

Victims of Trafficking in the Balkans

A study of trafficking
in women and children
for sexual exploitation
to, through and from
the Balkan Region



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IOM International Organization for Migration

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The Project Management

Preface

Trafficking in human beings is not a new phenomenon, but it is one that is always changing. Today many Governments are concerned about the newest developments in trafficking, which is a global trade in which women and children are treated as commodities.

The Balkans and neighbouring countries play a key role in this trade. Trafficking affects the countries and territories in which women are recruited, in which women and children are exploited, and the countries and territories through which they transit.

This study provides new information about the nature and extent of trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation in the Balkans. The study was prepared to help to show what needs to be done to combat the phenomenon and to provide better protection and assistance measures for the victims.

This is the first survey of this magnitude to have been carried out on the subject in the region. This study provides a systematic review of the available data on trafficking to, through and from the Balkans. It establishes the foundation for timely mechanisms on data gathering, information sharing, legislation, law enforcement and victim protection and assistance.

The people and entities behind this project—the NGOs, Governments and international organizations, the researchers, the consultants, the writers—made all this possible. I hope this study will help sensitize decision-makers to better combat this phenomenon.

Ndiro Ndiaye
IOM Deputy Director General

Executive summary

The study aims to increase understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking in women and children in the Balkans and neighbouring countries by examining data on trafficking collected from NGO, governmental and intergovernmental sources in 28 countries and territories.

Although there have been many reports of incidents of trafficking in the Balkan region, there has been little systematic research on the scale and nature of the trafficking problem affecting this region.

This study has two main goals:

- To establish the extent of trafficking to, through and from the Balkans and neighbouring countries by collecting and assessing relevant data from governmental, non-governmental, and inter-governmental sources, in a wide range of European countries.
- To critically assess the data and determine how existing data relevant to trafficking in the Balkans can be improved to help tackle the phenomenon and assist the victims of trafficking.

In terms of trafficking, the Balkans cannot be viewed as one homogeneous region, which means that counter-trafficking strategies need to be based on an awareness of country differences.

The region includes countries/territories of origin, of transit and of destination. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina represent trafficking destinations in the region, while Moldova, Albania and Romania, followed by Bulgaria, are the most significant sending countries in the Balkans and the neighbouring countries.¹ Each country or territory is, to varying degrees, a country of origin, transit or destination. Some countries, such as Albania, which is equally a country of transit and of origin, have more than one primary role.

Our survey of 28 countries shows that overall there is still a tremendous lack of reliable data on trafficking. The lack of solid, reliable information stems at least partially from the low priority attached to trafficking by many Governments and their agencies, particularly law enforcement agencies. Corruption, which was mentioned in some victim testimonies, hinders the prosecution of perpetrators and their associates, as well as influencing statistical data and thus perception of the magnitude of the phenomenon.

In this study, the significance of trafficking from the Balkans to Western Europe is interpreted based on statistical evidence as well as case-based information. The largest groups of women trafficked to Western Europe through and from the Balkans are Moldovan, Albanian, Romanian and Ukrainian, although there are significant differences from country to country which are elaborated in the report.

The Balkan region is also a transit region en route from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. While there are many explanations for the emergence of the Balkans as a transit region, one partial explanation is the presence of conflicts in the region, which led to a breakdown of social, political and legal structures. This situation gives traffickers significant freedom to operate in the Balkans.

¹This study follows the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings created under the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe in referring to the Balkans and neighbouring countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), henceforth abbreviated the BNC.

Trafficking in the Balkan region is clearly a significant problem, despite the lack of reliable, comparable data. The collection and exchange of information is important to effectively protect and assist victims and fight the trade. The data in this report, from 211 sources (of 495 which received our request), help to shed light on the extent of trafficking to, through and from the Balkans.

Many initiatives could be taken to facilitate and improve data gathering mechanisms. These include:

- Establishing a focal point in the Balkans for data collection;
- Encouraging agencies and institutions to use a common definition of trafficking, in line with appropriate international legislation;
- Allocating funds for the purposes of monitoring trafficking, carrying out research and creating databases.

The major recommendations of this study are:

- The passage or entry into force of compatible and appropriate legislation;
- The development and strengthening of protection and assistance mechanisms;
- Prevention through socio-economic support and awareness-raising activities;
- Data segregation by gender, nationality, age and type of exploitation;
- Trafficking and migration data should be more clearly differentiated;
- The appointment of a national counter-trafficking coordinator;
- Information-sharing at the international level.

The substantial amount of counter-trafficking activity in the Balkans indicates that it would be timely to initiate a monitoring system. Such a system could collect all available and emerging data as well as serving as a forum through which countries and agencies could be encouraged to share data.



Map 1. Border-crossings often used by traffickers to transport victims to, through and from the Balkans

Introduction

Trafficking to the Balkans is viewed as particularly brutal with trafficking victims citing being resold repeatedly, raped by the traffickers, bar owners, or their relatives, denied food periodically, and compelled to have unprotected sex (Richard, 2001).

Trafficking in human beings to, through and from the Balkans and neighbouring countries has become a major concern to many Governments. This report focuses upon the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation as this appears to be the most serious and growing form of trafficking in the Balkan region.

Although it is widely accepted that trafficking has increased in the Balkans and neighbouring countries in recent years, available statistical data and other data relating to the phenomenon are seldom systematically analysed. This makes it difficult to accurately estimate the scale of the problem and to monitor trends over time. As a coherent approach to counter-trafficking requires comprehensive, consistent and reliable background information, the lack of data makes it difficult for Governments, NGOs, international organizations and other agencies to develop national and regional counter-trafficking strategies. An IOM initiative, now underway, to gather data on all assisted trafficking cases is a significant step forward in learning more about this phenomenon.¹ Information available on trafficking in the Balkans

¹This initiative, which was begun in the IOM Pristina office, is a statistical database in which data on assisted trafficking victims (confidentiality is strictly maintained) are collected, and has already yielded valuable information on the trafficking process and the profile of victims.

and neighbouring countries has, in the past, often been based upon information gathered from one case or one situation, focusing on an aspect of the problem in a particular country. Recent reports on trafficking (Laczko and Thompson, 2000; IOM, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; Omelaniuk, 1998; Richard, 1999; Walshe, 1987; Williams, 1999) in Europe highlight the East-West nature of trafficking from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Western Europe. That trafficking increasingly occurs within Central and Eastern Europe, and, in rare cases, even among EU Member States, has received less attention. Furthermore, despite a growing number of attempts to develop better indicators and measures of irregular migration, relatively little attention has been given to the issue of how to estimate and measure trafficking (Delauney and Tapinos, 1998; OECD, 2001), although some attempts have been made (Laczko and Thompson, 2000; Meese et al., 1998; Siron and Baeveghem, 1999).

Aims and scope of the study

The Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe commissioned this study as an initial attempt to collect and analyse information available on trafficking in the Balkans and neighbouring countries. Implemented by IOM, the study is intended to support and strengthen counter-trafficking strategies in the region.

The definition of “the Balkans” for this study was not easy to agree upon. Some contemporary definitions limit “the Balkans” to all the countries and regions of the former Yugoslavia, while others implicitly exclude Croatia and Slovenia, but include Albania. Historically and geographically speaking, “the Balkans” includes all of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and portions of Greece and Hungary.

The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe does not refer to the Balkans as such, but refers to the countries of the region and their neighbours: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia,

Hungary, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). This report will take this definition and refer to “the Balkans and neighbouring countries,” henceforth abbreviated the BNC where appropriate.

This study broadly has two main goals:

- ❖ to establish the extent of trafficking to, through and from the BNC by reviewing data from governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental sources, including those of IOM and OSCE / ODIHR, in a wide range of European countries;
- ❖ to critically assess the data and determine how existing data relevant to trafficking in the BNC can be improved to ensure victim protection and assistance, and to help tackle the phenomenon.

The study strives to provide the most comprehensive review of trafficking data in the BNC by collecting and analysing data not only from the BNC but also from the relevant countries* of origin and destination. During the course of the study, it became clear that these countries were not all equally relevant for the BNC, and that comparable information was not widely available. The aim of the study was to determine and suggest much needed steps to improve the flow of information exchange on trafficking to, through and from the BNC. Thus, the study has systematically

*The countries/territories in this study include Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYROM, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

reviewed a wide range of data from sending, transit, receiving and destination countries in an attempt to:

- ◆ identify currently available sources of data on trafficking;
- ◆ describe recent trends in trafficking to, through and from the BNC;
- ◆ identify the most important sending, transit and destination countries;
- ◆ identify the most important trafficking routes;
- ◆ discuss reasons for trafficking in the BNC;
- ◆ learn more about the profile of trafficked victims;
- ◆ recommend measures to improve data collection and information flows.

Method

We were aware at the outset of this study that statistics on trafficked women are notoriously difficult to obtain, for a variety of reasons, which will be discussed below. Thus, we designed a questionnaire which includes indicators of trafficking in terms of direct statistics² on trafficked women and indirect indicators³ such as numbers of migrant sex workers and numbers of irregular migrants. These questions were intended to provide the widest possible range of all statistics relevant to trafficking.

²Examples of the questions are: How many victims were trafficked last year? Prosecutions against traffickers?

³How many foreign sex workers are in your country; Border apprehensions? Deportations to/from your country? Entertainment visas issued?

The data for this 28-country survey were collected largely through questionnaires distributed by IOM offices to NGOs assisting trafficked women, ministries and other government agencies whose area of responsibility also includes trafficking (such as border guards, immigration services, interior ministries, etc.).

Another significant source of data was the set of the background reports commissioned for this study (see References) as well as materials from existing IOM programmes in the BNC and studies and news reports on trafficking in the region and in Central and Eastern Europe.

The questionnaire focused on direct indicators of the scale of trafficking, such as information about victims counselled/assisted by NGOs, international organization and governmental agencies, contacts with victims through hotline calls, assisted returns, as well as arrests, investigations and prosecutions of traffickers.

Indirect indicators of trafficking were also elicited, including the number of foreign sex workers in a particular place, deportations, expulsions and voluntary assisted returns of young women, visas issued, border apprehensions and the number of permits issued to entertainers and artists.

The background reports were commissioned in Moldova, Romania and Ukraine — the three major sending countries to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina — and in significant countries of destination, namely, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The reports added more in-depth information than that gathered through the questionnaires, covering the profile of trafficked women and children, the recruitment process, government and other agencies' responses to trafficking, and any information about the traffickers. The reports vary greatly, emphasizing the disparity in available information from country to country, which is also reflected throughout this report.

IOM requested information from 495 sources and received 211 responses (from government agencies and institutions, NGOs and international organizations, including IOM and OSCE) in 28 countries and territories. The responses were then collated and analysed together with the background reports (See References (Primary Sources) for a list of background reports). This summary report highlights the most important findings, although a great deal more information was gathered which cannot be presented here for reasons of space.

Definitions

The terms “trafficking” and “smuggling” are often used interchangeably, despite their distinct definitions. At the international level, different countries use different definitions for trafficking, while even at the national level, different agencies and institutions also often use differing definitions. NGOs, regional and local police forces and other offices that deal with trafficking and smuggling of persons have no single definition for trafficking. As such, trafficked women are often pushed further into a disadvantaged situation. Because they are often wrongly identified, categorized and registered, they unwittingly forfeit their right to receive proper assistance – in some countries – from relevant agencies and institutions. Such conditions influence the accuracy of data on trafficking. The media also often use trafficking and smuggling interchangeably, thereby contributing to the miseducation of the public at large. The adoption in December 2000 of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* can hopefully eliminate this confusion in the coming years, as countries adopt and

implement the standardized UN definitions of trafficking and smuggling, which are as follows:

- **Trafficking in persons** shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
- **Smuggling of migrants** shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.

Thus, smuggling refers to the illegal transport of a person or persons across international borders which results in a benefit for the smuggler. The definition refers only to the transport of a person across borders for profit. While smuggling does not inherently involve exploitation, smuggled persons are very often at risk of injury or death. Thus, smuggling may involve grave human rights abuses, but the abuse of a person is not the fundamental intent of smuggling.

Trafficking, on the other hand, specifically targets the trafficked person as an object of exploitation and inherently involves a violation of human rights. The purpose from the beginning of the process is to exploit this person and to gain a profit. Deception and coercion both play a role in trafficking.

The BNC: Origin, Transit, Destination?

