



Compilation of

# Reports

from the Conference on 'When People are  
Treated as Commodities in the Global Market'

Verona, Italy 26-27 October 2006  
Auditorium, Piazzetta SS. Apostoli  
**Anti-Slavery International 2006**



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## **Introduction**

“Hands Up for Freedom” is a development education project involving a partnership between five non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Anti-Slavery International in London; Comunità Internazionale di Capodarco (CICA) in Rome; IEPALA (Instituto de Estudios Políticos para América Latina y África) in Madrid; Movimento Laici America Latina (MLAL), Progetto Mondo in Verona; and OIKOS in Lisbon.

The project’s purpose is to create public awareness of new forms of slavery and in particular of trafficking in human beings. This is an often misunderstood phenomenon that involves the sexual and labour exploitation of women, men and children, in every part of the world. “Hands Up for Freedom” aims to raise awareness of these issues amongst secondary school and university students, teachers, trade unions representatives, employers, politicians and the general public.

In October 2006, the organisations involved in the “Hands Up for Freedom” project took part in a two-day conference held at the Auditorium in Verona, Italy. Partners were invited from various countries and papers were presented on topics relating to the conference theme, “When People are treated as Commodities in the Global Market”. This report is a summary of some of the information made available during the conference in Verona.

# **The Criminal Dynamics of Human Trafficking in Europe**

Fabrizio Sarrica<sup>1</sup> UNODC

## **Characteristics of Human Trafficking in Europe**

In April 2006, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published its first global report on human trafficking entitled *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*. The report, based on two years of collecting data on trafficking, is an attempt to show the patterns and characteristics of trafficking at a global level. The nature of trafficking itself makes this report necessary. As trafficking often takes on a transnational nature, it cannot be analysed by looking at just one country or one region. Therefore, the report highlights some significant aspects of global trafficking.

The report indicates that the European destination countries most affected by trafficking are in central and southern Europe. The source of trafficking originates mainly from the East, in particular, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Also Asia (China and Thailand) and Africa have notable weight as countries of origin for trafficking to Europe.

In the East-West route, the Eastern European countries and Italy are the principal transit countries. The victims are mainly women employed in forced prostitution, but phenomena such as children being forced to beg or steal and men being exploited in forced labour are growing concerns throughout Europe.

The intensity of trafficking depends on the number of criminal groups organised in the territory, whether in the countries of origin or destination. The ‘organised crime’ factor is one of the most evident causes of trafficking.

## **Criminal Groups in Europe: Trafficking between Eastern and Western Europe**

In recent years, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the UNODC have conducted several studies on the activities of organised

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<sup>1</sup> Fabrizio Sarrica works for the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

crime in Europe.<sup>2</sup> These studies were based on detailed research and interviews with the police, magistrates and victims of trafficking. The results of this research identified the trafficking routes between East and West to be fairly complex but with some very similar characteristics.

There are organised criminal networks of global dimensions, as well as small operative cells that specialise only in certain aspects of trafficking and have intermittent working relationships with those abroad. The frequently used expression is ‘flexible organisations’. Both men and women take part in these organisations, and women always have a specific role to play – either in the process of luring the victims in the countries of origin or in their exploitation in destination countries.

Trafficking is often about multiethnic networks. Local organisations in the countries of origin contact the victims through offers of well-paying jobs in the destination countries. The recruiters develop a trusting relationship with the victims who are often unaware of their future exploitation in the destination countries. This stage of the operation takes place with ease and peace of mind, usually in a public place or at the home of the victims, and involves small groups of one or two people.

In the following stages of transport and exploitation, the situation changes drastically. There is an escalation of violence and isolation that heightens once the victims arrive at their destination. Also the number of persons involved in the trafficking increases in the period following recruitment. We can conclude that it is in the destination countries where the violence of organised crime explodes.

