# Why is gender an important factor in the process of trafficking for sexual exploitation?

## Guide for professionals, with a special focus on the trafficking for sexual exploitation of Romanian women and girls

Gender Interventions for the Rights and Liberties of Women and Girls Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation

Co-funded by the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context of the manual

The current manual represents the work of the project partners: CPE – Center for Partnership and Equality and Adpare - Association for the Development of Alternative Practices for Education and Reintegration (Romania), Expert 4 Europe (Italy) and Fundació SURT (Spain) in providing an instrument for professionals working in the field of trafficking in human beings with the purpose of sexual exploitation. The manual focuses on the significant importance that gender holds in regard to the phenomenon of trafficking, taking gender into account as a root cause for trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation, exploring the multiple manifestations of gender as a vulnerability factor, that influences recruitment, exploitation, prevention, identification, as well as the process of providing services to women and girls who experienced trafficking and who were able to exit the exploitation situation.

The elaboration of the current manual took place in the context of the **GIRL** project **- Gender Interventions for the Rights and Liberties of Women and Girls Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation;** the project aims at raising awareness of and integrating the gender perspective in activities related to fighting trafficking for sexual exploitation (prevention, identification, investigation) and providing support for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (assistance, protection of rights and social reintegration). Specifically, the set objectives for the **GIRL** project were:

1. To evaluate the extent in which the gender dimension, vulnerabilities and inequalities influence trafficking for sexual exploitation and the efficiency of prevention, support, rights recovery and social reintegration of victims at the level of all project partner countries.

2. To develop awareness and working skills of 270 proffessionals (socials assistants and psychologists, teachers and school counsellors, cultural and social mediators, prevention actors) working in the field of trafficking and related fields in understanding and integrating gender issues in the process of identification, prevention, investigation, assistance, protection of rights and social reintegration of victims of trafficking.

3. To develop an extensive trafficking prevention campaign to raise awareness of the gender vulnerabilities and inequalities linked to trafficking for sexual exploitation, to build stronger communities that can protect women and girls from trafficking and to target demand for services provided by victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Step by step, the **GIRL** project means:

- *Research* on gender vulnerabilities and inequalities as risk factors for trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation
- *Awareness and skills* development on diminishing gender vulnerabilities and inequalities as risk factors for trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation
- *Prevention* of trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation from a gender and demand-reduction perspective

The elaboration of the current manual also makes use of the research undertaken in 2015 in all three partner countries (Romania, Italy, Spain), as part of the GIRL project, a research that was based on interviews with professionals, as well as with women survivors of trafficking; however, it is not limited to that, as the current manual also makes best use of the knowledge and information gained as a result of previously implemented projects, such as *GendeRIS - The Gender Dimension in Anti-trafficking Policies*

*and Prevention activities in Romania, Italy and Spain* (2013-2015) and *AnimaNova – Labour Integration for Victims of Trafficking (2009-2012).*

Each project partner was responsible for one section of the manual. Parts of the information, especially the ones related to gender vulnerabilities and trafficking risks, can be found more than once, similarly expressed, in different parts of the publication; however, for the coherence and consistency of each section we have decided to allow it as such, so that the reader who is particularly interested in one section and not the others can have a detailed view from only consulting that particular part of the manual. Also, taking information out would have altered the logic in which each section was developed.

## 1.2 The aim of the manual

The manual has as main aim to provide professionals working in different roles with women survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation or in preventing the phenomenon with **new knowledge concerning the gender vulnerability factors and their impact** on the work in the field of preventing trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation and in the field of supporting and providing direct services to victims, approaching topics such as:

- why is gender a significant factor in the process of trafficking;
- which are the main vulnerability factors for young women and girls;
- how can the occurence of gender stereotyping could be diminished;
- victim blaming and gender vulnerabilities risks in the process of supporting women and girls victims of trafficking;
- developing and implementing gender sensitive prevention campaigns that target potential victims, current victims and clients.

As part of the GIRL project, a total number of **307 professionals** were trained in the context of this manual. The main groups of training beneficiaries under the GIRL project could be summarized as:

1. Social assistants and psychologists providing services for victims from public and private organisations
2. Teachers and school counsellors
3. Cultural and social mediators working with victims of Romanian origin
4. Professionals from organisations who work in trafficking prevention

Part of the training groups were only involved in Romania (for example, teachers and school counsellors), or in Italy and Spain (for example, cultural and social mediators), while other groups were equally involved for the trainings in all countries (social assistants, psychologists, prevention professionals).

In **Romania**, the total number of training beneficiaries comprised **188 professionals from both public institutions and non-governmental organisations**, among which social assistants, psychologists and psychotherapists, case managers, prevention experts, teachers and school counsellors.

In **Italy**, the total number of training beneficiaries comprised **44 professionals from both public institutions and non-governmental organisations**, among which social assistants, psychologists and psychotherapists, case managers, prevention experts and social and cultural mediators.

In **Spain,** the total number of training beneficiaries comprised **75 professionals from both public institutions and non-governmental organisations**, among which social assistants, psychologists and psychotherapists, case managers, prevention experts and social and cultural mediators.

## 1.3 Special acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to the training participants for their active involvement in the process of learning, as well as for their suggestions, comments and questions that were very valuable and supported us in the development of the final contents of the manual.

Further on, we express availability to support the work of other organisations, even after the project finalization, in using this manual; we could provide those professionals and organisations interested with guidance, additional examples or advice on how to introduce the topic of gender when working around the issue of trafficking for sexual exploitation. If interested, please contact us directly at CPE – Center for Partnership and Equality, contact person Livia Aninosanu, Program Director – laninosanu@cpe.ro

# 2. Why working in the anti-trafficking field from a gender perspective

## 2.1 Are gender perspective and knowledge in place?

Taking gender into account when addressing trafficking in women and girls is both a national and a European matter. Early gender socialization, gender relations, perceptions on femininity and masculinity, family roles and shares in power and influence, society's response to gender-based violence, to sexual violence, the early sexualisation of girls, all these aspects make it very difficult for women in general and especially for disadvantaged women to access their full rights and liberties as European citizens and as citizens in general. If women do not exercise their full rights in different contexts and situations, it is particularily difficult for women victims of trafficking to be able to recover after the experience of being sexually exploited, threatened and abused by criminal organisation of immense power, also without benefiting from the support of societies and communities that remain biased and prejudicial in front of sexual crimes against women and girls. Gender does matter: in raising boys and girls, in developing different patterns and dynamics of vulnerabilities, in the recruitment and exploitation process, as well as in the time-period and interventions made after exiting trafficking. If gender is a significant ingredient at all these levels, then it is obvious gender should be present at the level of all activities meant to fight trafficking: in prevention, in investigation, identification, in providing support and assistance, as well as in reintegration.

However, the gender perspective is mostly ignored in the way we work to prevent and combat trafficking, as well as in the way we support survivors of sexual exploitation in the path towards recovery, as well as towards the acknowledgement and processing of the experience and the re-establishment of violated rights.

According to an extensive report elaborated in 2013 as part of the *GendeRIS - The Gender Dimension in Anti-trafficking Policies and Prevention activities in Romania, Italy and Spain* project[1], most legal and policy-establishing documents analysed were gender blind, usually not containing any reference in relation to the gendered causes and impacts of trafficking for sexual exploitation or on gender-related needs. The *Gender Approach Within Anti-Trafficking Prevention Policies* report is based on the analysis, from a gender perspective, of the most significant legislation and policy documents in the trafficking in human beings field, in Romania, Italy and Spain. In the 5 legal documents analysed in the case of *Italy*, for example, only one is regarded as gender sensitive, being considered by the authors "just an isolated positive experience", while the remaining range from being gender neutral to using sexist and stereotypical language. The *Spanish* legal approach, on the other side, tackles the phenomenon of trafficking mainly from a criminal-based approach, being more focused on fighting against irregular migration rather than defending human rights[2]; an overview of the 5 Spanish documents that were analysed leads the authors to the conclusion that trafficking is either perceived as a gender-neutral phenomenon or gender equality is mentioned as a principle (in policies against trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation) but it is not translated into sufficiently clear and specific measures. 15 legal documents were analysed in the case of *Romania*, which mostly contained gender-neutral language; however, even when the gender perspective is present, it mainly remains included in a rather minimal and non-specific way. The main risk with regard to taking the step of making the legislation less gender blind without setting up clear evaluation indicators and binding requirements in terms of further implementation is that

1 www.genderis.org

2 More recent modifications in Spanish law and new political instruments seem to be more indicative of theinclusion of a rights-based approach (e.g. Law 4/2015, on the Statute of the Victims of Crime).

those provisions will not produce significant impact on the way intervention actions and measures are designed and implemented.

The previously quoted report also included a series of interviews with professionals working in the anti-trafficking field at different levels, from high decision-making positions to operational roles. As a whole, there seemed to be a very low awareness, especially among professionals from public institutions (in Italy, for example), with regard to the gender perspective and its impact on trafficking; gender aspects were seen in a very fragmented and non-coherent manner, and were only mirrored in statistics, in the perception of some of the interviewees, where the numbers of sexually exploited women were significantly higher; however, not even this was a convincing argument for some of the professionals who stated that specific actions are not needed and that gender should not be taken into account, not even at the level of gender specific prevention activities. In the case of Romania, the qualitative research report indicated that very little gender knowledge was/is available to specialists working in the field of trafficking or in connected fields. Most professionals did never benefit from trainings on gender issues and, as a result, they are not aware of the importance of gender in the process of recruitment, trafficking and how these aspects could be used to ensure better prevention, better assistance services and better intervention in the field of trafficking. Most professionals acknowledge the need for gender training as important for their work and also consider that in most cases their expertise in the field only comes from practical experience, from directly working with women victims of trafficking who were beneficiaries of their services. The interviewees consider there is still a high need to implement policies and actions in the field from a gender perspective and to look at trafficking through the lens of social gender relations. Benefiting from training on gender issues would actually allow for a better understanding of gender as a risk factor and would provide them with new awareness and instruments in performing their work from a gender perspective.

In the view of the research report elaborated on the basis of the interviews with professionals that were organized as part of the GIRL project, the same aspects that were assessed in 2013 significantly vary from one country to another. In the case of Spain, for example, it is considered that several of the interviewees had a good knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking for sexual exploitation and the degree of gender awareness was also very high in most cases, while, for instance, in the case of Italy, it is stated that several gender issues were bought up during the interviews, however in relation to aspects that can still be traced to a single issue, namely that of a position of vulnerability at different stages in the process. The Italian professionals also stressed out that, given the recognized importance of gender issues in the analysis and design of prevention, contrast and protection of victims, a strong difficulty is related to the sensitivity of the public opinion and professionals in this respect, which therefore leads to a limited integration of practices, particularly in relation to prevention interventions in countries of origin (aimed at potential victims or to the main social groups that should ensure a secure environment) and in destination countries (aimed at clients and the public in relation to the understanding of the phenomenon). In the case of Romania, most respondents were well informed and had experience and knowledge in the field of trafficking in human beings. However, in the case of gender awareness and understanding of the relationship between gender and trafficking for sexual exploitation, a lack of expertise was evident, reflected in the reluctance or incapacity of almost 1/3 of the interviewees to answer the questions. The respondents who did answer underlined that gender inequality still exists in the society, and that its effects are also present in the case of the trafficking phenomenon (women in the role of the victim, men as clients and numerous traffickers).

In the European provisions regarding trafficking in human beings - *Directive 2011/36/EU, the 2012 – 2016 EU Strategy to eradicate trafficking* - this phenomenon is directly connected to the gender perspective. It is considered that violence against women and gender-based inequality are the main causes of trafficking, which prevent women from enjoying the same rights as men and increase their vulnerability to trafficking (European Parliament, 2015).

In the previous years before the above mentioned strategy was adopted, the European Commission also opined, in a statement from 2004 on trafficking in human beings, that the most important factors leading to the phenomenon are poverty and the unemployment levels in the countries of origin of the victims (directly caused, among others, by lack of social reform, and declining industry and agriculture),

together with gender inequality and discrimination, and tolerance for violence against women, in both countries of origin and in destination countries.

Another source of reference for the understanding of the need to approach anti-trafficking policies and actions from a gender perspective is the *Study on Gender Dimension of Trafficking in Human Beings,* published by the European Commission in 2016. The study stresses the fact that trafficking is gender specific, as well as the victims of trafficking in human beings for different purposes and the harms resulting from trafficking. In particular, taking into account the specific needs of women and girls who are subjected to trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, the study underlines the fact that the harms from this form of trafficking are different from the harms from trafficking for purposes of labour and other forms of exploitation.

## 2.2 Who are the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation?

Global research and statistics show that women and girls represent the majority of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. According to trafficking reports released by *Eurostat* in 2013 among the victims identified between 2008 and 2010 (more than 30,000 in 28 Member States), 68% were female, 12% girls, 17% men and 3% boys. The data only include the victims identified by authorities - so the real number is actually much higher. The most widespread form of exploitation was sexual exploitation (69%), women and girls representing the majority of the victims (95%). The same report appreciates that trafficking in human beings is strongly influenced by gender. Data of the period 2010-2012, presented by *Eurostat* in 2015, also underlined the fact that 80% of the victims registered in the European Union are women (out of which 67% women and 13% girls). Most of them (69%) were trafficked for sexual exploitation, women and girls accounting for 85% of the whole percentage. 45% of the registered victims were 25 years old or over, 36% were between 18 and 24 years old, 17% were between 12 and 17 years old and 2% were between 0 and 11 years old. Most of the registered victims came from Romania and Bulgaria, Romania reporting also, in the reference period, an increase in the number of underage victims.

In the case of Romania, the destination country the project focuses on, the data available in the research and statistics provided annually by the *National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (NATIP – Agentia Nationala impotriva Traficului de Persoane)* show that women are constantly more numerous as identified victims of trafficking, and that the main form of exploitation is sexual exploitation. Moreover, the numbers of sexually exploited underage girls has increased in the past years. According to data on the sexual exploitation phenomenon made public in 2013 by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, based on the main characteristics of the victims identified between January 1st, 2012 and June 30th, 2013, 97.6% of sexual exploitation victims are women and girls. Of the 733 sexually exploited victims, 326 were women and 390 - girls. This was the first year when the number of exploited underage girls was larger than the number of women over 18 years old (55% compared to 45%). The youngest identified victim belonged to the 7 to 9 years old age category. Moreover, 25 victims were aged 10 to 13, 365 victims were aged 14 to 17, 285 - 18 to 25, 35 - 26 to 40, and 3 victims - 41 to 60. In the case of the data provided by the NATIP for 2014, an increase appears in the number of adult female victims, compared to 2013. In 2014, out of the total 467 adult victims, 283 were women (61%). The most vulnerable age category continues to be women aged 18 to 25 (279 victims). However, a significant number of minors aged 14 to 17 years old also became trafficking victims (251). The percentages are, in fact, very close. In 2014, sexual exploitation and child and online pornography remain on the top spot among exploitation methods, with 66% of the total. The gender distribution of victims identified in 2014 shows that 74% of the victims are female and 26% are male. In 2015, NATIP official data show an increase in the number of male minors sexually exploited, but women and girls continue to make up most of the victims, amounting to 66% of the total.

Concerning the research reports that were undertaken in the previous years, the *Hopes, for Sale* qualitative research report, published in 2012 as part of the AnimaNova project, had already underlined the tendency of decrease in the age of victims, a phenomenon that was obvious to the professionals directly working in the field. According to the report, sexual exploitation victims are aged 10 to 47. These

represent the lower and upper limit of the range. Most victims are female, but sexually exploited male victims have also been recorded (mostly teens, underage). Generally, the great majority of the victims are aged 14 to 25 (”this is the age envisaged for sexual exploitation”).

> *Young girls. Ever younger. That`s how I feel. Teenagers as young as 14-15.” (Interview with a governmental institution representative)*

The decrease in victims’ age is connected, by the *Hopes, for Sale* report respondents, to the evolution of internal trafficking for sexual exploitation, since it is much more difficult to take underage victims out of the country without identification papers or parent approval. Respondents often note that traffickers resorted to false papers in order to take the victims abroad. However, these methods were found to be too risky – which led to the development of internal exploitation networks. As some research participants noted, the smaller the victim`s age, the larger the number of clients – and implicitly the higher the profit.