Since the mid-1990s, the BNC has been recognized as playing a significant role in trafficking – as a region of origin, of transit and of destination. However, different countries within the region have varying primary roles – roles which are important to clarify for the purposes of developing effective counter-trafficking strategies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, are primarily destinations for trafficked women. Within the BNC, Moldova is the most important sending country to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, followed by Romania and Ukraine. Albania is, in addition to being a transit country, also a significant country of origin. However, trafficking from Albania is primarily oriented toward Western Europe rather than the BNC. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, whilst women are in transit they are often forced into prostitution for short periods; thus, Albania could be thought of as a country of destination as well.

While there have been isolated reports of trafficking from Croatia and Slovenia, these countries' primary role appears to be that of transit. The roles of FYROM, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria are somewhat less clear: one is clearly transit, while Bulgaria is, after Moldova, Albania and Romania, a country of origin in the region. It is unclear to what extent FYROM, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria are destinations for trafficked women.

Outline of the Report

This report is divided into five main sections. Chapter 1 discusses some of the problems common to measuring irregular migration and trafficking, and the limitations of relying solely on law enforcement data. Chapter 2 examines the scale of trafficking from the BNC and its significance with respect to the destination countries in Western Europe. Chapter 3 focuses on the BNC as a transit region, namely the extent to which trafficking routes run through the region. Chapter 4 examines countries and regions of origin of women trafficked to the BNC, and looks at their profile.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions and highlights the actions required to improve data on trafficking in the BNC, develop better mechanisms for sharing existing information to ensure victim protection and assistance, enhance law enforcement and develop effective prevention strategies.

Chapter 1

Sources of data and indicators of trafficking

In Europe, as noted above, measurement of the extent of irregular migration has been attempted only relatively recently (Tapinos, 2000). A number of recent studies provide some measure of the scale of irregular migration in Europe but contain little information about trafficking in human beings. Although trafficking is often regarded as a sub-set of irregular migration, it does not necessarily involve illegal entry into a country, illegal residence or even illegal employment. The definition of trafficking as agreed upon in a new UN Protocol mentioned previously does not include crossing an international border; thus, trafficking can occur within a country as well as between countries. The extent of trafficking within countries is more difficult to assess, and is largely unknown in the Balkan Region and throughout Europe.

Most European countries collect different types of administrative data which provide some indication of the scale of irregular migration but scarcely focus on trafficking. At the national level, information is generally compiled on numbers of irregular migrants, border apprehensions, visa overstayers and on rejected asylum seekers and deportations. Eurostat, the EU statistical office,

collects data on border apprehensions and smuggling cases in each Member State, but these are not made publicly available.

Despite the growing literature on trafficking in human beings (See References, Secondary Sources) few studies are based on extensive research, and data on the actual numbers of persons trafficked are very limited. In its latest annual report on trafficking in EU Member States, Europol comments that

“The overall number of victims trafficked in the EU is still unknown, and only estimates are available. What is clear is the fact that the number of victims is much higher than the official statistics from investigated cases in Member States” (Europol 2000: 18).

The European Commission reported in March 2001 that *“estimates of up to 120,000 women and children being trafficked into western Europe each year have been made”* (EC, 2001: 2). As with many estimates of victims of trafficking, the source for this estimate is not clear, although it seems to relate to estimates made by the US Government in 1998, namely that circa 175,000 women are trafficked from CEE/CIS countries annually, some 120,000 of whom are trafficked to Western Europe (Richard, 2001). To this number should be added the African, South American and Asian women trafficked to Europe, whose numbers are not insubstantial.

In a new report published in July 2001, the US Department of State further estimates that 700,000 persons, mostly women and children, are trafficked across international borders each year (Department of State, 2001).

The European Union has sponsored research on trafficking under its Sexual Trafficking of Persons (STOP) Programme, and Europol, in addition to annual reports, prepares regular situation reports on trafficking in each Member State. These reports rely mainly on information supplied by law enforcement agencies in Member States. Few comparable and reliable statistics are

available, in part due to the low priority given to combating trafficking and in part due to the many different means of collecting data. Moreover those data which are collected are often not publicly available.

There is currently no mechanism to systematically collect reliable statistics on the scale of trafficking in EU Member States. In 1998, IOM conducted a study, funded by the STOP Programme, which reviewed the types of statistical data collected on trafficking in human beings in 25 countries (IOM, 1998). Only 12 of the 25 countries surveyed were able to provide statistics on cases of trafficking in women. Eleven countries were able to supply data on the number of convictions for offences related to trafficking in women, with the combined total of convictions in 1996 less than 100.

Lack of data

Lack of data on the scale of trafficking in women and children can be partially attributed to the low priority given by authorities to combating trafficking. Legislation is still often either inappropriate or non-existent, making prosecution of traffickers very difficult or impossible. Similarly, successful trafficking prosecutions are often, although not always, based on witness/victim testimony. Such testimony is rare, as victims of trafficking are either not recognized as such and are deported as irregular migrants, or are too afraid to testify against their traffickers, making traffickers particularly difficult to prosecute. A report on trafficking in the UK by Kelly and Regan (2000: 32) indicates that women sometimes ask to be deported rather than face their traffickers in court. Given these difficulties, police often do not prioritize such investigations, viewing them as requiring significant resources for limited outcomes.

The Kelly and Regan study — commissioned by the UK Home Office — found that data on trafficking vary according to the priority given to combating trafficking by local police forces in the

UK (Kelly and Regan, 2000). It was found that statistics on trafficking are only produced where local police forces are monitoring the local sex industry in order to detect vice-related crime. Unfortunately, it is often the case that “*a problem unseen does not exist*” (Kelly and Regan, 2000: 29). As monitoring is rare, the scale of trafficking is routinely underestimated. This problem is echoed throughout this study.

The case of Germany is illustrative of some of these data problems. There, too, official statistics on the scale of trafficking depend on the degree to which the police are prepared to invest time and effort into investigating trafficking offences. Germany is one of several countries in Western Europe which centralizes data on victims, in this case, on victims of trafficking who give testimony in court cases. The German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt, or BKA) registered 801 victims of trafficking in 1999, a 47 per cent drop from 1,521 victims recorded

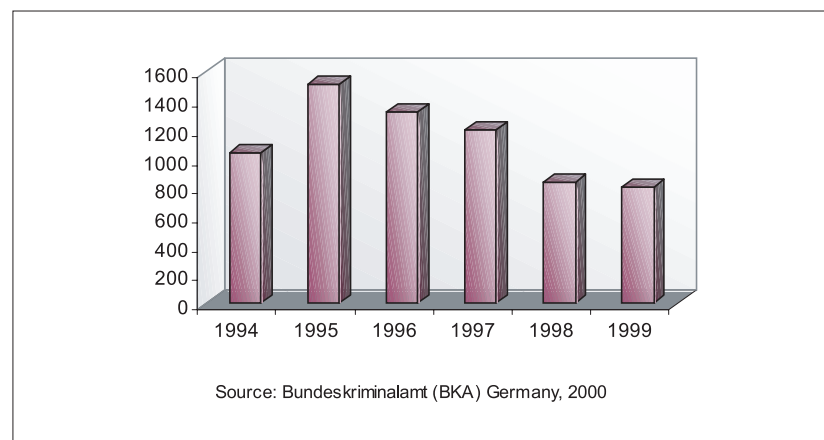


Figure 1. Detected Victims of Trafficking in Germany 1994-1999

in 1995. This drop, however, does not necessarily translate into fewer trafficking victims overall in Germany, as the BKA explains. Data published in the BKA’s annual situation report are based

exclusively on the numbers of trafficked women and children involved in police investigations of suspected trafficking cases defined under German law.¹ As the BKA points out in its 1999 report, the lower number of victims registered is partly a reflection of the lower number of police investigations of trafficking. The number of investigations in 1999 was 19.2 per cent lower than in 1998, but the number of trafficking cases dropped just 5 per cent from 1998 to 1999.

The BKA suggests several possible reasons why the number of cases investigated by the police has fallen in Germany:

- ◆ insufficient number of police personnel responsible for trafficking;
- ◆ a wide range of duties in the police teams responsible for trafficking;
- ◆ a larger proportion of investigations are being conducted by the organized crime units instead of trafficking units;
- ◆ a shift in attention to associated elements of crime that are easier to prosecute (BKA, 2000: 4).

New data sources

Despite the lack of data from police sources in destination countries, other new sources of data are emerging as more agencies begin to tackle the problem of trafficking in the Balkans and neighbouring countries and in Western Europe.

There are four European entities, numerous national and

¹These cases refer to Sections 180b (trafficking in human beings) and 181 (aggravated trafficking in human beings) of the German Penal Code (Strafgesetzbuch).

international NGOs and 15 international agencies, including four UN agencies as well as OSCE, IOM, Interpol and Europol active in the Balkans addressing trafficking issues. At the governmental level, numerous working groups and task forces have been established, many at the recommendation of the Stability Pact's Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings.

These agencies are each producing somewhat different data on trafficking which leads, as we discuss later, to somewhat varying figures on trafficking. These differences partly reflect the different ways in which data are gathered. For example, the majority of victims assisted by NGOs and IOM have been referred by the police, who have generally discovered them during a raid. It is not unusual that victims refuse NGO or IOM assistance and prefer to return home independently. In some cases, victims choose to remain in the country either as regular or irregular migrants, or face deportation. Thus, several institutions (police, NGOs, authorities in charge of deportation) may record the same victim or none at all may do so.

Some NGOs record only the first contact made or hotline calls received while others record only those victims actually assisted. Some categorize by *new cases* per year and others by *cases assisted*, where assistance may be provided over several years. Most offer a breakdown by nationality and gender, few by age, and some by type of exploitation (e.g., sexual exploitation, forced labour, etc.).

Available official figures also differ: Austrian data in this study refer to women and children in deportation custody, German data to victims involved in the prosecution of traffickers, Italian data to trafficked women and children who have received assistance and Dutch data to victims who have received B17 staying permits – permits given to women and children who have agreed to testify against their traffickers. Other sources refer to trafficked persons as “identified”, with no further clarification.

IOM data is based on the number of trafficked migrants

assisted under its voluntary return and reintegration programmes that are implemented in close cooperation with government authorities, NGOs and international organizations. The IOM definition of a *trafficked migrant* is based upon the UN definition cited in the introduction. In practice, the trafficked migrants whom IOM assists are nearly all women and children who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Although IOM offers voluntary return assistance to all trafficked migrants, not all accept this offer; thus only those returning with the help of IOM are registered. IOM keeps exact data neither on women and children who were referred to IOM, but who were not selected for the programme, nor on women and children who chose not to return home with IOM's assistance.

To sum up, the most detailed publicly available data, related to trafficking in the Balkans and neighbouring countries, are those from counter-trafficking programmes. As seen in Figure 2, counter-trafficking programmes can produce data, which can, in turn, help in the recognition of trafficking as a significant problem, which in turn spurs the creation of more counter-trafficking programmes, and the cycle can continue.

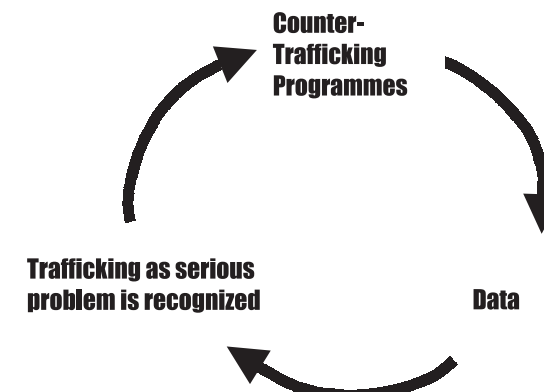


Figure 2. Data, recognition and programme cycle.

As noted above, however, each source of data has its limitations. Thus, the figures presented in this report are those currently available but do not necessarily reflect the full extent of trafficking.

Despite these disparities, data collection, standardization and dissemination is improving, due in part to efforts of NGOs, government bodies and international organizations, which have become increasingly involved in developing and implementing programmes to combat trafficking and assist the victims. The challenge for the future is to better co-ordinate data collection and to develop common standards.

Chapter 2

Trafficking from the Balkans and neighbouring countries

Although trafficking has been increasing in Central and Eastern Europe since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Balkans and neighbouring countries appear to have only become a region of origin, transit and destination for trafficked women in the mid-1990s in the wake of the humanitarian crisis and wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The BNC cannot be regarded as one homogenous region: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are primarily destinations for trafficked women, while Moldova, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria are the most significant countries of origin in the region. Other countries' and territories' roles are clarified further in this report.

