

CONFRONT

**Countering new forms of Roma children trafficking:
Participatory approach**

National report: Greece

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A Note on Terminology

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

1. Executive summary

Since the 1990s and the early 2000s, the phenomenon of child trafficking in Southeast Europe, especially in the form of child begging among migrant Roma communities, has grown and over time changed in nature. This report explores trafficking by focusing on Roma migrant children in Greece. It is specifically interested in the trafficking of children for the purposes of begging, pick-pocketing and sexual exploitation of boys. In the thoroughly transnational context that defines the phenomenon of trafficking, Greece is treated as a destination country, where a significant number of people of Roma origin migrate from other countries in Southeast Europe, such as Albania, Romania and Bulgaria. The purpose of this report is to present and analyse the findings of our research on the existence and extent of three forms of child trafficking in Greece. It also examines the challenges that child protection services and law enforcement agencies are confronted with when addressing these cases and to highlight best practices. A comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in Roma children requires knowledge of the scope of the problem and evaluation of government responses. But it also needs to protect Roma from discrimination.

Data for this research was collected through a combination of desk research of various sources (literature review of recent studies relevant to these topics, the legislation and policy for trafficking and victim assistance and protection), and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from the judiciary, law enforcement, service and welfare provision. Interviews were conducted with experts from public entities, representatives of international organisations and social workers from NGO's active in the fields of child care, streetwork, provision of assistance to victims of trafficking as well as NGO's working with Roma groups in Athens, Thessaloniki and Korinthos. We also draw on the responses to a questionnaire we developed in cooperation with the General Secretariat for Welfare (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare) and addressed all the public children welfare institutions in Greece.

Our research shows that trafficking for exploitation in begging affects a significant number of migrant Roma children in Southeast Europe. Albania, Romania and Bulgaria are the main countries of origin of the child victims in Greece. Our findings indicate that there is a high degree of uncertainty about the criteria to apply in determining the risk status of Roma children beggars - and thus the applicable legislation and the threshold of intervention in order to protect the child. The increasing involvement of parents and relatives in the extended family, as opposed to third parties, as transporters of their children in Greece to beg, or sell small items in the street has created substantial ambivalence among authorities as to whether it should be considered trafficking. The fact that exploitation may well take place within the immediate and extended family, including from parents themselves vis-à-vis their children is often neither acknowledged, nor further investigated. The issue of how law and social support services can detect, assess and address exploitation taking place within a family frame is extremely complex and remains a major challenge that must be faced in the best interests of those children who are most vulnerable and impoverished.

2. Introduction

Forced children begging constitutes a gross violation of children's rights. Children forced to beg by third parties experience particularly severe abuse, but the problem of parents forcing their children to beg should not be ignored despite the particular challenges this involves.¹

Trafficking in human beings (THB) has been recognised as a phenomenon that has grown in the context of expanding global and regional migratory movements, affecting not only adults but also children. Over the past fifteen years, international and European institutions have turned attention to it, adopting a variety of norms and conventions that prescribe states to recognise and sanction it as a crime. Besides constituting a form of criminal activity with a significant economic dimension that evades state control, it is also a gross violation of human rights, involving some of the most harmful and gruesome forms of exploitation of some persons by others. This is particularly the case when those subject to it and affected by it are children. Child trafficking for labour, begging, sexual exploitation and other purposes is widespread across many countries in the world. Despite regional standard-setting within the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU), and targeted law and policy reforms undertaken by national governments to address it, child trafficking continues in various parts of Europe.² Equally notably, it disproportionately affects children from Roma communities.³

This report explores trafficking by focusing on Roma migrant children in Greece, a country that over the past twenty five years has become a destination for immigrants and victims of human trafficking. It is specifically interested in the trafficking of children for the purposes of begging, pick-pocketing and sexual exploitation of boys.⁴ The reason that we specifically focus on boys in this latter form is because the sexual exploitation of boys, unlike that of girls, has been thoroughly under-researched. In the thoroughly transnational context that defines the phenomenon of trafficking, Greece is treated as a destination country, where a significant number of people of Roma origin migrate from other countries in Southeast Europe, such as Albania, Romania and Bulgaria, for work. While begging is a phenomenon also evidenced among domestic Roma children, we do not examine it in this study, as the main focus of this study is on trafficking and the cross-border movement that is inherent in it.

¹ Delap, Emily. "Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal." Anti-Slavery International, 2009, p.1. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/b/beggingforchange09.pdf.

² KMOP and Defence for Children International – Italy. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). Transnational Analysis." February 2014, p.15. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://impact-eu.org/files/IMPACT%20content%20web%20final%20Jan.pdf>.

³ See ERRC and PiN. "Breaking the Silence: Trafficking in Romani Communities." March 2011. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf>.

⁴ Female prostitution, including among the Roma, has been researched extensively. See for example, ERRC and PiN. "Breaking the Silence: Trafficking in Romani Communities." March 2011. See also Gabriella Lazaridis, "Trafficking and Prostitution. The Growing Exploitation of Migrant Women in Greece". *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2001): 67-102.

As it is commonplace, we begin this study by delimiting the concept of trafficking, drawing from the widely accepted definition provided by the United Nations. However, in order to understand begging among Roma migrant children in Greece – the most common form that we have encountered, among the three on which this project focuses – it is necessary to conceptualise and understand it also in reference to other phenomena such as child labour, with which it substantially intersects. Trafficking is an internationally recognised kind of punishable crime that takes many forms, which can be seen to constitute the modern form of slavery. According to the widely accepted definition employed by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (TOC), trafficking in human beings is

“...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation...”⁵

Regarding the exploitation taking place, there are two issues that must be highlighted in the above definition. In the first place, *movement*, especially across borders, is inherent in trafficking. Transporting people away from their homes, communities and countries renders them more vulnerable, more dependent on their trafficker, and thus less likely to revolt against it and seek to escape. Furthermore, there are greater difficulties in catching crime when it moves across borders. This is not to say that trafficking is only a cross-border phenomenon. On the contrary, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (the Warsaw Convention, 2005) recognised that trafficking can also occur internally, and most countries in Southeast Europe have also criminalised internal trafficking in human beings (OSCE/ODIHR report 2005, p. 4). Secondly, trafficking is often characterised by a façade of *consent* by the victim to be recruited, transported and even to be exploited. However, such consent is clearly false and does not remove the coercive and exploitative nature of trafficking – there cannot be any real consent under fraud, threat or use of force. This is especially the case when children and minors are involved; their young age and level of psychological development and maturity exposes them far more to abuse of power by adults.