> *A 15 year old girl, held captive in a German brothel for a month and a half, until we found her – because the parents started looking the moment she disappeared from home – brought in 79,000 Euro.” (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *I find it horrible to take a kid of 11 and a half year old out on the street. What I find even more awful is that they also had very many clients. So they were the most sought after.” (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

The same conclusions, regarding the low age of the victims of sexual exploitation, are also pointed out as part of the GIRL research, in both the Italian and Spanish reports; the same view on the phenomenon is reflected in the perceptions of Romanian professionals, who indicated a constant decreasing tendency on the age of the sexually exploited victims, especially in the country, in internal trafficking.

> *Numbers have not increased, but age distribution is now wider. If I think about it, during the last year we have had mostly underage girls. (...) At least in our case, with the services we provide.” (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *However, most persons trafficked internally are underage. (...) They come into the program when they are 14, so they were recruited before reaching that age.” (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *We believe that the prospect will stay... within the same parameters. Sexual exploitation will remain the main form of trafficking. We’ll still talk about women and young girls being exploited. Unfortunately, even though measures are being taken in this respect, we’ll see a decline in the age of sexually exploited victims.” (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *Our road unit works in the city of Milan and for years now Romania has been the predominant nationality of the girls. In the case of Romania we talk about girls and women. Romania accounts for 60% of contacts and, more or less, every year, we record 400 contacts with girls of Romanian nationality.” (Interview with an Italian professional)*

> *But in recent years we are finding very young, very young victims, who probably come to Spain when they turn 18 or 19.” (Interview with a Spanish professional)*

According to the *Study on High-Risk Groups for Trafficking in Human Beings,* launched by the European Commission in 2015, the extent to which a child is vulnerable to trafficking is only rarely determined by one particular factor, but rather by a combination of circumstances they are exposed to and that result in them becoming victims of trafficking. Four main groups of factors were however mentioned, respectively individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural. Two individual factors seem to have a crucial importance (a history of abuse and a vulnerable emotional state) and could often be traced back to a dysfunctional family situation, underpinned by material deprivation. Concerning the family-related factors, a situation of family breakdown was considered to be especially important, as it often manifested itself in neglect, abuse or abandonment of children. The report mentions two specific cases, one of them being that of children from Eastern European countries whose parents had either no means of su-

staining their upbringing or had migrated abroad for economic reasons, leaving the children in the care of relatives or in a residential care facility. Dysfunctional families are also connected to child trafficking, as they usually involve one or more family members as perpetrators. Similarly, social exclusion and marginalization were commonly associated with poverty and lack of opportunities, which influenced both the emotional state of children and their overall risk-taking behaviour, as they sought ways to escape the situation. In terms of structural factors, a general culture and tendency in society to discriminate against women and children and to tolerate violence and exploitation were underlined.

Taking into account risk profiles, the study mentions as children most at risk the following categories: children victims of family violence, abuse and neglect, children subject of a migration project planned by their families, children left alone, children victims of war, crisis and (natural) disaster, children engaging in risky behaviour, children with physical, learning and developmental disabilities and children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods.

## 2.3 Which are the main challenges?

The phenomenon of trafficking in human beings has a diverse and complex range of causes and is influenced by social, economic, cultural, geographical, geo-political and other factors. Specific contexts may lead to increased vulnerability and risk of exploitation by trafficking: poverty, lack of social and economic opportunities, human rights violations, oppression, armed conflicts, socio-political instability, involvement of organized crime groups, the lack of legislation in the field and of the political commitment to fight against trafficking, political corruption, natural disasters, as well as the devaluation of women and girls at the social level, and the desire to migrate - which can be exploited by traffickers (UNODC, 2008) .

Gender represents a significant vulnerability factor for women and girls in relation to trafficking in human beings; unequal gender relations represent one of the root causes of the phenomenon. This reality is recognized and integrated in action plans, strategies and international legal provisions concerning the prevention and the fight against this phenomenon –even if often this recognition does not translate into effective measures. To look at trafficking in human beings from a gender perspective is to recognize the fact that the differences and social inequalities between women and men influence the contexts, impact and consequences of the phenomenon.

Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation require a shift in the perceptions and stereotypes related to the image of women and men, and to the roles and expectations for each gender. However, to do this, one must be aware of the connections between our perceptions, prejudices and expectations concerning the roles and behaviours of women and men, and of the way we interact with either gender, as well as of the consequences of women`s exploitation and trafficking.

### The status of women and girls in societies

Stereotypes and prejudice concerning women and girls often cause and perpetuate their discrimination in the society, in various fields, such as the labour market (e.g. having access to and keeping a job, lower wages for the same work as men or for work of equal value, over-representation in lower paid fields of activities, which are considered ”feminized”), education, health, representation in politics and decision-making, as well as in the private life (unequal distribution of responsibilities for raising children and looking after other family members in need of care, uneven distribution of domestic tasks). Still tributary to patriarchal conceptions, society exposes women to the male authority, as well as to situations of abuse and violence. Moreover, the way the media promotes women`s image, focusing on objectification and sexualisation of women’s bodies, influences the perpetuation and strengthening of gender stereotypes and the proliferation of discriminatory behaviours.

Examples of such stereotypes and prejudices that are present and perpetuated within the society are very common and widespread:

- men have certain physical needs that must be satisfied, women are and should be available sexual objects
- men should occupy the decision-making positions, in both public and private lives, which places women in submissive positions in both spaces
- women's roles are more important within the private life/the household, while men's roles are rather associated with work, resources and generally the public life
- violence exists at the level of all societies, disguised as normal patterns of interaction
- social pressures are still strong on women concerning issues such as virginity, marriage, starting a family, giving birth to a child.

The statute and the position of women in many family contexts are often at a disadvantage compared to men. Gender stereotypes and prejudices associate women with the image of mothers, wives and consumers of goods, while men are seen as heads of the family, strong and in control, providers of the family income, public figures and producers of goods.

Women are represented in connection with domestic roles, while men are assigned roles in the public space. Considering thebiological role of women as a social role, including caring for children and for other dependent individuals, and fulfilling domestic tasks (household work - cleaning, cooking, washing), often results in less time allotted to paid work, less spare time, as well as an increased financial dependence, or overburdens women with a second shift of unpaid work (household work) after a long day of paid work in the labour market. Women have less control over material resources (income, properties), as well as non-material resources (taking decision within the family and in the public space/ politics, time management).

### Poverty and lack of opportunities affecting women and girls

Poverty and the lack of job opportunities are factors that deeply affect women and increase their vulnerability to trafficking. The economic motivation – the high level of poverty in the families of the victims, the difficulty of finding jobs within the community - is a vulnerability factor for victims of trafficking, according to the professionals working directly with this category (Aninosanu, 2012):

> *Poverty plays its part. Most girls leave because they want a steady income, in order to live a somewhat decent life... There are areas of extreme poverty, with no jobs, where the parents don't work, and there is no steady, constant income in the family. The fact that you are condemned to live in poverty, in a shack, without a certain future, often makes the girls choose what they think is the good life abroad". "They were pretty poor. The whole village was poor, not just their family. There weren't many choices, besides working in the field. That was about it". (interview with a Romanian professional)*

Research shows that women are facing a high degree of poverty. According to data published in 2011 in a *Eurostat* study, Romanian and Bulgarian women are the most exposed to the risk of poverty. The study also shows that Romania is among the states where the percentage of employed women is fairly low**.** More recent *Eurostat* data show that women are more exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion than men. Thus, for the year 2013, 25.4% of women were at risk of poverty and social exclusion at EU level, compared to 23.6% of men. For women and men alike, young people aged 18 to 24 are most exposed to poverty and exclusion risks, as well as single parents, families with many children, people with lower levels of education and migrants.

A study conducted in Romania by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons in 2014 shows that victims of trafficking in human beings are affected by the lack of job opportunities in their place of residence, especially in the rural area.

A recent report about poverty issues (European Parliament, 2015) shows that poverty levels in EU countries have increased and that women continue to be more affected by poverty than men. The wo-

men most exposed to the risk of poverty are migrants and single mothers. Women's poverty rates in the EU vary from country to country. Romania is in the higher pole (30%), compared to with other countries, such as Denmark, for example (7%).

The same conclusions are present in different other research reports or position papers. In their professional life, women are facing inequality as regards the access to jobs, lower income than men for the same job, integration in "feminine" jobs (such as health, education etc.), which are lower paid than the fields dominated by men, harassment and discrimination at the workplace. The so-called "feminization" of poverty, the lack of economic opportunities, gender stereotypes and prejudices, and early sexualisation of girls directly increase women's risk of abusive involvement in situations of trafficking, violence and sexual exploitation (Aretusa, 2012). Moreover, all these aspects make the psychological and social recovery of women subjected to trafficking for sexual exploitation very difficult.

According to the official data available for Romania, comprised in the *Women and Men, Work and Life Partnership* report released by the National Institute of Statistics in 2015, the following data is relevant for understanding the specific challenges women face in the field of employment:

- the employment rate of men (67.6%) is higher than the one of women (52.6%) and women are working, on average, almost two hours less per week than men
- women are the majority in the economically inactive population of 15 years and over
- there are almost 3 times less women employers than men employers
- women prevail in the group of civil servants, while men prevail in the group of leaders and senior officials in the public administration and socio-economic units
- men are better remunerated in most economic activities and the gender gap in terms of average gross earnings of women and men varies widely at the local level (for example, in the year 2012 women were paid less than men on average by 9.9%)
- the income of households headed by men is sensitively higher than that of women-headed households

Poverty and the lack of opportunities are also frequently mentioned among the main vulnerability factors leading to trafficking in human beings by both professionals and the victims interviewed as part of the qualitative research undertaken in the GIRL project. Survival in conditions that are below the subsistence level, the inability of creating a more positive context, which would allow decent living conditions, repeated experiences of labour market abuse and discrimination and the perception that the situation cannot be improved, all lead to the belief that working abroad could be an answer for a better life. This often results in taking high level risks; levels of desperation and hopelessness could rise to such high points that any offer is interpreted as an opportunity to improve the current state:

> *There are people who have not questioned this issue. Somebody came, he told them he is taking them to work, all will be fine, they will earn hundreds of euro and they left. And she wasn't even 12 years old, she was an adult. But she was living in conditions that made her think that it can only be better than this." (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

The realities of poverty experienced by some of the victims of trafficking during their childhood and mentioned during the interviews as very traumatic and troubling life experiences for both themselves and their close family are picturing a context of profound suffering and highly diminished security, where there is no social network to rely on and no plausible solutions; the entire family is at risk and this is reflected in a worsening of the family relationships and especially in the aggravation of mental health conditions of those impacted by unemployment, for instance, as well as in the incapacity of the parents to properly care for their children becoming apparent, even if hard to understand by a little girl.

> *Yes, it was a very tough period. I was five then, and my brother was nine. But I saw everything as an adult. I saw fights for reasons I didn't know. At that age, I didn't understand everything, but still, I understood some of it. Yes, these things made me suffer quite a lot; they hurt me a lot, and*

*still hurt when I think about them. I know that you should not be false, that you should be yourself, but you must find solutions. It was during Ceausescu's rule, those were different times. Yes, maybe there were no associations or places where people could go for help. I know that my father, when I was that age, used to go sell clothes from the house, or distribute fliers, so that we could buy a loaf of bread and share it among the four of us. Sometimes we'd just eat salt. Other times I felt sick because I had nothing to eat. I just sat and waited for food. All of this was because...my father had very big problems with his nerves. Now, he is more at peace, but he had very serious problems because of money. This also affected me. Most people who have children these days, when they realize they don't have money, they get very scared and make mistakes." (Interview with a Romanian woman survivor of trafficking)*

### Portraits of women and girls in the media

The models of women that media portrays remain, themselves, highly impacted by stereotypes. The media promotes and creates unrealistic messages and images about women and girls, focusing on body, beauty and physical perfection. Girls and teenagers adopt the models advanced by the media and develop various problems: an obsession with dieting, anorexia, the desire to imitate and to compare themselves with the "idols" presented by the media, and the disappointment and negative self-esteem impact caused by such comparisons. The promotion and broadcasting of stereotypical images of women in the media encourages women's objectification, and strongly influences young people in this respect.

Research shows (Grunberg, 2005) that media mainly associates women with the position of "the star", while men are mostly associated with the image of the politician. Women in politics are much less visible in the media. When women are presented, they appear in connection to family life, social life, or clothing style. They are presented as mothers, wives, friends, and often show up as victims. They are not presented in leader roles, and often appear in a degrading context, or scantily clad.

Femininity is associated with passivity, corporality, dependence and the domestic environment, while masculinity is associated with activism, dynamism, the public space, the position of the leader.

The sexualisation of the girls' image and the glorification of physical appearance and perfect sizes are very toxic for girls. They affect their physical and mental health: undermining self-confidence, creating low self-esteem, dissatisfaction and discomfort towards their own body, shame, anxiety, depression, lower attention span and concentration, eating disorders, lack of correct and healthy representations of their own sexuality, unrealistic and/or negative expectations concerning sexuality and sexual problems during adulthood. These stereotypical beliefs concerning women and sexuality, such as the perception of women as sexual objects, excessive valorisation of attractiveness and physical appearance, are internalized and might cause subsumed attitudes and behaviours: sexism, violence against women, sexual harassment etc.

Another extremely serious issue is that the sexualisation of women affects the girls from an early age, when the process of sexual growth is just beginning. They are exposed to various messages in teenage magazines, online, in video games, music videos, on TV and even in the toy industry, where female characters are frequently presented in attractive, seductive stances, through their attitude and clothing style. These messages suggest that being sexy is a desirable value, which attracts popularity and success. Hence, they encourage and even pressure girls to adopt these attitudes and to seem more mature than they really are.

Also according to a study released by CPE – Center for Parnership and Equality in 2016, focusing on how teenagers are portrayed in the media, which analysed the tabloid press, the generalist press, teen magazines and forums, emphasizes on the significant role of the media in promoting and perpetuating stereotypes about women, with very serious consequences. The conclusions of this research show that women are portrayed in the text and the images as victims, housewives or sex-bombs, in positions which objectify and sexualize them - even teenage girls. This has direct implications related to confidence in their own bodies, discriminatory behaviours and attitudes towards women, inequality and violence

against women. The study focuses on a very serious fact: women are constantly presented in the media as sexually available, which promotes the message that they are not the only ones who have rights over their own bodies. It's well-worth noting that this message never appears in the case of men. These continuously available and very powerful messages are also thought to have an impact on the social perceptions concerning rape and other forms of sexual violence: women who suffered sexual violence are perceived as provoking and having an active role in the crime, victim blaming being a common reaction to crimes against women and girls.

### Abuse and violence impacting women and girls

A research undertaken in Romania and Italy in 2012, based on interviews with professionals from both countries and with Romanian women survivors of trafficking shows that a significant number of women victims of trafficking suffered psychological, physical and sexual abuse during their childhood within the family, or come from families in difficult situations (economic, health) and dysfunctional families dominated by domestic violence (Aninosanu, 2012). The situations most victims went through, as described in various studies, illustrate the distribution of the roles in most Romanian families, especially in the rural environment: the central figure is the father (or, in the absence of the biological father, the stepfather, the partner or another male family member), often abusive, violent and dominating; the woman is on an inferior position, with household tasks, which most times she handles exclusively and from an early age, often experiencing constant violence. This traditional model of the woman, in which she appears in a submissive situation and is associated with domestic tasks, marriage, raising and looking after children, and which minimizes the importance of education for the social evolution of girls and women, is a "dangerous model, which leads to women being deprived of their personality and individuality, and to their transformation into a commodity, an object of exchange between men - this is the road to trafficking for sexual exploitation".

In this context, the violence between the trafficker and the victim represents, in its turn, a rapport of domination, of absolute power and dependency, mimicking the relationships within the original family.

The Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons reports from 2014 also show that some of the factors that make women vulnerable to trafficking are the dysfunctional families, with tense relationships, domestic violence, and alcohol or drug consumption. The victims' desire to escape an abusive or neglectful environment leads them to accept various promises about jobs, and to offer unconditional trust to friends, as well as strangers. Other official statistics provided by public institutions underline the gravity of the phenomenon; we are considering especially those cases in which violence against women had the death of the victim as a consequence: 175 deaths were reported in 2010, 138 in 2011, 141 in 2012, and 142 in 2014. The phenomenon of violence in the context of the family appears to be in an expansion trend: from 11.592 cases reported in 2010 to 14.376 cases reported in 2012. The average timing for the release of a protection order, which according to the law is 72 hours from its request, could however add to approximately 33 days.