Normally the recruiters and transporters are paid piecemeal and are not considered a partner. A very common characteristic of trafficking throughout Europe is the rotation of the victims from one city to another. This is often done through exchanges between various criminal organisations. The reason behind the rotation is to add to the

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<sup>2</sup> The following studies have been used for the analyses in this section: *Trafficking in Women from Romania to Germany: Comprehensive Report* (March 2005, UNICRI); *Trafficking in Women: The Czech Republic Perspective* (April 2004, UNODC/UNICRI), *Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Human Beings in Poland* (UNICRI).

vulnerability of the victims by minimising the possibility of them developing a relationship with someone in the destination country and asking for help.

The criminal networks are normally specialised in trafficking in persons or related crimes, such as the prostitution, falsifying documents or money laundering. Rarely, at least in these countries, are the same networks involved in other forms of trafficking.

### **Evolution of a Criminal Network Specialised in Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation**

In conclusion, an interesting case study is the evolution of a Polish criminal group that was involved in the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. This example<sup>3</sup> is taken from an investigation carried out by the prosecutor's office. In the late 1990s, this criminal group was involved in the exploitation of women in prostitution along the A2 motorway connecting Warsaw with the German border in the direction of Berlin. A contact from a German criminal group arrived and offered to let the women work in the German part of the motorway where they could earn more money. The profits were divided among the two groups. The women were then taken to German nightclubs with a percentage of the profits going to the Polish criminal group. It is from this point on that trafficking of human beings takes place.

The business began to expand as the Polish group contacted criminal groups from Belarus who recruited women to be trafficked into prostitution in Poland and Germany. Recruiting and exploiting Belarus women is much easier than Polish women because the former do not speak German or Polish. The Polish group bought the women from the recruiters for 2,000 euros and transported them to Germany where the German group then paid the Polish partners 3,000 euros for the transport and expenses plus the usual percentage of the women's labour.

The Polish criminal group understood that it needed to expand and innovate; it began to provide specialised services such as falsified documents, visas, work permits and Polish passports to the Belarus women. At this stage, the Polish police intercepted the criminal

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<sup>3</sup> The case reported in this section is taken from *Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Human Beings in Poland* (UNICRI).

network and arrested the Polish members of the organisation, but the others were not investigated, probably because of a lack of communication between the authorities in Poland, Germany and Belarus. According to the Polish prosecutor's office, the network had trafficked about a hundred Belarus women and dozens of Polish women in the space of a few months.

**Extract taken from:**

**Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children from Eastern Europe and Nigeria: The slaves in our city**

Valeria Scafetta University of Rome

Everything that I will try to tell you begins in a place far away from us, but it develops and ends in our streets, in apartments close to where we live, in known establishments and in silence. An ‘uncivilisation’ that we only notice when the consequences might interfere with our tranquil existence: creating unsightly traffic congestion or disturbing the conscience of our children with the embarrassing spectacle of women for sale.

Public opinion and the majority of citizens feel indignant about trafficking for prostitution, but stop short of taking action other than to look curiously at what lies behind the hidden world where women, who are very often similar in age to their own children, are held in captivity.

There are stories of violence, deprivation of dignity, and psychological and physical torture, as well as stories of girls whose only ‘crime’ was to be born at the wrong place and time and to have believed the wrong person when promised a better life in our beautiful country.

In this report, I will use concepts and conclusions taken from WEST, a project I was involved in.

**From Eastern Europe**

Four nations – Albania, Romania, Ukraine and Moldavia – supply the majority of victims. The number of women brought from each country changes over time, which suggests that the world of prostitution is evolving.

These changes are a result of the impact of the trafficking industry and its management of women. While the women’s nationalities change over the years (for example, the number of Albanians have decreased while the number of Romanians and Moldavians

have risen), the nationality of the traffickers does not. They are consistently Albanians who manage women from their own country, as well as those from other countries.

These women come from situations of extreme poverty and their family – if they have one – needs their financial support. Male and female traffickers and criminal networks take advantage of their vulnerability, and operate without any scruples. Their work is made easier by their victims' young age.

In the WEST research, *Trafficking Flows and Routes from Eastern Europe*, figures indicate that the number of girls being trafficked is on the rise. From more than 1,000 case studies of women and girls trafficked into prostitution, the study showed that 64.79 per cent were between 12 and 21 years old and almost half of them were minors. To bring the message home on how young the victims are, 70.97 per cent of the women and girls were between the ages of 15 and 22. This aspect of trafficking from Eastern Europe is probably the most significant data from the research. The girls, who often come from very poor families, are easily lured by an acquaintance or a family friend by promises of riches and a better life in Italy.