Trafficking in persons disproportionately affects the Roma, including in the form of child begging.⁶ It mainly affects Roma children between the ages of four or five and throughout their years as children and adolescents. There are a number of reasons that account for the high risk and extreme vulnerability and proneness of Roma children in regard to trafficking and begging, which we encounter in Greece and in Southeast Europe more broadly. In the first place, the root causes of their vulnerability are to be found in their status as a thoroughly marginalised social group,

⁵ This definition is contained in Article 3(a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>.

⁶ ERRC and PiN. “Breaking the Silence: Trafficking in Romani Communities.” March 2011, p.11.

a target of pervasive prejudice and negative stereotyping, in addition to being affected by very high levels of unemployment. Their high levels of marginalisation render Roma children especially prone to being lured into activities that are at their root exploitative.

Secondly, Roma children are vulnerable to trafficking because they often lack civil registration documents and therefore lack a presence and identity in the state records. This is a generalised problem that exists in many countries. It is partly related to their way of life, but also to institutionalised and deeply entrenched discrimination against them, which leads many Roma to distrust state authorities. The lack of civil registration makes it easier for traffickers to recruit victims, and it also obstructs state authorities in their attempts to detect the true identity of children who are being transported across borders. It is difficult for social workers or for police authorities to distinguish if the person accompanying a child is his parent or guardian if they had no identification means.⁷ The lack of official registration also makes it difficult for national authorities to collect reliable information regarding the nature and frequency of trafficking among Roma communities, and children in particular. The lack of civil registration for many Roma, including many children, also means that those individuals fall outside the protective net of the state's social support services.

In Central-East and Southeast Europe, particular cultural practices encountered within the Roma communities, such as early marriage, child labour and mobility, may also render their children more vulnerable to trafficking.⁸ They may make it more difficult for parents and carers to recognise the risks and the problems involved when children are encouraged or are expected to work instead of regularly attending school. In at least some, especially poverty-stricken Roma communities in Europe, children being sent to work or to beg in order to supplement the family income, is an established or at least, accepted and tolerated practice. Entrusting a child to a relative, friend or acquaintance who promises to find him/her work, may appear acceptable to parents who are unaware of the actual conditions that will be encountered in a foreign country.

Recognising that parents may encourage or expect children to supplement the family income as an internal community practice should not be seen as being tantamount to accepting the popular and stigmatising association of Roma people with begging. Instead, it should prompt us to reflect more carefully about how such practices may underpin essential survival strategies of families and entire communities, rather than assume that they stem from a purportedly different (and inferior) cultural mentality and traditions. In fact, it has been reported that such cultural biases prevailing among the non-Roma has reinforced an attitude of closure, and a reluctance to openly acknowledge and talk about trafficking and child begging, lest they fuel into existing prejudices.⁹ From a human rights perspective, child begging is a form of forced labour, and is clearly against the child's fundamental rights and best interests. It is so even if child begging does not involve coercion or

⁷ OSCE-ODIHR. "Awareness Raising for Roma Activists on the Issue of Trafficking in Human Beings in South-Eastern Europe." Warsaw, April 2006, pp. 9-10. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/18813?download=true>.

⁸ OSCE-ODIHR. "Awareness Raising for Roma Activists on the Issue of Trafficking in Human Beings in South-Eastern Europe." Warsaw, April 2006, p. 2.

⁹ OSCE-ODIHR. "Awareness Raising for Roma Activists on the Issue of Trafficking in Human Beings in South-Eastern Europe." Warsaw, April 2006, p. 12.

deception, and regardless of whether it takes place in the context of cross-border migratory movements (trafficking) or internally to a country.¹⁰ Children are treated as an opportunity in relation to begging; the sight of children as vulnerable and in need of protection stirs feelings of compassion and charity, and they are therefore likely to make more money than adults.

Since the 1990s and the early 2000s, the phenomenon of child trafficking in Southeast Europe, especially in the form of child begging among migrant Roma communities, has undergone a fundamental change in nature. While in the early years, child trafficking for begging involved and was organised by third persons and criminal rings, over the past ten years child begging has been taking place predominantly under the control of the parents, broader family or the extended family. Perusal of NGO and international organisations' reports on the topic, as well as several interviews with stakeholders, have all pointed to such a shift having taken place. A number of reasons have contributed to this. In the early 2000s, after signing the so-called Palermo Protocol and other international conventions, the government of Albania, a main country of origin for Roma children coming to Greece to beg, started to acknowledge the phenomenon of child trafficking. It criminalised trafficking in human beings, including in children, as well as illegal border crossing, and introduced severe penalties for perpetrators.¹¹ More stringent anti-trafficking provisions became a disincentive not only for traffickers but also for parents in view of the higher risk of their children getting caught.¹² Another factor that possibly contributed to the decline of child trafficking by criminal gangs is related to the influence of awareness raising campaigns by NGOs among Roma communities and families, as well as a result of pressure exercised by international organisations.

The increasing involvement of parents and relatives in the extended family as recruiters and transporters of their children to a foreign country to beg, or sell small items, raises profound challenges to common and well-established definitions of trafficking and it has far-reaching implications for how best to redress it. The purpose of this report is to present and analyse the findings of our research on the existence and extent of three forms of child trafficking in Greece. It also examines the challenges that child protection services and law enforcement agencies are confronted with when addressing these cases, and to formulate and highlight best practices. A comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in Roma children requires knowledge of the scope of the problem and evaluation of government responses. But it also needs to protect Roma from discrimination.

Data for this research was collected through a combination of desk research of various sources, such as information requests to relevant institutions. A wealth of information has been collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (law enforcement, service providers, Roma experts) held during February and July 2014. Desk research comprised a literature review of recent studies

¹⁰ Delap, Emily. "Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal." Anti-Slavery International, 2009.

¹¹ See Terre des hommes and Arsis. "Transnational Protection of Children. The Case of Albania and Greece, 2000-2006." 2006, p.14. Accessed December 1, 2014. https://tdhproduction.s3.amazonaws.com/media_files/457_tdh_transnational_protection_children_albania_greece_en_2006_original.pdf.

¹² Delap, Emily. "Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal." Anti-Slavery International, 2009, p.8.

relevant to these topics, the legislation and policy framework for trafficking and victim assistance and protection. Before the start of our field-work we carried out a stakeholder mapping in order to identify the main stakeholders at the national level, as well as stakeholders in Athens and Thessaloniki where the phenomenon of child trafficking appears more intense.