The connection between trafficking in human beings and domestic violence, and the vulnerability to trafficking of individuals subjected to domestic violence constituted the subject of a dedicated analysis (USAID, 2007) . This analysis shows that domestic violence causes lower self-esteem in girls and women, and represents a factor that forces an escape from the violent situation, thereby increasing the risk and vulnerability to traffickers. Domestic violence and abuse situations may encourage the girls to skip school, lower the interest and involvement in education, or lead them towards dangerous activities (such as drug consumption). In the case of women, such situations lower the chances of getting a job in their own countries and increase the intention to migrate, especially in the context of economic crisis.

The data of the studies presented show that many of the victims of trafficking benefiting from services and assistance come from dysfunctional, conflictual families, and suffered various types of abuse and domestic violence. The desire to escape family abuse and the vulnerability caused by these situations are factors that considerably increase the risk of trafficking. Many traffickers take advantage of these situations by presenting themselves as trustworthy persons, who promise material support, understanding and empathy.

The analysis presents various data from Romania and other countries with cases of victims of trafficking who reported family violence. Thus, almost 41% of 194 sexually exploited victims from Romania reported domestic violence and dysfunction in 2003, and 36.4% of 193 victims in 2004. Of these percentages, domestic violence situations prevailed in 30.8% of the cases in 2003 and 33,1% in 2004. Also, 1.4% of trafficking victims in 2003 and 1.3% in 2004 were subjected to incest situations. Some of these victims said that these situations of abuse and violence made them want to escape by leaving abroad. The work presents the case of a victim who wanted to run away from her constantly and violently abusive husband, and who was caught in a trafficking situation after she accepted a proposition to work abroad. Another woman found herself in a sexual trafficking situation in Italy, after she wanted to escape her stepfather, who was abusive.

The connection between the acts of abuse and violence against women is also reflected in a research paper dedicated to the gender perspective in policies and activities of trafficking in human beings prevention in Romania, Italy and Spain, which focuses on the need to integrate the gender perspective when approaching trafficking, especially considering the tight connection between family abuse and violence and the recruitment patterns used when initiating the trafficking process (GendeRIS, 2014). This standpoint is enforced by an expert in the fight against trafficking, interviewed as part of the research:

> *The gender perspective is barely taken into consideration, even though this should be the start point for many campaigns, especially in the case of sexual exploitation, because... recruitment methods are tightly interconnected with domestic violence, with violence against women in general, sexual abuse from an early age, the fact that parents are disappointed for having girls, not boys. Families don't talk about the gender perspective. We just have the woman and the man - we know this is the issue. So, from the very beginning, the image of the trafficker is the image of the man... If we ask somebody what the image of the trafficker is, they'll say it's the man, who has a position of power over the woman." (Interview with a Romanian professional)*

The vulnerability of trafficking victims, irrespective of its causes – social, economic, familial etc. - is something traffickers take advantage of, in various ways. One of the recruitment methods, the *lover boy method,* consisting of a man presenting himself as a saviour, actually tends to the victim's immediate needs for love, self-confidence, fulfilling future projects, safety etc., and fulfils the social mandate of getting married and having a life partner and children as measures of women's role and success in life. This dynamic was also described, within a previously-mentioned research about trafficking, by several professionals from government organisations and NGOs, who underlined the emotional relationship of the victim with the trafficker (Aninosanu, 2012):

> *He is protective and caring, he spoils them, he listens to them. He doesn't really give them money, but he buys them presents, clothes. "Poor thing, you don't have socks, let be buy you some. Let's go shopping together. Oh, no, you don't have a mother!" Or "your mother doesn't take care of you, your dad is a drunk", and so on. They invest time and energy so that the girls become emotionally attached to them and see their dream parent in them" (interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *These things push the girls to the other side, because they don't feel appreciated by their parents. They say "my folks think I'm broken, I'm bad at school, they don't like how I look, I'm the ugly duckling, I'm stupid, I'm an idiot". They look for appreciation somewhere else, and they get the confirmation they need: "you are wonderful, you're smart, you're beautiful" (interview with a Romanian professional)*

> *All girls who were trafficking victims always saw the positive, bright side of things. They thought they could have a better life, they would be loved for who they were. They became more confident - something they never had in the family. They never thought about bad things, because recruiters also have to save face. You never beat the girl the first day you meet her!" (interview with a Romanian professional)*

The importance of the gender perspective in approaching trafficking in human beings becomes evident

when showing the relational and gender socialization factors; these factors prove there is a connection between vulnerability to traffic and situations of emotional neglectfulness, abuse and violence experienced by the victims within their own families, as well as a connection of this vulnerability and growing in a family and community environment which promotes the acceptance of women's dependency on men, discourages assertiveness and self-confidence in women, and is indifferent to violence against women and girls.

***Case study 1***

In 2014, in a village from Vaslui County, Romania a student was approached by a young man she knew; he proposed to drive her home, as he lived in a village next to hers. However, she was not taken home, but instead gang raped by the man and his friends. Given the atrocity of the act, as well as the attitude of indifference and disrespect of the young men even during the criminal investigation and criminal trial proceedings, the media coverage of the case was significant. Some of the statements the rapists publicly provided describing their act, as well as the potential legal consequences, were: "We don't deserve a punishment of five years for a crime of five minutes!", "We want a sentence equal to the duration of the pleasure!" or "It was not rape, it was just surprise sex!" (source: adevarul.ro).

The media coverage often consisted of several interviews being taken, of relatives, friends of the aggressors and a part of the community, including women and teenage girls, who often spoke in support the aggressors and their actions, and placed the blame and responsibility on the victim, pointing out that she is the one who instigated the act. Some of the statements are very relevant: "(the victim) destroyed 7 families, religious people who never had any problems with the law", "(the victim) set the group rape up", "(the act) is just a mistake due to young age", "It serves her right - she got in the car with seven men. If she had been a good girl, she would have been fine", "They shouldn't have done that, but as far as I heard, the girl might also share some of the blame". Although most of them do not know the victim, they say, however, that she is "a rotten fruit".

Moreover, some young people within the community set up Facebook support groups for the rapists, with messages that minimize and make fun of the act of rape: "Let's support the boys!". The mother of the man proposing the ride to the victim also created a Facebook group with the public objective of identifying any negative information regarding the woman, which would support her son's innocence during the trial. The group was, however, closed soon after.

The media coverage, even expressing good intentions, also meant grave breaches in the rights of the victim and in the ethics of covering cases of sexual violence. The identity of the victim was made public and none of the details of the case were protected; in this manner, the focus shifted, turning the case from a political point of reference (which could be used in support of changing the existing system in the field of sexual violence and in providing better and more integrated services for victims) into yet another voyeuristic, sensationalistic subject for the general public.

***Case study 2***

The previous case should also be read and understood in the context of the general attitude towards sexual violence, sometimes publicly supported by well-known professionals. In 2010, for example, in the context of a situation that took place in Iasi (a man attacked women on the street by poking them with a penknife), a famous professor and criminology expert, Tudorel Butoi, invited to a TV show covering the story, made offensive remarks about women: he said most women assaulted on the street, in parks or in elevators are "women who behave like Balkan bimbos", and that "women should be careful and shouldn't roam through parks, like explorers in the middle of the night". These statements grant mitigating circumstances to the assaulters, who are allegedly provoked by the victims' libertine behaviour.

Several NGOs filed a complaint to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), considering that these statements offend women's dignity, place the blame on the victims and promote the idea that violence against women (in this case, rape) can be justified by a certain kind of behaviour on the part of the victims. NCCD considered that the statements were discriminatory: *"...They go beyond what is needed in order to prevent violence against women, and transfer the responsibility to the victims. [...] The effect of the stereotype promoted by the defendant leads to women being afraid to make a rape or other types of physical abuse public, which results in the failure to punish the culprits; it also generates a feeling of exoneration and impunity for violent individuals. This effect does not help prevention, but the very individuals who commit violent acts. It doesn't help the assaulters' victims either. On the contrary, it makes their situation more difficult, because of how they are perceived by society...".*

It is obvious that the factors resulting in exposure to trafficking in human beings, especially to trafficking for sexual exploitation, are complex, strongly gendered and have a strong foundation in the way the rights of women and girls are respected and promoted. The challenges Romanian women face are not culturally or geographically-specific, they are actually global challenges, instances of inequalities and inequities women and girls face at a global level. The responses should be adjusted to these specific realities, for an efficient prevention, intervention, as well as for adequate assistance offered to victims of trafficking, especially trafficking for sexual exploitation. The professionals working in the above-mentioned fields should benefit from gender awareness and sensitisation trainings, with a special focus on how gender inequalities and discrimination impact women and girls during all life cycles. Also, building efficient protection systems and having a rights-based approach are essential.

# 3. Prevention of trafficking from a gender perspective: practical guidelines for schools and organisations involved in prevention work

## 3.1 What is prevention?

Under European Union law (Directive 2011/36/EU) and international law (Council of Europe Trafficking Convention), States have an obligation **to take proactive and positive measures to prevent trafficking**. Prevention is part of the 4P approach to combat trafficking: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnership. According to the international standards (UN Protocol, Council of Europe Trafficking Convention, EU Directive 2011/36/EU), anti-trafficking policies and measures need to adopt a comprehensive approach to trafficking in persons, which addresses all aspects of the crime and which balances criminal justice concerns with the need to ensure the rights and protection of victims and to address the factors that increase vulnerability to trafficking.

As stated by the EU directive, the mainstreaming of the gender perspective is part of an effective prevention framework: *"Member States should establish and/or strengthen policies to prevent trafficking in human beings, including measures to discourage and reduce the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation, and measures to reduce the risk of people becoming victims of trafficking in human beings, by means of research, including research into new forms of trafficking in human beings, information, awareness-raising, and education. In such initiatives, Member States should adopt a gender perspective and a child-rights approach."*

A specific provision of the EU anti-trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU deals with the issue of prevention and sets minimum EU-wide standards for the prevention of the crime of trafficking. Art. 18 of the Directive obliges Member States to take appropriates measures in the area of prevention as summarised by the following figure:

Furthermore, prevention is one of the five priorities identified within the "EU strategy towards the eradication of Trafficking in human Beings 2012-2016" of the European Commission in order to address the issue of trafficking.

Generally speaking, prevention can be defined as the act of stopping something from happening or of stopping someone from doing something and involves activities and practices aimed at anticipating, avoiding and removing possible causes to preclude a hazardous event from happening.

As stressed by the definition, prevention policies and measures are part of the "proactive" (interventions take place before a criminal act is committed) and "non-repressive" (interventions do not necessary involve punishments) approach against trafficking and involve: awareness-raising public campaigns and education; capacity building and cooperation among key players; initiatives to change personal and community behaviours and to transform the context of tolerance towards trafficking; social and economic initiatives to challenge personal/family/community conditions that may foster trafficking.

As far as criminal activities are concerned, prevention refers to a range of strategies that are implemented by individuals, communities, businesses, non-government organisations and all levels of government to target the various social and economic (individual and environmental) factors that increase the risk of crime and victimisation.

## 3.2 Is trafficking prevention a gender-sensitive issue?

As emerging from the results of the joint research conducted in Romania, Italy and Spain, **gender vulnerabilities and inequalities produce impact at the level of all phases of trafficking from recruitment to exploitation**, including the exiting from the situation of exploitation and violation of human rights. This evidence highlights the importance of integrating gender issues into the policies and measures tackling the root causes of trafficking.

As stated by the Directive, the EU legal and policy framework *"recognizes the gender-specific phenomenon of trafficking and that women and men are often trafficked for different purposes. For this reason, assistance and support measures should also be gender-specific where appropriate. The 'push' and 'pull' factors may be different depending on the sectors concerned, such as trafficking in human beings into the sex industry or for labour exploitation"*.

**Trafficking in human beings is a manifestation of gender-based violence,** so interventions must be located in the largest context of policies promoting gender equality and anti-discrimination. To this regard the "Strategic engagement to gender equality 2016-2019", which marks a new phase of the effort of the European Union to promote equality between women and men (following the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015), under the priority "combating gender-based violence" calls Member States to ensure that the gender dimension of human trafficking is addressed.

As confirmed by the indicators developed by the DG Home and Eurostat, at national and EU level, trafficking is a highly gendered phenomenon: data collected by gender over 2010-2011-2012 shows that 80% of registered victims are female. Looking at the data considering gender and age, women account for 67%, men for 17%, girls for 13% and boys for 3% of the total number of registered victims of trafficking in human beings.

*Art. 1 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.*

**Violence against women** is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

**Gender based** violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a women because she is a woman or that affect women disproportionately.

Including the gender perspective in preventing trafficking means to **consider gender issues and gender discriminations/inequalities when designing,implementing and evaluating policies and measures aiming at mitigating/reducing the risks which make girls and women vulnerable to trafficking**.

## 3.3 How to develop gender sensitive policies and measures to prevent trafficking?

Developing a good prevention strategy with a gender sensitive approach requires accessibility and ownership of an informative framework regarding:

- a clear **understanding of trafficking**: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
- the **analysis of vulnerabilities/risks factors**: WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS OF THE PROBLEM?
- the **identification of potential victims**: WHO IS AFFECTED AND HOW?

From the literature and the experiences on prevention, a great variety of prevention initiatives emerge, in terms of outputs, results, targets/audience and approaches. Taking into account the different options available, a key challenge associated to the definition of a prevention initiative is the analysis of needs and the definition of objectives.

Based on the information, stories and experiences collected through the interviews of the GIRL project, to professionals in the field of assistance and investigation and victims of trafficking, some key topics relevant to develop gender sensitive policies and measures to prevent trafficking can be recommended.

The **analysis of the crime of trafficking from a gender perspective** makes clear that:

- the highest number of **victims are still sexually exploited** and the number of exploited women is still much higher than the number of men;
- there is a constant **decreasing tendency on the age of the girls exploited;**
- a **relevant number of victims were involved in prostitution prior to trafficking;**
- a common experience that seems to be common to a higher number of girls/women victims is the occurrence of **sexual violence**;
- in most cases, **recruitment takes place through close, trustworthy persons**, whom the victims knew directly, without mediation, or persons about whom they have guarantees from acquaintances or close friends;
- a very common case is the one of the **lover boy** being also the recruiter and, in some cases, being both the recruiter and the trafficker; in some cases, the decision to enter into a trafficking network is taken because of a very strong pressure from the lover boy;
- when the traffickers/exploiters are the victims' partners, many **elements of the violent couple relationships** (domestic violence) and the behaviour patterns of the people with violent behaviour (domestic aggressor) may occur;

- **traffickers use different strategies to keep the appearance of consent, however the control is very visible** in the interviews with victims, in many forms and degrees (concerning the amount of money the victims receive, the contacts they are able to have with family/friends/anyone else, the freedom of movement, the freedom to select clients and of rejecting practices they do not want);
- **new technologies are increasingly used by traffickers** for the recruitment and control of victims, some are even exploited or controlled from distance;

Being aware of what the trafficking picture looks like from a gender perspective is of great relevance to design and implement effective preventing policies and measures.

The **analysis from a gender perspective of the vulnerability/risks factors** at individual, societal and community level can be regrouped in three main categories:

- ECONOMIC FACTORS mainly reflect poverty and the lack of opportunities connected to the work environment and gender related discrimination in economic and social life;
- STRUCTURAL FACTORS REGARDING WELFARE/SOCIAL PROTECTION SEVICES mainly regard the lack of adaptation and practicality of educational and social systems to meet individual/family/community needs;
- FACTORS CONNECTED TO VALUES, TRADITIONS, ATTITUDES mainly underline gender discrimination, gender specific roles, stereotypical portrayals of women and girls, high level of tolerance towards violence against women, sexual violence, exploitation.