Only a few of the victims – although they certainly exist – are women who already had jobs in their own country or were studying. Most are single or widowed women and girls who come from abusive families or families where the head of the household is a widow struggling to provide for her children. Traffickers take advantage of their poverty by posing as recruitment agents seeking to fill jobs in Italy for carers, waitresses and dancers.

### **From Africa**

We will now draw a parallel with African women and girls, and how they arrive in Italy only to be brutalised and forced to sell their bodies in our cities. Most come from Nigeria and Kenya. Old traditions and new business opportunities play an intrinsic role in their recruitment. In this context, one figure is pivotal: a woman, often a prostitute, who is called a 'madam' or 'sponsor'. She, sometimes with the complicity of the parents, lures the women and girls with promises of a well-paying job in the agricultural or industrial

sector and assures them that she will take care of all the bureaucratic paperwork. As the intermediary of the trafficking network, the madam makes the family of the woman/girl sign a contract for a loan that they have to take out for the journey to Italy. The document does not specify the type of work or the amount of the loan, which is significantly lower than the actual sum that the traffickers demand from their victims upon arrival in Italy. Many African women and girls come to Italy knowing that they will be working in prostitution:

*I came to Italy to work as a prostitute. I knew it and so did my father. I was only 16 years old and for me, being a prostitute meant only giving my body to the customers for a bit and making them pay. But I didn't realise that this business could be so terrible and dangerous.* (A young Nigerian girl)

Women who are trafficked from Kenya often are alone with no family support. They are lured by men who take advantage of their vulnerability by showering the women with affection and promising them a better life in Italy.

### **The Journey from Eastern Europe**

We return to our continent to address another distressing aspect of trafficking: the journey that the women must face in order to reach Italy. Once the women have decided to undertake this trip, which route and means of transport do they take?

There are a variety of different routes. These vary according to who organises the trip – a small group or a wider trafficking network. The women rarely travel alone and the person who accompanies them is not necessarily the one who will exploit them in Italy. At each step of the journey, the women are handed over to someone who knows the country best. This exchange usually occurs at the border. This highlights the existence of an organised structure that meticulously plans all stages of the journey to ensure the safe arrival of the ‘valuable goods’ at the correct destination.

There are two main routes to Italy: a direct maritime route and an indirect one by land. The direct route is carried out using speedboats that cross the short stretch of water

separating the two banks of the Adriatic Sea. The indirect route crosses two territories, the former Yugoslavia and Austria, the latter being the entry point into Italy.

From Romania, there is also a direct route both by land (scheduled buses) and air. Women who use this route normally enter Italy with a tourist visa.

There are many other land routes using cars, trains, vans, boats (to cross rivers and lakes), TIR (International Road Transport), or even on foot (to cross border passes in the mountains).

### **Journey from Nigeria and from Kenya**

I do not have detailed information regarding the travel routes taken by women coming from Africa, but their journey also takes place in various stages. They use many different modes of transport and travel through numerous cities before arriving at their final destination.

From stories told by trafficked African women, it appears that they first take a flight to Europe with stopovers in Moscow, London or Paris. They then continue their journey by land accompanied by several different groups of men who bring other women with them along the way.

**Extract taken from:**

**European Legislation in the Fight against Trafficking of Human Beings**

Giusto Sciacchitano Italian National Anti-Mafia Directorate

In considering the theme of this conference, it is sad to confirm that the trafficking of human beings is similar to the trafficking of other goods coming into Italy, in particular narcotics. In both cases, there is indeed a country of origin, a transit country and a country of destination. The victims, like illicit drugs, are transported from one country to another and are often sold from one criminal group to another before arriving at their final destination.

This type of trafficking is similar to the dark side of globalisation. It is an industry that is growing thanks to the fragile economies of some countries; social situation faced by women in these countries; enormous profit margins; and low risk involved for the traffickers. It is rare that traffickers face prosecution for their crimes.