Twenty three interviews were conducted. Our interviewees came from the following public entities: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Security Divisions of the Hellenic Police (Attika and Thessaloniki), the Public Prosecutor's Office (Athens and Thessaloniki), the National Centre for Social Solidarity (Athens and Thessaloniki), the Institute of Child Health and the Greek Ombudsman. Interviews with representatives from NGO's active in the fields of child care, street work, provision of assistance to victims of trafficking as well as NGO's working with Roma groups were also carried out in Athens, Thessaloniki and Korinthos.¹³ These include: A21 Campaign, Arsis, Klimaka Iatriki Paremvasi (Medical Intervention), Kentro Paidiou kai Oikogeneias (Centre for the Children and the Family), Kivwtos tw n Paidiwn (Children's Ark), Praksis, Xamogelo tou paidiou (Smile of the Child). An interview with an associate in the UN High Commission for Refugees in Greece was also conducted. We also draw on the responses to a questionnaire we developed and addressed all the public children welfare institutions in Greece. This was done in cooperation with the General Secretariat for Welfare (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare) which is the body responsible for supervising these institutions. The questionnaire included questions on the number and characteristics of Roma child victims of trafficking to which they have provided services/accommodation, the forms of exploitation to which these have been subject, *inter alia*.

3. Country Background

3.1. Roma child trafficking in Greece

The first instances of Roma child trafficking in Greece were reported in the late 1990s. Children of Roma origin were to be found among Albanians who were trafficked and exploited in begging or forced labour in the streets of big cities in Greece. The term 'traffic light kids' (*paidia tw n fanariwn*) was coined to refer to the children who were usually encountered around traffic lights or stop signs to beg directly or indirectly, i.e. selling packets of handkerchiefs or washing windshields for change. One of the first studies on the subject, published by Save the Children, highlighted the vulnerability of Albanian Roma children from the Roma communities of Elbasan, Korca, Berat and Tirana to trafficking, drawing attention to acute poverty, lack of opportunity and social exclusion as the root factors of the phenomenon.¹⁴ Trafficking from Albania for begging and other purposes principally affected boys.

¹³ We would like to give a special thanks to our interviewees who shared information, insights and expertise.

¹⁴ Renton, Daniel. "Child Trafficking in Albania." Save the Children, 2001. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.childtrafficking.org/pdf/user/child_trafficking_in_albania_save_the_children.pdf.

Research showed the trafficking, recruitment and exploitation was mostly carried out by trafficking rings.¹⁵

In most cases though, the recruitment of children by traffickers took place with the consent of the parents. Many of them were usually unaware of the harsh exploitative conditions that the children would experience, and they would agree to ‘rent’ their children to traffickers in exchange for a monthly sum of money.¹⁶ Cases of Albanian Roma girls who had been trafficked for exploitation in prostitution in Greece were also reported in the early 2000s.¹⁷ In the context of greater awareness about trafficking, including among Roma communities, and more stringent criminal penalties for traffickers, which have already been described in the introduction section, the consent of parents stopped being so forthcoming. Parental perceptions of children at risk, but also of opportunity, changed, as they reportedly saw that they could retain a substantial share of the profit instead of leaving it to the traffickers, if they themselves organised migration to neighbouring Greece to engage in activities such as begging.¹⁸

Nowadays, law enforcement authorities and service providers estimate that trafficking of Roma children from Albania in the form described has substantially decreased, if not altogether subsided. At the same time, nearly all of our interviewees have conveyed the increased presence of Roma children from Bulgaria and Romania in the streets where they are involved in begging and other income-generating activities. The EU accession has enabled legal and unhindered entry to Greece. According to the *2014 Trafficking in Persons* report for Bulgaria, a number of Roma children are forced into street begging and petty theft in Greece.¹⁹ The same report identifies Romania as a country of origin of men, women, and children subjected to labour trafficking, sex trafficking, as well as forced begging and theft in Greece, with victims of forced begging being typically ethnic Roma.²⁰ In recent years, the police and NGOs have noted the presence in Greece of a significant number of Roma children from Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania subjected by family members to sell goods on the street or beg.²¹

The shifting nature of child trafficking in Southeast Europe from an activity initiated, organised and exploited by third parties and criminal rings for profit, to one that has largely come under the control of parents or extended family has triggered debate among police authorities and social workers. It has raised profound questions

¹⁵ See Sikiwtou, Athanasia, P. *Emporia Anthrwpwn sta Valkania. Thima, Drastis kai Katastatikes Stratigikes [Human Trafficking in The Balkans. Victim, Perpetrator and Prevention Strategies]*. Athens-Komotini: Ant.N.Sakkoula, 2003.

¹⁶ ODIHR-CPRSI. “Assessment Trip to Albania on Trafficking in Children from Roma and Egyptian Communities. Report.” 16 - 21 June 2003, p.12. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.osce.org/odihhr/42549?download=true>.

¹⁷ Renton, Daniel. “Child Trafficking in Albania.” Save the Children, 2001; ODIHR-CPRSI. “Assessment Trip to Albania on Trafficking in Children from Roma and Egyptian Communities. Report”.

¹⁸ Delap, Emily. “Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal.” Anti-Slavery International, 2009, p. 4.

¹⁹ US Department of State. “2014 Trafficking in Persons Report. Country Narratives: Bulgaria.” Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2014/226689.htm>.

²⁰ US Department of State. “2014 Trafficking in Persons Report. Country Narratives: Romania.” Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2014/226803.htm>.

²¹ US Department of State. “2014 Trafficking in Persons Report. Country Narratives: Greece.” Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2014/226730.htm>.

about the extent to which the frame of family decision-making and control under which the labour of migrant Roma children frequently takes place dissociates it from the phenomenon of trafficking, and renders the extant criminal law approach completely inappropriate. In so far as they take place within this family frame, begging and street labour must arguably be considered as an income-generating activity for Roma migrant children – a way to supplement the family income – and the parents or family members who oversee should not be held criminally liable for it. Taking a criminal law approach towards parents or family members qua traffickers is arguably likely to only worsen the position of the children by holding liable and taking away from them those who are often their most important source of stability and security.

On the other hand though, the family sphere cannot be seen as one that is immune to coercion and inhuman behavior. As NGOs and social workers have noted in our interviews, exploitation may also take place within the immediate and extended family, including from parents themselves and from relatives vis-à-vis their children. At the same time Roma families may be themselves vulnerable to exploitation with criminal gangs or informal networks trafficking them in Greece and exploiting them in begging and other street-based activities.

The issue of how law and social support services can detect, assess and address exploitation taking place within a family frame, as it has transpired from our interviews, is extremely complex. In the overview of the anti-trafficking legislation that follows we seek to identify the main challenges that law enforcement authorities and social workers face in this respect, and point out the shortcomings of the anti-trafficking framework to identify Roma child victims of trafficking for begging.

