocketing (63 % of the children), had irregular residence status (12 %), were involved in begging (11 %) or prostitution (9 %), or had committed other offences (5 %). The *Drehscheibe* director estimates that 50 % of the admitted children might be victims of exploitation/trafficking. In Slovakia, the authorities did not identify any children victims of forced begging. At the same time, for the period 2010 – 2012 the Research Institute of Labour and Family reported 47 cases of begging children, most of them at the age between 6 and 10.<sup>11</sup>

The official **data on child trafficking is also not informative of the socio-economic and ethnic background of the victims**. Data from criminal proceedings cannot shed light on such characteristics, while other data, collected by service providers and other stakeholders is not centrally collected and analysed.

*“The failure to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity in the field of anti-trafficking constitutes a major barrier to tracing this human rights violation and consequently to developing appropriate policies on prevention and victims assistance.”<sup>12</sup>*

While none of the countries studied provided data on the ethnic background of the victims, expert assessments from various stakeholders (service providers, police, child protection authorities) point out that **Roma constitute about 90 % of the victims of trafficking** for begging and pick-pocketing activities and the minority group is significantly overrepresented among victims of sexual exploitation. The significant share of Roma persons among trafficking victims calls for special attention to the factors, which make the members of the ethnic minority vulnerable to trafficking.

<sup>8</sup> Department for Juvenile Justice, Centro Europeo di studi di Nisida, Second Report on juvenile deviancy in Italy. *Quaderni dell'osservatorio sulla devianza minorile in Europa* (Notes on juvenile deviancy in Europe), Gangemi Editore, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> In order to ensure as much uniformity as possible throughout the country, the Department for Juvenile Justice has given a definition of Roma children, valid for statistical ends only, according to which this category includes: “only foreign minors whose family unit is of Roma ethnicity, with no permanent residence, and thus living in Roma camps [...] or illegally occupying a dwelling, and usually without a steady job”.

<sup>10</sup> Theft includes the crime of pick-pocketing.

<sup>11</sup> Bodnárová, B. Analysis of phenomenon of child begging, Institute for labour and family research, Bratislava, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) (2011), Breaking the silence: Trafficking in Romani communities. Accessed October 13, 2014. <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf>. p. 32.

## 2. FACTORS OF VULNERABILITY OF ROMA TO CHILD TRAFFICKING

The study conducted in seven EU member states revealed that there are no specific culturally ingrained practices that directly make Roma vulnerable to trafficking. Rather, a complex of inter-dependant socio-economic factors makes the minority group especially vulnerable.

**TABLE 2. MAIN FACTORS OF VULNERABILITY OF ROMA TO CHILD TRAFFICKING BY COUNTRY**

	Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
Poverty/multiple deprivations							
Unemployment/lack of life prospective							
Criminalised environment/youth gangs							
Discrimination/segregation/closed communities							
Low education/illiteracy							
Lack of birth/civil registration/personal documents							
Family economic activity/survival strategy							
Usury/intra-community dependencies							
Mobility, early marriage, child labour, inter-dependency within extended family							
History of previous abuse/exploitation							
Growing up in state institutions							
Dysfunctional family background							
Disabilities							
Substance abuse							
Absence of child care support							

**Source:** National Reports of the research partners available at [www.childtrafficking.eu](http://www.childtrafficking.eu)



At the a core of this complex interdependent factors lies **the deep and multi-dimensional poverty** in which the majority of Roma populations live, and multiple deprivation in the fields of living standard, housing and (lack of) decent infrastructure from which they suffer. The scales of this poverty are simultaneously a result of several other factors, also inter-depending from each other:

**The large-scale unemployment** of Roma populations **and engagement in economic activities in the “grey” and “black” sectors** are identified as a key risk factor in all of the participating seven countries.

The lack of perspectives in attaining regular employment at home acts as a push factor for Roma families to undertake **high-risk migration** in pursuit of perceived economic opportunities abroad. The lack of knowledge of the labour markets regulations in the host society, together with lack of language proficiency and low level of education makes Roma migrants susceptible to exploitation.

The phenomenon of **poverty migration** deserves particular attention as increasing the vulnerability of Roma to trafficking. In Austria “poverty travellers” arrive mainly from Romania, Bulgaria but also from Slovakia, Hungary other Balkan countries. The migrants stay in Austrian cities for a maximum of two to three months. The travellers beg or sell small items in the streets or play an instrument and are accompanied by their children. Around 60-70 % of these people are estimated to be of ethnic Roma origin.

**When families migrate with their children**, the latter may be exposed to different risks. As the travellers cannot access any support infrastructure such as emergency shelters or day care for children, the families and their children are vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers who can offer loans and accommodation in return for exploitative work.

**Migration of parents leaving children at home** can also contribute to the increased vulnerability of the children to trafficking. Children are left in the care of grandmothers or other relatives or in other cases of older sisters or brothers. The caregivers have difficulties in looking after these children, especially if they are teenagers. In Hungary, such children are often referred to foster care and are at risk of becoming part of youth gangs. Throughout the countries studied, children left behind are also at higher risk of early school leave.

**Low levels of education, early school drop-outs and high illiteracy rates, resulting from a history of social exclusion** of the Roma, both results and factors of poverty and unemployment, make parents and children less aware of the risks of trafficking and potential support actors and more susceptible to the “traps” of the traffickers. This group of factors is identified in five countries (all with the exception of Hungary and Italy).

**Discrimination and segregation** that Roma groups experience across Europe led to formation of highly closed communities, according the observations of research teams in all of the seven participating countries. On the one hand, discrimination and segregation appear important factors preventing Roma people to receive equal educational opportunities and

to find suitable jobs at home countries. On the other hand, Roma communities become reluctant to communicate and interrelate with the greater societies of the home and the host countries (when they migrate) and hence, to cooperate or seek assistance from organisations and authorities in their anti-trafficking activities, at all stages from prevention to prosecution and victims' support.

**The lack of civil registration**, a phenomenon characteristic for the most excluded parts of Roma communities, also makes Roma children particularly vulnerable to trafficking. The lack of civil registration makes it easier for traffickers to recruit victims, and it also obstructs state authorities in their attempts to detect the true identity of children who are being transported across borders. It is difficult for social workers or for police authorities to distinguish if the person accompanying a child is his parent or guardian if they had no identification means. The lack of official registration also makes it difficult for national authorities to collect reliable information regarding the nature and frequency of trafficking among Roma communities, and children in particular. The lack of civil registration for many Roma, including many children, also means that those individuals fall outside the protective net of a state's social support services.

**Segregated and impoverished environments** where the risk of **criminalisation** is substantially higher are identified as additional risk factor in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In Hungary and Slovakia, a reported impact of the criminalised environment on peer groups is the formation of **youth gangs**. Children, either school-drop outs or still at school, get together and commit crimes in the street such as robbing, stealing or bullying other youngsters.

Other factors, such as **history of physical and sexual abuse and previous involvement in prostitution, growing up in state institutions and dysfunctional family background** also increase the chance of children falling prey to trafficking exploitation. In Bulgaria, a report based on testimonies of trafficking victims found that 9 out of 26 trafficked persons reported having suffered domestic violence and sexual abuse at the hands of parents, grandparents, husbands and boyfriends prior to their trafficking<sup>13</sup>. Testimonies of transgender persons, victims of sexual exploitation and likely victims of trafficking, also revealed a history of physical and sexual abuse in the family. According to estimations of Hungarian experts, the majority of children VoT, especially for purpose of sexual exploitation, come from institutions, because the high rates of runaways that put children at high risk of abuse, exploitation and trafficking. In Romania, the 2011 NATP annual report<sup>14</sup> states that minors, victims of THB sexually exploited abroad were already involved in practicing prostitution in Romania. They were lured by the prospective

<sup>13</sup> European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) (2011), *Breaking the silence: Trafficking in Romani communities*. Accessed October 13, 2014. <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf>, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (2012). *Annual evaluation regarding the situation of THB 2011*, consulted on September 15, 2014, <http://teste.mixfabrik.ro/aitp/docs/studii/analiza%20victim%202011.pdf>

of earning a lot of money, being unaware about the exploitation and extremely poor conditions they would face abroad.