Understanding the root causes of trafficking and the common risks factors in relation to how girls and women from diverse backgrounds become victims of trafficking is a key element to be able to reduce the link between trafficking and gendered vulnerability factors.

| Economic factors | Structural factors regarding Welfare/social protection | Factors connected to values, traditions, attitudes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| • High female unemployment<br>• Poverty<br>• Living in a low income family<br>• Single mothers with limited resources to support themselves or their families | • Difficulties in entering the labour market and experiences of gender discrimination<br>• Lack of opportunities to improve quality of life<br>• Escaping persecution, violence or abuse<br>• At risk families, such as dysfunctional families, families with problems of alcoholism, with damaged relationships, including domestic violence<br>• Failure of social protection systems | • Gender discriminations and inequalities<br>• Ethnic discrimination<br>• Banalisation/acceptance of exploitation of prostitution | PUSH FACTORS |
| • Better employment opportunities<br>• Improved standard and quality of life<br>• Demand for cheap labour<br>• Demand for commercial sexual services<br>• Growing sex industry sectors | • Better access to education | • Less gender discrimination<br>• Enforcement of minimum standards and individual rights<br>• Banalisation/acceptance of exploitation of prostitution | PULL FACTORS |

Many of the interviewees mention poverty, as well as lack of opportunities among the main vulnerability factors for girls and women leading to trafficking in human beings. Survival in conditions that are below the subsistence level, the inability of creating a more positive context, that would allow decent living conditions, repeated experiences of labour market abuse and discrimination and the **perception that the situation cannot be improved all lead to the belief that working abroad could be an answer for a better life. This often results in taking high level risks; levels of desperation and hopelessness could rise to such high points that any offer is interpreted as an opportunity to improve the current status.**

The **realities of poverty experienced** by some of the victims of trafficking during their childhood and mentioned during the interviews as very traumatic and troubling life experiences for both themselves and their close family are picturing **a context of profound suffering and highly diminished security, where there is no social network to rely on and no plausible solutions**; the entire family is at risk and this is reflected in a worsening of the family relationships and especially in the aggravation of mental health conditions of those impacted by unemployment, for instance, as well as in the incapacity of the parents to properly care for their children becoming apparent, even if hard to understand by a little girl.

In the case of some women, **being poor also negatively reflected on their sense of belonging and identity forming, very important during teenage years.** Being accepted, being like the others, defining yourself through your social interactions is a significant task for adolescents and, in this context, poverty can, in their perception, equalize rejection, marginalization and inferiority.

Unemployment, the experience of being hired informally, injustice in the labour market and in working relationships, low wages, great discrepancy between the earned income and the amounts necessary for a person or a family for ensuring a decent livelihood constitute factors with an effect on vulnerability, even among those who are employed.

The educational system, in Romania as well as in other member States, remains **inefficient in terms of not only building self-esteem and resilience, but also in terms of building the necessary practical skills and supporting, in a positive manner, a reality-based perception of young people's abilities and capacities**, which would further lead them into critically analyzing their options and choosing what works best in their particular contexts. Schools should be a space of safety and growth for all children, yet rather than that, schools operate with a very strict system of punishments, labels and rejections, while almost completely giving up their function of supporting young people's vision of their future.

A sudden change in the value system in the last few years related to the loss of the value of education is the supreme value assigned to material wellbeing, which constitutes a sensitive problem. The media (for instance, commercials), as well as different forms of good stories provided by citizens who went abroad and manifest a major leap regarding the improvement of their personal and family economic situation, bring forward a distorted model of success for those who are willing to take the risk (risking their life and health, family breakdown and relationships, embarking on illicit activities or activities bordering on the illicit, etc.). At times, it is the family who encourages young women to try and build a better future by going abroad, even when the information provided is scarce or the absence of a safety net is very clear.

**Growth of demand in the sex industry, normalizing buying and selling sexual services**. The theme of demand also constitutes a very sensitive subject in the debates regarding human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation. The acquisition of different sexual services seems to be a more and more visible practice, considered a form of entertainment by most buyers; yet some of the professionals in the field of trafficking also show subtle forms of prejudice against young women practicing different forms of prostitution, still positioning blame and morality questioning at their level.

The **analysis from a gender perspective of the profile of victims** of trafficking highlights that:

- **Violence** is a common occurrence in the lives of victims of trafficking, including transgenerational violence, where the abusive parent is presented as a victim of abuse himself/herself in their childhood;
- among girls and women victims of trafficking, a multitude of **different family situations were por-**

**trayed**, ranging from the divorce or separation of parents, with the children previously having to manage or endure complicated interaction patterns and later on acute feelings of belonging nowhere, also resulting from tense relationships with their step-parents, to the death of one or both parents occurring at a young age;

- a significant number of girls and women victims of trafficking come from **disorganised, neglectful and/or violent families**, with damaged relationships and repeated experiences of loss;
- poverty, lack of stability, **physical or emotional absence of different family members**, role confusion, lack of opportunities for parents, lack of understanding in regard to children's and young people needs increase the level of vulnerability of girls and women;
- experiences of **lacking emotional availability** and presence from their family members were mentioned several times by the victims participating in the interviews, especially while also underlining the unmet needs that they had for authentic, protective relationships, as well as how this lack of availability further created effects in their lives, directing them towards decisions that were not as beneficial in the long run;
- the trafficker, usually with an interest, reacts at the girl's aspiration of a "movie-like" love relationship or at her aspiration of the loving parents;
- gender and age are vulnerability factors first of all because these are the characteristics defined by the **demand**;
- in the case of **homeless or runaway children**, the individual vulnerabilities are also shaped by the low level of education, lack of experienced healthy relationships, the high degree of exposure to crime, the lack of life abilities, drug and/or alcohol use, risky sexual behavior.

According to the EU directive (art.2) "a position of vulnerability means a situation in which the person concerned has no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved". As emerging from the interviews some risks and position of vulnerability which are strictly linked to the fact of being girls and women and of facing gender inequalities can be acknowledged.

## 3.4 What type of activities can be implemented to prevent trafficking?

Based on the desk and field analyses performed, the following table presents prevention initiatives from two perspectives: the one of the origin countries; the one of the destination countries. The first column describes the objectives of the prevention initiatives, the other columns describe, taking into account the circumstances of origin and destination countries, the potential area of intervention/targets to be addressed, as well as sample types of intervention to achieve the scope of prevention measures implemented.

| Goals | Country of Origin | | Country of destination | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Targets | Initiatives | Targets | Initiatives |
| **Change the environment into which people are trafficked** | Public opinion | • Information/awareness raising campaigns | Public opinion | • Information/awareness raising campaigns |
| | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building |
| | Individual empowerment/support | • Active social inclusion programmes<br>• Legal protection<br>• Gender specific advice/advocacy | Individual empowerment/support | • Victim assistance/ support<br>• Gender specific advice/advocacy |
| | Community empowerment/support | • Information/awareness raising campaigns | Community empowerment/support | • Conflict mediation for neighbourhood disputes resolution |
| | Family empowerment/ support | • Education programmes focused on gender issues | Business entities (profit organisations such as hotels, travel agencies, SMEs) | • Information/awareness raising campaigns<br>• Capacity building |
| **Demand reduction** | Public opinion | • Information/awareness raising campaigns<br>• Education programmes | Public opinion | • Information/awareness raising campaigns<br>• Education programmes |
| | Sex buyers | • Education programmes | Sex buyers | • Education programmes<br>• Information/awareness raising campaigns |
| | Local administrations (City Council) | • Capacity building | Local administration (City Council) | • Capacity building |
| **Re-trafficking prevention** | Individual empowerment/support | • Active social inclusion programmes | Individual empowerment/support | • Victim assistance/ support |
| | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building |
| | Family empowerment/ support | • Information/awareness raising campaigns<br>• Education programmes | - | - |
| **Safe internet** | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building | Law enforcement actors and diverse professionals | • Capacity building |
| | Individual empowerment/support | • Information/awareness raising campaigns | Individual empowerment/support | • Information/awareness raising campaigns |
| | Family empowerment/ support | • Information/awareness raising campaigns | - | - |

The types of prevention activities that might by performed are:

- **information and awareness-raising campaigns**, aiming at promoting and improving knowledge and understanding to work on motivations and commitment with a view to change behavior of the target group (women, young people, teachers, parents, social workers, SMEs, hotels); the message/contents must be tailored for the specific audience (e.g. according to the level of initial awareness); the message/contents must be focused on a specific issue and avoid general topics; the message/contents can be disseminated through different instruments appropriate to reach the target, such as media (e.g. tv, website) or initiatives (conferences, public events).
- **capacity buildings interventions,** aiming at enhancing skills and abilities of players in the field of trafficking (prevention, prosecution, protection) to effectively implement their institutional mandate/professional tasks (e.g. front-line police officials, prosecutors, labour inspectors, professionals who come into contact with potential victims/traffickers/exploiters, NGOs); the audience includes also players with an institutional mandate or implementing professionals tasks which are not directly linked to prevention, prosecution or protection in the field of trafficking (e.g. teachers, communication specialists, business entities); content should aim at transferring skills/working methods/abilities to professionals (e.g. proactive investigation, guidelines on human rights, victims/witness protection, non-criminalization of trafficking victims, checklist to facilitate victims identification); building interventions involving study visits (at national and EU level), technical seminars/workshop, training courses, networking activities and exchange of professionals.
- **education programmes focused on gender issues,** aiming at tackling stereotypical gender prejudices, perceptions, praxis concerning women/girls as well as gender discriminations/inequalities that may predispose a family or community to accept or encourage trafficking/sexual exploitation of women and girls; the message/contents are meant to educate (e.g. promotion of common values such as equality, dignity) more than (just) inform or raise awareness on a topic; message/contents are mainly examined through workshops, schools initiatives.
- **victim assistance/support,** aiming at offering to victims opportunities to exit/recover/reintegrate from trafficking and/or at protecting them from re-victimizations; promotion of initiatives making it easier for women/girls to join the labour market, to access benefits and the quality social services they are entitled to; to participate actively in society, access to justice and compensations; initiatives are implemented within the framework of protection/integration programmes for victims of trafficking (in destination countries) or assisted repatriation programmes (in origin countries).
- **active social inclusion programmes**, aiming at offering opportunities and tailored supporting measures to reduce/counter gender vulnerabilities of women/girls at risk of trafficking; implementation of integrated policy strategy/initiatives addressing specific factors that deeply affect women/girls and increase their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and trafficking (e.g. lack of opportunities of employment/personal development; long term unemployment, gender inequalities, violence against women; lack of social integration, lack of access to education); measures are implemented through individual projects supporting/promoting active participation to economic and social life, positive actions contributing to the goal of equality between women and men.
- **legal protection measures/programmes**, aiming at enhancing law enforcement and policy implementation in key sectors such as social protection, children protection, human rights protection, labour law protection; implementation of measures that address significant vulnerabilities or programmes that ensure protection of vulnerable and at risk groups, promotion of measures to reduce "invisibility of exploitation" (countries of destination) or to strengthen the national guardianship system for children to better protect children in the absence of parents (countries of origin); measures are implemented through capacity building programmes and analysis of the exiting legal and policy framework, legal consulting and aid.
- **gender specific advice/advocacy interventions**, aiming at building positive actions for the effective implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination; implementation of measures advocating for legislative or policy change; initiatives are implemented by building alliances and networks of key actors, by developing resource and information hubs about the gender perspective

and its impact on trafficking.

- **conflict mediation for neighborhood disputes resolution initiatives**, aiming at resolving disputes, discrimination-based community tensions, with the view to prevent them from culminating in hate crimes, severe forms of social exclusion or stigma and bias against women in prostitution; implementation of programmes and measures promoting mediation and investing in community cohesion by improving tolerance and acceptance of diversity, initiatives enabling communities to develop positive relations; measures are implemented through formal and informal education programmes, initiatives to promote dialogue and debate at community level.

## 3.5 Which are the key steps to develop a prevention initiative?

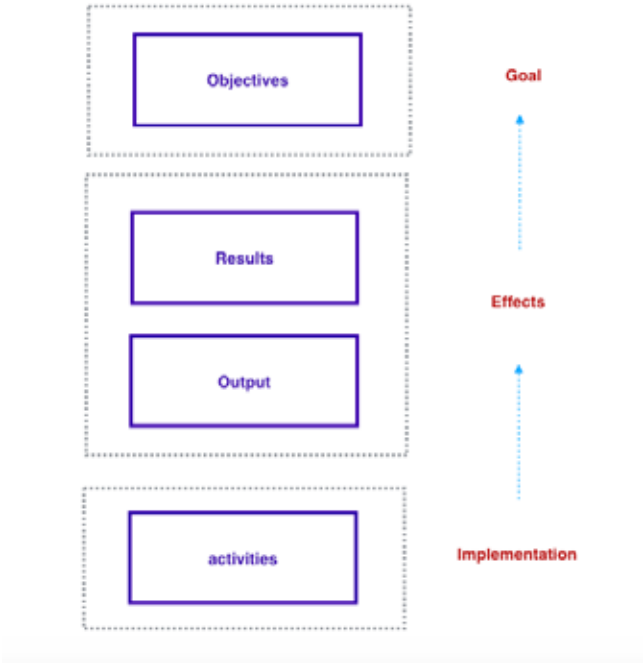
The main motivation related to the implementation of a prevention initiative is to achieve a relevant improvement of the capability of public and private entities to reduce trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation. This can be achieved by the implementation of (a mix) of "positive actions", such as improving knowledge, promoting opportunities for inclusion, develop legal protection systems. To this end, project management is a key tool to achieve the best results and impact possible of the prevention initiatives promoted.

The development process of a prevention initiative starts from the analysis of needs/problems to be addressed in order to better tackle risks and gender vulnerabilities to trafficking. The initial step aims at describing the situation that needs to be changed and at exploring and understanding the link between economic/social/context risks factors detected and the incidence of trafficking. In relation with trafficking of women and girls, the problem analysis should gather specific information about the characteristics of women and girls which might be relevant to reduce risks/vulnerability factors to trafficking.

**Needs** are gaps and problems in terms of reduction of structural/community/family/individual risks/factors that make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking. As pointed out in a recent publication of the European Commission, some questions must be taken in consideration in order to be able to identify the most effective prevention initiative:

- What are the most important gender issues in relation to trafficking in a given environment?
- What changes are necessary to make the difference in preventing trafficking?
- What have other stakeholders already implemented in a given environment to tackle gender vulnerabilities to THB?
- How can the initiative build on these initiatives?
- Who are the target groups of the initiative?
- How can the target groups best be reached?
- What added value/change can the prevention initiative provide compared to the current situation?

The evidence emerging from the needs analysis support the development of the intervention logic and the definition of objectives and effects of the initiative. Once the needs have been identified they can be translated into objectives. The logic of intervention therefore outlines how the need will be addressed (expected results and outputs) to Influence/change behavior and/or build knowledge of the target audience (goal).




**Objectives** are the context/policy/behavior changes relevant to overcome/reduce community/family/ individual risks/factors identified.

**Results** are the contribution/benefit of the prevention initiative (using the outputs) in terms of gradual/ complete achievement of the goal (e.g. development of a different knowledge/abilities/ behavior/perception in the target group).

**Outputs** are the direct product (e.g. information materials, events, reports, helpline, ICT tools, trainings) of the activities implemented in the framework of the prevention initiative. The outputs must be analyzed and evaluated, with a view to their appropriateness for generating a contribution/benefit towards the target audience. In some cases, it can be highly effective to mix different types of outputs (e.g. papers and online tools).

**The target group** identifies the group/category of individuals/professionals/entities that the prevention initiative is expected to reach in order to address the need and reach the objectives.

For access to a European **database of gender-sensitive good practices** in trafficking prevention, please access: http://www.cpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Catalogue-of-gender-based-good-practices-on-prevention-of-trafficking-in-the-EU.pdf and for a **manual on** how to implement **gender-sensitive prevention initiatives**, please access http://www.cpe.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Gender-Matters-A-practical-handbook-to-implement-gender-sensitive-initiatives-to-better-tackle-human-trafficking.pdf

# 4. Taking gender into account when identifying victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation

The purpose of this chapter is to provide gender-sensitive guidelines on the detection of women victims trafficked from Romania for their sexual exploitation.[3]

Detection of situations of trafficking remains one of the main problems in addressing the phenomenon of human trafficking. Identifying the signs of trafficking is a difficult issue, which requires accurate and updated knowledge of the phenomenon, its recruitment and exploitation patterns. As it happens with gender-based violence, it is estimated that trafficking holds a serious problem of underreporting: the visible figures are only the tip of the iceberg. Improving detection is crucial to effectively address and fight human trafficking.