In this study on Greece, we primarily focus on child begging, in regard to which most of our findings are drawn. The discussion on the other two forms of trafficking that this project is interested in, namely Roma child trafficking for exploitation in pick-pocketing and sexual exploitation of Roma boys, is, however, limited. The reason is that there is no relevant research or data to report on pickpocketing and sexual exploitation of boys, while expert awareness of the extent and the characteristics of these phenomena is low, not allowing for an elaborate discussion. Nevertheless, this lack of awareness may very well stem from a lack of attention to and understanding of these forms of trafficking on behalf of the stakeholders which is a significant finding in itself. The lack of data or reporting on it should not be taken as an indication that these forms of trafficking do not exist in Greece. As already noted, the 2014 *Trafficking in Persons Report* identifies Greece as a destination country for victims of Romanian origin trafficked for theft. The adoption, perhaps, of a methodology different from the one employed in this study, such as for instance one based on observation, could allow for gathering more in-depth information on these two forms.

A significant obstacle to efforts to study the extent and forms of Roma child trafficking in Greece is that no data on the ethnic origin of the identified victims of trafficking is collected.²² The data that is available, collected by the Hellenic Police, can be disaggregated by the sex of the victims, their nationality and the forms of

²² The collection of ethnic data would require the prior definition of Roma individuals. At the moment, there is no harmonised method of establishing whether a person or groups of people are of Roma ethnicity, besides self-identification and language.

exploitation to which they were subjected. Minors make up a minority among the victims of trafficking registered by the Greek Police, as Table 2 shows. During the period 2011-2013, 34 minors were detected as victims of trafficking in Greece in total (see Table 1). Of these, four had been trafficked for begging (3 males of Romanian nationality and a Greek female), nine were victims of labour exploitation (mostly males of Romanian nationality), 19 were subject to sexual exploitation, and one Bulgarian child was found trafficked for illegal adoption.²³ In any case, these police statistics cannot be considered to be reflective of the true extent of the problem. They are only representative of the cases which have been detected, and referred to the anti-trafficking teams, and for which criminal proceedings have been initiated.

State welfare institutes and NGO's involved in victims protection have similarly so far largely refrained from collecting information on the ethnic origin of the victims of trafficking to which they have provided their services. Our interviewees were, thus, not in a position to provide us with any data in this respect. They were, nonetheless, helpful in sharing their views and experiences concerning Roma child trafficking in their area of competence. It is on those experiences and estimates – where available – that we mainly draw from in this report.

In view of the data on Roma victims of trafficking that is missing, we designed a questionnaire and administered it, with the assistance and central coordination of the General Secretariat for Welfare (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare) to all public child welfare institutions in Greece.²⁴ These provide for child care, housing, and schooling to orphans, unaccompanied children, including cases, in which parental custody has been withdrawn by order of the Public Prosecutor. The objective of this questionnaire was to generate an estimate of the number and the nationality of Roma children, among those children who have been identified or suspected to be victims of trafficking, and to whom they had provided their services over the years 2010-2013. We received responses from the 23 child residential care institutions that exist in Greece. Although the structure of the questionnaire did not allow us to cross-tabulate our data in order to produce a side-by-side comparison of two or more question items, our data still offers some interesting insights. Over this three-year period, 23 Roma children that had been placed in state-run child care residential institutions were suspected to be, and in a very few cases were officially identified as victims of trafficking. Almost half of them (12) were babies from Greece, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria trafficked for illegal adoption. The other half (11) had been exploited in begging, and they were of Greek, Albanian and Romanian nationality.

Our findings indicate that Roma children trafficked into Greece from neighbouring countries are neither placed within Roma communities in Greece nor mingle with the domestic Roma population. Roma experts interviewed for this study

²³ Some stakeholders highlighted the issue of baby trafficking in Greece and to the vulnerability of children coming from Roma communities to it. The “Maria case”, which generated considerable media frenzy in Greece and abroad, points to the multiple dimensions of this phenomenon that is, however, well beyond the purpose of this study. See for instance, Christides, Giorgos. “Greece’s Child-trafficking Problem.” *BBC*, October 21, 2013. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24613781>.

²⁴ For reasons of economy, we did not address the questionnaire to NGO's and care-centres run by the church. This is not so much of a problem here as the aim was not to create a nationwide database of cases but to generate some insights on the phenomenon.

make it clear that each Roma community has its own characteristics and internal culture and is founded on the basis of extended family ties. Roma communities are not, thus, open to the settlement of newcomers who are not related to the community.²⁵ It appears that child victims most often live in rented apartments in large cities where they are exploited, often close to the centre so that they can easily reach the spots where they carry out their activities, while city life potentially reduces the chances that they get identified and caught.²⁶ These observations guided our decision not to apply the participatory methodology that this project has developed for the countries of origin of the victims, seeking the active involvement of the Roma communities in Greece.²⁷

Trafficking can be also internal (within state borders) so long as the elements of movement and (the intention) of exploitation exist. In a number of interviews with service providers and law enforcement representatives it was communicated that children from the domestic Roma communities are not as vulnerable as migrant Roma children to becoming victims of trafficking and exploitation within the country. This is not necessarily related to the living conditions of the domestic Roma population as many of them are poor and excluded.²⁸ Most of our stakeholders admit that while a number of Greek Roma children from the poorest communities are involved in begging or other street-based activities, these activities do not constitute (internal) trafficking in that they are part of the family ‘economic activity’ and a third person as coercer or trafficker is not needed to facilitate the activity and the child’s movement. Such street activities, in which Roma children are substantially engaged, have never been perceived as trafficking or exploitation, either by the Roma or by the majority population, not least because cross-border movement is not present. They are instead viewed as culturally endorsed or tolerated Roma family and community practices. However, as we have already described earlier in this section, the family frame has predominantly come to define street-based activities such as child begging, also among the migrant Roma populations. In either case, the children’s rights are distinctly and largely affected, while detecting the existence of exploitation, is premised, as we subsequently discuss, in balancing a multitude of factors and considerations.

²⁵ Interview with the coordinator of the NGO Kivwtos twv Paidiwn (Children’s Ark), Korinthos, June 27, 2014; Interview with Roma expert and representative of the NGO Kentro Paidiou kai Oikogeneias (Centre for the Children and the Family), Athens, December 11, 2013; Interview with NGO Klimaka partners, Athens, November 23, 2013.

²⁶ Interview with Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

²⁷ In any case, no participatory methodology was foreseen in the countries of destinations of victims such as Greece and no resources had been allocated for this purpose.

²⁸ On the Roma in Greece see: Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (2011). “National Strategic Framework for Roma.” Accessed December 1, 2014. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_greece_strategy_en.pdf; Ziomas, Dimitris, Bouzas Nikolas. and Spyropoulou, Natalia. “Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies. Greece.” Institute of Social Policy/National Centre for Social Research – EKKE, 2011. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1025&langId=en&newsId=1407&moreDocuments=yes&tabName=news>.