The factors illustrated above are registered among vulnerable communities worldwide and are thus not “ethnically specific” or typical for the Roma community. The interplay of these factors, however, could be amplified by practices that are evident among particular Roma communities or Roma families in the seven countries studied and that can be explained as historically rooted, cultural or survival practices.

The reliance on **children to be actively contributing to the household income** in many Roma families may lead to the involvement of children in activities that could expose them to risks of exploitation or to unsuitable environments. Such activities could include begging or similar activities like washing of car windows, “provision” of parking space, etc. If a child is involved in begging together with parent(s) or persons authorised by parents or legal guardians to (temporary) implement guardianship role, following “the letter of the law”,<sup>15</sup> the child should not be considered a victim of trafficking. This could be a “survival strategy” of the family with common sharing of responsibilities and benefits gained between all members of the family or kinship. Nevertheless, this type of situation could also undermine the child’s rights because street work can expose children to risky or hazardous environments, while working long hours interferes with the child’s education. In addition, children can be handed to relatives or third persons, when the risk of exploitation and abuse could be underestimated by the child’s parents or guardians.

The UN Trafficking Protocol implicitly considers the delivering of a child to another person for the exploitation of the child’s labour, as defined by the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956), to be a form of exploitation associated with trafficking. Paragraph 3(a) to forms of “exploitation” that include “servitude”, as well as “services, slavery or practices similar to slavery”.

Thus, as per international anti-slavery and anti-trafficking legislation, a child who is sent to beg by parents or guardians, while continuing to live with them, cannot be regarded as “having been delivered” to anyone else, and thus the parent’s actions do not constitute an act of trafficking.

At the same time, however, children who are made to beg by their parents could under some circumstances fall under the protection of the ILO Convention 182. Article 3 of the Convention includes (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” as a worst form of child labour. The types of work falling under d) are to be determined and formally listed by the appropriate authority at national level. However, the ILO Recommendation 190 on the worst forms of child labour specifies that

*“In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention, and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given, inter alia, to:*

<sup>15</sup> Article 1 of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956) specifies that, in order for a child to fall under the terms of the convention, the child must be handed over to another person, rather than being exploited directly by the parent or guardian.

- (a) *work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;*  
 ...  
 (d) *work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;*  
 ...  
 (e) *work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer”.*

**Early marriages**, a practice that is still widely present in some Roma communities, could increase the risk of exploitation for pick-pocketing or for begging. An early marriage into a well-off family could be considered a survival strategy of impoverished Roma families who wish to ensure the financial well being of a young daughter. Marrying into a wealthy family operating a pick-pocketing network, however, could also constitute a recruitment strategy for trafficking and/or exploitation for pick-pocketing abroad. In some cases, if the girl does not perform well with this type of criminal activity, she is forced into a different form of exploitation such as prostitution or begging. Although the acts of exploitation (abroad or within the country) might not follow immediately, interviewed service providers and law enforcement officials state that the brides are expected to “pay back”, or “at least double” the price paid for them to their parents. The role of (extended) families (in-law) in the process of transportation and “training” of minors for the purpose of pick-pocketing, at least in the part of the cases, is identified by experts in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Romania. In Bulgaria, interviewed experts connect exploitation of minors for pick-pocketing exclusively with certain clans within the Kardarashi subgroup.

The combination of particular **traditional practices** encountered within the Roma communities, such as early marriage, child labour and mobility, and the strong **inter-dependency between family** members may also render their children more vulnerable to trafficking. Such practices may make parents and caregivers less aware of the risks and the problems when children are expected to work to contribute to the family income instead of regularly attending school. In cases when a particular activity is organised by or with the participation of family, and especially in case of begging and pick-pocketing, the strong ties between family members prevent identification of parents or caregivers as involved in exploitation and trafficking process. Typically, children involved in begging and pick-pocketing do not feel victims and are proud to contribute to the family income. Even when they experience abuse or violence, children do not testify against traffickers, as this would mean standing against their families. In other type of situations, when entrusting a child to a relative, friend or acquaintance who promises to find him/her work, may appear acceptable to parents who are unaware of the actual conditions that will be encountered in a foreign country.

In addition, a phenomenon that is relatively new, but widespread among many Roma communities, may put the children of the poorest families at greater risk of trafficking. **Reliance on loan sharks for money** and **intra-**

**community dependencies** can be employed as recruitment strategies for child trafficking. Against a background of deep poverty and extreme social exclusion affecting many Roma, usury became a large-scale practice in Roma communities in post-communist South-European countries. Without access to formal employment, members of Roma communities are not eligible to receive loans from legal financial institutions. Thus, many Roma families are forced to seek loans from usurers for health needs, food, heating, etc. These loans are provided with extremely high interest rates (reaching 300 – 400 % according Roma informants from Bulgaria), which make them practically impossible to return. Powerful figures involved in criminal activities in the communities employ this mechanism to gain control over personal documents of the family members of the debtors, including the children. Children are then forced into different forms of exploitation and in some cases trafficked abroad.

### 3. CHILD VICTIMS FOR BEGGING, PICK-POCKETING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF BOYS AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS: PROFILES, MECHANISM OF RECRUITMENT AND OF EXPLOITATION

#### 3.1. Child trafficking for begging

While child trafficking for begging is gaining significant international attention in 2003 – 2005, **statistical evidence and policy response to this form of exploitation is declining**. Firstly, as illustrated above, Italy and Austria, both typical destination countries, register very few victims of trafficking for the past two recorded years of 2012 and 2013 (8 and 16 victims officially identified by law enforcement bodies in Italy respectively and three victims identified in Austria). Neither of the countries provides data particularly on begging as a form of exploitation.

Greece, a destination country of children and families travelling for begging, identified 34 child victims between 2011 and 2013 and four of the victims had been trafficked for begging. Simultaneously, in line with Bulgaria's Coordination Mechanism for Referral and Care of Unaccompanied Children and Child Victims of Trafficking, Returning from Abroad 32 children victims of trafficking for begging were repatriated in 2013 and 10 victims in 2012. The predominant destination country for Bulgarian victims of trafficking for begging were Greece (22 cases), followed by Austria (5 cases), Belgium (1 case), France (1 case), Italy (1 case), Spain (1 case). Romania reported 13 and 11 cases of forced child begging in the years 2012 and 2013 respectively. In Hungary, disaggregation of data on children VoT (8 in 2011 and 5 in 2012) is not available by forms of exploitation. The same is valid for Slovakia, where generally, the numbers of identified children VoT are extremely scarce (1, 3 and 2 for 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively).

Expert assessments point out that more **than 90 % of the children begging on the streets of EU countries are of Roma origin**. Service provider in Austria quoted in the Austrian country report alerts that around 20 % of begging could be related to a criminal network and could be considered as child trafficking.

The limited caseloads of identified children victims of trafficking for begging exploitations **provides little empirical evidence of the on profiles and vulnerability factors** of the Roma minority to trafficking. Most information on child trafficking for begging refers to the period between 2003 – 2004 when several such cases were investigated, including Romanian children from Calarasi trafficked to Italy and Bulgarian children, trafficked to Austria.

The **Bulgarian children identified in Austria** 2003 – 2004 were mostly Roma girls, aged 14-15 years old, begging and pick-pocketing on the streets of Vienna. The recruitment process was as a type of ‘bonded labour’ whereby the victim was sold by his/her parents for a set sum, which was to be recouped by the victim. A female minor trafficked to Austria and assisted in 2004 came from a family of eight children, five of whom were in Vienna begging for different recruiters. Following an active law enforcement and victims’ assistance cooperation between the two countries,<sup>16</sup> the number of identified children decreased from 650 in 2005 to 233 in 2006 and to 12 in 2007.