The findings of this study suggest that, in many European countries, women and children from Central and Eastern Europe remain the largest group of trafficked migrants, with the number of those coming from Africa and Central and South America also significant in some cases. This chapter discusses the major groups of trafficked women, insofar as available data allow, for a wide range of European countries, focusing in particular on the extent of trafficking from the Balkans and neighbouring countries.

Data from Countries of Destination

Our survey of destination countries in Europe yielded a great deal of information on the origin of trafficked women in those countries. Thus, this chapter on the origin of trafficked women is organized by destination country. The data and information available vary, as noted above, considerably, with very little information available for some countries. Data from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom vary in terms of quantity and quality, while for some countries – Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland – little data was available, and information is based upon other sources. Some data sources do not have any indication of nationalities, age or gender while, as noted in Chapter 1, the basis upon which data are collected varies from country to country, and from institution to institution.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 reflect the variety of available data. NGOs in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain were able to provide data for trafficked women whom they had assisted.

Official sources – police sources, border guards, various ministries (e.g., interior, social affairs) etc. – were able to provide data in Austria, Belgium, BiH, Bulgaria, FYROM, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. The data vary in quantity from country to country, ranging from Italy's figures, which reflected 2,951 confirmed victims of trafficking who, according to Article 18 of the Aliens Law, had received government-funded assistance administered by an NGO to the United Kingdom, which, despite all reports to the contrary, was able only to confirm three victims of trafficking. Because Italy's data are provided by both the Ministry of Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and NGOs, the 2,951 trafficked women assisted in Italy appear in both the official data and the NGO data.

As mentioned earlier, IOM data are compiled from IOM's counter-trafficking assisted return programmes and from assisted

return programmes which include trafficking victims assisted in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FYROM, Germany, Greece, Italy and Kosovo.

Germany and Italy are among the countries which centralize or compile standardized information on trafficking in human beings, although, here, too, the basis upon which data are gathered differs – in Italy, data on women assisted under Article 18 of the Aliens Law are gathered, while in Germany, women who have agreed to testify in trials against traffickers (as discussed in greater detail below) are registered as victims of trafficking.

Gathering data on “the Balkans” is also hindered by differing definitions of the Balkans while there is an apparent inability in some receiving countries to differentiate among Serbs from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and among Albanians from Kosovo, FYROM and Albania. Sources in the United Kingdom and Belgium have reported that distinguishing Kosovar from Albanian women is difficult, more so as some Albanians pretend to be Kosovars in the hope of receiving better treatment or asylum (Moens, 2001: 39). Also, most sources do not distinguish between the various territories within FRY, including Kosovo.

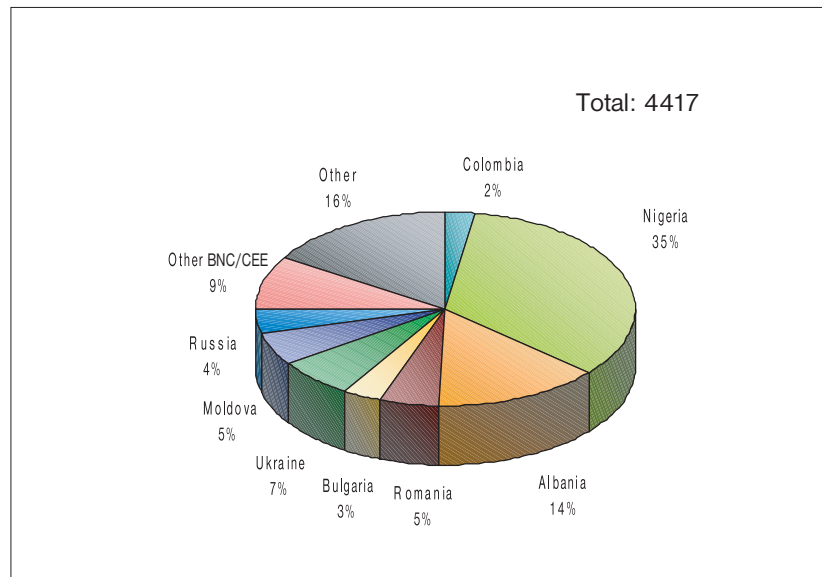
Nationalities of victims of trafficking: official, NGO and international organization sources compared

The data provided here are, as noted, drawn from three different broad sources, namely NGOs, official sources such as police and the Ministry of the Interior, and IOM assisted return data. The data are the most recent available (1999 or 2000). In some cases, the NGO and official data agree strongly; in other cases, there are significant differences.

As noted above, there can be significant overlap among the

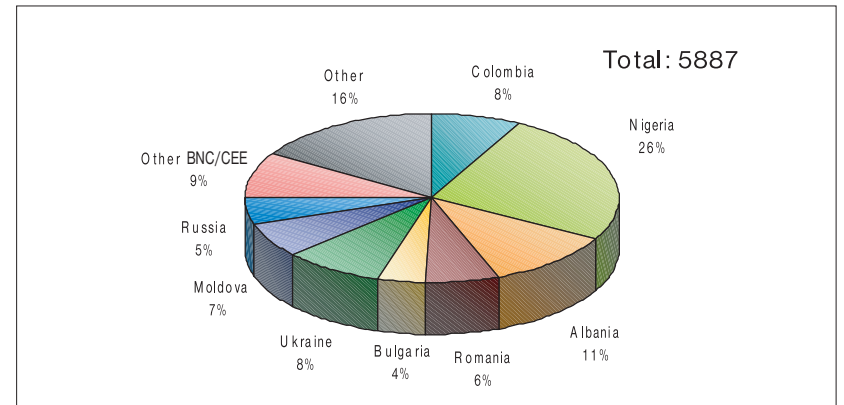
data sources, sometimes counting the same case. Therefore, the available data can be used to provide a general indication of the nationalities of trafficked women in various countries in Europe, but may not be an accurate reflection of the true scale of trafficking. In the case of Germany, for instance, only trafficked women involved in an investigation are shown, thus suggesting that many more women are trafficked to Germany than the number given.

Figure 3. Nationalities of Victims of Trafficking Detected in Selected European NGOs in 1999 or 2000.



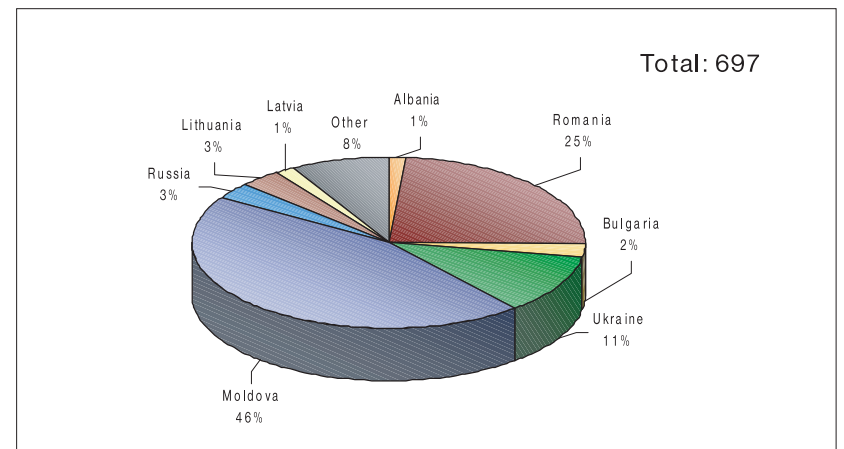
“Other” includes 168 unknown. 2,951 trafficked women from Italy are included both in the NGO and official figures. Data gathered from NGOs in: Austria (2000), Belgium (1999/2000), Bulgaria (2000), Germany (1999/2000), Greece (2000), Italy (March -Nov 2000), Kosovo (Feb - Dec 2000), Luxembourg (2000), the Netherlands (1999), Spain (Jan 1999 - Nov 2000).

Figure 4. Nationalities of Trafficked Women and Children Detected by Official Sources in 1999 or 2000.



“Other” includes 560 unknown. 2,951 trafficked women from Italy are included in both NGO and official figures. Data gathered from official sources in: Austria (2000), Belgium, BiH, Bulgaria (2000), FYROM (2000), Germany (1999), Greece (1999), Italy (March -Nov 2000), the Netherlands (2000), Spain (1999), UK (2000).

Figure 5. Nationalities of Victims of Trafficking Assisted by IOM in 2000.



“Other” includes 13 from Africa, 4 from Asia and 2 from South America. Excluding IOM's programmes in South-East Asia

In terms of country of origin, available data from official and NGO sources both show that over one third of known trafficking cases involve women from the Balkans and neighbouring countries with Albania being the most significant source country in the BNC. It must be cautioned, however, that a large portion of these data comes from Italy, which has the largest figures of trafficked women in Europe, largely due to impressive assistance and data collection measures. In Italy, Nigerian and Albanian women are the largest groups, although their presence in the rest of Europe is uneven.

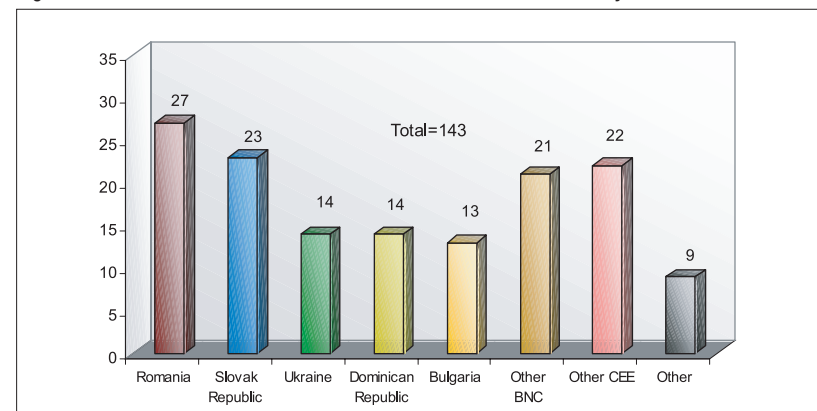
IOM's data presents a somewhat different picture of the nationalities of victims of trafficking. As most of IOM's counter-trafficking programmes are located in the BNC, the majority of women assisted by IOM are from this region with Moldovans making up the largest group assisted (46 per cent), followed by Romanians (25 per cent).

National data

Austria

The most extensive data available in Austria comes from the NGO LEFÖ (Lateinamerikanische Emigrierte Frauen in Österreich), which offers direct assistance to victims of trafficking throughout Austria. Their statistics on trafficked women and children assisted in 2000 show that the majority of those assisted originated from Central and Eastern Europe and the BNC, particularly Romania and the Slovak Republic, with the Dominican Republic also relevant. Twelve other women and children from the Balkans were detected as trafficked in Austria in 2000, of whom nine were from FRY and three from Croatia.

Figure 6. Nationalities of Trafficked Women and Children Assisted by LEFÖ in 2000.



“Other BNC” includes 9 from Hungary, 9 from FRY and 3 from Croatia

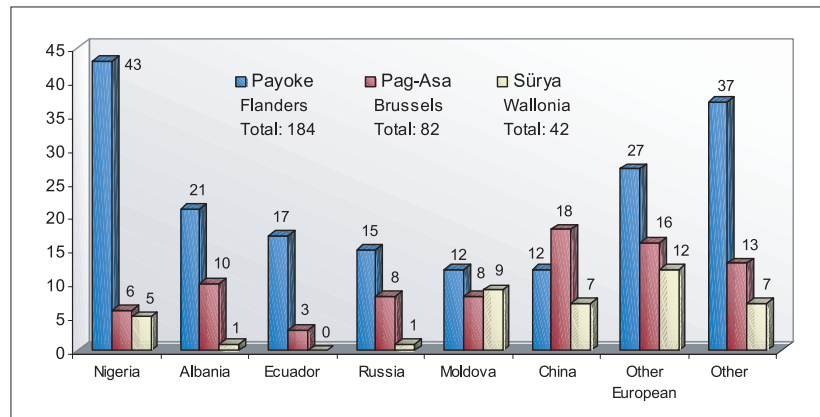
Many of the women's shelters and several NGOs said they each have recognized three or four trafficked women over the past year, most of them coming from Asia and Africa. Exact statistics were not available as records were either not maintained, or not collected in the interests of protecting the victims. Counselling services in Austrian detention centres also recognized victims of trafficking, although only one centre provided actual numbers and the nationalities of trafficked persons. Twenty-eight victims of trafficking were recognized in 1999, including seven from Romania and five from FRY (of whom four were from Kosovo). Caritas in Graz estimated that, of 91 women in detention centres in Vorarlberg between 1998 and 2000, one-third were victims of trafficking and most were from Africa and Eastern Europe.