Table 1: Identified minor victims of trafficking by nationality, type of trafficking and gender (2011-2013)

Nationality	2011		2012		2013		2011		2012		2013		2011		2012		2013							
	Sexual exploitation						Labour exploitation						Exploitation of begging						Illegal adoption					
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Greek		1		1		1										1								
Romanian	3	5		5			6	1	1						3									
Albanian				2																				
Bulgarian				1						1									1					
Bangladeshi											1													

Source: Hellenic Police Headquarters, Public Security Directorate, Department of Crime Prevention and Analysis. Data provided upon request.

Table 2: Victims of trafficking, 2005, 2007, 2011-2012

	2005	2007	2011	2012	TOTAL
Men	29	31	28	18	106
Women	104	64	54	61	283
Minors	4	4	17	15	40
TOTAL	137	99	99	94	429

Source: Table created by the authors on the basis of data obtained from the Hellenic Police Headquarters, Public Security Directorate, Department of Crime Prevention and Analysis.

3.2 The anti-trafficking legal framework in Greece: challenges as regards its application to Roma child trafficking

The existence of an adequate legal framework that complies with international standards is a key element in anti-trafficking efforts. While the Greek anti-trafficking legislation is sufficiently aligned with such standards, the identification of trafficking situations among Roma children can be particularly problematic. The analysis that follows provides a critical analysis of the domestic anti-trafficking legislation. It reviews legal concepts and definitions, and examines their implementation in practice. It also discusses to what extent legal norms and implementation practices are applicable to, and appropriate for, the trafficking and exploitation of Roma children in begging, pick-pocketing and the sexual exploitation of Roma boys, and it examines their deficiencies in this regard.

In Greece, trafficking in human beings was established as a distinct criminal offense in 2002 when new specific clauses were added to the Penal Code by means of Law 3064/2002.²⁹ This law emerged as a response to phenomena that the existing legal framework at the time was unable to tackle. Major push factors from abroad coincided with a period of economic growth in Greece, rendering the country an attractive destination for economic immigrants and a transit and destination country for networks engaged in trafficking.³⁰

Pursuant to Law 3064/2002, the crime of trafficking in human beings was defined by adopting the UN definition that sees it as the recruitment, transportation, transfer across borders and within the country, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of labour or sexual exploitation or of removing body organs.³¹ This applies also to cases when the offender has achieved the consent of the person to the intended exploitation by means of deception or by abusing their position of vulnerability through promises, gifts or other benefits.³² Maximum penalties for human trafficking offences were established, consisting of imprisonment and pecuniary penalties. When committed against a person under the age of majority, these offences were regarded as aggravating

²⁹ Greece / Law 3064/2002 (15.10.2002).

³⁰ Lymouris, Nikolaos. "Trafficking in Greece." Paper presented at the 3rd Hellenic Observatory PhD Symposium on Contemporary Greece: Structures, Context and Challenges, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom, June 14-15, 2007. p.4. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/32457/1/MPRA_paper_32457.pdf;

Papantoniou-Frangouli, Maria (in collaboration with Dourida, Vangelio, Diamantopoulou, Areti, Barla, Efrosyni and Kapsalis, Apostolos). "Trafficking for Labour in Greece." Report prepared in the frame of the project Combating trafficking in Human Beings - Going Beyond, 2011, pp.19-21. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/20_Areas_of_Work/10_Slavery___Anti-Trafficking/National_reports/2011-03-Greek_Report_GOING_BEYOND.pdf.

³¹ Greece / Articles 1(1) and 8(1) of Law 3064/2002.

³² Greece / Articles 1(2) and 8(2) of Law 3064/2002.

circumstances, entailing a sentence of maximum 10 years and a pecuniary penalty between €10.000 and €50.000.³³

Following the enactment of the anti-trafficking legislation, a team was established within the Public Security Division of the Hellenic Police to handle trafficking instances at the national level. With a view to strengthening counter-trafficking efforts nationwide, in 2006 two specialised Departments for Fighting Human Trafficking were formed within the Attica and Thessaloniki Security Divisions and anti-trafficking officers were appointed within several regional police divisions in Greece acting as information and liaison points.

The vulnerability of children to human trafficking gained further recognition through the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in 2007 by means of Law 3625/2007.³⁴ This law brought further amendments in the Penal Code in order to cover for the crimes of offering, delivering or accepting, by whatever means, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs for profit, and engagement in forced labour. In 2010 Greece ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention) and its three additional protocols.³⁵ The most recent piece of legislative intervention in the field concerns the transposition of the EU Anti-trafficking Directive³⁶ by means of Law 4198/2013.³⁷

Although the domestic anti-trafficking legislation already covered most of the issues dealt with both by the Palermo Convention and the EU Directive, their adoption is significant in that it sets the grounds for increased European and international cooperation in preventing and combating the crimes related to human trafficking. But it also aims at promoting the implementation of anti-trafficking policies at the domestic level. The establishment of the Office of the National Rapporteur under the central service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following the provisions of the EU-Directive, is expected to contribute to the strengthening of such efforts. The mandate of the Office is to design a national anti-trafficking strategy, coordinate the implementation of national legislation and monitor the anti-trafficking activities of relevant stakeholders.³⁸ With a view to promoting the collection of

³³ The law does not provide for a definition of underage person/minors. The Greek Civil Code (*Astikos Kwdikas*) defines minority indirectly by establishing the age of majority at 18 years of age (Article 127).

³⁴ Greece / Law 3625/2007 (24.12.2007).

³⁵ Greece / Law 3875/2010 (20.09.2010). The additional Protocols comprise the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms.

³⁶ Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA, OJ L L 101, 15.4.2011, p. 1.

³⁷ Greece / Law 4198/2013 (11.10.2013).