The trafficking industry is one in which all levels of crime operate: from the small groups to the big international criminal networks where profits are made from activities such as falsifying travel documents and enslaving people into exploitative labour.

To combat the criminal organisations, two parallel action plans have been developed: the first deals with the prevention of trafficking and the protection of its victims. The second focuses on prosecuting the traffickers. Going after individual traffickers is not enough; there must also be an effective anti-trafficking programme which includes measures to protect the victim.

I would make the following observations in relation to anti-trafficking measures:

1. The seriousness of the trafficking phenomenon has captured the attention of the international community. This is illustrated by the establishment of the Palermo

Convention<sup>4</sup> which is the first time the United Nations has taken action to combat transnational organised crime and its various related activities.

2. Having examined many international and European documents on combating trafficking, I feel that we need to look at the reality of this phenomenon in EU countries. The organised criminal network today is no longer made up of small groups aligned to one large organisation or even one country (the Italian mafia and the Colombian cartels are examples of this type of structure). Instead they are made up of many groups of different nationalities and ethnicity where their only point of mutual interest is the profits coming from this illegal activity.
3. On the subject of international legislation and collaboration to combat trafficking, it is essential that the judicial branches of the international community work together, but this is not always sufficient for the following reasons:
  - The responses time is too long;
  - Some countries do not respond at all or their responses are inadequate;
  - Some countries do not have structures in place that would facilitate information sharing and joint activities.
4. Italy is certainly one of the countries that has legislation in place adhering to the principles of the Palermo Convention, its two protocols, and the relevant European legislation. Law number 228, which was passed on 11 August 2003, extends all powers given under the Anti-Mafia legislation to the fight against human trafficking. This is in perfect adherence to the Palermo Convention. In order to properly combat trafficking, procedural laws must be adapted to deal with organised crime and the appropriate investigative methods and techniques indicated in the Convention (phone tapping, undercover police, etc.) need to be incorporated into the investigatory process.

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<sup>4</sup> The United Nations *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) includes the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* and the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*.

5. Another aspect that deserves mention, in regards to Europe, is victim protection. Italy's Article 18 provides more protection for trafficked victims than laws in most other European countries. Northern Europe, in particular, is very resistant to introducing legislation to protect victims. Denmark provides a reflection period of 15 days and then they are deported. Victim protection in Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is practically non-existent.
6. In contrast, Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy) supports, to differing degrees, a policy of victim protection and facilitates the integration of victims by issuing them with a residence permit.

The big unresolved problem, which also affects Italy, is trafficking within the EU. A Polish woman, or in the future a Romanian, who is trafficked into Italy cannot benefit from Article 18, which is intended only for non-EU citizens.

I will conclude this presentation by distributing a document, last updated in December 2005, on trafficking proceedings in Italy.

## **Trafficking for Forced Labour: UK Country Report**

Klára Skrivánková Anti-Slavery International

### **Executive Summary**

Despite the existence of international laws on trafficking, forced labour and all forms of slavery, our research found cases of trafficking of forced labour and labour exploitation occurring in the UK, Ireland, Portugal and the Czech Republic. As the majority of people trafficked for forced labour are not identified as such and not afforded adequate assistance, their rights are unprotected. Therefore they continually find themselves in vulnerable positions. While the problem of trafficking is enormous the responses in place are insufficient and traffickers continue to profit from such situations.

We have no reason to believe that these countries would be exceptions in Europe. It is likely that such situations are common in other EU countries. There is a long list of industries and sectors in which cases of trafficking for forced labour have been identified. The main ones are agriculture, construction, domestic work and hospitality, yet we came across many others, ranging from nail parlours to forced begging.

Migrant workers are a group at risk of trafficking for forced labour. Due to their often insecure and vulnerable situation, they are an easy target for exploiters and find themselves compelled to perform work in conditions amounting to slavery.