A more recently uncovered trafficking network recruiting **children from the Romanian town of Tandarei** revealed that children were trafficked with counterfeit documents by the notary. The documents were used to legalise the travel of children abroad with an unrelated adult. Investigation revealed that contracts were signed between a family selling a child and the trafficker taking control of the youngster. Reportedly, children were sold £20,000 and trafficked into the UK to join members of the criminal network in Slough, London, Manchester and other cities. The children were given a false name and bogus birth certificate. Many were moved around the country frequently, using the bogus identity papers to make multiple claims for child benefit. In time the criminal network started to recruit members of different nationalities (Slovaks, Czechs and Poles, mainly of Roma ethnicity). The network controlled the minors who were sent to beg, clean car windows, or pick-pocket.

More recently, in 2013 criminal investigations revealed the operation of trafficking network in Milan, exploiting **adult disabled Roma from Romania in Italy**. The victims were recruited from poor families in Romania, transported to Italy in vans and forced to beg on the streets and on the underground in Milan. The exploitation for begging brought in about EUR 60,000 per month to the trafficker.

Although information from previous investigations is limited and cases involving child victims are outdated, these cases reveal the **lucrative nature of child begging activities**, which makes them appealing to organised criminal groups.

Moreover, uncovered cases of child trafficking for begging reveal the **vulnerability of impoverished Roma families to exploitation** through recruitment through usury and bonded labour. The identification of Bulgarian child victims of trafficking in Austria in 2004 revealed that children were sold by their parents for EUR 200 – 300 that children had to “earn back” to traffickers. Furthermore, interviewed experts in Greece noted that traffickers of Bulgarian Roma children in some cases present themselves as relatives or friends of the family. It is confirmed by the case of a Bulgarian Roma girl killed by a bus in in the area of Laggadas in Thessaloniki in January 2013. The girl had been spotted many times in a period of two years engaging in income generating activities in

<sup>16</sup> The Austrian-Bulgarian model of cooperation included establishment of joint multidisciplinary teams, including representatives from law enforcement, units for combatting organised crime, consular services, social assistance and child protection agencies. The child victims were offered assistance in the Vienna Crisis Center “Drehscheibe”. A Coordination mechanism for referral and assistance to unaccompanied minors and child victims of trafficking was established and the children were repatriated and assisted in Bulgaria. An Austrian liaison officer was appointed in Bulgaria, improving significantly the exchange of information.

the streets, mostly in traffic lights cleaning windscreens.<sup>17</sup> After the tragic incident the authorities realised that the girl's passport was fake. Moreover, it was proven that the persons that showed up to claim her body, claiming to be family members, were not relatives.<sup>18</sup>

The limited caseload of identified victims of child trafficking for begging in recent years can be correlated with the **increased involvement of parents and relatives** in the organisation of begging activities across the countries studied. The tendency of involvement of parents in begging activities leaves confusion among authorities whether exploitation exists and whether cases could be considered as child trafficking.

Clearly, children begging on the streets fall within protection of international legislation on worst forms of child labour as well as trafficking in persons, when delivered to third party. The country researches however revealed that **instances of child begging in all seven countries are rarely questioned or investigated by authorities, and rarely, if at all, investigated along anti-trafficking legislation.**

In Italy, **prejudices and cultural bias of begging as a “traditional Roma”** practice lowers the threshold of alertness to possible exploitation of the children. There is therefore a large degree of discretion on the part of local institutions in deciding whether or not to take action when a Roma child is found begging on the street, and if so what sort of action to take. There is no uniformity among different Juvenile Courts and among social workers in deciding on the best course of action for the child, in particular whether or not to take the child away from the family of origin. Similarly, in Greece children found begging on the streets with adults are most commonly treated under the legislation related to begging (Article 409 of the Penal Code), with charges pressed against the parent or the adult who has been ascertained as the child's legal guardian. In Austria, efforts of child-protection institutions to counteract the involvement of children in begging are faced with contradictory response from different agents in society, both Roma and non-Roma. It is well illustrated by the case of a four-year old girl found on the streets with her grandmother begging there. Police took them to a police station, and separated them, the child being brought to the *Drehscheibe*<sup>19</sup> for two days, while police tried to establish the identity of the persons, and parents from Bulgaria could be traced and requested to come to Vienna to identify their child. The case got to the attention of the *Bettelobby*, a civil society initiative supporting the rights of begging persons against discrimination – according to their interpretation of the situation, the separation of the girls from the adult and related measures taken by the authorities have been an over-reaction, insensitive and not necessary;<sup>20</sup> on the other hand, from the child

<sup>17</sup> Iefimerida. “Paidi twv Fanariwn i 11 Xroni pou tin Patise Lewforeio enw Ekane Podilato sti Thassaloniki [The 11-Year Old Killed by a Bus in Thessaloniki was a Street-Child]. January 23, 2013, <http://www.iefimerida.gr>

<sup>18</sup> Interview with ‘House of Arsis’ social worker, Thessaloniki, July 9, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> A specialized crisis centre operated by Vienna municipality for unaccompanied children from abroad, including for trafficked children.

<sup>20</sup> See their blog entry about this incidence at <http://www.bettelobby.at/2014/10/14/4-year-old-romani-child-taken-into-state-care-a-report-bericht-einer-kindesabnahme-in-wien>, last accessed June 11, 2015.



protection authority's point of view, it was legitimate to act immediately in the child's best interests to investigate the situation.

A recent phenomenon identified in Austria related to child begging is so called "**poverty travellers**". The majority of the "poverty travellers" are of Roma origin and came from Romania, Poland and Slovakia; very few of them are from Hungary, Czech Republic and Bulgaria. Income generation in Austria concentrates on begging, day-to-day work and single cases of prostitution. Poverty travellers originating from Romania organise the travel and stay in Salzburg within the family or with the help of friends/neighbours. Together with the adults, around 39 children arrived in Austria, in order to "assist their parents – more or less – in begging".<sup>21</sup> The increased phenomenon of poverty migration was also confirmed by Bulgarian child protection authorities.

In **Italy**, those involved in begging are children belonging to families of recently arrived migrants mostly from Romania, living in irregular camps. Activities on the street may involve both the very youngest children often carried around by their mothers and the oldest children. From adolescence onwards more females continue the activity of begging, while males are more involved in the collection of copper and iron. Both in Italy and Austria, **the absence of support mechanisms, such as day care for children, leave no alternatives than to involve even youngest children in precarious street begging activities.**

The presence of adults replacing the situation of children begging alone led to the general lack of efforts of institutions aimed at checking the situation of begging: why the child is involved; are the accompanying adults her/his actual parents/legal guardians or not; if not, do they all have needed permissions from parents or legal guardians to take the child with them and are their documents eligible or fake; if yes, has the family resorted to begging only to the reasons of poverty, or has the entire family been forced through mechanisms like usury and bonded labour?

Furthermore, evidences coming from researchers, media and citizens regarding elements of organisation of child begging that go outside of the family unit seem to be inadequately investigated by the authorities. A study of child begging in Greece reports that groups have been observed transporting Romanian and Bulgarian children in cars or vans to certain parts of Athens to beg overseen by an adult supervisor.<sup>22</sup> The media has also reported on instances of trafficking networks which recruited children and handicapped adults from the Roma communities in Bulgaria and transported them to Greece by bus and exploited them in begging in various spots in Athens. In Naples, Italy, citizens reported to associations dealing with Roma citizens and

<sup>21</sup> Schoibl, *Notreisende und Bettel-MigrantInnen in Salzburg*, Salzburg, Juni 2013.