Regarding the trafficking for sexual exploitation of Romanian women, in particular, as a gender-specific phenomenon where women are the overwhelming majority of victims, it is key to have a gender awareness. This includes both a general understanding of the existing gender inequalities in society and the gendered specificities of trafficking of women and Romanian women specifically.

These pages present the basic elements of the detection process, taking always into account a gender and human rights approach and the realities of Romanian victims identified during the research undertaken as part of the GIRL project.

The tools provided will be mainly of interest to professionals working in the social sector (social NGOs and public services), but other professionals may also find useful tips.

## 4.1 What is trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings is a crime recognised by international, European and national legislations. It is a violation of human rights and it is considered the slavery of our times.

Human trafficking consists in the recruitment and transportation of a person through a variety of illegitimate means, with the purpose of their exploitation in several contexts.

The following table summarises these three constitutive elements of human trafficking: action, means and purposes.

3 The contents of this chapter were adapted from the manuals of the Project Development of Common Guidelines and Procedures on Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking ( Euro TrafGuID) to include the gender dimension and the specific characteristics of Romanian women survivors of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, on the basis of the results of the research of the GIRL project

| ACTION (what) | MEANS (how) | PURPOSES (for) |
|---|---|---|
| - **Recruitment**<br>- **Transportation**<br>- **Transfer**<br>- **Harbouring**<br>- **Reception of persons**<br>- **Exchange or transfer of control over those persons** | - Threat<br>- Use of force<br>- Other forms of coercion<br>- Abduction<br>- Fraud<br>- Deception<br>- Abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability<br>- Giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person | - Exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation<br>- Forced labour or services, including begging<br>- Slavery or practices similar to slavery<br>- Servitude<br>- Exploitation of criminal activities<br>- The removal of body organs |

When there are signs of one action, one means and one purpose indicated in the above list, a person may be a victim of human trafficking. Anyone perceiving such signs may suspect that there is a situation of trafficking. However, it is the task of judicial actors to finally decide if there are enough elements for the formal identification of the person as a victim.

If the person is a child, there is no need to check if any of the means listed has been used. The combination of one action for the purpose of any type of exploitation is enough to suspect trafficking.

## 4.2 What is sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is one of the purposes of human trafficking. It means taking advantage of a person's sexuality to make a personal gain or profit.

Victims of sexual exploitation are mainly women and girls, but sexual exploitation also affects a significant number of boys.

Sexual exploitation includes several activities, such as forced prostitution, pornography, and sexual services in bars, hotels, spas, massage parlours and entertainment businesses, among others.

***The issue of consent: what happens if a woman declares that she practices prostitution voluntarily?***

*The Palermo Protocol considers that the consent of a victim of human trafficking is "irrelevant". This should never mean that a victim's agency and views are ignored or disregarded. What it means is that if a potential victim has been subject to the means listed in the definition of trafficking, her consent is not valid.*

*If an adult woman has been threatened, forced, coerced, abducted or deceived, or was subject to abuse of her vulnerable position, her consent to act in a certain way cannot be considered valid, because she was not able to take a voluntary, informed decision. For this reason, the Palermo Protocol considers her consent irrelevant.*

For example, research carried out during the GIRL project shows that Romanian women often initiate their trafficking experience thinking that they are migrating for employment and/or to start a new life with their partner. Their desire to start a new life in another country, where they may have more opportunities, makes them vulnerable to traffickers' recruitment and subsequent exploitation. Women may be eager to have a new job, but her intention is not to work in exploitative conditions. Even if they are aware that they will be working in prostitution, this does not mean that they consent to be working never-ending hours and receive no money in exchange. Similarly, when an agricultural worker is trafficked for labour exploitation and exploited in a farm, her or his consent to working in the farm does not imply consent for exploitation. Given the specific nature of sexual services in society, often consent is not considered in the same terms as in other situations and activities.

At any rate, all these considerations are not relevant when the person subjected to trafficking is a minor. If the victim is a child (under 18), there is no need to prove the use of any means to force or deceive him or her. The consent of a child for sexual exploitation is never considered to be valid.

### *Why talk about victims?*

*The persons subjected to trafficking are usually called "victims" because trafficking is a serious crime described in international legislation and national criminal codes.*

Using the term "victims" does not mean that women should be victimised and re-victimised, deprived of voice and agency. During the phases of detection and intervention, professionals should always take into account the stories of the women and their opinions about how to proceed. Professionals should never act without their consent or take decisions without them. The role of professionals is to provide women with the necessary information, with accuracy and sensitivity, so that they are able to take the decisions on the issues that concern them.

The word "victim" often evokes a certain type of victims (subject to reclusion and extreme violence, and with a submissive attitude). This image does not match the actual stories of trafficked women. Many Romanian women are recruited because they are eager to migrate: their courage and initiative to start a better life elsewhere should not be overlooked.

Moreover, victims exiting situations of trafficking are also survivors. They have gone through very difficult experiences and it is not uncommon that they develop strength and resilience throughout their journey. Ultimately, the story of a victim who manages to exit exploitation is a story of success.

### *Can Romanian women be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation?*

*Yes, Romanian women can be victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Romanian men are also victims of trafficking, but usually they are exploited for their labour and not specifically in the sexual industries.*

*All Romanian women working in sexual services are at risk of being exploited, but not all women providing sexual services are victims of trafficking. Some indicators to identify situations of trafficking are presented in section 4.5 in this chapter.*

### *Can anyone be a trafficker of human beings for sexual exploitation?*

*Yes, anyone can be a trafficker: men and women, destination country nationals and migrant workers, including those from Romania.*

*However, research shows that Romanian women are often trafficked and exploited by Romanian men, even though there are signs that women are becoming more and more involved in exploitation activities. Exploitation is often carried out by trusted acquaintances and intimate partners and, in some cases, by family members. There may also be controlling figures working with exploiters as accomplices to control victim's performance; this could be the case of women who have been victims of trafficking themselves in the past. They may also act as recruiters.*

*Trafficking and exploitation are not always carried out by the same person. Someone may recruit the victim, a second person may be responsible for organising their transport and transfer, while a third one may intervene only to harbour or receive them in order to leave them with an exploiter. The situations differ, but research shows that intimate partners often act both as recruiters and exploiters.*

*Human trafficking and migrant smuggling: The person has paid a lot to cross the border illegally. Does this make her a victim of trafficking?4*

4 Manuals of the Development of Common Guidelines and Procedures on Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking project, Euro TrafGuID.

**Not necessarily.** The fact that someone has been paid to organise an illegal border crossing is not equivalent to trafficking. This is what is called **smuggling**.

Trafficking in persons is different from smuggling of migrants. Smuggling of migrants is a crime involving the procurement for financial or other material benefit of illegal entry of a person into a State of which that person is not a national or resident.

**Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, Article. 3(a),** "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".

**In smuggling cases, the migrant consents to pay someone (the smuggler), who will organise and/or facilitate her illegal entry into a State of which that person is not a national or resident.**

The smuggler is not concerned with what will happen to the migrant once the border is crossed. In particular, the smuggler's objective is not to exploit the migrant once he/she is at his/her destination, but to receive a financial gain.

Smuggling is legally a crime against the State (illegal entry), not against the migrant (who paid for a service). However, this does not mean that migrant's rights are not violated, as explained below.

The four main differences between smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons can be summarised as follows:

| | **Trafficking in human beings** | **Smuggling of migrants** |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose | Exploitation | Financial or other material benefits |
| Consent | Invalid consent | Valid |
| Transnationality | Not required | Required |
| Crime | Against the person | Against the State |

One difference between both terms is the element of **consent**. In the case of smuggling, the person has given his/her consent to the smuggler for being smuggled. The person is a "client", who pays for the service in order to enter a certain country illegally.

However, as the UN Smuggling of Migrants Protocol states, smuggled migrants may also be subject to violation of their rights. Article 6 of the Protocol requires states to criminalize both smuggling of migrants and enabling of a person to remain in a country illegally, as well as aggravating circumstances that endanger lives or safety, or entail inhuman or degrading treatment of migrants.

Additionally, the processes of trafficking and smuggling can be interrelated and the distinctions between the two crimes can be difficult to draw. Both smuggled persons and trafficked persons can be identified in the same group of persons illegally crossing a border, as criminal networks are interlinked. Similarly, a migrant consenting to be smuggled across a border may, in transit or at his/her destination, end up in a trafficking situation.

## 4.3 First-level identification and formal identification

Detection or first-level identification is the process that begins with the detection of signs suggesting a possible detection of trafficking. This is the first stage of the process leading to an assessment of the possibility that the person may be a victim of trafficking.

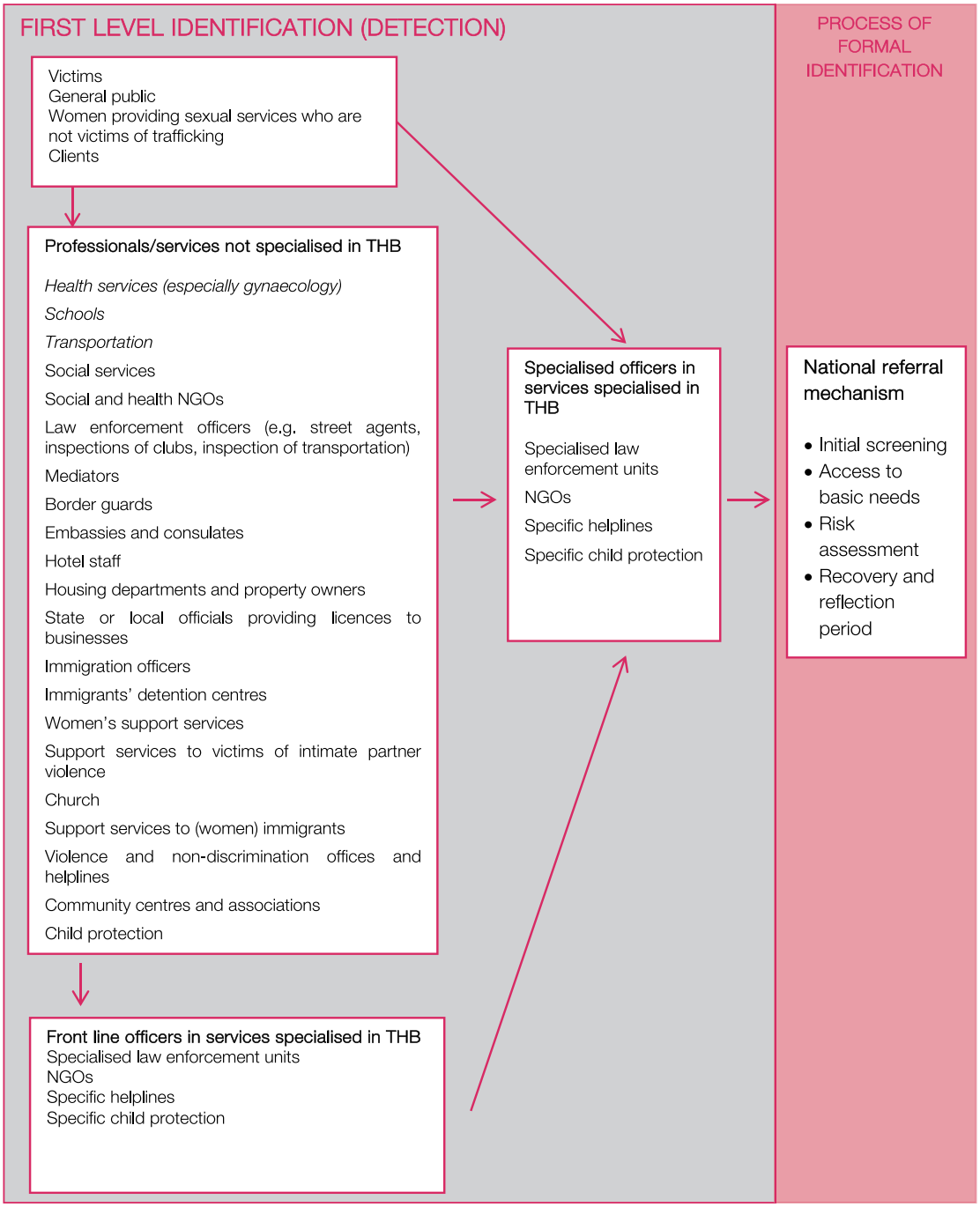
When someone is considered a potential victim, a process of formal identification and support is started. That possible victim is referred to the relevant authorities in charge of formally identifying victims of trafficking, and, if this is the case, in charge of providing various forms of support to the person. The whole set of actions related to formal identification and protection of the possible victims is coordinated at national level by a body called Referral Mechanism.

In most jurisdictions, only authorised authorities can officially designate a person as victim of trafficking. Consequently, formal identification is performed by specialised officers, who are specifically trained in identifying trafficking and appointed within their organisations with specific tasks.

In contrast, first level identification may (and should) be carried out by a variety of both specialised and non-specialised actors. Other non-specialised professionals and the general public are of course not responsible to carry out the whole process leading to the formal identification of victims, but they play a key role in the early detection of potential victims and their protection, and it is useful to have a comprehensive view of the existing mechanisms set up to protect the victims.

Early detection of potential victims makes a difference in their protection from those that exploit, harm or threaten them, as they are most probably in danger. Referring potential victims to specialised support services also allows them to have access to services such as housing and counselling, among others.

The following table presents a selection of stakeholders which play a significant role in the first level identification of trafficking of Romanian women for their sexual exploitation.



### *Self-detection and self-reporting*

With human trafficking, there is a very low level of self-reporting: victims do not tend to report themselves to the authorities their situations of exploitation. This makes trafficking different from other crimes and makes first level identification of victims is critical.

There are several reasons for low self-reporting, such as:

- Fear of retaliation from exploiters or other controlling figures of their environment. Retaliation may be directed to them personally or to their families.
- Lack of knowledge, contacts and opportunities to report.

Self-reporting is not the same as self-detection. There are women who are able to detect that they are victims of a crime and, even if they do not report to the police, they are aware of their situation and try to escape and reach for some kind of help. Of course, it is extremely difficult for anyone to exit the situation alone, but their agency in the process of exiting exploitation cannot be denied and should be respected by all kinds of support services and professionals.

However, many victims do not self-identify as such. The level of self-detection or self-identification is also very low.

Self-identification as victims is especially difficult in the following circumstances:

- When they have been "rescued" by others (clients, general public, services)
- When they have been abandoned by exploiters
- When they are still exploited or in contact with exploiters.

It should be noted that the difficulties of self-identification as a victim are an inherent problem of the gender-specific nature of the sexual exploitation patterns of women. As it happens in cases of intimate partner violence against women, there is an important part of psychological manipulation which traps victims and makes it difficult for them to react against their exploitation.

This is especially related to the fact that exploiters are often significant figures, with whom they establish different kinds of affective relationships (as it was described in the second chapter of this publication):

- Exploiters may be false "significant others" (so-called "lover boys"), which persuade the victims that they will have a promising future with them in another country. They promise a job and a life together.
- Acquaintances and, in some cases, family members, which establish or already have trust relationship with the victims, manipulate their expectations and promise them a job and income.

**TIP:** Services providing support to women in situations of intimate partner violence have knowledge and experience dealing with similar situations of psychological violence on victims. Their support may be of help to deal with situations of trafficking for exploitation.

Another important issue limiting the ability of victims to self-identify as such is the normalisation of the situation of exploitation. This may be related to several elements:

- Lack of opportunities and previous experiences of exploitation in the country of origin, which makes them acceptable.
- No knowledge of their rights.
- Pervading situations of exploitation in prostitution, so that it seems normal both to victims (and sometimes to support services and professionals) to accept them and no other options are available.
- Pressure to continue providing income to their relatives. As it often happens with women migrating voluntarily, victims of trafficking may be loaded with the extra responsibilities of providing for their families in the country of origin. This makes them more willing to put up with situations of exploitation.

### Difficulties of detection by specialised and non-specialised stakeholders

Self-detection is not the only challenge related to the detection of situations of trafficking: first-level identification by specialised and non-specialised stakeholders also entails many difficulties.