³⁸ Greece / Art. 6(1) of Law 4198/2013. The National Rapporteur replaced an equivalent mechanism in terms of responsibilities, the National Coordination Mechanism, consisting of the Committee of Secretaries General of the competent Ministries (established by means of Article 9 of the Presidential Decree 233/2003, 28.08.2003).

comprehensive statistics, Law 4198/2010 further foresees the establishment of a national database on trafficking incidents.³⁹

In order to comply with the provisions of the Protocol and the EU anti-trafficking directive, Law 3875/2010 introduced amendments to the Greek Penal Code extending, *inter alia*, the scope of the crime of human trafficking to cover for the exploitation of begging.⁴⁰ This is significant as previous research and our own research findings identify exploitation of begging and labour exploitation in the form of selling petty items on the street (such as paper handkerchiefs or flowers) as the most common types of exploitation affecting Roma children in Greece. We discuss our findings in this regard later in this report, yet we should already note that the selling of items on the streets often constitutes and is treated by law-enforcement authorities as, auxiliary to begging activities.⁴¹ The crime of exploitation of begging did not previously fall under the anti-trafficking legislation or under the legislation relevant to begging. As a result it remained largely unpunished, despite the fact that it was increasingly committed against economically deprived persons.⁴² Anti-begging legislation concerns Article 409 of the Penal Code which criminalises the act of a) coercing persons under one's custody or dependent on him into begging or neglecting to prevent them from begging; and b) supplying persons under the age of majority, or adults who are mentally or physically handicapped, to others with the aim of gaining themselves, or others, financial benefit through the pity or curiosity these persons evoke to the public.⁴³

Important as it may be at the policy level, the inclusion of begging among the types of exploitation related to the crime of human trafficking, and the identification of children begging in the streets as victims, or potential victims, of trafficking, are subject to a series of challenges. It is widely understood among our interviewees in the fields of service provision, child care and law enforcement that cases of exploitation of begging are often not identified as trafficking, and therefore, they are not treated under the anti-trafficking legislation.⁴⁴ Although, as noted earlier, Greece

³⁹ Greece / Art. 6(7) of Law 4198/2013.

⁴⁰ Greece/ General Provisions, Article 24(1) of Law 3875/2010 and Article 3(1) of Law 4198/2013. Exploitation of begging is essentially defined as the exploitation of the services that a person offers the offender under circumstances of coercion. See Ministry of Justice. "Aitiologiki Ekthesi sto Sxedio Nomou 'Kurwsi kai Efarmogi tis Sumvasis twn Hnwmenwn Ethnwn kata tou Diethnikou Organwmenou Egklimatos kai twn Triwn Protwkolwn Aftis kai Sunafeis Datakseis" [Explanatory Note to the Draft Law, 'Ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto']. June 2010, p. 22. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://www.ministryofjustice.gr/site/Portals/0/files/4_6_2010_aitiologiki_ekthesi_symvasis_inomenon_ethnon.pdf.

⁴¹ See ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 172. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report_for_the_study_on_typology_and_policy_responses_to_child_begging_in_the_eu_0.pdf.

⁴² See Ministry of Justice. "Aitiologiki Ekthesi sto Sxedio Nomou 'Kurwsi kai Efarmogi tis Sumvasis twn Hnwmenwn Ethnwn kata tou Diethnikou Organwmenou Egklimatos kai twn Triwn Protwkolwn Aftis kai Sunafeis Datakseis" [Explanatory Note to the Draft Law, 'Ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto']. June 2010, p. 43.

⁴³ Offenders are punished with imprisonment of up to six months or a fine. Note that case (b) of Article 409 appears as amendment by Article 2(7) of Law 3189/2003 (21.10.2003).

⁴⁴ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014.

has been reported as a country where a large number of children of Roma origin are involved in begging⁴⁵ and might be at risk of having been trafficked, the number of identified child victims of trafficking for exploitation in begging is quite low (see Table 1). In the view and experience of the Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens district, the issue of children trafficked for exploitation in begging has not been addressed yet in terms of policy implementation and child protection response. Instead, anti-trafficking efforts have been mostly concerned with and generally oriented towards the phenomenon of sex-trafficking among girls and women.⁴⁶

In line with previous research, our findings suggest that trafficking situations are much less likely to be detected in instances of children begging with parent/guardian supervision and in cases where parents are involved in the exploitation. These are most commonly treated under the legislation related to begging (Article 409 of the Penal Code), with charges pressed against the parent or the adult who has been ascertained as the child's legal guardian.⁴⁷ From the interviews it transpires that law-enforcement authorities in Greece find it difficult to investigate and prove whether or not involving children in begging constitutes trafficking when there is no evidence of the involvement of a third person or group of persons, beyond the parents/legal guardians, as traffickers. In fact, it is somehow unclear whether the anti-trafficking legislation applies to situations when the parents/legal guardians are the (suspected) perpetrators. This is especially the case when no clear signs of use of physical violence, abuse or coercion against the child, are detected at the stage of the investigation. This is so even though Law 3875/2010 foresees that the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the relevant legislation.⁴⁸

The above challenges in the identification of children as victims of trafficking have important implications as regards the prevention of the crime, the prosecution of offenders and the protection and assistance that child victims receive. Quite significantly, they reveal that Roma child begging constitutes a "gray zone". As an anti-trafficking expert explained, begging can be linked to trafficking but also begging does not necessarily constitute trafficking and should not by definition be treated as such. The difficulty lies in drawing the line between the two.⁴⁹

The limited ability of the anti-trafficking legal and policy framework to prevent the crime and adequately identify the victims is more profound in situations of child trafficking in begging but it is not limited to those. While anti-trafficking efforts and the cooperation between relevant stakeholders have strengthened in recent years, most of our interviewees reckon that the number of identified child victims of trafficking grossly understates the reality. Greece has not put in place a formal national identification and referral system for victims of trafficking. Nevertheless, a quasi-formalised process of identification and referral involving the anti-trafficking

⁴⁵ See also Delap, Emily. "Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal." Anti-Slavery International, 2009.

⁴⁶ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014.

⁴⁷ The police authorities submit a case file (*dikografia*) to the public prosecutor to decide whether charges shall be brought against the suspect.

⁴⁸ Greece / Article 3(c), Section I of Law 3875/2010.

⁴⁹ Interview with anti-trafficking expert at the NGO A21 Campaign, Athens, June 20, 2014.

units and Public Prosecutors exists, while the national identification and referral mechanism (NRM) foreseen in legislation is in the process of development.⁵⁰

Turning our attention to child trafficking for sexual exploitation, it is clear that girls trafficked for this purpose make up the largest share among the identified victims of trafficking in Greece. These statistics depend heavily upon and reflect the practices of countering sex trafficking among girls. As already noted, these efforts have intensified over the recent years. The police does not collect information on the ethnicity/ethnic origin of the victims, but through interviews with service providers it emerges that a number of Roma girls from Bulgaria and Romania have been trafficked into Greece and exploited in prostitution.⁵¹ Unlike sex trafficking of girls, sexual exploitation of boys in general, and Roma boys in particular, is an under-researched phenomenon. Yet, as explained earlier, we have not managed to contribute to a better understanding of the existence and the extent of this form of trafficking in Greece. Among the three identified boy victims of sex trafficking, all of Romanian nationality, the authorities were not in a position to provide information on their ethnicity in the first place. But neither have instances of sex trafficking among Roma boys come to the attention of our interviewees. This lack of information does not necessarily rule out the existence of this form of trafficking. In fact, although our interviewees could not identify this problem, they did not deny that it might exist, thus highlighting the need to raise awareness about a potentially overlooked phenomenon within the anti-trafficking framework.