<sup>22</sup> ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012. p. 168; Accessed December 1, 2014. [http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report\\_for\\_the\\_study\\_on\\_typology\\_and\\_policy\\_responses\\_to\\_child\\_begging\\_in\\_the\\_eu\\_0.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report_for_the_study_on_typology_and_policy_responses_to_child_begging_in_the_eu_0.pdf)

children a daily transfer of a certain number of Roma children, taken from the camp by van every morning to go begging in some parts of the city. However there has been no official confirmation of this activity, and no further details have emerged and it appears that no investigations have been carried out.

Contextual understanding on the child begging phenomenon is necessary to provide knowledge on the situation and profiles of children involved in these activities, in view of identifying vulnerabilities to trafficking. Currently, there is limited empirical knowledge on the profiles and situations of child begging, mostly gathered through service providers in destination countries.

Mechanisms of involvement identified by research teams and profiles of children involved in begging are presented in Table 3. Despite the predominance of the cases when parents or other adults claim kinship relationship with the children, in all of the seven countries participation of non-relatives organising child begging could also be assumed because the above-mentioned examples of organised transportation and fake identification of supervising adults as relatives. Involvement of children as a part of the income-generating activities of the family is also assumed everywhere; but recruitment mechanisms and methods of control over the victims in cases of begging organised outside the family remain unclear, especially in Austria and Hungary.

**Two main typologies** of begging children can be delineated in all countries – children between 0-5 years old, accompanying a begging adult (usually a mother); and children aged between 5-18 begging alone, in groups, or accompanying adults.

**The profiles of begging children are based mainly on expert evaluations and vary across the seven countries.** Substantial differences are reported in respect of the **age of children involved in begging.**

The expert evaluations in Austria and Italy, report similar ages: between 10 and 13 in Austria, and 10 years and above in Italy. In Greece, however – the third primary destination country among those participating in the research – two separate age groups are reported: the larger group of children up to 15 years, and the smaller group of infants aged 0 to 6, which is assessed as most present among children used in begging and similar activities.

Generally, the countries of origin report larger age intervals. The Bulgarian children, repatriated for begging in 2013, were predominantly in the age group between 8 and 16, with only 3 cases of children aged between 16 and 18. As older children are less successful in begging, it is less frequent for them to be involved in such activities. The exception to this rule is **children with disabilities**, who are considered among the „more successful“ groups for begging regardless of the age group. Exactly the same age profile is identified in Romania. The research teams from Hungary and Slovakia reported generally younger ages of children involved in begging.

**TABLE 3. INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS AND PROFILES OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN BEGGING**

		Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
<b>Profile of victims</b>	Age	10-13	8-16 (~2/3)	0-6; 1-15	0-5; 8-13; 13-17	10+	8-16	5-14
	Gender		mostly boys (~3/4)	boys slightly more		mostly boys	70-80 % girls	boys and girls
	Ethnicity (expert assessment)	>90 % Roma	Almost all Roma	Mostly Roma		Mostly Roma		
	Destination	AT	EL, AT, BE, IT, ES, DE, FR, UK, SE, BG	EL	HU	IT	UK, FR, IT, DE, EL, ES	SK, UK, CH
	Origin	BG, HU, RO, SK, Balkan countries	BG	AL, BG, RO	HU, RO	RO, BG, IT, West Balkans	RO	SK
<b>Involved persons (expert assessments)</b>	Family							
	Ext. family, relatives	~80 %						
	Organised networks	~20 %						
	Peers							
<b>Recruitment mechanisms</b>	Bonded labour							
	Sold from parents to traffickers							
	Usury							
	Early marriage, dowry payments							
	Income earning of the family							
<b>Methods of control</b>	Emotional ties							
	Family dependency and loyalty							
	Rewards							
	Violence, threat, fear							

Source: National Reports, research partners.

In Hungary, a significant differentiation is made between children used in begging by their mothers, who are usually between 0 and 5 years; children begging alone, but living in family environments, who are usually between 8 and 13 years; and children from institutions who practice begging from 13 to 17 years of age. In Slovakia, begging children are in the age of 5 to 18 years, but the largest group consists of children in the age of 5-14.

Information on gender of child beggars is lacking for Austria and Hungary. The Bulgarian victims identified in 2003-2004 were predominantly girls, but in 2013, the ratio was the opposite: about 3 of 4 repatriated begging children were boys. Predominance of boys among begging children is reported in Italy and Greece, both genders are involved in Slovakia, and girls predominate in Romania.

The study in Greece indicates that Roma children trafficked to Greece from neighbouring countries are neither placed within Romani communities in Greece nor mingle with the domestic Roma population. As each local Roma community has its own characteristics and specific culture traits, the local Roma communities are not open to the settlement of newcomers. The **distance between migrating Roma and long settled local Roma communities is also confirmed** by the research in Italy and Austria.

Begging children in Greece are most often **accommodated in rented apartments in large cities where they are exploited**, often close to the centre so that they can easily reach the spots where they carry out their activities<sup>23</sup>. There is an **increased presence of Bulgarian and Romanian migrants among the begging families in Greece**. This is facilitated by geographical proximity between the northern parts of Greece and Bulgaria, direct train transport from Bucharest, Romania, as well as by the accession of the two countries in the EU since 2007. The children do not attend school both in the sending and receiving countries.

**Romanian children** trafficked for begging are housed in very poor conditions: rented apartments for 15-20 persons, caravans, deserted houses and parks. According to research based on Romanian database of assisted victims, children had to beg on the streets between eight and fourteen hours a day in crowded areas – shop entrances, supermarkets, schools, churches, railway stations, crowded markets, touristic attractions. Exploiters closely monitored the begging activities and used physical force and threats to ensure compliance.

### 3.2. Child trafficking for pick-pocketing

Similar to other forms of exploitation, the **officially registered child victims of pick-pocketing in the seven countries studied provide little evidence on the profiles of victims**. In Austria, Italy, Greece, Slovakia and Hungary there are no officially registered victims in the year 2013. The lack of data collection in Greece is a direct result of non-recognition

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with street worker and responsible for counter child trafficking projects at Arsis, Thessaloniki, July 8 2014.

of exploitation for pick-pocketing as a form of trafficking explicitly in law. Greece does not explicitly recognise exploitation for participation in criminal activities as a form of trafficking.

Information on officially registered children VoT for pick-pocketing is available in two of the typical origin countries – Bulgaria and Romania. Romanian authorities report eight cases of children victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing registered in the first six months of 2013, three victims registered in 2012 and two identified in 2011. In Bulgaria, official statistics as per criminal proceedings do not indicate the victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing, but information of such cases is provided by the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection. The reports of the State Agency for Child Protection show an increase in the caseload of child victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing repatriated from abroad from 11 cases in 2012 to 18 cases in 2013. Most of the victims are girls, between 13-16 years of age. Two thirds of the victims, 12 out of 18, were identified abroad with family or a relative and one third of them were unaccompanied. Expert interviews also confirm that most of the victims are brought into pick-pocketing within family networks.<sup>24</sup> In 2013, most of the victims were trafficked to Sweden (four victims), followed by Italy, Spain and the UK, (three victims in each of the three countries).

Apart from official statistics, interviewed service providers and representatives of institutions shed some light on the **profiles of children, victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing** as well as on children, **committing petty crimes, who are at risk of exploitation for trafficking**.

In all countries with the exception of Hungary, service providers and experts signal that most child victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing have Roma background. Generally, the research teams found a number of similarities between children involved in begging and those involved in pick-pocketing, with two important differences: pick-pocketing is not necessarily connected with poverty, and is generally not perceived as admissible within Roma communities. According to service providers in Bulgaria, child victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing are from well-off families, are literate and have finished some degree of education.

Gender specifics of children involved in pick-pocketing are not identified in Hungary, Italy and Romania. Girls predominate in Austria, Bulgaria and Greece, and boys are most frequently found among pick-pocketing children in Slovenia.