Non-specialised stakeholders and the general public do not have an accurate knowledge of the phenomenon of trafficking. Several images of trafficking pervade in the social imaginary.

The pervading, sexist image of the female victim as someone in extreme reclusion and subjected to physical violence means that any kind of expression of women's agency may be interpreted as a situation of voluntary consent and no attention is paid to signs of trafficking (actions, means and purposes). When professionals are familiar with the existing sets of indicators, they may deny the evidence that they exist in specific cases, or question them as subjective assessments.

The issue of consent is key here. Both the general public and even professionals tend to put emphasis on issues of consent, as the universal sign of legitimacy of an action, and do not pay attention to signs of exploitation.

Others only conceive trafficking as the product of big and sophisticated crime networks. Stakeholders may refrain from detection because they do not perceive that exploitation within partnerships or families are related to trafficking.

This lack of perception has also a gender dimension. Violence in intimate partnerships and in family contexts is often considered a private issue still, which denies that third parties have the social responsibility to intervene and to protect victims from perpetrators.

Even when some signs of trafficking may be detected, stakeholders may not act for security reasons or because they do not have the competence to do so (as some police forces tend to act in cases involving organised crime networks and it may be difficult for them to intervene when exploiters are members of small-scale family clans or so-called "lover boys").

Additionally, another important obstacle for first-level identification is the fact that there are no common shared indicators of detection. Existing sets of indicators are only known by some specialised professionals and even in these cases there may be confusion. The diversity of women and their experiences makes it difficult to have inclusive indicators gathering all their experiences.

One of the actors of detection of situations of trafficking is the buyer of sexual services, who sometimes may support victims in their search for help. However, professionals should be careful with this pattern of "rescuing" clients, as sometimes they may then subject women to sexual exploitation or labour exploitation (e.g., in domestic work) or exert other kinds of violence. Victims may be pressured to accept the new exploitative pattern, as a way to "pay" for his rescue.

Finally, given that situations of exploitation, in the sectors of prostitution and sexual services are pervasive in many contexts, and in several degrees, support services and professionals may tend to normalise them and, hence, accept their inevitability instead of intervening.

All the elements described above are especially relevant when professionals at different public or private services first interview women who have been referred by other professional services.

There may be different situations where the previous professional/service:

- has not detected any signs
- identifies some signs of THB, but considers that there is no need for a specific intervention. different from that of sexual workers.
- omits information due to confidentiality issues.
- identifies a woman as a victim of trafficking in human beings, but wants to deal with this issue herself/himself.
- considers that the woman is exploited, but does not consider that this requires specific intervention.

## 4.4 General guidelines for first-level identification by professionals in the social sector[5]

### What should you do and how?

Your role is limited to **recognising the signs** which may indicate that a woman is a victim of human trafficking any, if this is the case, **to inform specialised organisations or professionals that are able to continue with the process of identification, support the woman during the process and offer her the possibility to refer her for formal identification and support.**

### Ensure safety and basic needs

- Make sure that the situation is safe for herself and for you. If not (for example, if there is a potential trafficker present that is listening to you or threatening you or her), you must leave the place and CALL the police for help.
- Offer the woman shelter, food, something to drink, rest or access to other basic needs, if necessary.
- Do not register unnecessary information, such as specific names of people and places, as this may compromise safety.

### Assess if the woman is a child (under 18)

- The procedures to follow in this case are specific. Keep in mind that some youths below 18 years old may make false claims about being adults.
- If there is any doubt as to whether the woman is a child, then you must presume that she is and proceed accordingly. The correct age will be formally determined later in the process by the specialised authorities.
- If she is (or probably is) a child, then as soon as you have enough reasons to believe that the child was exploited, in one way or the other, the first thing to do is to call the specialised organisation providing support to trafficking victims and the **unit in charge of (or competent for) child protection.** This unit usually uses a multidisciplinary approach, with psychologists and medical doctors being involved in the identification process. It is their responsibility to go further into the identification of trafficking. Meanwhile, it is important to make the child feel safe and secure, to listen to her fears. The specialised unit will decide whether and when the parents/guardians should be informed.

### Make sure you understand each other

Using signs or basic language, you may have been able to communicate enough to offer protection and assess if the woman was a child. But in order to go further in the detection of trafficking, you need to make sure that the woman understands the language you speak. If not, you should offer to call for an interpreter or, preferably, a mediator trained on issues of trafficking and gender, whose name or profile should be accepted by you and the possible victim. Do not agree to the use of acquaintances, friends or “colleagues” from the same group as the possible victim, as they may be related to the trafficker.

### Create confidence, explain who you are

- Provide the possible victim with basic information including who you are and for which organisation you work..
- The conversation may not be centred on discussing the issue of trafficking as such, but on issues such as the experience of the woman in the destination country and her social or labour needs. This

5 Based on the manuals of the Development of Common Guidelines and Procedures on Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking project, Euro TrafGuID.

may allow you to identify potential signs of trafficking.

- Ask for her consent to start the discussion, tell her that she can interrupt or ask more details at any moment of time. Inform her that her identity will be disclosed only with her consent to organisations which need it to organize their support.
- Ask for her consent to take notes during the discussion if you need to do so and explain why.
- While talking and listening to the woman, always keep in mind that you should follow a human-rights based approach, that victims of trafficking are holders of rights.
- Respect a **gender-sensitive approach**, especially when you or the woman talk about the sexual exploitation. This may mean, for example, that they prefer to share their experience with women rather than men; in order to avoid creating more stress for the victim, the choice of the gender of the officer should be left to her. After the detection phase, the specific needs of women should be taken into consideration when offering protection and support measures, in particular in relation to health and shelter services.
- Also take into account the ethnic specificities in your approach. For example, in the case of women victims of Roma ethnicity, the support of gender-aware Roma mediators is advisable.

### Listen, observe, ask questions

Your role is to observe the situation and listen to the woman in order to get enough information for you to decide if you have detected a possible victim of trafficking.

A list of indicators of detection is provided in the following section. They will help you to decide whether or not you want to refer the woman to the competent authority.

At the end of the discussion, if you come to the conclusion that the woman may be a victim of trafficking, you need to offer to refer her to a specialised organisation or body, which will provide support and protection for the short, medium and possibly long term. If the topic of trafficking does not arise in the conversation, it is not absolutely necessary for you to bring it up. In fact, mentioning it may scare the woman and interrupt the process of self-identification and decision-taking, which often takes a long time. You may offer her the possibility to consult an specialist lawyer or social worker, who will provide her with more information and support about the specific needs she may have expressed (e.g. legal counselling, training, social benefits, health care, a job). The specialist organisation will then continue with the process.

If the issue of trafficking clearly arises in the conversation, you may offer her information about the process of identification of victims of trafficking. This information is provided in the next paragraph. If you do not feel confident in explaining the next steps involved in formal identification to the possible victim, just tell her that as soon as she will be in contact with the specialised organisation, a dedicated officer will explain to her the whole process to her and will be able to answer to her questions.

### If the issue of trafficking is clearly discussed in the conversation, explain what are the different steps of identification of victims of trafficking

The possible victim may ask you what will happen once referred to the competent authority in charge of identifying victims of trafficking. The information below is for you to be prepared to answer to her questions, if you feel able to do so.

If the woman agrees to be referred to the competent authority (National Referral Mechanism), then she will be interviewed by specialists in charge of identifying victims of trafficking. Once identified as a presumed victim of trafficking, the woman shall be treated as a victim and will benefit from the assistance prescribed in national law for victims of trafficking until some new evidence comes to light to contradict this identification.

**For adults, once identified as a victim, and if she gives her consent, the woman will:**

- Be offered a recovery and reflection period of a minimum 30 days (in Romania it lasts 90 days), which entitles a victim with no legal residency the right to remain in the country, recover and make an informed decision as to whether she wishes to cooperate with competent authorities to prosecute the trafficker.
- Be protected from previous exploiters/traffickers by security measures decided jointly on with the victim, following a risk assessment.
- Be offered protection for her physical safety and well-being, including some solutions for safe housing, if needed.
- Be offered the services of an interpreter.
- Be granted free legal aid.
- Be offered medical and pharmaceutical assistance, if needed.
- Be offered psycho-social services and care.

**Later on, this authority or other competent authorities will examine her case more in detail in order to grant the formal status of victim of trafficking (or not). This formal status opens up the right to:**

- A long-term residence/work permit for third-country victims without a legal right of residence
- Access to compensation
- Benefit from some training/education offers for the youngest ones
- Regular medical-pharmaceutical care
- Victims who so wish, they can be provided with safe and dignified repatriation to their country of origin or sometimes to another country

Details vary in different countries and contexts, depending on the national legislations and the existing services in each area.

**If the presumed victim is a child, she will benefit from specific measures as soon as she is identified as a presumed victim.**

These include:

- Special measures taken by competent authorities to determine identity and nationality of the child, and whether she was accompanied or not
- The provision of legal representation
- Access to compensation
- The need for the competent authorities to make all possible efforts to locate the minor's family
- Access to schools or other forms of education
- The possibility of voluntary return, if the minor so wishes and following a best interest determination by the competent child protection authorities

## 4.5 Indicators of trafficking for sexual exploitation

The following list is useful to recognise some signs of ACTION, MEANS AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION. It includes some of the signs of specific trafficking for sexual exploitation that are also characteristic of Romanian women.

Not all of the indicators will be present in the case you are dealing with. The list is not exhaustive. More details about the specificities of Romanian victims are given in chapter 2 of this publication.

Background history

**Very young women, often minors.**

- Poverty or living standards that the woman/girl considered insufficient
- Early marriage or partnership
- Having children early in life
- Low educational level
- Having suffered or witnessed abuse as a child (ask about the issue)
- Information on past or present situations of abuse by relatives, friends or other professionals or institutions
- Absent or negligent parenthood, which may be related to situations of parents separated or divorced, and living in residential care institutions. Isolation in these situations increases vulnerability to recruitment
- Family violence background
- Low-skilled and precarious jobs (for those victims who are not so young)
- History of abuse of medication, particularly psychotropic drugs, and of alcohol and drug abuse
- History of suicide attempts
- History of repeated accidents
- Eating disorders

IMPORTANT NOTE: Background history of potential victims is never conclusive of the existence of trafficking for sexual exploitation. An analysis of this information should work for professionals to be more alert on the possible existence of the indicators below.

**Purpose indicators**

**PURPOSE: Do you find some of the following signs that the woman is a victim of sexual exploitation?**

- The woman cannot refuse clients, is forced to provide sexual services even when she is sick or pregnant, or is forced to have sex without the use of condoms.
- She does not keep the money she earns and has to hand it over to someone else.
- She is always or very often accompanied when she is out.
- She is denied breaks, days off, and free time, or has to work on call.
- She is moved from one place to another one without consent.

### Action indicators

**ACTION: Do you find some of the following signs?**

RECRUITMENT

- She did not know where she was going to work.
- She paid excessive fees for recruitment.
- She has no employment contract, the terms and conditions are poorly defined, or the employment contract is written in a language that the woman does not understand.

TRANSPORTATION, TRANSFER

- She did not organise her transport or did not know the travel route from the place of origin to destination.
- She shows signs of fear of the man or woman who accompanies her.
- A third person gives the passport back to the woman just before crossing the border (relevant for Romanian women trafficked before the country entered the EU).
- Travellers in a group do not appear to know each other.

HARBOURING, RECEIPT

- She lives and sleeps at work.
- The sleeping areas are over-crowded, unhealthy and there are no basic hygiene facilities, with limited privacy or no right to privacy.
- She has limited freedom to move in her place.

### Means indicators

**MEANS: Do you find some of the following signs?**

THREATS

- She shows sign of fear and anxiety, especially in the presence of the supervisor, manager, or men or women who accompany her during transport, transfer or border crossing.
- She makes statements that are incoherent or show indoctrination.
- Men or women who accompany the woman show aggression towards the woman.

USE OF FORCE

- She has visible injuries (e.g. bruises, scars, cuts, and mouth and teeth injuries, cigarette burns) or certain particular tattoos.
- She shows signs that she is anxious or afraid (e.g. sweating, trembling, difficulty responding to questions directly, avoidance of eye contact for reasons unrelated to culture).
- She makes frequent visits to emergency centres for injuries, STDs, abortion.

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

- She lives and works at the same location or very close by.
- There are control mechanisms of the place of prostitution or working place, such as video surveillance, signs warning people not to leave, inaccessible windows or windows with bars, locked doors, etc.

- She is moved from one place to another one by the pimp (or manager of the entertainment place) without her consent.

ISOLATION

- She does not know her location or address.
- The workplace is in a remote location which is difficult to reach by public or private transportation.
- She has limited or no access to means of communication (e.g. phone, mail, internet). She changes frequently her phone number.
- The traafficker/exploiter/employer insists on answering questions on behalf of the woman and/or on translating all conversations.

RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS

- She does not possess or have access to her ID documents (passport, ID card, visa, work or residence permit) or other valuable personal effects (return ticket) and cannot access to them on request.
- Other prostitutes (or workers) are in the same situation, with no access to their identification documents.
- Identification documents seem to be forged.

RETENTION OF WAGES

- She must give all or most of the money she gets from clients to her supervisor.
- The employer cannot show an employment contract or proof that wages have been paid to the woman, or employment documents and wage records have been altered.
- Payments are irregular and/or frequently delayed.
- She does not know how much she is earning.

DECEPTION

- She did not know she would have to provide sexual services.
- The actual terms and conditions of work differ from those that were promised orally or in writing.
- She signed a new employment contract upon arrival at work.

ABUSE OF VULNERABILITY

- She is in an irregular administrative situation and does not have residence permit or work permits.
- She belongs to a group that has been discriminated against or does not have equal rights in society (e.g. based on refugee/asylum status, ethnicity, disabilities, orphan status, or being part of a minority, religious or cultural group).
- She has limited education and/or is illiterate or does not know the local language.
- She is in a situation where she is dependent in multiple ways (e.g. reliant on the employer for accommodation, food, and relatives' jobs or other benefits).
- She is emotionally and economically tied to the employer/recruiter (e.g. because of a romantic or blood relationship).
- She refers to religious or cultural beliefs with fear.

DEBT BONDAGE

- She must repay excessive fees for recruitment, transportation accommodation, food, tools or safety equipment that are deducted directly from the woman's wages.
- Repayment terms for wage advances are unclear or manipulated.
- She must work to repay an actually incurred or inherited debt.
- Parents received a payment in return for their child to come with the traffickers.

# 5. Taking gender into account when providing services for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation

The *Study on the Gender Dimension of Trafficking in Human Beings* report, launched by the European Commission in 2016, underlines the importance of gender in the period after exiting trafficking, mainly while providing specific assistance to victims. According to the report, the harms from trafficking are gender specific and different from the harms from trafficking for purposes of labour and other forms of exploitation, as their seriousness is related to the specific ways that the bodies of trafficked women are abused. The study mentions the severe, brutal and long-term, gender-specific physical, gynaecological and mental health harms, as well as the risks to life and traumas from trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. As a result, specialised service provision needs to be gender specific as well, taking into account the intersections with other forms of disadvantage and vulnerability, as well as appropriate to the needs of victims. Having specific gender-related expertise is essential in providing this specialised assistance needed by the victims of trafficking to recover their rights, as well as their well-being.

## 5.1 Overview on different dynamics of vulnerability to trafficking

There are positive examples of assistance programs and the existing ones are strongly connected to integrated intervention models, based on the victim`s personalised plan, and carried out at the individual, family and community level. Some of those programs are highlighted in the Romanian research developed as part of the GIRL project and their main feature is that, apart from **treating the consequences** of the events suffered during the trafficking period, they **also take into account the initial vulnerability factors and especially the gender-related vulnerability factors** that existed even before trafficking took place.