Many prostitutes from Hungary and Romania, in Austria illegally, are regularly held in detention prior to their expulsion. Most of them do not request counselling and are rapidly deported. Therefore, NGOs can seldom make contact with the women and determine their actual status, i.e. whether or not they were trafficked.

Belgium

Belgium is a country of destination for trafficked women, as well as, to some extent, a country of transit to other EU countries. In recognition of the phenomenon, there is close cooperation between three NGOs (Pag-Asa in Brussels, Sürya in Wallonia and Payoke in Flanders) and the authorities, while there are also a number of other NGOs active in counter-trafficking. Each NGO, however, maintains data for its own use, and data gathering is not standardized or centralized.

Figure 7. Comparative data on trafficking victims from the three major Belgian NGOs



Data may include victims trafficked for forced labour.

All three NGOs are able to provide data by nationality for 2000. Sürya and Pag-Asa, along with the Foreign Ministry (based on NGO information), are the only institutions able to provide a breakdown by type of exploitation, i.e. for sexual exploitation, forced labour, etc. Thus, of 82 new cases assisted by Pag-Asa in 2000, 35 were exploited for prostitution, and a further five had been intended for prostitution. In the case of Sürya, 29 of 42 new cases in 2000 were exploited for prostitution. For the sake of comparison, however, as Payoke's data are not broken down similarly, the complete data from each NGO are presented in Figure 7.

NGO data indicate that trafficking from Albania is significant in Belgium. Trafficked women from Moldova, Nigeria, Russia, Ukraine and Ecuador also appear in significant numbers.

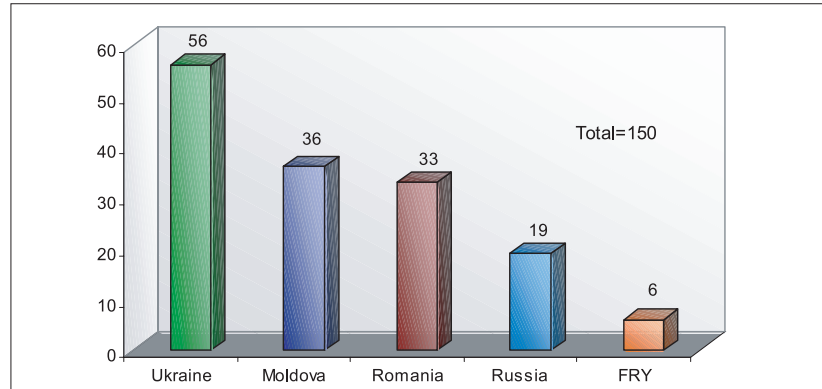
Pag-Asa estimated that 50 per cent of the women and children trafficked to Belgium originate from Eastern Europe, with approximately half of these coming from the Balkans. The other 50 per cent originated from Africa, Asia and the Americas. The NGO Espace-P suggested that only 10 per cent originated from Eastern Europe, of which one-third were trafficked to Brussels. Pag-Asa estimated that 10 per cent were minors.

The data available from the three main NGOs, despite being based on different criteria, indicate a significant number of victims trafficked from the Balkans.

Bulgaria

It is not clear whether Bulgaria is a country of destination per se, or whether data for trafficked women in Bulgaria reflect women who were in transit elsewhere. As discussed in Chapter 3, Bulgaria is an important transit country for Moldovan, Ukrainian and Romanian women trafficked to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgarian women are, themselves, trafficked to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo as well as to Western Europe and to countries such as the Czech Republic. Statistics from the National Service for Combating Organized Crime at the Ministry of Interior show that, of 150 trafficked women assisted in Bulgaria in 2000, 56 were from Ukraine, 36 from Moldova, 33 from Romania, 19 from Russia and six from FRY, of whom four were from Kosovo. In the first months of 2001, four Ukrainians, three Russians and one Romanian were assisted. The majority of trafficked women are from countries which are significant sending countries for Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus leaving the question open of whether these women were trafficked to Bulgaria or whether they were in transit elsewhere.

Figure 8. Nationalities of Trafficked Women and Children Detected by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior in 2000



“FRY” includes 4 from Kosovo

France

Despite the existence of a central office against trafficking in human beings, l’Office Central pour la Répression de la Traite des Etres Humains (OCRTEH), public recognition of the phenomenon is limited in France. According to an activity report for the French Senate concerning prostitution in 2000 (Derycke 2001: 52), criminal investigations of procurers resulted in the recognition of over 800 women who had been subject to procurement in 1999. Of the nearly 4,500 female prostitutes brought in for questioning in 1999, 35 per cent originated from Central and Eastern Europe, nearly 50 per cent were French, and 15 per cent came from Africa, the Maghreb and the Americas (Derycke 2001: 37). Further nationality breakdowns and detailed information relating to trafficking from or through the Balkans were not available.

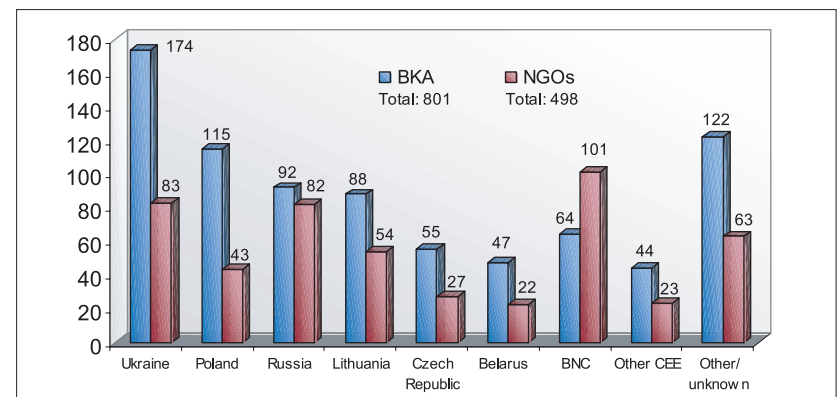
Germany

According to existing data on trafficking to Germany, there are no significant numbers of women and children trafficked from the Balkans. Information from NGOs, the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), or Federal Criminal Office, and IOM are, in Germany as elsewhere,

based on different criteria. Figures from the BKA annual report in 1999 are based on the numbers of women trafficked for sexual exploitation, as defined in Articles 180b and 181 of the German Penal Code, who are testifying in cases against traffickers. Some NGOs likewise define trafficking under German law, while others include persons trafficked for forced labour. The NGO figures here are based upon the number of victims assisted. Some are newly detected in 2000, others are those assisted in 2000.

Significant numbers of trafficked women and children came from Ukraine, Poland, Russia and Lithuania. Five Balkan women were also recognized, three from FYROM and two from Slovenia. Other sources provided complementary data, which support the finding that Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian and Russian women make up the four largest groups of trafficked women in Germany. Of 498 trafficked women assisted by NGOs in Germany in 1999 and 2000, 42 originated from the Balkans. The NGO SOLWODI (not in the chart) maintains statistics only on the number of first contacts made. In 1999, 204 women made initial contact with one of their six centres for trafficked persons, 33 of whom were from the Balkans (Albania - 4, Bosnia and Herzegovina - 8, Croatia - 6, FRY - 12 and FYROM - 3).

Figure 9. Nationalities of Victims of Trafficking Recognized by Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) and Various NGOs in Germany in 1999 or 2000.



Although the number of recognized victims from the Balkans is relatively small, some transit trafficking could be expected due to Germany's geographical location, as indicated by several NGOs and the Ministry for Family, the Elderly, Women and Youth.

The 1999 BKA report shows that German nationals were the majority of suspected traffickers, although most were naturalized German citizens. Other traffickers are Turkish (15 per cent), Polish (7 per cent), Lithuanians (4 per cent), Russians (4 per cent), Ukrainians (3 per cent) and Yugoslavs (3 per cent). The nationalities of traffickers largely match the nationalities or countries of origin of victims, with the exception of the Turkish traffickers.

Greece

Greece is clearly a destination country for trafficked women as well as, in some cases, a transit country, largely for women being trafficked to Italy or to Turkey. Despite the recent inclusion of the term "trafficking of human beings" in law, few statistics were available. The Ministry of Public Order provided statistics on 185 recognized victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, with a further 513 victims of pimping, many of whom can reasonably be considered trafficked. A further 1,341 foreign women were arrested as illegal workers (some of whom may also have been trafficked, although there was no evidence of sexual exploitation).

The term trafficking in human beings has only recently been incorporated into Greek legislation (Law 2605/98 which ratified the Europol Convention), but is not in the Greek Penal Code. This makes recognition of victims problematic for police and border guards. The precise basis for the above-mentioned figures is thus unclear.

Bulgaria, Romania and Albania are the key countries of origin of women trafficked to Greece. The close proximity of Greece to these countries of origin, its mountainous and therefore porous borders, combined with its EU membership, makes Greece an attractive destination.

International Social Service, an NGO recently concerned with trafficking, received nine reports of sexual exploitation over the last 18 months. The women originated from Albania (three), Moldova (two), Romania (two) and Ukraine (two), and were between 16 and 35 years of age. Six were promised jobs in Greece, which later did not materialize and three were kidnapped. In an attempt to stem the perceived increase in flows of trafficked persons, the issuance of artist visas to women was suspended.

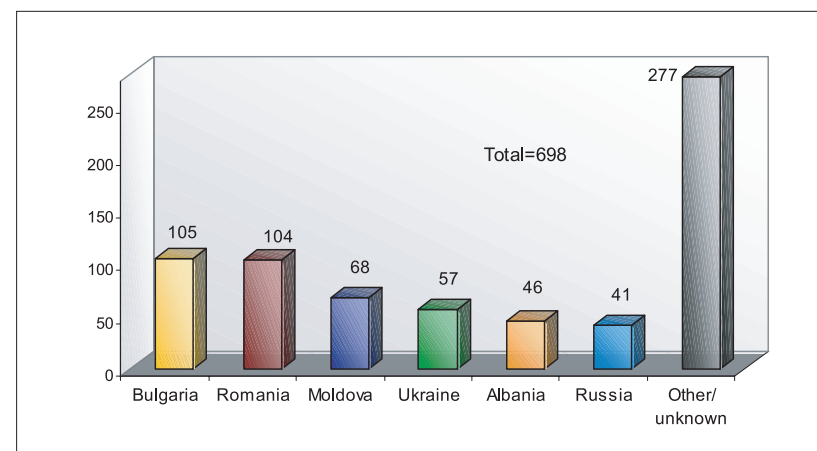


Figure 10. Nationalities of Victims of Trafficking and Pimping Recognized by the Greek Ministry of Public Order in 1999

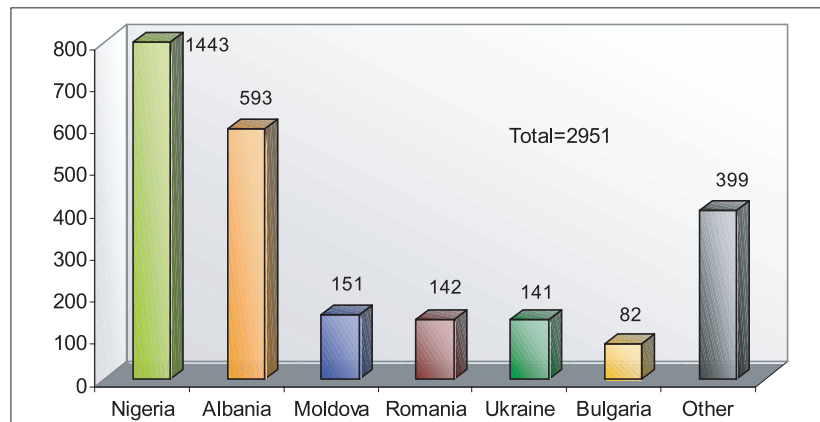
The prostitution of minors is a serious problem in Greece. According to the NGO Save the Children, official statistics show that 120 children (who could be considered trafficked) were involved in prostitution. Most of them are from Greece, Albania and Ukraine. Save the Children also cited a report supported by the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights (1997), which estimated that there were 3,000 child prostitutes in Greece during the 18-month period of the study. Nearly eight per cent were under 12 years old.