The age group of the children is very much dependant on how and by whom they have been involved. When pick-pocketing is organised by (extended) family, or by third persons, and especially when children are trafficked abroad, they are usually under the age of criminal liability in the respective country (under 14 in most of the cases). The youngest ages of minor pick-pocketers are reported in Greece, Hungary, Italy and Slovakia. When minors are involved by family in law through the

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<sup>24</sup> Interview, SACP expert, Sofia, October 2014, Interview LCCTHB member, Pazardhik 21.05.2014.

mechanism of early marriage, or by peers as a result of a criminalised environment, their reported age is older. As illustrated in the data provided by SACP in Bulgaria, children are most often girls, aged 13-18 years old. The age group is the same for victims from Romania, where adolescents between 14 and 17 are most vulnerable to trafficking. Both in Romania and Bulgaria, children trafficked for pick-pocketing are **first exploited for such activities within the countries, after which they are transported abroad**. Elements of a “rotation system” have been observed, according to the interviewed expert from the *Drehscheibe – Vienna*, in which children remain in one place/country only for a short period of time, and once they get in difficulties with authorities, the child would have to move immediately to another country. In Bulgaria, profits are returned to the family operating a pick-pocketing network, thus contributing to considerable wealth of some of the “clans”<sup>25</sup> involved in pick-pocketing.<sup>26</sup> In Romania, research revealed that members of impoverished communities as well as well-off families may be involved in pick-pocketing activities.

Evidence of Roma children involved in pick-pocketing activities is provided also by **destination countries**.

Children assisted at the *Drehscheibe* shelter in Vienna, who had been caught committing pick-pocketing, are almost entirely of **Roma origin and mostly girls**. Reportedly, the girls would be forced to make up to EUR 350 per day. If they do not deliver, the girls would experience violence or may be forced into prostitution. Significant language barriers further add to vulnerabilities of those children, making reaching-out for assistance and building trust by service providers more difficult.

Despite the lack of data and the limited attention of stakeholders, police investigations have indicated that there may be a link between pick-pocketing and Roma child trafficking in Greece. The Public Prosecutor in the Athens district reported that there are suspicions that criminal rings are trafficking young Roma teenage girls from Bulgaria to Athens where they are forced to pick-pocket. The girls got into contact with the police, often repeatedly, while they were possibly exploited, as they were found to have committed pick-pocketing offences. Getting in contact with the police did not, however, effectively lead to the identification of the suspected trafficking conditions leading to the commission of the offence. Reportedly, the persons organising this activity know well that the police cannot detain the children even in case of multiple offences.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The term “clan” is used in throughout the report to signify the perceptions of respondents of Roma families and extended families belonging to the Kardarashi subgroup. The term is not used in its anthropological sense, pertaining to a group of people united by actual or perceived kinship and descent, as there were no interviews and ethnographic studies to confirm such linkages in the extended families referred to by respondents.

<sup>26</sup> Interview police officer, Pazardzhik, 25.09.2014, Interview LCCTHB member, Pazardzhik, 21.05.2014, Valia – IGA.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014.

**TABLE 4. INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS AND PROFILES OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PICK-POCKETING**

		Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
<b>Profile of victims</b>	Age		13-18	young teenagers	8-10; 14-20	9-14	14-17	5-15; 12-17
	Gender	Mostly girls	Mostly girls (~3/4)	Girls				Mostly boys
	Ethnicity	Entirely Roma	Roma	Roma		Roma	Roma	Roma
	Destination	AT	SE, IT, ES, UK, DK, CZ, SK, BG	EL	HU	IT	RO	SK, UK, CH, DE
	Origin		BG	BG	HU	RO,	RO	SK
<b>Involved persons</b>	Family							
	Ext. family, relatives							
	Organised networks							
	Peers							
<b>Recruitment mechanisms</b>	Substance abuse							
	Sold from parents to traffickers							
	Kidnapping							
	Drawn by peers							
	Early marriage, dowry payments							
	Income earning of the family							
<b>Methods of control</b>	Emotional ties							
	Family dependency and loyalty							
	Rewards							
	Corruption							
	Violence, threat, fear							

Source: National Reports, research partners.

From 2003 until the end of 2007 in Rome, as in other Italian cities, there were numerous cases of Romanian children at non-prosecutable age involved in pick-pocketing activities. Evidence revealed that the children were victims of trafficking and of parents who had handed them over to so-called “uncles” to whom they were required to bring the proceeds of their activities each day. The research in Italy has shown that the children represented only the final link in a **layered criminal chain**, with a first level consisting of adult leaders, who took care of the economic management of the proceeds. An intermediate level was represented by the older boys, who were responsible for instructing and managing the children during their activities on the streets and for protecting them, both from law enforcement and from the victims of the robberies/pick-pocketing. The older children also appeared at police stations to take custody of the children under 14 who could not be arrested.

According to the Bulgarian and Italian national reports, a typical **recruitment strategy** in Bulgaria and Italy for children victims of pick-pocketing is **early marriage** into a family operating a such network. Involvement within the frame of income-generating activities of the closer or of the extended family is reported in Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Slovakia. Other strategies employed are similar to the recruitment of children for begging and may involve “**bonded labour**” where the child is used to return and multiply a sum paid to the family by a member of the criminal network. The cited amounts paid to families vary from 1000 – 3000 EUR, as identified by an Italian research report, to £20,000, according to a police officer interviewed in Romania. In the latter case, fake documents of the children were also used for abuse with social benefits in the UK.

There are several **key factors that challenge significantly investigation of exploitation for children for pick-pocketing**. Firstly, when operating within a family network, children performing pick-pocketing do not feel victims of exploitation. Evidence from Austria, Bulgaria and Italy reveals that such children may be rewarded for their illicit activities and may feel proud to contribute to the family income. Emotional ties with the family and/or the high level of dependency and loyalty between family members are identified as methods of control in all countries with the exception of Greece. Distrust towards authorities means that children in such cases rarely come forward to seek support or protection. In Bulgaria, connection to the family is retained even if the child is repatriated for committing the crime abroad. When children exploited for pick-pocketing are referred to a crisis centre, the families manage to ensure that the child is returned to the family as soon as possible and well before the prescribed six-month duration stay in the centre is over.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, employment of violence and threats is also assumed from experts in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, especially in the cases when minors are exploited by families in law, extended families and organised criminal groups. In Romania, the presence of corruption is also suggested by community members:

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<sup>28</sup> Interviews Crisis Center Sofia, CC Balvan, Interview LCCTHB member, Pazardhik, 21.05.2014.



*„I would call the police but in many cases the police is hand-in-hand with the criminal. If the Police would act, the phenomenon would not be present”  
(Romania, interview with teacher from rural area)*

Secondly, the crime **can only be investigated if the child is caught in the act**. Even in such cases, linkage to adults profiting from these activities cannot be traced. Children are thus criminalised, if they are of prosecutable age, or are referred to the respective authorities if they are below the age of criminalisation. As in the case of a child with 400 charges for pick-pocketing in Austria, such cases rarely lead to investigations for trafficking in persons.

Although Hungary and Slovakia do not have any registered cases of children trafficked for pick-pocketing, country researches established particular **risk groups** to child trafficking for pick-pocketing. In Slovakia, children aged 5-15 years old part of families living in the worst socio-economic conditions and committing criminal activities such as pick-pocketing, shop-lifting, metal theft are vulnerable to different forms of exploitation. The vulnerability is heightened by addictions to various substances, which makes them resort to desperate strategies for acquiring money to feed their addictions.

In Hungary, pick-pocketing, as part of crimes committed in **youth gangs**, exposes children to a highly criminalised culture. Children aged between 8-10 and older ones, between 14 and 20 commit offences at a very young age without being directly coerced but rather due to their socialisation in a criminal environment. Such children can be easily lured into involvement in organised criminal activities and can become victims of exploitation of trafficking for criminal activities.