The EU anti-trafficking Directive adopts a broad definition of trafficking in human beings which also includes ‘exploitation of criminal activities’. This is understood as the exploitation of a person to commit, *inter alia*, pick-pocketing, shop-lifting, drug trafficking and other similar activities.⁵² In Greece, however, the transposition of the Directive (through Law 4198/2013) did not include the Directive’s provision about pick-pocketing. We have not been able to identify the reason for this omission from the explanatory report that accompanies the respective law. Furthermore, law 4198/2013 did not entail the extension of the scope of anti-trafficking legislation to explicitly include exploitation for criminal activities, as does the EU Directive that the law transposed.

As a result of the non-inclusion of exploitation for criminal activity in the legal definition of trafficking, no data on the victims of such forms of exploitation and the kind of activities they were forced to commit is collected. Moreover, it also remains unclear whether, and under what conditions, exploitation for the purpose of forced criminality could be considered as a form of labour trafficking and thereby treated under the anti-trafficking legislation. That said, Law 2918/2001 which ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour classifies the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities among the worst forms of child *labour* (emphasis added).⁵³ Nevertheless, there is no published research on forced criminality and child trafficking in Greece and our interviewees from the field of law enforcement and service provision could not identify any cases of Roma children having been trafficked to Greece for the purpose of committing criminal activities. To

⁵⁰ Greece / Article 6(7) of Law 4198/2013. Interview with the National Rapporteur for Combating Human Trafficking at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, March 28, 2014.

⁵¹ Interview with anti-trafficking expert at the NGO A21 Campaign, Athens, June 20, 2014.

⁵² See EU Anti-trafficking Directive, Prelim 11.

⁵³ Greece / Article 3 of Law 2918/2001 (15.6.2001).

our knowledge, one Bulgarian child victim of trafficking for pick-pocketing was identified in Greece in 2013.⁵⁴ The Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens district, however, noted that there are suspicions of criminal rings trafficking young Roma girls to Athens for the purpose of exploitation for pick-pocketing but no investigation has so far been carried out on these cases (see section 4.3).

What Law 4198/2013 does provide, however, is the non-prosecution of victims for their involvement in criminal activities that they may have committed as a direct consequence of being subjected to any of the acts of trafficking referred to in the Penal Code.⁵⁵ It is up to the Public Prosecutor to determine the non-prosecution of alleged victims who denounce the act of trafficking, on the basis of the available evidence and until an irreversible Court decision is reached. The principle of non-prosecution, which is in line with the provisions of the Directorate, serves to recognise that victims of trafficking may be compelled to commit any criminal activity as a result of their trafficking. It thereby seeks to protect the position of the victims while at the same time facilitating their willingness to collaborate and provide testimony in the prosecution of offenders.

A critical issue that arises here concerns the willingness of victims to identify themselves as victims, denouncing the act of trafficking, to which they have been subjected, in order to benefit from the abovementioned protection of the non-prosecution clause. According to experts' opinions, the possibility that persons who are victims of trafficking, will present themselves to the authorities to report their situation, is limited because it is based on unrealistic assumptions. Persons who have been victims are unlikely to go to the police or judicial authorities to file a complaint, because psychologically, they are unlikely to have the necessary sense of trust towards them and they are simply very afraid to do so. Profound fear is very much the basis of their relations with and dependence on the traffickers, and fear is a consciousness-distorting emotional state. Victims are unlikely to be ready to talk even to a lawyer about such a painful, stigmatising, and emotionally as well as mentally damaging experience, unless they have already received substantial and specialised support and counseling that encourages and prepares them to do so.⁵⁶ Victims are far less likely to report their exploitative situation on their own than if they are under social support and counseling, and build a relation of trust with social workers.⁵⁷

All of these concerns and inhibitions are even more pronounced in the case of children and minors. Instead of assuming that victims will simply show up to the police to report that they have been subjected to trafficking, and testify themselves in order to initiate a process of criminal investigation, it is suggested that it is imperative to improve the process of victim identification as much – if not more – through reliance on intensive social work as on legal assistance and the criminal prosecution process.

⁵⁴ Official Letter from the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) to the Center for the Study of Democracy from 19.08.2014, in response to request for information.

⁵⁵ Greece / Article 2(3) of Law 4198/2013. Victims' protection from prosecution is also provided for violations of the legislation on prostitution or immigration as a result of their trafficking.

⁵⁶ Interview with researcher Danai Aggeli, Athens, September 9, 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with Ms Kapetanaki, UN High Commission for Refugees, Athens, October 9, 2014.

4. Roma Child Trafficking in Greece

4.1. The phenomenon of child trafficking for begging

The official number of identified child victims of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in begging over the period 2011-2013, provided by the Hellenic Police, was 4: three Romanian boys and one Greek girl (see Table 1). Given the lack of data on the ethnic origin of these victims, we cannot report on the representation of Roma children among the identified cases. At any rate, as noted earlier, the number of identified child victims trafficked for begging is widely considered to underestimate the reality and the real extent of the phenomenon. It emerges from our research that the problems hampering the identification of victims trafficked for begging have a significant impact on Roma children - widely considered by our interviewees as the group most vulnerable to this form of trafficking. A number of reports identify Roma with a migration background as the main group of children who are involved in begging in the streets of big cities in Greece. However, little is known about the extent and the forms of child trafficking for begging among the Roma children in street situations.

Research provides evidence for the occurrence of trafficking among Albanian children seen begging in the streets of Greece throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s. The fall of communism and the ensuing collapse of social services in the country resulted in increased immigration to neighbouring Greece and contributed to the vulnerability of poor and excluded groups of the population to exploitation. Many of the Albanian children begging in the streets belonged to Roma groups who had long experienced poverty and discrimination.⁵⁸ They arrived in Greece following a relative, a friend of the family or an unknown person and trafficking rings were also frequently involved in the recruitment and exploitation.⁵⁹ According to a report by 'Save the Children', the children entered Greece illegally accompanied by their traffickers and the most popular routes were Korça-Bilisht-Follorine or the Gjirokastra.⁶⁰ According to the same source, in many cases the families, often unaware of the exploitative conditions that the children would encounter, had given their consent and had come to a commercial arrangement with traffickers by which they received a monthly stipend in exchange for the services of their children.⁶¹ It has been reported that children were forced to work endless hours in the streets and were subject to physical abuse when failing to comply with the traffickers' orders.⁶² The harshness of the conditions that many of these children experienced becomes explicit in the words of an interviewee:

⁵⁸ See also Delap, Emily. "Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal." Anti-Slavery International, 2009, p.1.

⁵⁹ Terre des hommes and Arsis. "Transnational Protection of Children. The Case of Albania and Greece, 2000-2006." 2006.