Italy

Data collected from sources in Italy illustrate significantly higher numbers of trafficking victims than in other receiving countries. Italy recently initiated an innovative approach to combat trafficking, assist victims and centralize the resulting statistics. The figures here reflect trafficked women and children who benefited from Article 18 of the Aliens Law introduced in Autumn 1998. The programme of social protection envisaged by the law specifically targets victims of trafficking with provisions for special care towards those sexually exploited. Assistance is administered through a network of approximately 200 registered NGOs, with the Ministry for Equal Opportunities coordinating the various activities and collating relevant statistics. Projects are initiated at local (co-financed by local entities) and national levels, including a National Hotline and an information campaign.

Of those assisted under Article 18 between March and November 2000 (the latest figures available), some 50 per cent originated from Nigeria and 20 per cent from Albania. Other

Figure 11. Nationalities of Trafficked Women and Children Assisted under Article 18 in Italy from March to November 2000.



“Other” includes 77 from Morocco, 54 from Russia, 52 from Colombia and 43 from Italy.

significant countries of origin include Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. IOM data show that the primary countries of origin include Romania and Moldova, followed by Albania, Nigeria and Ukraine.

It is notable that 34 of 87 minors assisted were Albanians. Other minors assisted originate from Moldova (17), Romania (15), Nigeria (13), and Italy itself (2).

Italy is a key destination country for trafficking victims of various nationalities, but most notably for Nigerians and Albanians. Albania’s ports of Durrës and Vlorë are the major crossing points from the Balkans to Italy, with Albania a major sending country. A report by Save the Children released in March 2001 suggests that there are nearly 15,000 Albanian prostitutes in Italy (Save the Children, 2001: 6).

Luxembourg

Official sources suggest there is no trafficking to Luxembourg. Many have drawn links between the issuance of entertainment visas and sexual exploitation. In 1999, 868 such visas were issued, largely to strip-tease artists. Officially, there are no brothels in Luxembourg, and cabaret bars are the only entertainment open after 1 am. Some have suggested that the number of cabaret visas issued supersedes the number of dancers necessary to fill the cabaret bars. Other sources were reluctant to discuss the issue, but suggested that trafficking does occur. Women and children from Central and Eastern Europe seem to be the primary victims, with a few from the Balkans.

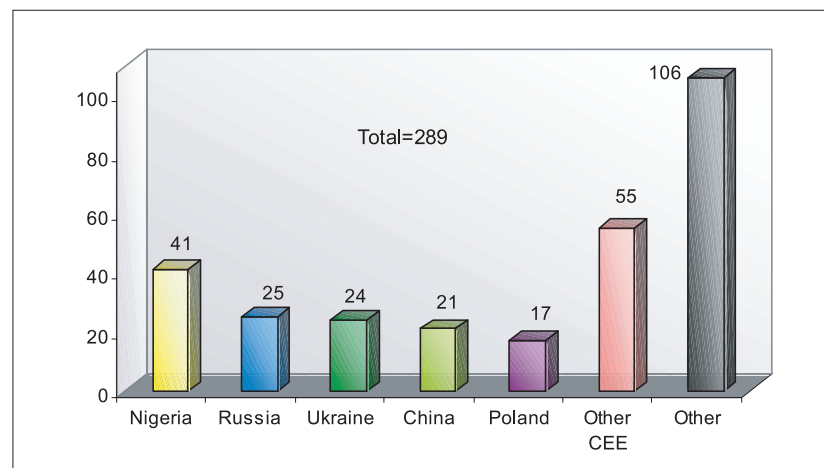
The Netherlands

The police and the judiciary have prioritized trafficking, according to the Central Criminal Investigation Information Service of the Dutch police, but there is, as yet, no central registration of victims. Only cases of trafficking which lead to police investigations are registered. Given the well-known problems hindering investigations, the numbers are thus correspondingly low. One

problem in terms of centralization is that each police district registers its own trafficking reports, and very few of these reports lead to police investigations. The Dutch Government hopes to improve their understanding of the phenomenon through the creation of a national rapporteur, whose first report is expected towards the end of 2001.

NGO data in the Netherlands reflect a much higher number of trafficked women, and indicate that numerous nationalities are trafficked to the country. The NGO STV (Stichting tegen Vrouwenhandel - Foundation against Trafficking in Women) aims to collate information on cases of trafficking, based on third-party reports about victims, including those from the police and social workers. The differing definitions of trafficking in human beings, and the likelihood that not all are aware of STV's activities, suggest that the data may be incomplete. STV said that most victims knew of at least one other victim of trafficking. Thus, the 289 known victims are probably half of the actual number.

Figure 12. Data on Country of Origin Compiled by the NGO STV in the Netherlands in 1999 and 2000.



"Other" includes 39 from Africa, 8 from Asia, 19 from Western Europe, 15 from Latin America and 25 unknown.

Of those victims recognized in 1999, relatively few originated from the Balkan and neighbouring countries: four Albanians and one Yugoslav, with considerably more originating from Ukraine (24), Bulgaria (24) and Russia (25). The largest group of women trafficked to the Netherlands was from Nigeria (41), while Chinese (21) and Polish (17) women were also part of the statistics. Victims from other African and Asian countries as well as from Latin America were also recognized. In 1998, seven victims from the Balkans were recorded: Albania (four), Bosnia (one), Croatia (one) and Slovenia (one).

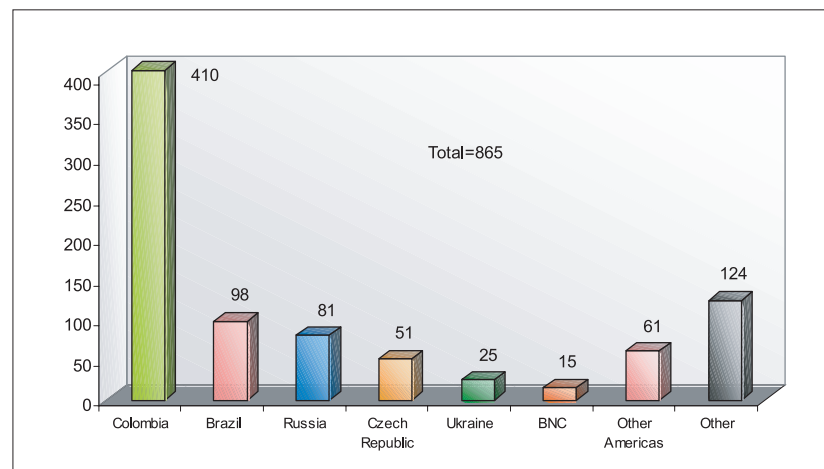
Data from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Services reflect much smaller numbers than NGO data, and are based on B17, or Staying permits, issued, which, as noted earlier, reflect those women permitted to stay while they are testifying in a prosecution. Official and NGO data here overlap as some of those recognized or assisted by STV in 2000, also received B17 permits. In 2000, 51 permits were granted by the Dutch INS to Romanians (seven), Russians (six), Nigerians (seven), Bulgarians (six), Albanian (one) and Yugoslav (one). Of these, a Nigerian, a Ukrainian and two Russians were minors.

Spain

Data from the Spanish police provided by Esperanza, the main NGO assisting victims of trafficking, show that Colombia is the most significant country of origin of trafficked persons, with other countries in South America and Central and Eastern Europe, also appearing in the statistics. Police statistics reflect the number of sexual exploitation victims who are considered trafficked. Statistics from Esperanza are based on the number of trafficked persons assisted between January 1999 and November 2000. During this period, Esperanza assisted 85 female victims, 69 of whom originated from South and Central America. Of the 21 Europeans assisted, seven were from Ukraine, four from Hungary, three each from Russia, Romania and Lithuania and one from Belorussia.

Colombians are clearly the largest group of trafficking victims in police data (410), but Russians (81), Czechs (51) and Ukrainians (25) continue to appear in police records, albeit at a much smaller percentage than in other European countries, due to the large number of Colombians. Victims from the Balkans also appear in the data in relatively small numbers: Yugoslavs (five), Slovenians (three) and Croatians (two). In 1998, one Slovenian was the only victim from the Balkans.

Figure 13. Victims of Sexual Exploitation Recognized by the Spanish Police in 1999.



“Other Americas” includes the Caribbean.

Switzerland

The Swiss Government considers trafficking in human beings a serious issue relevant to national security. Within the context of cooperation agreements on transnational crime, irregular migration and trafficking, Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have implemented a pilot project to improve police cooperation.

Swiss law includes provisions criminalizing sexual exploitation and trafficking, with other forms of trafficking also covered by legislation. The numbers of investigations into trafficking and

related crimes have increased considerably from a single case in 1998 to 25 in 1999.

A Geneva-based NGO suggested that trafficking in the Geneva area was limited, but more pronounced in Ticino. Indeed, the Italian-Swiss border is believed to be an entry point for those who are trafficked through the Balkans.

United Kingdom

At least 300 women and children are believed to have been trafficked to the United Kingdom, according to the Metropolitan Police in London. Outside the capital, trafficking is not prioritized, thus the scale of the phenomenon is unknown. Those trafficked to London are believed to have originated from Albania and Kosovo, and other countries in the Baltics and South-East Asia. Trafficking is likely to be more significant than official figures suggest given the existence of 75 known brothels in the Soho area of London, alone, in which 80 per cent of employees are foreigners, the majority of whom are believed to be Albanians or Kosovars. There are fears that the victims are getting younger, but there are no statistics currently available on age. Official statistics from the Immigration & Nationality Directorate show that women from 26 countries were discovered in raids on brothels, but only three were willing to admit they had been trafficked.

Conclusion

This review of destination countries in Europe indicates clearly that trafficking from the BNC is significant in Western Europe. The main sending countries from the BNC are: Moldova, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria.

Albanian women are trafficked primarily to Italy, but also to Belgium, where they are the second-largest group of trafficked women after Nigerians, to Greece and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands and UK.

From Bulgaria, women are trafficked to Greece (where they are the largest group of trafficked women, together with Romanian women), Italy and Austria. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, Bulgarian women are also trafficked to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Moldovan women are primarily trafficked to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but within Western Europe are trafficked to Italy, Belgium and Greece. Moldovan trafficked women have also been assisted in Bulgaria, but, as noted above, it is not clear whether these women were trafficked to Bulgaria or were in transit elsewhere – for instance to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The other significant group of women trafficked from the Balkans and neighbouring countries, Romanian women, make up the largest group of trafficked women in Austria, are the largest group of trafficked women in Greece (together with Bulgarians), and are trafficked to Italy as well. As with Moldovans, Romanian trafficked women have also been trafficked via Bulgaria.

Chapter 3

Trafficking through the Balkans and neighbouring countries

Each country/territory in the Balkan region assumes a combination of roles as origin, transit and destination for trafficked women. Distinguishing transit from destination countries is problematic as victims may be forced into prostitution while in transit, but these countries are not necessarily destination countries per se. Transit may include time spent waiting for other women and children, for good weather to cross the Adriatic, or while a trafficker is searching for a buyer.

An accurate overview of trafficking routes would support counter-trafficking efforts. This chapter, using data from interviews with trafficked women and information from those assisting trafficked women, aims to provide this overview. Many reports refer to the Balkan Route, referring to the Balkans as a region of transit for trafficked women and children en route to EU destinations.¹ The location of the Balkan Route is particularly advantageous as it provides

¹This route is used as well for smuggled migrants. See “Irregular Migration through Bosnia and Herzegovina” in *Migration Challenges in Central and Eastern Europe*, IOM forthcoming.

traffickers with relatively easy access to the EU, either by land or by sea. The Adriatic Sea crossing from Albania to Italy appears to be the primary means of transit from the Balkans to the EU. This crossing is well documented and media stories have captured public attention.

Transit is particularly difficult to demonstrate statistically, as the available data are gathered from assisted/recognized trafficked women. If border apprehension data were available with age, nationality and gender breakdown, they might be able to be of some assistance, but these data are not available. Few institutions/individuals who assist trafficked women record information concerning routes and/or final destinations. In many cases, the trafficked women themselves do not know. A study by IOM

Map 2. Trafficking routes known to NGO sources, depicting flows through the Balkans towards EU countries



Arrows by D. Brüggemann

and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) in 2000 shows that 18 per cent of 125 trafficked women interviewed in Albania did not know their final destination. Sixty-four per cent thought they were going to Western Europe, half of those naming Italy.

The three maps presented here reflect the known routes of trafficked women, according to information gathered by NGOs, official sources and IOM. The NGO and official maps represent the frequency with which sources named each route and border crossing. The IOM map is based on routes according to trafficked women interviewed by IOM staff in Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana, and so reflects routes only to these four locations, and not onward.