### 3.3. Child trafficking for sexual exploitation of boys and transgender persons

While victim caseloads and expert opinions based on assisted child victims of trafficking for begging and pick-pocketing allow some empirical discussion on the **profiles of the children** involved, there is no such reference point for determining the profile of boys, trafficked for sexual exploitation. Statistical evidence was provided in Bulgaria, where court decisions reveal that in the period 2011 – 2013 there were between 10 and 14 boy victims of “trafficking for debauchery”<sup>29</sup> each year. This constitutes about one fifth of the victims of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, the **victims identified in criminal proceedings had not been referred to assistance**. Similarly, in Romania few cases of boys were officially registered as victims of sexual exploitation in recent years. Eight cases of boy victims of trafficking were recorded by the Romanian authorities in 2012 and 14 were registered in 2010. Notably, the Romanian victims were also not referred for assistance. Although there are no identified boys victims of trafficking for sexual services in Hungary, the statistics of the Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities (ENYÜBS) show 5 cases of sexual exploitation of boys in 2013.

<sup>29</sup> “Trafficking for debauchery” is a form of exploitation as per art. 159-c of Bulgarian penal code.

Research in all countries studied show **clear indications that specific groups of boys and transgender persons of Roma origin are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking** and some have already been **victims of sexual exploitation**.

**TABLE 5. INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS AND PROFILES OF BOYS INVOLVED IN SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

		Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
<b>Profile of victims</b>	Age				9 and above	10 and above	8 and above	15 and above
	Ethnicity		Mainly Roma	Roma and non-Roma		Roma and non-Roma		
	Destination		DE, BE, FR, ES	EL	HU, CH	IT	IT, ES	DE, AU, CY
	Origin		BG	BG, AL	HU, RO	RO	RO	SK
<b>Involved persons</b>	Family							
	Ext. family, relatives							
	Organised networks							
	Peers							
<b>Recruitment mechanisms</b>	Bonded labour							
	Sold by family to traffickers							
	Deception by criminals/peers							
	Kidnapping							
	Emotional ties with "lover boys"							
	Income requests by the family							
<b>Methods of control</b>	Rewards							
	Violence, threat, fear							

**Source:** National Reports, research partners.

**Prostitution of Roma boys and transgender persons** was detected in the four countries, typically considered as origin countries for victims of trafficking. Previous studies in Bulgaria reveal a growing number of Roma transgender persons selling sexual services on the street.<sup>30</sup> This phenomenon is attributed to the relative lack of stigma towards same sex sexual activities within the Roma communities studied and were also explained by a pattern of impoverished men engaging in sex for money.<sup>31</sup> According to a report on HIV and sex work, most of the transgender sex workers are transvestites of Roma origin, working in hidden environments, due to the stigma attached to male prostitution. Roma boys enter prostitution as minors and some of them are HIV positive and suffer heroin addiction.<sup>32</sup>

Boy and transgender prostitution is also present in Roma communities in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. However, there are no estimations regarding the approximate ratio between Roma and non-Roma. In Slovakia, Roma boys increasingly enter the sex markets either as homosexuals or transvestites. Their clients are mainly random tourists, visitors to restaurants or random drivers passing the localities. Boys and transgender persons who could become victims of forced prostitution in Slovakia are most frequently in the age range of 17 to 19 years, but identified cases in the qualitative study show the lowest age at 15 years. Those who offer sexual services meet together and have created a tight-knit community, where they exchange „job offers“. Similar tight communities were noticed also in segregated Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria.

In Hungary, “hidden prostitution” of underage males is reported as increasing the risk of child trafficking. Young boys and girls are used for prostitution and they are taken directly to clients by their pimps, thus avoiding the visibility of street prostitution. The youngest victim identified through occasional interviews was firstly exploited at the age of 9.

The **international aspect** of male and transgender prostitution was evident in all countries studied. The transgender sex workers originating from Bulgaria are very mobile, travelling mainly to Germany, Belgium and other Western European countries.<sup>33</sup> Typical destination places that were found during research in three Bulgarian Roma communities included also Bordeaux, Paris, Saint Trope and other cities in France, as well as cities in Spain and Germany. Counter-trafficking authorities in Romania refer to clients in Italy and Spain that seek boys/children and use trafficking networks to placing special requests. The victims are recruited, mostly, from orphanages and they are recruited with the promise of a better life. The boys then cross the border using fake documents. If the minor is “successful” he remains in this form of exploitation, if not he is send to beg in the streets. In Slovakia, transvestite boys offering sex

<sup>30</sup> Amirkhanian, Yuri, Kelly, Jeffrey [...], and Khoursine, Roman. (2013) High-Risk Sexual Behavior, HIV/STD Prevalence, and Risk Predictors in the Social Networks of Young Roma (Gypsy) Men in Bulgaria.

<sup>31</sup> Amirkhanian, Yuri, Kelly, Jeffrey, [...], and Khoursine, Roman (2013) High-Risk Sexual Behavior, HIV/STD Prevalence, and Risk Predictors in the Social Networks of Young Roma (Gypsy) Men in Bulgaria.

<sup>32</sup> TAMPEP Bulgaria, National report on HIV and sex work 2007.

<sup>33</sup> TAMPEP Bulgaria, National report on HIV and sex work 2007.

services travel abroad, mainly to Germany, Austria and Cyprus. Finally, the study reveals evidence of the presence of Romanian boys prostituting in Hungary.

Prostitution of Roma boys was common in Italy until 2008, with a boom in the period from 2004 to 2006 when the phenomenon was especially visible in Rome and in other Italian cities. Roma children, especially Romanian, had joined the prostitution ring in those years, competing with youngsters already present on the streets, in particular non-Roma Romanians. Competition came in the form of lower rates and lower ages: Romanian youngsters were 16 and over, Roma children included boys below the age of 16 with the lowest registered age of 10, who appealed more to a certain category of clients. According to Italian stakeholders, in more recent years this phenomenon appears to have declined significantly. Nevertheless, there are still cases of Roma boys selling sex services in Rome and Naples, competing with unaccompanied Egyptian children and, to a lesser extent, Tunisian boys.

While the international aspect of boy and transgender prostitution of Roma persons from Eastern Europe could be detected, the **element of exploitation**, needed to provide evidence of child trafficking, is more difficult to determine. Across the countries studied an **institutional homophobia** and perspectives such as “male prostitution is voluntary” and is “gay business” **undermine significantly the chance for detecting signs of exploitation and trafficking** in persons.

Nevertheless, in Roma communities where fieldwork took place, there were organised criminal networks for exploiting Roma women for prostitution abroad. Pimping was especially visible in one of the communities in Bulgaria, where “the street of the pimps” was pinpointed in a community mapping exercise. From a criminological perspective, it is not feasible to assume that the male prostitution and transgender sex market can be left to function independently from the networks for female sexual exploitation, whereby the traffickers forgo possible profits from male and transgender sex work.

Along this line of argument, service providers in Italy also refer to the zoning and control of prostitution areas in Italy by criminal networks. Finally, **testimonies of Bulgarian transvestite boys selling sex services abroad revealed clear elements of coercion and exploitation**. In one particular case, the pimp of the transgender sex worker had taken away documents of the person and had used threats and physical abuse to exert the return of an insurmountable “loan” for arranging travel and accommodation – a typical strategy of coercion used by traffickers.