Recruitment is much connected to the concept of vulnerability, impacting on the society/community; family and the individual predisposed to victimisation. The research report based on the interviews with Romanian professionals, closely working with victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, underlined the essential role the family and the relationships between family members play in the vulnerability of potential victims, as well as the gender relations in these families and communities. Based on the experiences of the interviewed specialists, those working in intervention and those who mainly operate in prevention, a significant number of the young victims come from disorganised, neglectful and/or violent families, with damaged relationships and repeated experiences of loss. Poverty, lack of stability, physical or emotional absence of different family members, role confusion, and lack of opportunities for parents, isolation or marginalization of the family increases the level of vulnerability. Especially for sexual exploitation, the vulnerability **factors are acting at family level, portrayed as:**

The maintaining of the patriarchal family

- the man is validated as the authoritarian figure, owner of the family and financial provider; whereas the woman becomes an accessory
- rigid, divergent role prescriptions and gender inequality

In the Italian research report developed for the GIRL project, for example, the gender issues are raised with reference to the condition of vulnerability. In particular, they relate to: the status of women within the family and, in connection with this aspect, the experience relating to the role and condition of the mother within the family. In this sense the acceptance of their condition, or at least the perception of normality of the condition lived in the framework of exploitation, is often based on the idea of inevitability of such situation as a condition associated with gender.

**Dysfunctional relations between members**

- Intra-family abuse/ domestic violence/ emotional violence
- Several generations live in a small space that does not allow emotional development
- Children not brought up according to age and gender specifics

The same previously quoted research report, elaborated on the basis of interviews with Italian professionals directly working with victims of trafficking, stresses the fact that the family context is often the reality from which girls and women want to escape, to get away from unhealthy relationships, lack of opportunities, discrimination, abuse and violence.

**The dysfunctional parenting style:** neglecting/unpredictable; criticizing/over-focused on child's performance; rejecting/punishing; overprotective; abusive

- The expression of parental affection is unpredictable or comes in cycles of engagement/disengagement
- Children, especially girls, are assuming adult roles: financial providers; caretakers of younger brothers; managing household; parents' advisors; substitute partners

The assuming roles are "within the family or in the nearest community (school, neighbourhood)"; while taking these roles upon themselves, their dignity, capabilities and potential are not supported. Often these undervalued women and girls are at the same time entrusted with excessive responsibilities and tasks, which are accepted as a vital "sacrifice" and as a "duty", in the name of the family".

Due to the fact that the vulnerabilities are related to parental/intimate relationships, which constitute a natural "asset" and part of the identity for each individual, the professionals pointed out how difficult it is to access and share that kind of information with victims. Victims are not expected to express immediately in what way and to what extent family issues have affected the development of their personality and personal projects. These issues tend to be kept private and protected, hoping in this way to limit the distress caused by the awareness. According to the experience of professionals, to overcome problematic family events and settings, a great level of "psychological re-working" and then a strong level of confidence between professionals and victims are required.

When discussing recruitment, the strategies used by recruiters/traffickers are of great importance as they can predict the impact exploitation has on victims and their families, as well as their recovery process and sometimes their decision of cooperating with law enforcement in denouncing the exploitation. As stated in the Romanian research report, the vulnerability of victims with a history of living in violent families or partnerships (lover boy or husband as trafficker) can be described by the consequences of the abuse in the family: the ambivalence towards the family members, the lack of trust in the chance of changing their life for the better, the hope that the situation will be solved by the trafficker.

According to the previously mentioned *Hopes for Sale* study, focusing on psycho-social vulnerability factors for sexual exploitation, the face-to-face recruitment and more particularly the victim-recruiter relationship, irrespective of the recruiter's gender, is characterized by more subtle and nuanced mechanisms aimed at obtaining victim's consent and submission in exploitation. In most of the researched situations, recruitment followed a previous relationship between the victim and recruiter/trafficker, the latter being perceived as a support person (friend, couple partner, and family member). Often, recruiters are grooming the future victims and their families, gain their trust and have knowledge of victims' needs, desires and problems, therefore can elaborate a proposal moulded on these.

Yet, the use of violence (in the form of rape, kidnapping etc.) remains a constant means used both in recruitment and exploitation.

Several types of recruitment strategies involving emotional violence have been identified:

a. **Developing emotional attachment and building the couple project** - in this category fall the "best friends" and couple partners, the recruitment aiming to create an image of a protector and care-giving partner, offering a helping hand to the future victim whenever in need. Their discourse is focused on presenting the saving solution as opposed to the obscure and uncertain present. The proposal is usually cantered on the benefits of leaving home and building of a hypothetical future in a couple. Most often, the emotional relationship with the victim is established before the debut of the exploitation and it sometimes evolves into building emotional dependency and assures victims' unconditional submission. It is often accompanied by the guilt victims may feel to disappoint or harm their protector, their saviour from an existence deprived of many. This relationship is built on the dysfunctional relation victims have with their families and acts as "functional" substitute for the first, thus giving the recruiter the opportunity to closely know the problems faced by the victim and systematically act to destroy the victim's trust in her family. Such recruiters are good listeners and can assess the victims' needs, lacks, and aspirations.

b. **Creating better life opportunities by offering professional alternatives** – recruiters approached victims by offering them better paid jobs, which did not require special professional training. In most of the cases the recruiters were friends, former classmates or colleagues, or had been recommended by a person well known to the future victim. These could also be respected members of their communities or successful migrants coming back home and willing to share their good fortune with a neighbour. Accepting such a proposition is highly influenced by the victims' perceived low quality of life and the desire to create a better future for their families. In this situation too, the recruiters/traffickers are aware of personal/family shortcomings victims face and the job proposal acts as solving these problems. Even in the cases in which recruitment is done via internet, some recruiters are willing to meet the future victims in person, to foster the creation of a relation of trust and enhance the credibility of the proposition.

c. **Creating better life opportunities for an already consolidated couple** – in this case, the recruiter is the partner or even the husband of the victim. It occurs that either the future trafficking victim had been subjected to domestic violence before the exploitation, her self-trust and coping mechanisms have been shattered or the partner/husband suddenly changes his behaviour as soon as he obtains the wife's consent. Usually the consent is obtained for migrating to find a regular job abroad, but at the destination, sometimes after a failed "job search", the wife is influenced to accept offering sexual services as a temporary solution. Accepting such situation is done for the sake of the family and initially she is told she can refuse certain activities or clients any time. Assuring control and submission in exploitation will in this case be obtained through threats and acts of domestic violence.

In some cases the recruiter is also the exploiter of the person, accompanying and controlling her, but in others recruiters remain in the region/country in which the victim resides, acting as instruments to ensure the victims' docility in exploitation. By being acquainted with the victim's family, they can threat to harm them should the victim disobey.

## 5.2 Cooperation among key actors

A very important element of an effective intervention, mentioned by most experts in the research initiative performed as part of the GIRL project, is consolidating the collaboration between representatives of various institutions in the country and abroad, through formal or informal networks. Taking into account migration trends and increased trans-national mobility of victims, states need to widen trans-national partnerships to cover stakeholders from origin, transit and destination countries and ensure better standardization of procedures. In this respect, by 2015, the Commission envisages the creation of an EU Transnational Referral Mechanism, reuniting together the national referral mechanisms of member states in order to improve the victim protection and assistance measures.

The Romanian National Identification and Referral Mechanism (MNIR) with a focus on referral to assistance providers was approved through Joint Ministerial Order no. 2881 in 2007 and sets up the general and special principles to be taken into account with regard to the identification of trafficked persons, as well as the means to identify them, from a double perspective: the legal and the victimological point of view. It specifies the actors involved and their tasks in carrying out not only victim identification, but also in referring victims to assistance providers. It also contains a list of 70 trafficking indicators, adapted after the ILO list in 2009.

The victim referral process is defined according to the MNIR as **entrusting presumed and possible victims of domestic and international trafficking in persons to the providers of protection, assistance and monitoring institutions. This can be conducted within the borders of a country or trans-nationally, upon the decision to implement such services in the victims' country of origin or in a transit or destination country** (the National Identification and Referral Mechanism, approved by Joint Ministerial Order no. 335 from 2007).

As in identification, there are several actors involved in carrying out the referral: judiciary authorities; international organisations; embassies/consular offices; institutions and governmental organisations; NGOs from origin/transit/destination countries; social assistance institutions; labour inspectorates; healthcare personnel; educational staff; civil society members; to a smaller extent self-referrals. The multi-agency actors involved in the referral process shall cooperate to ensure that identified victims are provided in due time with adequate protection and assistance services. The national focal point of MNIR is The **National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (NATIP).**

NATIP is the specialised structure under the Ministry of Internal Affairs with attributions to coordinate, evaluate and monitor the enforcement of anti-trafficking policies and practices, at national level, by institutions and organisations mandated to address trafficking in persons. NATIP also acts to bridge the gap between trafficked persons and law enforcement and connects the first with NGO service providers across the country. The NATIP collaborates with NGO services providers in Romania and abroad as well as with intergovernmental organisations for various matters. It is structured in a central coordinating unit and 15 Regional Centres, established in the main developmental regions, in areas in which Appeal Courts operate. The Regional Centres coordinate and monitor the anti-trafficking measures taken at local level, cooperate with the municipality, the specialised police and social assistance system (state and NGO). Their personnel scheme includes a Regional Centre Coordinator (detached law enforcement officer and two specialty inspectors, a Psychologist and a Social Assistant). In addition, at the level of the central unit, a repatriation team was set up with attributions to participate in assisted returns, pick victims up from the airport/place of arrival and ensure they are safely transported home, to a shelter.

The victim identification process represents the first phase of a Trans-national Referral Mechanism - TRM or National Referral Mechanism – NRM and includes both activities related to victim's participation in the criminal proceedings and the provision of protection and assistance.

First level identification is the rapid process of screening through persons who are in exploitation, identifying those who were trafficked and rapidly providing them the assistance in crisis measure for their safeguard. According to international victim protection standards, the main priority with regard to ensuring victims' access to re-integration services is the ability of relevant actors to conduct fast identification. First level identification may be carried out by both law enforcement officers (from the specialised taskforces), as well as by grassroots workers in the field of victim protection and assistance; social assistance; child protection units; labour agencies, as well as by non-specialised professional categories who come into contact with trafficked persons.

**First level identification** contains the following actions, undertaken by professionals in relation to potential victims of trafficking in persons:

- Initial screening – the rescuing/identification process, assessment of assistance needs
- Ensuring access to basic needs – assistance in crisis intervention: accommodation, food, water, clothes, emergency medical assistance, counselling/psychotherapy, information on the rights available to trafficked persons;

- Assessment of risk for the person and her family (if possible), on relapse into trafficking, on potential retaliation from traffickers, as well as risks associated to the physical/mental state of health or available resources in the family/community;
- Ensuring communication in the victim's native language or a language she can understand (wherever the case);
- Granting the reflection and recovery period (in Romania this contains 90 days) and implementing the specific assistance services (medium term);
- **The formal identification** conducted by the judicial authorities investigating the trafficking in persons offence.

## 5.3 Myths, stereotypes and prejudice that can negatively impact the assistance provided to victims of trafficking

When working with victims of trafficking it is important to be mindful and aware of the personal position the professional may have towards the assisted person, to acknowledge one's beliefs, prejudices, personal themes so that they interfere as little as possible in the professional relation between the assistant and victim. Should such beliefs strongly impact the quality of the assistance, the professional may seek supervision/professional support or may refer the case to another colleague.

*If the person consented to the activity, there was no trafficking.*

Even if the victim consents to performing the activity, she does not consent to the abusive conditions. Her consent should be regarded in the broader context, by also considering pre-existent vulnerability.

*If the person cannot prove the presence of physical abuse or threats against her and her family, there was no trafficking.*

Actualised tendencies imply a more subtle manner of imposing control on the victims; the impact cannot be strictly and clearly quantified.

*If the person could move freely and did receive occasional payments, there was no trafficking.*

These are parts of the traffickers' strategy to motivate victims, coercing them to continue performing the activities in order to keep such benefits that are needed. The changes in the dynamics of trafficking for sexual exploitation (availability of a certain amount of money and more freedom of movement) have led to a decrease in the number of victims of trafficking from Romania who apply and have access to the programs of protection and assistance managed by third sector organisations in Italy, for example.

*During the trafficking episode, victims are moved out of the area of residence.*

Some of the victims, especially minors, are initially exploited in their hometowns.

*In order for a person to be considered a victim of trafficking in persons, she must be identified by the police or the prosecutor.*

Both the trans-national and the national identification and referral mechanisms recognize both the formal and the informal identification, the latter being conducted by NGOs and services providers. However, the legal status of victim of trafficking in persons can only be granted upon court decision following the victim's collaboration with the law enforcement.

*Recruitment is more often carried out in rural areas than in towns or cities.*

Recruitment is carried out both in villages and cities or towns. As the "Hopes for Sale" study shows, at least for sexual exploitation, recruitment is more often carried out in towns, usually in the county of residence, irrespective if the victim lives in the rural area. Towns are more often associated with better social and professional opportunities.

*Persons who do not denounce the trafficking situation to the police are not victims.*

It is within the victims' rights to refuse collaboration with law enforcement, from a victimological perspective they will be identified as such and assisted according to their needs.

*If the victim was exploited by her couple partner it is a case of pandering, not of trafficking in persons.*

The Spanish report underlines the fact that psychological elements play an important part in these recruitment patterns: trust for family members and infatuation and love relationships. Motivations to recruit women are mainly promises of a job and a better life. In the case of boyfriends, a project of couple's life and children. Practice shows that such situations are hard to prove under the trafficking in persons offence. *If upon court decision, the perpetrators are acquitted, there was no trafficking in persons.*

Even though the court decided otherwise, if the informal identification was carried out by taking into account the Standard Operational Procedures in force, it does not affect victims' access to protection and assistance measures.

*Victims trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes are women consenting to offer commercial sex services.*

There is a clear distinction between the voluntary, consensual performance of commercial sex and trafficking in persons for the prostitution of others and other sexual services. Yet persons who have been involved in prostitution may be trafficked too. The research report elaborated in Spain stresses out the fact that some professionals do not make a clear distinction between prostitution and trafficking, and it is difficult to grasp the specific dynamics of trafficking regarding some elements, such as the urban and rural areas where trafficked women practice prostitution.

*Trafficked victims are illiterate or have abandoned school.*

According to the official statistics, the majority of victims have graduated secondary education (8 years of study). In practice, most have been recruited while in high school and abandoned school due to the exploitation, afterwards finding it difficult to re-enrol to the same school.

*Real victims are grateful for their rescue and assistance; they will accept help and are motivated to work for their future.*

The experience of trauma and its manifestation differs much from one person to another. It should not be regarded as a criteria upon which professionals may decide who is a victim or not. Practice shows that victims have had very different reactions to rescue, assistance and projects for the future.

## 5.4 Important experiences of exploitation that could impact the assistance dynamics and participation

While in exploitation, victims are repeatedly subjected to degrading treatments, acts of violence, utter deprivations of basic needs (sleep, food and rest), this impacting on long term on their state of physical and emotional health and also altering their perceptions over the self, body and needs. In brief, the exploitation activates two experiences: 1) that of being objectified and no longer allowed to voluntarily use the body and the self; 2) that of an inequitable rapport of power in which the victim has no real opportunity of reversing positions to improve their condition.

There are two considerations with regard to the impact of exploitation on victims' physical wellbeing: a) suffering from medical conditions as a direct result of the bad treatments during the trafficking period; b) medical conditions which can be partially explained by the exploitation, but have a strong psychosomatic component. According to the *Stolen Smiles* research, immediately following a trafficking experience most women are burdened with numerous and concurrent physical and mental health problems. At 0 to 14 days, over 57% of women were experiencing 12 or more physical health symptoms that caused them pain or discomfort. After 28 days, 7% were experiencing 11 or more symptoms, and after 90 days, 6% showed this number of concurrent symptoms.

Therefore, the provision of medical services should be considered a priority in the assistance programme; proactive intervention should also include normalizing the situation for the victim, explaining the procedures, asking for their consent, allowing them to ask questions and accompanying them throughout the entire process of attaining physical health.

Specialists in psycho-traumatology describe trauma as a paradoxical situation that is unexpected, has harmful potential and for which the victim's defence mechanisms are ineffective. Following the experience of a traumatic event, victims often experience physical and emotional sufferance that is very similar to loss and bereavement. In the wider context, the trauma following exploitation may or may not be the person's first encounter with abuse, in a significant number of cases exploitation being only another episode in the over-saturated with trauma personal and family history. In a sense, a person may already have developed a certain habitude to abuse, followed by certain beliefs on sufferance, risk and protection/help. It is important for a professional working in this field to learn the victims' perspective, her benchmarks and work with them to find solutions appropriate for the person instead of imposing one's own solutions.