Map 3. Trafficking routes through the Balkans known to official sources



Arrows by D. Brüggemann

Traffickers use complex and varied routes to remain a step ahead of authorities. NGO respondents emphasize routes from Moldova to Romania, Romania to Serbia, Serbia to Montenegro and Albania and Albania to Italy. A FYROM respondent says that traffickers primarily use the “green borders” (the unguarded frontier): Dojran and Gevgelija on the Greek-Macedonian border, Struga on the Albanian-Macedonian border and Tetovo on the Kosovo-Macedonian border where KFOR troops have been stationed. Another FYROM respondent speaks of border crossings with FRY and Bulgaria, tracing the path of the movement to Greece and Albania.

The main land route to Italy goes through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Certainly this is an

Map 4. Significant trafficking routes within the Balkans based on interviews with victims assisted by IOM in 2000



Arrows by D. Brüggemann

important route for irregular migration in general as indicated by the high percentage of border apprehensions by the Slovenian border police on the green border with Italy. A source at the Croatian Ministry of Interior says that trafficking through the country is not a significant problem, although there have been cases of transit to Italy, as well as case of trafficking from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The majority of the irregular border crossings, however, are at the Croatian-Bosnian and Croatian-FRY borders.

The IOM map shows only intra-Balkan flows that emerge from information obtained through programmes to provide direct assistance to victims in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and FYROM. A well-trodden route starts in Moldova, moving through Romania and on to Montenegro or Hungary. Other flows cross from Hungary to Montenegro, onward to FYROM, or via Montenegro to Albania.

Reasons for trafficking along these routes include the existence of established systems and routes for smuggling, including the accessibility of Italy and the lack of visa requirements at the airports of Podgorica and Tivat.

There are also reports that Albania is often bypassed for the more direct Montenegro-Italy route because of the ever-worsening economic situation in Montenegro. Another source says that the port of Bar is being used as a springboard to Italy, and Podgorica airport for flights to Budapest and Zurich.

The Balkan region has become a transit area for many of the same reasons that its countries and territories are receiving trafficked migrants: porous borders and the collapse of legal and political systems in the wake of recent civil wars and economic transition. Corruption in the bureaucracy further boosts trafficking through the Balkans, according to respondents. The police in Albania are

suspected of involvement in trafficking—perhaps the cumulative effect of low morale, low salaries and low rates of success in prosecuting those involved in trafficking and organized crime. In the recent IOM/ICMC report, based on interviews with trafficked women in Albania, some 10 per cent of trafficked women noted that police had been directly involved in facilitating their trafficking.

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, border controls in the early post-Communist years were problematic. Lack of resources and low prioritization contributed to difficulties in border control in the face of new challenges before these countries.

Today, countries collectively known as the EU Accession States are under pressure to improve border control and migration management efforts. Continued visa-free travel arrangements within the region are often cited as a factor that transformed the Balkans into a trafficking and smuggling route.

The past and present Balkan conflicts have placed border controls low on State priorities. At the same time, the arrival of foreign troops, international organizations and foreign investments have spurred a trickle-down effect favouring segments of the local population in some areas of the Balkans. This surge of money into the local economy has helped transform Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina into a region where there is a market – conveniently located en route to the EU – for trafficked women.

In the Balkans, Moldovan and Romanian citizens are the two largest groups of trafficked women, followed by Bulgarians and Russians. Most have been recruited with the promise of high-paying jobs in Italy or Germany, as waitresses, household help, nannies or dancers. Some have been lured with the prospect of marrying an EU citizen. Their

transit routes can also vary depending upon countries of origin and destination:

- Ukrainians are usually taken to FRY (Belgrade) via Hungary and then onwards to Bosnia and Herzegovina, frequently crossing the border at Bjilena or Zvornik. To reach Kosovo, common routes include Hungary-Belgrade-Kosovo, Romania-Bulgaria-FYROM-Kosovo, or Moldova-Romania-Bulgaria-FYROM-Kosovo. To reach Albania, the majority of known victims crossed Lake Shkodra.
- Romanians cross directly into Serbia, often at Timisoara, and then to Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo. Data from Albania show that 39 of 42 women who crossed into Albania from Montenegro crossed Lake Shkodra, while several crossed through Bulgaria into FYROM and then via Lake Ohrid into Albania. (One victim crossed from FYROM into Greece and then across the mountains into Albania.)
- Moldovans have been known to transit via Romania, at which point the route becomes the same as that used for Romanian trafficked women, but they are increasingly travelling via Hungary after transiting Romania. Albanian reports say that the vast majority of victims transited via Romania and Serbia, crossing into Albania near Lake Shkodra. Most crossings have been by boat. Some also use the footpaths over the mountains. A few have been taken via Bulgaria to FYROM and from there into Albania via Lake Ohrid.
- Bulgarians are taken through FYROM, then across Lake Ohrid into Albania, or north into Kosovo.

Onwards from Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, trafficking generally follows these routes:

- ◆ From Bosnia and Herzegovina south via Montenegro to Albania across Lake Shkodra and then on to Italy from either Vlorë or Durrës, or northwest to Croatia and Slovenia and by land to Italy.
- ◆ From Kosovo, primarily through FYROM into Albania via Lake Ohrid or into Greece by land, or directly into Albania and then to Italy across the Adriatic Sea.

Albania is the most important transit country from the Balkans to Italy because of the ports of Vlorë and Durrës. The “green borders” and the lakes along the Albanian, Montenegrin and FYROM borders are also significant transit points for trafficking. For example, 93 per cent of the 125 trafficked women assisted by IOM and ICMC in Albania have identified the Shkodra road that runs from FRY to Albania as the road they travelled with their traffickers. While the Adriatic Sea is the most significant trafficking route from the Balkans to Italy, land routes through Croatia and Slovenia and by boat from Croatia and FRY-Montenegro should not be dismissed.

Merging information on trafficking routes known to official, NGO and IOM sources provides the most complete information on trafficking routes through the Balkans currently available, although care needs to be taken in interpreting this information as the sources of data vary. As discussed, routes are complex and diverse, helping traffickers stay ahead of the authorities.

Map 5. A compilation of all known routes, reflecting an inter-agency view of trafficking flows to, through and from the Balkans



Arrows by D. Brüggemann

Well-known routes include Moldova and Ukraine to Romania, Romania to FRY and FRY to Albania, with the most recognized route into the EU across the Adriatic Sea from Albania to Italy. Despite the lack of scale indicators, it is evident that flows increase as more victims are included, and decrease where routes fork into different destinations.

Many trafficked women said that they believed they were originally going to an EU country. This is evident through recognition of flows to Italy and Greece from neighbouring Balkan countries. The range of movements, however, ensures that many remain within the region because of profitable opportunities in the exploitation, sale and re-sale of the victims.

Chapter 4

The Balkans as a destination region

The number of victims of trafficking on record varies considerably between sources and among countries in the Balkans. Data on victims of trafficking in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia are almost non-existent, partly because there are no counter-trafficking measures currently in place in these countries. It is unclear whether there are no programmes because trafficking is not a significant problem, or whether programmes simply have not yet been developed.

Table 1. Number of victims recognized in the Balkans by official, NGO and IOM sources in 2000.

Country	Official	NGO	IOM
Albania	n/a	117	117
Bosnia and Herzegovina	199	n/a	186
Croatia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kosovo	n/a	118	115
Montenegro	n/a	10	n/a
Serbia	n/a	n/a	n/a
FYROM	75	n/a	106
Slovenia	n/a	n/a	n/a

Among the NGOs which shared data for this study are the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in Kosovo, ICMC in Albania and the Women Safety House in Montenegro. These NGOs run shelters for victims of trafficking. UMCOR and ICMC data closely match those of IOM, which is explained by the fact that most of the women and children in the shelters have also received voluntary return assistance from IOM. The Women Safety House last year gave shelter to 10 trafficked women. These women originated from Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. Most local NGOs in the Balkans, which were especially concerned with domestic violence, are now also involved in counter-trafficking activities to varying degrees, primarily assisting their own nationals upon return.

The Ministry of Interior of FYROM and the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the only official sources able and willing to provide comparable statistical information. Despite the lack of specific legal provisions relating to trafficking in human beings, the Ministry of Interior provided figures within the framework of investigations on *mediating into prostitution, inducing and enabling sexual activities and establishing a slavery relationship and transporting persons in a slavery relationship*¹. Although the IPTF is a United Nations police force, its statistics are similar to those provided by the Ministry of Interior. These figures overlap with IOM data as nearly all referrals for IOM assistance come from the IPTF.

There is currently no comparable information available from sources in Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. The Croatian Ministry of Interior says that 24 female victims have been trafficked to Croatia in the last three years, most of them forced into prostitution. (Of these, 10 were Hungarian and seven Ukrainian. Two were Romanian children.) Several NGOs and the international community are willing to assist victims, but the lack of identification and referral mechanisms result in difficulties in recognizing trafficked persons as such.

¹As paraphrased from articles 191, 192 and 418 of the Criminal Code by IOM Skopje.

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Interior estimates that 200 trafficking victims arrive in Slovenia each year. They originate from Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. The figure is a guesstimate, as authorities are unable to give the actual number of trafficked persons identified in the country. There is, however, a noticeable increase in the number of nightclubs in Slovenia, which implies a higher demand for sex workers. It can be said that the absence of information and protection and assistance measures in trafficking in women and children reflects the lack of response by relevant entities that include governmental, NGO and the international community in dealing with the problem.

Not much information is currently available on trafficking related to FRY, though there is a noticeable and increasing concern on the part of the Government of Montenegro, the NGOs and the international community. In fact, the Government, in cooperation with the NGOs and the international community, has devised an Action Plan against trafficking to and from the territory. A similar measure is currently being developed in Serbia.

Available data and other information

Sources in the Balkans have also noted the nationalities of trafficked women recognized in the different countries and territories.

Albania

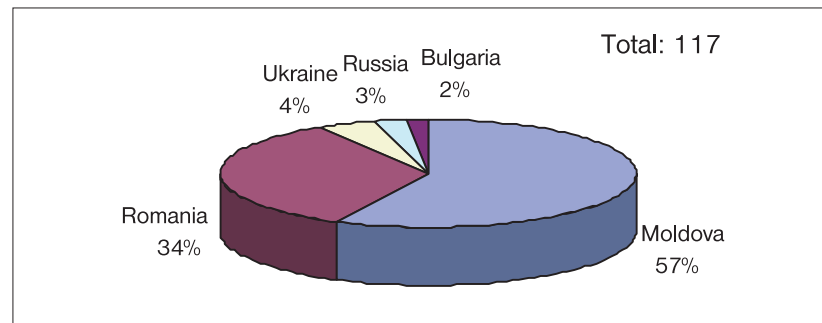
There is little trafficking to Albania per se, particularly compared to the trafficking through and from the country,

according to the OSCE, UNHCR, IOM, ICMC, Save the Children, the Albanian NGO Vlorë Women's Hearth and the Albanian Ministry of Public Order. IOM believes that the victims recognized in Albania are en route to Italy, and that many of these are forced into prostitution for a short period.

IOM/ICMC data—presently the only figures available—support the estimate of others that the main countries of origin of persons trafficked to and through Albania are Moldova and Romania. All of the minors assisted originate from these two countries: seven from Moldova and nine from Romania. Nearly 70 per cent of all those receiving assistance were between 18 and 24 years old.

There is strong international pressure for the Albanian Government to act. The only major project in place that offers trafficking victims protection and assistance is presently the IOM/ICMC Inter-Agency Referral System.

Figure 14. Nationality of Victims of Trafficking assisted under the IOM/ICMC Inter-Agency Referral System in Albania in 2000.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

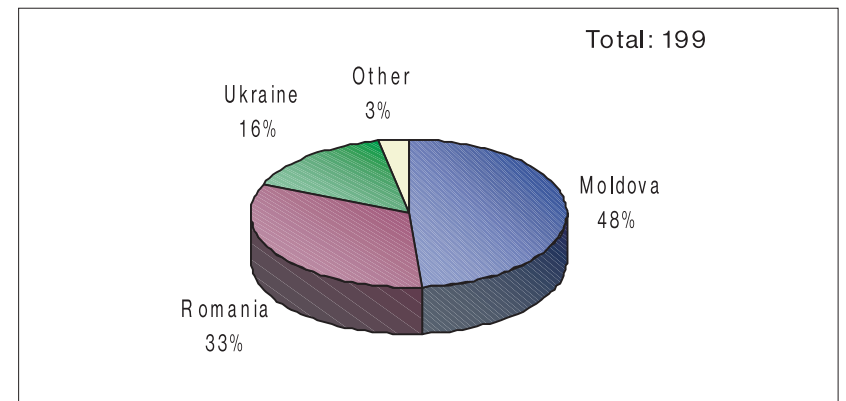
In Bosnia and Herzegovina, data came from the IOM office and from the International Police Task Force. Most of the women and children assisted by IOM were initially recognized as

trafficked by the IPTF in raids on bars and brothels (IPTF then referred the victims to IOM). A few of these victims did, however, manage to escape on their own. Thus, the figures overlap, but are not identical.