Evidence from the studies in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia revealed that the **“lover boy” method used to recruit** female victims was also applied to approach boys and transgender persons, victims of sexual exploitation. The boys and transgender persons are approached by a known person with promises of protection, luxury items and wellbeing used to convince victims to travel abroad. The studies in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Slovakia revealed that **peers involved in prostitution**

could also serve as recruiters. In several reported cases in Romania and evidenced cases in Bulgaria, the families of the boys and young persons were aware of the engagement of sexual services of the boys and transgender persons, but accepted this behaviour as it contributed to the family income. In Romania, kidnapping of young boys was identified by communities as a recruitment method for forced sexual exploitation. And finally, the study in Hungary revealed participation of some figures from the Church in an organised sexual exploitation of boys.

A significant **factor of vulnerability** to sexual exploitation of boys detected in all countries of origin is **growing up in state care**. The lack of adequate care and attention toward children growing up in so called “institutions” or “orphanages” – a legacy of the communist organised system for children deprived of parental care – leads to development of deviant and high risk behaviour at an early age. Physical and sexual abuse corrode any self-protection mechanisms that a child needs to develop in order to avoid exploitation. Children are thus lured into prostitution and many cases of abuse of children living in state care by paedophiles have been recorded. A case study from Bulgaria shows that the next step – being lured into working and travelling abroad and thus falling victim to trafficking – is not difficult to take.

In Bulgaria and in Hungary, the substance abuse is found to be closely related to vulnerability to sexual exploitation. According to a report on HIV and sex work in Bulgaria, most of the transgender sex workers are transvestites of Roma origin, working in hidden environments, due to the stigma attached to male prostitution. According to the study, Roma boys enter prostitution as minors and some of them are HIV positive and suffer heroin addiction.<sup>34</sup> The Hungarian research team found evidence that drugs are widespread in all kinds of exploitation and child trafficking, as a cause, or as a consequence: children fall victim for they are drug users and need their daily dose, or they are forced to take drugs while being exploited and trafficked.

*“My buddies in the rehabilitation center, those who were prostitutes and drug users, they all had their childhood traumas.” (Hungary, transvestite, locality 2)*

In addition, research in Slovakia and Hungary revealed that boys offering sexual services often suffer from various **mental health disorders** which are caused by a combination of factors such as unexplained and mainly undiagnosed mental health conditions, poor parenting, child abuse, sexual exploitation and other factors including abject poverty and gross material deprivation.

Significant efforts by service providers, street workers, child protection and counter-trafficking authorities are thus needed in order to **direct trafficking identification efforts to boys and transgender persons providing sex services**. The identification efforts need to take place both in the communities of origin, where male and transgender prostitution is usually a visible, yet ostracized phenomenon and in the countries of

<sup>34</sup> TAMPEP Bulgaria, National report on HIV and sex work 2007.

destination. Targeted efforts need to be directed towards combatting sexual exploitation in state institutions for child care. Indicators for trafficking used in identifying sexual exploitation of women need to be reviewed and adapted to reflect adequately the situation of male and transgender prostitution. Law enforcement, child protection and judicial authorities need to be sensitised towards the risks of trafficking for sexual exploitation of boys and transgender persons. Evidence gathered based on life stories of boys and transgender persons should serve to inform and raise awareness among all counter-trafficking authorities.



## 4. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

Several deficiencies in the provision of assistance to child victims of trafficking were identified in the seven countries studied. Some of these deficiencies have an especially negative impact on Roma child victims of trafficking.

Firstly, five out of the seven countries **do not have a national referral mechanism (NRM)** for victims of trafficking. Such mechanisms were only identified in Bulgaria and Romania. The absence of NRM undermines victim identification and does not provide guidance and regulations for effective cooperation between stakeholders in the referral assistance of victims. Ad hoc cooperation mechanisms are established by authorities on local level in Austria, but there are no formalised national procedures for victim referral and support. Besides the negative implications on children VoT, the lack of NRM also jeopardises the efforts for gathering more adequate information of the numbers and profiles of identified and presumed victims; and hence, the efforts for building of detailed knowledge needed to analyse and elaborate effective measures to combat child trafficking.

Most of the countries **lack formalised procedures for risk assessment** prior to referral and repatriation of the children victims of trafficking. Formalised procedures for risk assessment are provided in Bulgaria's NRM. They also exist in Romania, where the local police, together with the social worker are in charge of doing preliminary research to find out if the minor, once back to his/her family, is still in danger of being trafficked. The *Drehscheibe* in Vienna has established a network of contacts with relevant stakeholders in some countries of origin, which facilitates family tracing of the child victims of trafficking. However, in practice, priority is given to expedite return of children to the countries of origin. Evidence from cases of children repatriated to Bulgaria reveals that in some cases, children arrive with incomplete documentation and prior to the conducting of risk assessments, which would establish risk factors of re-trafficking in the home environment. In Slovakia, there are no provisions guaranteeing the tracing of family members in the country of origin of the child and there are also no provisions requiring formalised assessment of a child's best interests concerning assistance in family reunification. There are no general provisions referring to the obligations under Convention of the Rights of the Child, including best interest determination.

Insufficiency in **funding and capacity of facilities providing assistance to child victims of trafficking** was a common problem in all countries reviewed. The limited capacity of transit centres for children victims of trafficking and abuse is a particularly acute problem. In some cases, it could lead to the violation of child's rights. For instance, two Roma



siblings found on the streets in Greece were detained for 40 days in a police cell, while authorities were searching for an available and suitable accommodation place.

The two main source countries for victims of trafficking to the EU – Bulgaria and Romania – display some common problems in the systems for child assistance and protection, which affect significantly Roma children victims of trafficking. **Challenges in communication between local authorities involved in child protection and assistance** undermine significantly the quality and effectiveness of support to Roma children victims of trafficking. In Bulgaria, child victims of trafficking repatriated from abroad are typically placed in a crisis centre. The assistance provided is supervised by a social worker/case manager at the Child Protection Department (CPD) covering the region of the crisis centre, whereas another CPD at the place of residency of the child is obliged to contact and establish relations with the family in view of preparing the parents or caregivers for the prospective reintegration of the child. The lack of coordination between the two Child Protection Departments and crisis centre leaves the latter with no information on the long term reintegration path to be followed by the child. Such uncertainty and lack of information about the future is a cause of serious anxiety of children assisted in a crisis centre. In Salzburg, Austria, communication and agreement between the police and other stakeholders on the approach to child protection can be difficult to reach in some cases.

The **lack of experience** and in some case the **unwillingness** of social workers to work with segregated and socially excluded Roma communities that are at high risk of trafficking was another defect in the system of child protection identified in all countries of origin of victims. Such attitudes are the result of a number of factors such as **case overloads** of the social workers that leaves them little opportunity for field work and thorough assistance to families at risk, **lack of motivation** to work in difficult and impoverished communities, which is also related to the low wages offered to social workers across Eastern Europe. The **high turnover** in this profession due to the poor working conditions and high levels of stress undermines the establishment of long-term trustworthy relationship between the social workers and the Roma communities. Last but not least, **prejudices and racism towards the Roma** communities can deter social workers from adequately supporting Roma families. These challenges undermine both the prospects for prevention of child trafficking and the effectiveness of the assistance provided to child victims of trafficking and their families.

The challenges between establishing trustful relationship between the children and child protection authorities are present also in the **countries of destination** of victims. Social workers in Italy, Austria and Greece **do not speak the language** of the child victim of trafficking. Thus, most often the children do not confide in or rely on the support of the social worker, while they remain in contact with the trafficker. This leads to **high rates of run-aways** from shelters and child protection facilities. For instance, in the *Drehscheibe* 63 % of the children leave the shelter prematurely and go missing.

The **lack of facilities for long-term accommodation** for children, whose best interest is not to return to the families, is another problem in long term assistance identified in the majority of the origin countries. In Slovakia there is insufficiency in so called “half way homes” for children who have left the foster home. The few available facilities prefer to accommodate “healthy” children and may be reluctant to host children with special health or psychological needs. The under-development for long term care of children at risk and child victims of trafficking is also identified in Bulgaria. Child victims of trafficking leaving the interim care at the crisis centre are most often returned to their families or referred to state institutions, which offer low quality of child care. Due to the lack of sufficient family type accommodation facilities, children are often returned to their families and guardians without careful assessment of the environment and the potential risk of re-trafficking when parents or guardians were complicit with the crime. And in Hungary, there is **no specialised assistance for child victims of trafficking, there are neither state-run nor civil organisations** dealing specifically with child VoT.