We identified four main factors affecting the exploitation of migrant workers that are also underlying causes explaining why migrant workers end up in forced labour as a result of trafficking. The most important common factor, or rather set of factors are: isolation, lack of knowledge of their rights and the multiple dependency of migrant workers. Migrant workers often feel responsible for making a wrong choice and are not aware of the options they have under national and international law. Moreover, they are often selected by crooked employment agents for their lack of knowledge of the local language in the country of destination and are discouraged from learning it. Exploitation for domestic work or care in the private sector is a special case of concern. In these settings identification and intervention from outside are even more difficult. However, in other industries, for example forestry in the Czech Republic, employers undertake much effort

to hide migrant workers away in remote locations and to prevent contact with the local population.

The second factor that has an important impact is the restrictive nature and complexity of the labour and immigration regulations in destination countries. In practice, there is confusion between actions against unauthorised working (the enforcement of immigration control) and action on behalf of unauthorised workers (the enforcement of labour standards and the protection of fundamental human rights). This is particularly evident in the UK where the Immigration Service has quotas for the deportation of certain nationalities. In specific instances, such as with Chinese nationals trafficked into the UK for forced labour this can run in clear contradiction to law enforcement priorities, where investigation of trafficking enterprises demands building trust with trafficking victims, which the threat of deportation singularly undermines.

Restrictive migration regulations force more people to look for alternative ways to realise their migration project, using the services of agents or intermediaries (who sometimes are involved in the trafficking chain) for arrangements, assistance with documents and finding work. These arrangements leave migrants vulnerable to exploitation due to their dependency and high debts. The complexity of regulation in many countries explains why it is not uncommon for migrants, who would be permitted to reside and work somewhere legally, to be exploited on the basis of their belief that they are not meeting immigration requirements. Under those circumstances they can be threatened with exposure to the authorities, where in reality they would in fact be safe from deportation.

The third important factor that plays a role is the threat of violence made against the migrant worker or their family at home. Threats are underlined partly by myths planted by exploitative employers and partly by the knowledge of what happened to fellow workers. Next to debt bondage and the threat of violence, additional strategies used by exploitative agents/employers are to withhold documentation and pay or to create multiple dependency, for example by providing accommodation at extortionate rates. In many cases there is a combination of coercive mechanisms being used.

The fourth major factor is more structural. The increasing demand for cheap labour in many industries and in the service sector in the European Union is partly met though using an exploited labour force. Even in cases where employers pay the legal minimum wage, the increasingly widespread practice of subcontracting creates opportunities for agents to cream off the earnings of the migrant workers. Combined with the urgent need of many people in countries outside the EU to search for a better life, often simply to provide income to meet the basic needs of their families, this provides the circumstances in which people take risks in their migration strategies.

In conclusion, policies need to be developed at the European level to counteract the trafficking of people for forced labour and exploitation in industries other than prostitution. In this context the report highlights a number of additional policy recommendations which would help to tackle trafficking for forced labour:

1. States need to sign up to the Palermo Protocol<sup>5</sup>, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and other relevant instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.
2. Trafficking for forced labour is a global problem requiring global solutions. The UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration Phase II needs to focus on trafficking for forced labour.
3. Trafficking for forced labour must be identified and understood in the context of people's vulnerability. The migrant's method of arrival in the country of destination is not relevant to their identification as a victim of trafficking for forced labour. The situation of exploitation should be the primary determinant and indicator for prompting investigation. It is only by understanding a person's situation of vulnerability that it is possible to properly assess whether their consent was really given freely.

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<sup>5</sup> *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.*

4. Trafficking for forced labour needs to be actively targeted by all relevant actors particularly businesses, trades unions and NGOs.
5. Temporary or permanent residency status and/or access to services should not be dependent upon a trafficked person participating in criminal proceedings.
6. Trafficking for forced labour is in need of further research, particularly in terms of its effective treatment by governments nationally and globally.

Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839, is committed to eliminating all forms of slavery throughout the world. Slavery, servitude and forced labour are violations of individual freedoms, which deny millions of people their basic dignity and fundamental human rights. Anti-Slavery International works to end these abuses by exposing current cases of slavery, campaigning for its eradication, supporting the initiatives of local organisations to release people, and pressing for more effective implementation of international laws against slavery. For further information see: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

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