The different nationalities of trafficked women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina show a similar pattern to the figures from Albania, with Moldovan nationals forming the majority followed by Romanians and then Ukrainians. The origin of trafficked women and children is more evenly distributed in Bosnia and Herzegovina among the three major countries of origin than in Albania. In terms of age, the average is 22, with one minor—a person under 18 years of age—from Hungary receiving IOM assistance.

IOM Sarajevo estimates that there are between 600 and 3,000 trafficked women in Bosnia and Herzegovina at any given time. IOM data show that Sarajevo, Tuzla, Prijedor, Brcko, Bijeljina and Zvornik are the main centres for trafficking. Bijeljina and Zvornik are border crossings often used by traffickers.

Figure 15. Countries of Origin of Women Assisted by the IPTF in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000.



IPTF: International Police Task Force

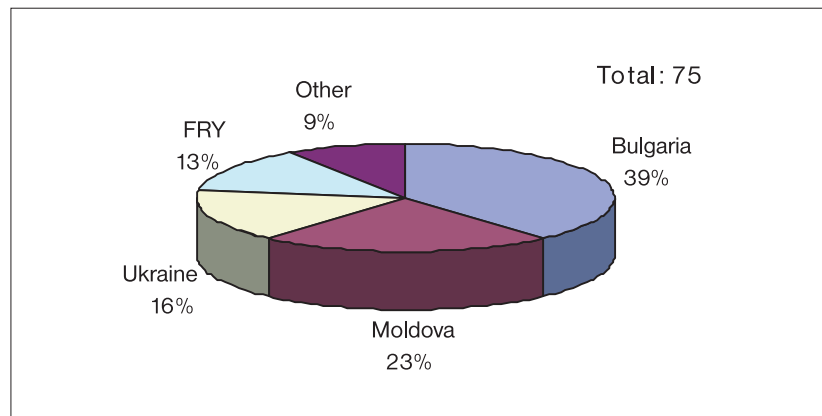
FYROM

Data from FYROM differ from other data already cited in that the two major data sources disagree as to the most significant nationalities. It is unclear to what extent FYROM is a destination country, and to what extent it is a transit country.

According to the Ministry of Interior, the most significant country of origin for trafficked women and children is Bulgaria. Moldova is second, followed by Ukraine and FRY. However, the number of victims assisted by IOM in 2000 (106 in total) shows that Moldova (69) again ranks the highest in terms of countries of origin. Romania (28) again plays a significant role, followed by Belarus (seven). In 2001, the number of women and children assisted increased dramatically to 147 by the end of May. Moldova (84) and Romania (32) continue to be primary countries of origin, with Ukraine (20) now also included. In recognition of the severity of the issue, the FYROM Government has established a shelter for recognized victims.

The only information relating to minors derives from the IOM programme, which to date has assisted two minors under 15, and a further 21 between 15 and 18 years old.

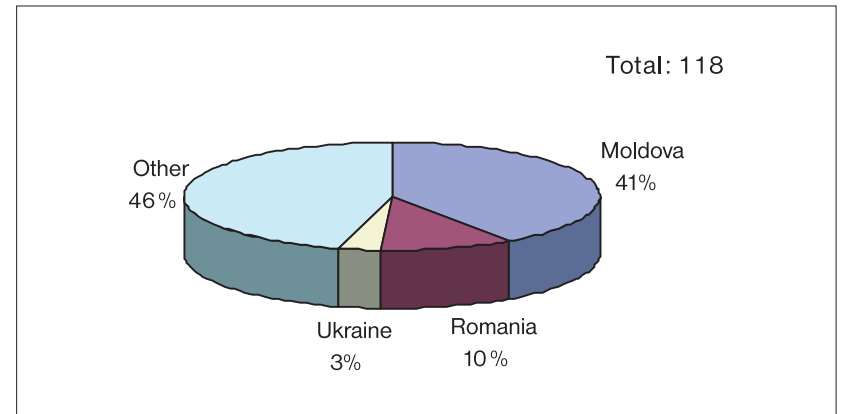
Figure 16. Victims of Trafficking Recognized by the FYROM Ministry of Interior in 2000.



Kosovo

Data from UMCOR and IOM show similar countries of origin as both institutions have assisted most of the victims. The high proportion of unknowns in the UMCOR figures is a result of the UMCOR take over of the shelter from Action by Churches Together (ACT). Based on the 160 victims assisted by IOM over the previous 15 months, many are between 18 and 24 years old, although eight per cent are minors between 14 and 17 years.

Figure 17. Nationality of Trafficked Women and Children Sheltered by UMCOR in Kosovo in 2000.



“Other” includes 49 unknown (Action by Churches Together (ACT) opened the shelter in Feb 2000, and handed over to UMCOR in July 2000. Between Feb - Dec 2000, 118 victims of trafficking were sheltered. UMCOR only has reliable information concerning the 69 women sheltered between July and December 2000.)

Women from Moldova rank the highest in number among the different nationalities of persons trafficked in Kosovo, followed by Romanians and Ukrainians. Sources say that victims who were able to escape spoke of “four or five” friends each still working in a bar or brothel.

IOM Pristina estimated that in addition to those women and children assisted by IOM (118) there are as many who were known to have been trafficked but refused IOM assistance. An UNMIK adviser said that

“... there are at least 1,000 if not 2,000... Locals are telling social welfare workers and members of international organisations that there are now bars and brothels even in small villages. In one small town alone, an OSCE source notices five women a week who are probably trafficked.” The numbers presented here thus represent a fraction of the total number of trafficked women and children in Kosovo.

A destination region takes shape

In reports on trafficking of women from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the dire economic conditions in countries of origin. The reasons usually given for the proliferation of trafficking include extreme poverty levels, high unemployment rates, low levels of education, gender inequalities and lack of information about regular migration options. Lack of awareness contributes to the problem as potential victims readily believe promises made by traffickers.

The response of UMCOR in Kosovo outlines many of the reasons why the Balkans developed into a destination region: They *“... believe the social disruption, economic crisis, and legal/political vacuum left by the war has allowed prostitution to flourish along with other criminal activities. Also, the influx of soldiers, police officers, and international workers into a ‘non-family’ mission has increased demand for sex workers.”*

1) Post-conflict: Respondents indicated that the breakdown of social structures, economic crisis and the institutional

vacuum left in the wake of wars, accentuated by continuing unrest, allowed organized crime and prostitution to flourish. Prior to the 1999 conflict, Kosovo was strictly under Serb control. All brothels were required to register with Serbian authorities, and movements of Kosovar men were restricted while a strict moral taboo against prostitution reigned. Several respondents noted that both the Serb control of brothels and the taboo against prostitution collapsed after the war. The lack of relevant legal instruments and enforcement thereof limits the capacity of States to criminalize traffickers and protect victims.

2) International troops and the expatriate community: Although international troops and the expatriate community are neither the only customers nor the majority of customers, their presence appears to play a significant role. The large number of international troops and officers in non-family posts create a market for the sex industry, although OSCE and others have made efforts to raise awareness and restrict visits to brothels. The media have reported on international troops patronizing sex workers, but trafficked women rescued in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina say that local men, including local police, are the primary user group. A respondent from OSCE in Kosovo suggests that border guards may be bribed to facilitate border crossings. Studies carried out in Albania show that corruption among the police supports the claim of many that the police is in connivance with traffickers.

IOM Pristina commented, *“We believe that post war conditions as well as the large amount of cash circulating in the province after the war and the significant social changes have all turned Kosovo into a lucrative and easy trafficking destination.”* Several respondents also noted that the introduction of large amounts of cash into the local economies through foreign

investment and the daily spending of the international community have raised the spending power of the local community, making visits to brothels more affordable.

3) Porous (or non-existent) borders: The emergence of porous borders facilitated irregular migration within the region. Despite the thousands apprehended attempting to cross borders illegally each year, thousands more succeed. The lack of border controls between FRY and the Serb-majority area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, facilitate entry across this border. The Kosovar and Montenegrin borders with Serbia are not international borders, thus movements within FRY are largely uncontrolled.

4) Organized crime: A respondent from IOM Sarajevo said, *“(Crime) is very organized at the moment and these groups most likely have been previously involved in illegal arms and drug smuggling and the trafficking trade.”* Long-established links among crime syndicates within the region and within key countries of origin have also been mentioned. An UNMIK consultant on violence against women in Kosovo commented, *“Women’s groups from Bosnia say that the Mafia moved into Kosovo to organize trafficking as soon as they knew there would be an international presence here.”* It is probable that the potential of a market created the mechanisms for trafficking that include the demand and supply for trafficked women.

5) Geographic location: Geographically, the Balkans is between the key countries of origin and the European Union – the most significant destination region. Current conditions in the Balkans allow traffickers a lucrative trade – the buying, selling and re-selling of their victims.

Arguments that trafficking in the Balkans is on the rise abound. Caution should be adopted with regard to such statements, however, precisely because of the lack of comparable data in terms of current year’s numbers versus previous years’ numbers.

Existing statistics suggest that the number of victims of trafficking is on the rise, although it is difficult to distinguish an actual increase in number from increasing awareness about the plight of victims of trafficking. (The connection between increased awareness of the phenomenon and assistance of victims is clear: police who are aware are more likely to detect trafficked women – Kelly and Regan 2000; Regan 2001).

Continued confusion between trafficking and prostitution further blurs recognition of victims and the resulting data. Respondents in Albania say that the presence of trafficked women and children in high-class hotels in and around the capital, as well as the increased numbers of such hotels, is an indicator of increased trafficking, although this may not necessarily be the case.

Profile of Trafficked Women and Children

Some IOM offices in the Balkans have, as a result of an initiative to gather information on trafficked women and store this in a database, compiled biographical and case information on all trafficked women and children assisted, and produced situation reports. This initiative has already raised the standards of available information and provides a valuable general sketch of women trafficked to some countries and territories in the region. Much of the information presented here was drawn from these reports, along with profiles given by respondents in destination and origin countries.

Sources believe that poverty in many Eastern European countries drives young women to accept job offers abroad, particularly Western Europe. A recent poll in Moldova by the Romanian Centre for Opinion and Market Studies (CSOP) found that *“36 per cent of Moldovans would like to leave the country and make money abroad for some time, while 26 per cent want like to leave ‘for good’.”* Some 600,000 to 1 million Moldovans are estimated to be currently living abroad.

A statistical profile of trafficked women and children made by IOM offices in Pristina and Skopje show that they are generally quite young—18 to 24 years of age—mostly single and usually quite poor. Many Moldovans come from industrial cities or towns whose main industry had shut down.

In terms of origin, some 60 per cent come from Moldova, followed by Romania and Ukraine. The average age is 21, including 16 minors in Albania, 23 in FYROM and 13 in Kosovo. Some five per cent were over 30 years old.

Levels of education vary, as 45 per cent of those assisted in FYROM finished high school, corresponding to only 18 per cent in Kosovo, and eight and three per cent respectively went to university.

Some 60 per cent of victims assisted are single, and 14 per cent are divorced. Eleven per cent are married, and 35 per cent are mothers.

Around 70 per cent of victims assisted by IOM Pristina were living with their families at the time they were recruited. Nearly 18 per cent reported being engaged in difficult to bad relationships with their parents or with their husbands or partners. Some 16 per cent admitted having been raped or suffered physical abuse in the past.

According to the IOM/ICMC report on assistance to trafficked women in Albania, around 5 per cent of victims receiving assistance in the shelter attempted suicide. Some have tried to take their lives shortly before arriving in the shelter. Another

seven per cent were being treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Recruitment

Trafficking is characterized by different recruitment methods in various countries, according to sources. For instance, women in Moldova, Romania or Ukraine are more likely to be duped by fraudulent job offers, while significant numbers of Albanian women are kidnapped, or persuaded to leave by false promises of marriage abroad.

The three primary means of recruitment are:

- ◆ the promise of a high-paying job abroad;
- ◆ the promise of marriage to a Western European, or national abroad;
- ◆ kidnapping.