**TABLE 6. MAIN DEFICIENCIES IN PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

	Austria	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Romania	Slovakia
Lack of NRM							
Lack of formalised procedures for risk assessment	At place only in Vienna, priority to return						
Challenges in communication between local authorities involved in child protection and assistance	Only in particular regions						
Insufficient funding and capacity of facilities providing assistance							
Insufficient capacity of social workers							
Lack of facilities for long-term accommodation							
Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms							

Source: National Reports, research partners.

Finally, the **lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** for the assistance provided to child victims of trafficking is a problem identified in all countries studied, across all phases of assistance. This leaves little possibility to assess the effectiveness of assistance provided, identify gaps, devise and monitor efforts for improvement.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Data on child trafficking is both limited and non-representative of the real scope of the phenomenon. Member states lack centralised data collection mechanisms; data is collected by different institutions as per different indicators.
- The limited information on child victims is also hardly comparable across Europe, due to the variety of registration mechanisms and definitions applied by the different EU member states.
- Empirical data on the socio-economic and ethnic background on victims of trafficking is generally unavailable.
- Problems in trafficking data are also related to challenges in victim identification and prosecution along anti-trafficking legislation.
- Although partial and slow, some positive changes in terms of availability of data could be observed in the past five years, resulting from efforts aimed at comparability and disaggregation of data requested from the member states.
- In many cases, children begging on the streets have strong loyalty and emotional attachment to their families, even if they are involved in these activities under their control. This challenges significantly any efforts for identification of exploitation, as children may not consider themselves victims.
- Turning a blind eye on child begging as a “survival practice” of the Roma precludes any efforts to assess each individual situation in view of examining indicators of exploitation and in view of assessing the needs of child.
- Child trafficking for pick-pocketing is one of the least recognised form of trafficking as the connection between the child and the exploiter is difficult to establish and the prospect of identification can begin only if the child is caught committing the crime. This means that in many cases, older children, who are victims of crime, may be penalised for actions performed under influence and coercion of traffickers.
- In many cases, pick-pocketing is organised within extended families of closed communities, which diminishes significantly opportunities to devise prevention actions and to address the issue with a bottom-up community approach.
- Specific groups of boys and transgender persons of Roma origin are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking and some have already been victims of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, boys and transgender

persons fall outside of the radar of identification of trafficking victims and thus cannot access available assistance.

- There are several deficiencies in the protection and assistance provided to child victims of trafficking. The gaps are related to ensuring adequate coordination between all stakeholders involved in referral and protection of child victims of trafficking, conducting thorough risk assessments and best interest identification prior to repatriation and ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation across all phases of assistance.
- In addition, all countries experience difficulties in ensuring adequate funding for facilities for child victims of trafficking.
- Gaining the trust of victims of exploitation for begging and pick-pocketing is especially difficult for child protection authorities and service providers, due to the lack of perception of exploitation among children especially when parents and guardians are complicit or involved.
- Assistance to Roma child victim of trafficking in the countries of origin is challenged by the lack of access to the Roma communities of the social workers and lack of motivation to work with highly marginalised families.
- The lack of careful assessment of the social situation of each child victim of trafficking and gaps in communication between the stakeholders involved in providing assistance often renders the support ineffective and exposes the child to the risk of re trafficking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Existing European policies concerning obligations of member states in the field of statistical data on THB should be further developed through elaboration of detailed standards for data gathering and clear definitions on all statistical indicators requested from the national authorities.
- Indicators on trafficking in persons and child trafficking in particular need to be regularly updated to reflect new phenomena and groups at risk. National and local stakeholders should be trained to recognise these indicators among risk groups. Specific efforts should be made to build the capacity of local social and street workers to recognise signs of exploitation among vulnerable groups.
- Data on child trafficking should be centrally collected (including data of service providers, among other stakeholders) and regularly reviewed. The National Rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms should play central role in the collection and analysis of data on trafficking in human beings.
- The analysis of data, including disaggregated by ethnicity and socio-economic status, should serve to inform all policy actions. The analysis of data should seek to identify key risk groups and vulnerability factors.
- Empirical research and fieldwork based on participatory methods should be conducted in order to identify groups at risk of trafficking which have not come into contact with local authorities involved in counter trafficking. These groups at risk are currently not reflected in trafficking statistics and thus fall outside the target of counter-trafficking efforts.
- Such methods can also be used to identify both existing coping and protection mechanisms within Roma communities, and possible future networks and inter-community protection strategies.
- Situations of child begging need to be addressed by state authorities and **carefully examined on case-by-case basis** with adequate consideration of the best interest of the child.
- Families, resorting to begging as subsistence strategy should be provided with the necessary **assistance for ensuring adequate child care**, including respect for the rights of the child, access to education and to decent accommodation.
- The existence of **coercion, bonded labour and exploitation** of both families and children should be carefully examined by law enforcement authorities and street workers that come in contact with begging families.

- Local and national authorities should undergo training on recognising indicators of exploitation and trafficking for the purpose of begging.
- Roma community based organisations should be involved in raising awareness among the most marginalised groups on the risks of exploitation through bonded labour, on the negative effects on the children from hazardous and street work and on the possibilities for assistance.
- Further research should be conducted on the situation and needs of poverty travellers, seeking to identify vulnerabilities to trafficking and exploitation.
- Law enforcement and child protection authorities should be sensitised to recognise signs of influence and exploitation of children, caught committing pick-pocketing activities. There should be careful review of cases of repeated offenders in view of identifying involvement of organised criminal activities.
- Specific attention should be devoted to identifying victims of trafficking or children at risk among criminalised youth and children with delinquencies. Questions and indicators should be developed to identify signs of exploitation.
- Further research should be conducted on the meanings children victims of trafficking for begging and pickpocketing activities attach to their income earning activities (considering the fact that they oftentimes do not see themselves as victims). Such research could help understand children perspectives and as such might give new handles to cope with this phenomenon.
- Investigation efforts should be strengthened to “follow the money” and investigate sources of conspicuous wealth in migrating communities.
- Roma organisations should conduct awareness raising campaigns about the risks and effects of early marriage, including early school leave and risks of exploitation.
- Specific trainings should be developed for identification of male and transgender victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The trainings should be based upon empirical information and interviews with those affected. The trainings should provide information on the sex markets for male prostitution, the profile of victims, factors of vulnerability, as well as real case studies based on victim testimonies.
- Member states should develop National Referral Mechanisms for Assistance and Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking. The operation of the mechanisms should be monitored and regularly evaluated.
- Procedures for local level coordination between the stakeholders involved in child protection and assistance should also be established

and formalised and their implementation should be monitored. Opportunities for exchange of experience and good practice in assisting child victims of trafficking should be provided at local level.

- Member states should assess the capacities of existing accommodation facilities for child victims of abuse and trafficking in view of optimising the support network and establishing new facilities, such as transit centres and family type accommodation centres, in areas where they are most needed.
- The employment of members of the Roma communities in child protection institutions should be encouraged through scholarships and specialised programmes. Roma persons should be included at all levels of child protection and social assistance, including as social workers and policy makers.
- Community based centres providing social services should take part in the provision of assistance and protection to Roma child victims. They should be involved in establishing contacts with the families of victims, assessing the family environment, providing support for family reintegration in cases when this is in the child's best interest. Community based centres also have instrumental role in preventing child trafficking by identifying families at risk, providing social assistance, raising awareness of the risk of exploitation and alarming relevant institutions.





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