According to the above mentioned *Stolen Smiles* study on physical and psychological health consequences trafficking has on women and girls in Europe, 60% of the respondents reported to have suffered physical and/or sexual violence prior to being trafficked, with 32% having been sexually abused and 50% physically assaulted. Nearly one-quarter (22%) were both physically and sexually abused (the onset of sexual abuse occurring before the age of 15). One in seven respondents (15%) reported having a coerced sexual experience before the age of 15, prior to being trafficked. Of these women, almost one-quarter (24%) cited more than one perpetrator, with over half (52%) reporting being sexually abused or coerced by a family member, and 28% stating that the abuse was perpetrated by a father (14%) or step-father (14%). Mothers were also implicated in cases of sexual coercion (7%), and women reported abuse by carers in institutional settings, such as orphanages. Just over one-quarter of the women (26%) reported a forced or coerced sexual experience after the age of 15, prior to being trafficked. The majority of these women stated that the abuse was perpetrated by either an acquaintance or a stranger, with only a few women reporting sexual abuse by family members, or boyfriends. Some said that they were physically forced, and many stated that they feared they would be killed if they did not comply.

In Romania, the *Hopes, for Sale* qualitative research on vulnerability factors associated to entering sexual exploitation records victims mentioning the experience of physical/emotional or sexual abuse before trafficking. What was particular in those cases was that the context of vulnerability also included teen age, parents migrating abroad for work and rarely being in contact with the children left at home, daughters being left in the care of a foster father who was the first one to sexually abuse or even exploit

the girl. Again, as a vulnerability factor the feeling of emotional abandonment, the lack of love, acceptance and validation from parents were mentioned; exposure to domestic violence of the parents; being raised in a household with several brothers and having different expectations attached from a gender perspective.

According to the *Listening to Victims – Experiences of Identification, Return and Assistance in South-Eastern Europe* study, victims describe their experiences of having been identified, referred for pre-departure assistance and returned to their home countries as accompanied by contradictory and ambivalent feelings of **relief, anxiety/fear and suspicion towards the actors involved**, **nervousness, frustration, disappointment or excitement, relief, gladness**. Attitudes of trust, feeling safe and comfortable are usually built with time and only in the framework of an open, authentic relation with the personnel in charge with the various tasks for their protection. At this point, being provided with information and being asked for consent before the main interventions take place was crucial. Sometimes information sharing with victims was reduced to updating them on the following steps to be taken for their return, without being provided with a comprehensible rationale regarding why were those steps necessary, what is victim protection, what does being a victim of human trafficking mean, what are the available options. Victims felt confused and somehow trapped in a complex, multi-actor system, with lengthy procedures, knowing, hoping that at the end they would go back home.

The identified shortcomings with potentially negative impact on the victims' safeguarding were related to: not being explained their rights and assistance options; limited identification skills of some actors; not receiving (entirely) proper treatment during identification; corruption; identification interviews conducted in unsafe conditions; victims receiving pre-departure assistance being repatriated without being referred to providers in home countries; delaying returns and victims being reintegrated in destination countries without their consent; victims in significantly vulnerable states returned without escort or with unsafe means of transportation; victims not being provided with sufficient information in the case of facing difficulties; anxiety at the border points due to not having identity documents.

According to the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes, in order for a criminal investigation of a crime to be initiated, it is mandatory for the victim of that crime to denounce it and to press charges against the suspect. However, trafficking in persons is legally considered an organized crime offence, of high severity, therefore when initiating the criminal pursuit, it is the state denouncing the crime committed against the victim (the state against traffickers). Yet, both the victims' and witnesses' participation in the criminal pursuit and afterwards in the trial against perpetrators are of crucial importance to establish the offence and sentence of the perpetrators. The judicial proceedings develop in a long-term process, containing several stages, in each of these the victims' active participation being requested for a positive outcome. Ideally, in parallel victims are also included in a specialised protection and assistance programme, aimed to help in their reintegration.

It happens quite often that victims in vulnerable emotional states, displaying acute posttraumatic symptoms or being traumatically attached to the perpetrators, participate in the criminal proceedings, without proper preparation to help them cope with their feelings and to provide good participation. This may negatively influence the contents of their declarations in terms of authenticity, detail and also their decision to continue helping authorities in the criminal pursuit until the end of the trial or to accept and continue the reintegration programme.

The victim–trafficker relation has a very complex dynamic and involves ambivalent feelings and reactions. For instance, a victim who normally fears the trafficker may feel relief when he chooses not to punish her or when he offers certain rewards. It is very difficult for a person to be able to contain and respond to such reactions, therefore a compromise between the two needs to be found. While in exploitation victims need to survive and adjust to the abusive environment; in order to do so, some choose to very carefully observe the perpetrators, to put themselves in their shoes in order to anticipate how traffickers would react, so that they adjust their own reaction and deviate conflict. This is how victims introject/internalize their traffickers and danger associated to them and continue to re-live the traumatic event even after their rescue. Another category of victims, especially those exploited by their couple

partners/close relatives experience traumatic attachment or have strong emotional bonds with their perpetrators. They experience a strong internal conflict and feel guilt at the thought of denouncing, consequently harming, someone they have feelings for.

Those above are arguments to strengthen the role of the assistance/protection provider as a mediator between victims and authorities, who must at all times act to:

- Clearly explain the legal aspects of trafficking in human beings to victims and the context in which they have rights related to their protection and assistance, by using simple words;
- Inform victims on each of their rights and how they will be helped to access them;
- Stress that under no circumstance should their protection and assistance be made conditional upon their cooperation with law enforcement authorities;
- Inform victims on the criminal proceedings stages and the activities that will be implemented, as well as on the various actors – policemen, investigation prosecutor, medical-legal expert, lawyer, court prosecutor, defendant, judge and their tasks;
- Mediate the relation between victim and law enforcement (police officer investigating the case; Prosecutor; attorney defending their interests);
- Ensure that victims' rights to protection on private life, identity, physical security and specific judicial protection measures are respected;
- Ensure that victims are guided and safeguarded throughout this process and that practices triggering secondary victimization are avoided;
- Accompany the victim throughout the criminal proceedings.

Moreover, among the most frequent reasons rendering victims reluctant in deciding to cooperate with authorities/specialists are:

- The fear that the family/community may find out about exploitation if the police comes to ask questions or hand in the summoning at home;
- The psychological and physical impact of the trauma – sudden mood shifts, difficulties in recollecting certain memories; difficulties in focusing their attention; exhaustion; high anxiety; ambivalence; guilt towards hurting the perpetrator; traumatic attachment;
- Shame and fear that they will have to once again tell their stories and feel all the emotional pain associated to it;
- The fear that they will themselves be investigated and made legally liable for the deeds of illegally working;
- Victims have been inoculated the idea that traffickers are omnipotent and that they have "bought" the police, therefore there is no real justice to be done;
- The fear not to make things worse by denouncing the offence with the strong belief that there is no actual protection they can benefit from;
- The lack of information on rights, judicial and administrative procedures applicable.

The objective of direct assistance to victims of human trafficking is to facilitate their recovery and empowerment. Taking gender into account when providing services for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, involves, at least:

- **The importance of individual case-by-case approach ->** this brings to attention the difficulties between the victims' perception on exploitation, unique resources, needs, and the individual empowerment versus universal assistance services.
- **Specific gender issues ->** are raised in all post-rescue intervention stages, indicating the need to

be able to create adequate and needs-responsive programmes for victims. The gender sensitive perspective also offers significant insight on the perceptions on the exploitation experience, needs, interests, sense of/loss of social roles, trauma.

- **Recognition that prevailing gender stereotypes and women's less valued social roles,** distance them from having ownership and control.

## 5.5 Special aspects to be taken into account by the programs of protection and support for victims of trafficking

The overall impact of trafficking impacts victims and their families systemically and also influences their communities. There are three main categories of consequences exploitation has over the individual and his peers:

- as *physical impact*, the aggravation of pre-existent medical conditions or acquiring diseases and affections as consequence of bad treatments received during the exploitation (e.g. immunity system issues; Hepatitis; TB infection; HIV; Syphilis etc.); these may not be covered by the medical insurance system, which results in no access to services;

- as *emotional impact*, post-traumatic symptoms (PTSD) - high anxiety; depression; acting out of negative feelings; psychosomatic symptoms;

- as *physical security* impact, exposure to threats from traffickers or recruiters made against the victim and her family; difficulties in accessing adequate and emergent security measures;

- as *legal impact*, civil consequences of the exploitation - divorce; losing custody of children; losing assets; penal consequences - re-exposure to trauma due to long lasting trial and insufficient in court protection measures;

- as *economic impact*, losing the possibility to work and provide income; some victims used to be the main economic providers in their families;

- as *social impact*, social and community stigma leading to isolation; marginalization; feelings of guilt; shame; losing previous social roles and status – victims constrained to abandon school or work; difficulties to return to school or to previous work; sometimes difficulties to go back to live in the same town; fear of discrimination; losing social support - from family; friends; acquaintances.

The Romanian research report undertaken as part of the GIRL project underlined the fact that no matter the type of services provided to victims or the types of prevention initiatives organized for teenage girls and young women at risk or children in general, the most significant factor is maintaining these real, practical, individualized.

In the frame of a client-centred, human rights based approach, the protection and assistance programmes for trafficked victims shall be organized in a normalizing de-institutionalized approach, which foresees the active involvement of the beneficiaries in choosing and implementing the most appropriate services. Thus, the beneficiary may become a subject in designing the individual protection and assistance plan, in selecting the services to be implemented, and in working together with the team to implement services and to improve their status. Becoming a subject is also an important step in re-gaining one's identity and individuality, taking into account the exploitation experience and its objectification.

An individualized assistance and protection intervention also uses the beneficiary's resources – motivation for change; projects for the future; initiatives; coping mechanisms. The aim of any assistance intervention is that of increasing the level of adjustment/functionality of the victims in various areas of the life identified as important to them. Attaining re/integration for trafficked victims also refers to building independent living skills, improving the economic sustainability of the person, improving the social functioning and the wellbeing of the victim (physical, emotional, material). Re/integration is both a result of the assistance implemented and a process; it is often lengthy, lasting in average three years and has a

sinuous dynamics. Given these facts, professionals may avoid characterizing the individual reintegration experiences of their beneficiaries as “successful” or “failures”, but may consider the individual resources as factors influencing the progresses in assistance.

The Spanish research report undertaken as part of the GIRL project also points out that concerning intervention activities directly benefiting victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, the comprehensive perspective adopted by professionals shows a global concept of the process of social reintegration in all its aspects, promoting coordination and educational intervention to reach those women that may not come directly to organisations. Some specific needs are highlighted, such as the need to combine both residential support (shelters) and external support, to provide continuous and accurate information on sexual and reproductive health, and to provide legal counselling and support in order to fight against the secondary victimisation women suffer when they enter the legal system.

As practical experience points out, the process of recovery could be much facilitated if family members/ significant persons in the support network are also involved in the assistance programme. Therefore, if possible, significant persons will be considered as resources in the assistance programme.

A different situation is that in which family members become indirect beneficiaries in the protection and assistance programmes. The lack of social protection and professional opportunities often makes the victim vulnerable for trafficking, but also impacts on her family. According to the problems the family is facing and their level of dependency on the direct beneficiary, they may receive: guidance and information on social assistance measures they may apply to; benefit from material assistance, medical services or family/couple counselling. The family members who can become indirect beneficiaries could be undeclared, long-term unemployed persons; persons with disability; children or younger brothers; persons falling out of the state social assistance system.

## 5.6 Objectives and types of programs to protect and support victims of trafficking

Out of the general goal of victims’ assistance - that of ensuring re/integration - three **working objectives** can be extracted:

- Ensuring the physical protection and wellbeing of victims of trafficking
- Ensuring improved emotional wellbeing, by reducing posttraumatic symptoms
- Ensuring the economic sustainability for victims

Using working objectives helps professionals to assign assistance services according to objectives and link them to results, so that the outcomes of the assistance programme can be measured. In addition, each assistance programme may be divided according to stages, as below:

- Assistance in crisis (from 0 – 6 months from entering assistance) – focused mainly on addressing emergency situations: ensuring physical protection and accommodation; providing emergency medical assistance; psychological intervention in crisis
- Intermediary assistance (7-12 moths in assistance) – focused on implementing the full range of services, unless assessed differently: residential, material, medical, juridical, psychological, social, vocational/educational assistance
- Final/ re/integration phase (13-24 months in assistance) - focused on implementing the range of services according to ongoing identified needs: residential, material, medical, juridical, psychological, social, vocational/educational assistance, until the objectives of the assistance and protection plan are met. It is followed by a 6 months monitoring period.

**Types of assistance services:**

- **Material assistance:** ensuring personal needs by providing food, care and personal hygiene,

clothing and footwear; activities of managing a personal budget.

- **Psychological support:** immersion of beneficiaries in activities such as individual psychotherapy, couple/family counseling, psychological support groups, ergo therapy and art therapy; relationship mediation with the original/nuclear/extended family; psychological support and preliminary assessment, by telephone, before repatriation; psychological support before and after the medical investigations; psychological support in the relationship with the authorities.
- **Medical care:** implementation of routine and specialised medical investigations; blood tests; emergency medical interventions, treatment and dental prophylaxis, ophthalmic check-up, in collaboration with private medical clinics.
- **Social care:** social surveying; assessment of re-victimization risks; reissue of identity papers; support in obtaining means of social protection; support for transportation costs within and outside city limits; victims' support throughout the reintegration steps; regular monitoring of beneficiaries; mediating relations with the institutions of social protection, training providers, schooling institutions.
- **Educational assistance:** steps for studies completion within the governmental system; enrolling beneficiaries into vocational conversion/re-conversion courses; providing school supplies, textbooks and needed materials; monitoring the schooling situation and developments; vocational guidance and counseling activities; informal education activities (literacy, education for healthy living, PC, learning foreign languages, support for themes); specific activities related to work reintegration (mediating relations with job placement public agencies, CV writing, job searching, preparing for a job interview).
- **Legal counsel:** legal advice concerning the rights of an aggrieved individual/witness and court representation in the criminal case, as well as civil case relating to the trafficking situation (actions on the civil side, divorce, juvenile custody etc.), services provided by an associate attorney; support in taking the necessary steps in obtaining the financial compensation.
- **Residential assistance:** provided physical security to victims in high risk in the origin areas but also to beneficiaries who undertake timely assistance services and has as main components: assistance in crisis, transit assistance, long-term assistance.

Effective and complex assistance interventions are carried out by multidisciplinary teams of: psychologists, social assistants, lawyers, doctors, educators. The professionals involved in carrying out the assistance may come from a single organisation/institution or several service providers may collaborate to complete their work for the best outcome of the intervention. Ideally, formalized explicit collaboration agreements or informal cooperation are means to ensure safe referrals and best use of resources for beneficiaries.

To ensure equity and transparency, the service provider(s) may conclude an Assistance Contract with the beneficiary and may also use a Beneficiary's Rights Charter.

**Steps to be taken at the intake in assistance**

- Safeguard the beneficiary and protect him from risks associated to traffickers
- Start working at an open, collaborative professional relation
- Assess the risk on multiple dimensions
- Inform the beneficiary on the legal status and consequent rights
- Evaluate and clarify the assistance needs, as expressed by the beneficiary
- Discuss the services that can be provided
- Identify the assistance objectives and work together on the protection and assistance plan
- Introduce the assistance team and their roles in guiding the beneficiary achieve goals

### Monitoring the assistance and protection interventions

The monitoring and evaluation of an assistance programme is a constant activity to be carried out in the various stages and has three directions:

- monitoring and evaluation done by the beneficiaries (qualitative): (re)evaluation of the assistance objectives; feedback on the satisfaction and relevance of provided services;
- monitoring and evaluation done by the team of professionals implementing the assistance (qualitative and quantitative): based on indicators measuring the beneficiaries' progresses in various stages of the assistance programme; through narrative progress reports; through the annual activity report; through the number of beneficiaries assisted per year/type of service provided/type of assistance;
- monitoring and evaluation of the programme and the degree in which it complies with the national specific standards for the specialised assistance of trafficked victims - conducted by NATIP, the national anti-trafficking coordinator.

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