Victims of trafficking come to realize much too late that the high-paying job will never materialize. Many women trafficked to Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina thought they would be working in Western Europe as waitresses, nannies or dancers. These false job offers are placed in newspaper advertisements and are the most common method of recruitment. Travel agencies that have contacts in Western Europe have arranged for some of the jobs. Other means of recruitment include offers to be an actress, or the chance to join a beauty contest with the top five finalists obtaining jobs in Italy or elsewhere in Western Europe.

Respondents, however, maintained that a proportion of women knew they would be working as prostitutes in Kosovo. According to IOM Pristina's database, of 160 trafficked women and children, a third were aware to some extent of the possibility of being involved in sex-related work. Of victims assisted in FYROM, 89 per cent responded that they were not aware of such a possibility.

Some recruiters claim to represent bachelors from Western Europe. Arranged marriages continue to victimize women seeking escape from life in the east in exchange for the splendours of Western Europe.

Kidnapping has increasingly become a means of recruiting Albanian women for trafficking. The Albanian Interpol dealt with 103 abductions of young women (many of them minors) between 1993 and 1998. Only 44 of them were found alive (Save the Children, 2001:14). This serious development affects even the schooling of young women and minors whose parents simply refuse to send their children to school unless the authorities can guarantee their safety on the way to and from the school. Incidences of kidnapping leading to trafficking have become so common that, in rural areas where children must walk long distances to school, some 90 per cent of girls over 14 years old are too frightened to go to school (Save the Children, 2001: 6).

The worst aspect of promised jobs and arranged marriages is that they thrive on the fairy tale syndrome—romance and unimaginable wealth. Victims often cling to false hopes: romance will eventually bloom out of the arranged marriage with an Italian citizen; the job offer from Germany may work out after all.

According to the background report on Moldova commissioned for this study, one of the most difficult issues in trafficking in women is the fact that there are many female traffickers as well. *“Usually, female traffickers are the most convincing – they show up in luxury cars, wearing a lot of golden*

jewellery and telling all sorts of stories about the beautiful life in the West... Very often, the girls, young and illiterate, are easily convinced. And then regret for the rest of their lives.”²

Conclusion

Observers often see the Balkans as a homogenous region in relation to trafficking, but this study indicates that it is not so. Countries and territories in the region can be categorized, to varying degrees, as origin, transit or destination. The lack of information on trafficking in the Balkans, however, hinders further definitive categorization of countries in the region.

Thus, while all countries in the region are to some extent countries of origin, transit and destination, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are the primary destinations for trafficked women in the Balkans, with FYROM a destination country to some extent and Albania a country in which women in transit are often exploited for short periods. Many of the women who became victims of trafficking in the Balkan region had, according to victim testimony, intended to find employment in Western Europe. Victims often are sold and resold within the region, and are often exploited either before they are resold or taken to another destination.

²Information from the IOM/ICMC project in Albania shows that over half (52 per cent) of the first contacts victims have had with a recruiter was with a woman.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

No central registration of all victims exists. A problem is that every police district has its own registration of reports of traffic. Not all reports of traffic lead to police investigations.

Central Criminal Investigation Information
Service for the Dutch police

The office doesn't keep any records on the number of prosecutions (or) on the nationality of the victims or criminals.

Prosecutor's Office, Brussels, Belgium

Some assistance is being provided by NGOs but there is a lack of consolidated efforts, just isolated assistance which is obviously not sufficient.

Vice-President of Parliamentary Committee for
Human Rights, Moldova

This report has presented available data on trafficking to, through and from the Balkans and neighbouring countries with a two-fold aim: first, to present what is known about the situation and, secondly, to determine what measures could best be taken to improve data collection and analysis.

The elements of trafficking to, through and from the BNC have been, insofar as is possible, outlined.

Problematic Data Collection

The clandestine nature of trafficking, combined with victims' fear of traffickers, complicates and hinders data collection. Information on various aspects of trafficking promotes the development of effective mechanisms to combat trafficking, protect and assist the victims, and target the criminal elements and related activities. It is, therefore, necessary to assess problems in data collection, and develop methods that facilitate collection, analysis and exchange of information in the future.

Low prioritization

Low prioritization, or non-recognition, of trafficking impedes data collection. One respondent said of authorities that *“it is my opinion that they are not aware what ‘trafficking’ is, and also they do not collect data in an appropriate way.”* The indications are that few and overburdened staff are assigned specifically to trafficking, the absence of relevant institutions or NGOs concerned with trafficking, and the lack of financial and other resources allocated to counter-trafficking measures.

Of 28 countries/territories included in this study, comparable NGO data were received from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo and the Netherlands. Comparable data were also obtained from official sources in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, FYROM, the Netherlands, Spain, and United

Kingdom. Comparable data also came from IOM missions in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo and FYROM. IOM, official and NGO sources in other countries and territories provided non-statistical information for this study, information that was not comparable or guesstimates.

A respondent in the United Kingdom said, *“Outside London, they won’t look at [trafficking], it’s not a priority, so they are not looking at it and if you don’t look for it, you won’t find it.”* This statement highlights the importance of awareness among key authorities and relevant referral systems to provide protection and assistance.

Despite ongoing conflicts in the Balkan region, Governments are becoming more aware and taking initial action against trafficking. Countries are identifying trafficking focal points, task forces and other trafficking-related issues and activities as recommended by the Stability Pact’s Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings. Counter-trafficking activities can be expanded and enhanced as more data is collected, ensuring victims the necessary protection and assistance.

Incompatible data collection mechanisms

Institutions gather data based on their own needs, resulting in the non-standardization of collection mechanisms. Some NGOs register first contacts, hotline calls or those actually receiving varying types of assistance. Victims may thus be counted several times by contacting different NGOs for advice or assistance. Most institutions compile data over a one-year period, but some begin the year in January, while others operate on the basis of when the project actually started. Victim assistance, particularly to those involved in legal proceedings or in long-term assistance mechanisms, may mean being under NGO care for a long period of time. While some register all those assisted in one year, others do not keep detailed records.

In the UK, the Netherlands and other countries, different police forces collect information on investigations against traffickers and the numbers of victims involved, but without maintaining a national database. A database of trafficked migrants willing to testify against their traffickers is a start, but it excludes the majority of victims.

Data segregation

Existing data is often not segregated. Many authorities continue to mix up issues of trafficking, smuggling and irregular migration. This has negative ramifications for victims and our understanding of the issues. This lack of recognition can be attributed to the continued use of different definitions at national and international levels. As many victims are not recognized as such, but are deported as illegal aliens, they do not receive the necessary protection and assistance, and so are only recorded in deportation statistics.

Many NGOs and official sources were able to provide a breakdown of the nationality of recognized victims of trafficking. It appears likely that most are female but gender is often not indicated. The lack of information throughout this report on trafficking in children is explained largely by the dearth of information on the age of victims. Pag-Asa and Sürya in Belgium were the only NGOs that segregated data by type of exploitation.

Indirect indicators were rarely segregated by nationality, gender or age, including data on foreign sex workers, irregular migration, visa issuance and deportations. It is therefore difficult to assess their importance in relation to trafficking.

Reluctance to share data

Some countries regard data on trafficked women and trafficking routes as classified information. They therefore do not share information. Some countries have data protection laws

prohibiting the distribution of personal information, while some ministries simply espouse a policy of restricted distribution. Still other ministries, police forces, Interpol and Europol, and other institutions finalizing their annual reports are unwilling to release data, sometimes simply because their data is so poor. NGOs tend to be reluctant to share data for other reasons - primarily a result of their desire to protect the confidentiality of assisted victims. Official agencies, on the other hand, may be reluctant to admit that their data are so poor.

Complicity of authorities

One explanation for poor results in data gathering and the unwillingness of some to cooperate in data collection relates to reports that police and other authorities are in connivance with trafficking and organized crime rings. Recent IOM/ICMC research in Albania indicates that some police were implicated in trafficking. For instance, about 11 of 125 trafficked women (who were trafficked from or via Montenegro to Albania) said that police escorted them along the way. One trafficked woman said she stayed in a policeman's house.

Programme-related data

Most data on trafficked victims are by-products of counter-trafficking programmes. Currently, there are no large-scale counter-trafficking initiatives in place in Croatia, FRY or Slovenia.

Recommendations

This study highlighted various problems relating to current data collection mechanisms, including information on victim protection and assistance to trafficked women and children. The following recommendations are intended to enhance law enforcement, prevention, victim protection and support, combat trafficking and improve data collection.

✘ The passage or entry into force of compatible and appropriate legislative frameworks in all countries — sending, transit and destination — based on the Protocols on Trafficking and Smuggling of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

Currently, wide variations in legal instruments guarantee neither equal protection for victims of trafficking nor severe penalties for traffickers. As long as legal instruments are insufficient or non-existent, dissimilar and incompatible, traffickers will continue their work with impunity, or simply transfer their operations to countries where penalties are less harsh. The UN Protocols clearly define the distinction between smuggling and trafficking, which should be integrated into all institutions in all of the ratifying States (which include the Balkans, apart from Slovenia which signed only the Convention).

In the interim (before the UN Convention and its Protocols are ratified and implemented), States with inappropriate or non-existent legislation should use existing national and international instruments, such as the Slavery and Forced Labour Conventions and CEDAW, to criminalize traffickers and provide protection and assistance to victims.

✘ The development and strengthening of protection and assistance mechanisms

Trafficked women and children need legal protection adapted for their situation; currently, many are considered perpetrators, often as irregular migrants, in receiving countries and have difficulties adjusting to life in their home countries after returning home. Italy has taken a strong stance by offering comprehensive assistance to victims, including an initial six-month residence permit. Other countries should also consider

this option. Many countries link prolonged stay to testimony against traffickers, which many victims fear. Voluntary return and reintegration options are varied and are increasingly customized to individual needs.

✘ Prevention through socio-economic support and awareness-raising activities presenting the risks and dangers of trafficking and smuggling

Profiles of potential victims and key countries and regions of origin are gradually being established. It is necessary to target socio-economic support to help tackle the reasons causing victims to take the risk, specifically poverty, gender inequalities, limited access to employment, and violence in the home among others.

A recent survey carried out in FYROM for IOM (BRIMA-Gallup) shows that only one-third of Macedonians can distinguish between trafficking and prostitution. Other surveys show that a majority of young Moldovan women would accept job placements abroad regardless of the potential risk. The raising of awareness of the trafficking phenomenon and the promotion of regular migration options are necessary in the countries of origin. Potential victims must understand the realities of migration and learn how to protect themselves should they get into dire situations.

✘ Data segregation in terms of gender, nationality, age and type of exploitation

Much of the available data related directly or indirectly to trafficking is not segregated by gender, nationality, age or type of exploitation. One important step to combat trafficking would be to make reliable, segregated data available. Segregated data provides an insight into profiles of victims, thus helping

establish a profile of potential victims. More precise data on convicted traffickers would support crime fighting, while details of indirect indicators may help to assess the scale of trafficking in general. Sexual exploitation is certainly the most significant, although not the only, form of trafficking in the Balkans and a breakdown into types of exploitation may be useful for destination countries.

✘ Trafficking and migration data should be more differentiated

Much of the data currently available is based on counter-trafficking programmes. These provide detailed and reliable information directly from victims, insufficient both because only a small percentage of actual victims are recognized and offered assistance, and victims know little about the traffickers. Throughout this study, emphasis has been placed on the importance of combining and comparing data sources, particularly as each has its own focus and objectives. Thus data from the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs show the phenomenon from different viewpoints. NGOs and international institutions also have their own perspectives. What is obvious is that a wide variety of data sources and indicators ensure reliable flow of information that can be compared and contrasted.

✘ Appointment of national counter-trafficking coordinator/task force

Data collection mechanisms vary at national and international levels, often due to different attitudes and policies towards trafficking. The appointment of national coordinators or task forces, as recommended by the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, should be pursued to ensure a uniform

treatment of trafficked women and children within the country/territory, to coordinate national strategies and to ensure international cooperation.

✘ Information-sharing at international level

Trafficking is a transnational phenomenon that cannot be stopped by one country or authority alone. Information sharing at international level is thus vital to comprehensively approach efforts to combat trafficking. A standardized, movement towards centralized data gathering mechanism, based on a common definition of trafficking, is essential to successful information exchange.

Better information would help us to understand trafficking flows, and the factors that make women vulnerable to trafficking and which allow traffickers to operate so freely.

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