⁶⁰ Renton, Daniel. "Child Trafficking in Albania." Save the Children, 2001, pp.44-46.

⁶¹ Renton, Daniel. "Child Trafficking in Albania." Save the Children, 2001, pp.44-46.

⁶² Terre des hommes and Arsis. "Transnational Protection of Children. The Case of Albania and Greece, 2000-2006." 2006, p.10. See also, Altanis, Panagiotis and Goddard, Jim. "Street Children in Contemporary Greece." *Children and Society*, 18 (2004): 299-311, pp.306-307. doi: 10.1002/CHI.797.

“Many times, when these children grew older and were no longer able to gain sympathy they were brought back to organised rings in Albania who brought them in a deformed state by means of hot oil or amputations. They could thus arouse the feelings (of compassion, pity) of the public.”

Interview with representative of the NGO Praksis, Athens, February 10, 2014

Back in the 1990s and early 2000s, the influx of street children in Greece was a recent phenomenon and as such it was not addressed in an organised and coherent manner by the authorities. It has been reported that begging children arrested by the police were deported, without however taking measures to eliminate the risk of their re-trafficking.⁶³ Under the state project “Protection and social care for street children”, a number of street children, boys of Roma and non-Roma origin from Albania, who were found working in the streets of Greece in the late 1990s, were placed in public institutions throughout Greece. For some of them it was possible to locate their families in Albania, but the majority remained in child care institutions as their parents could not be identified. An astonishing 502 of these children, accommodated in the state institution Aghia Varvara in Athens went missing between 1998 and 2002. What became of these children is still unknown. A findings report by the Greek Ombudsman observed numerous deficiencies in the programme and the way it was implemented, most notably insufficient measures to ensure that the children would not run away and return back to their traffickers.⁶⁴ In 2013, following renewed interest in the case, the Chief Prosecutor of the Athens court of First Instance, ordered that the case – which was declared closed and archived – be re-opened.⁶⁵ One of our interviewees notes that it is impossible to be certain about the exact number of children as many of them who did not have any identification documents used different names every time they were admitted. Escapes were not uncommon as the traffickers were waiting for the children outside the institution.⁶⁶

The phenomenon of Roma children with a migration background who are trafficked by third persons has either subsided or it is more difficult to discern. According to an Arsis social worker, an NGO which implements actions for the protection of children who work in the streets and for victims of trafficking through street-work, there has been a decrease in instances of trafficking by third parties among Albanian (Roma and non-Roma) after 2003-2004. She explains why:

“Many of the street children who had come to Greece went back to Albania and they could explain the situation in Greece to their parents that lived for many years in poverty themselves. So the parents realised the opportunity: the children were earning a lot of money in the streets all these years. So the parents, whole Roma communities decided to move with their children in Greece to work in the streets... Already since 2003-2004 most children were

⁶³ Renton, Daniel. “Child Trafficking in Albania.” Save the Children, 2001, p.45.

⁶⁴ Greek Ombudsman (2004). “Ylopoiysi tou Programmatos ‘Prostasia kai Koinwniki Frontida tw n Paidiwn sto Dromo’” [Implementation of the Project: Protection and Social Care for Street Children]. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.synigoros.gr/resources/202018.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Eleftherotypia. “Nea Ereuna gia ta 500 Eksafanisma na Paidia tw n Fanariwn” [New Investigation about the 500 Missing Street Children]. September 16, 2013. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=386393>.

⁶⁶ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

here with their parents, as far as I remember. Few children were here with their uncles, aunts or neighbours.”

Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014

Similarly, research conducted in 2009 by Anti-Slavery International found limited evidence of child trafficking from Albania to Greece by networks or gangs for begging.⁶⁷ The limited incidence of such kind of trafficking has also been reported by researchers engaged in the MARIO project, including in regard to Romanian and Bulgarian Roma children who beg. However, there are at least two reasons that its ongoing occurrence should not entirely be ruled out. In the first place, such lack of evidence may simply reflect the hidden and elusive nature of this phenomenon. Secondly, it is more likely that organised trafficking of children with parents, relatives and/or entire groups from a community by criminal rings may take place primarily for labour in agriculture, or even with the purpose of pushing women into prostitution, which for various reasons does not materialise. In such instances, begging may become a strategy of last resort, and it may be taken up after the trafficked persons (victims) are disconnected from their original traffickers, either because they run away or because they were never transported to the areas where they could engage in agricultural labour.⁶⁸

Our interviewees unanimously confirm the presence of Albanian Roma children but also increasingly of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma children begging in the streets. According to them, the majority of child beggars nowadays are from these three groups. Albanian children in Athens come mainly from Southwestern and Southeastern Albania (Fier, Vlora, Korca).⁶⁹ Bulgarian children mostly originate from the Roma communities in Ruse, Pleven and Sofia. Romanian children are mainly from the Roma communities in Bucharest and Cluj.⁷⁰ Their numbers in respect of country of origin fluctuates from year to year and between the two large cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. From all three nationality groups, children as young as five years old have been seen to work in the streets of Athens and in the northern city of Thessaloniki without adult supervision. As to their geographical distribution, most begging children are to be found in the streets of Athens, Thessaloniki and Xanthi, while during the summer period they are also encountered in the islands.⁷¹ The MARIO project reports that Albanian and Romanian children begging are mostly

⁶⁷ Delap, Emily. “Begging for Change. Research Findings and Recommendations on Forced Child Begging in Albania/Greece, India and Senegal.” Anti-Slavery International, 2009, p.6.

⁶⁸ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki”. Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.36. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/vulnerability-exploitation-and-trafficking-bulgarian-children-and-adolescents-greece-case>.

⁶⁹ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 171.

⁷⁰ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

⁷¹ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 171.

concentrated in Athens, while in Thessaloniki Albanian and Bulgarian children are most frequently encountered.⁷² In Thessaloniki, Romanians tend not to have specified sites where they beg but they have tended to move around a lot, while Bulgarians had recently settled on certain areas and Albanians always begged in the same places.⁷³

In 2010 Arsis street-workers approached 191 children in the streets of Thessaloniki begging or carrying out auxiliary to begging activities such as selling handkerchiefs, flowers, candles or playing music alone or accompanied by their mothers. Some were found collecting items in rubbish bins. 45% of these were Albanian, 42% Bulgarian and 13% Romanian. In 2011, the number was 320, most of them from Bulgaria (48%), a 30% from Albania, 15% from Romania and a 7% Greek. The number of boys was slightly higher than that of girls. In 2013 the number of children spotted carrying out such activities in the streets reached 427. Of these 31% was Albanian, 36% was Bulgarian, 10% Romanian and a 23% Greek. Regarding the age of children approached during these three years, the majority of children were between 1 and 15 years old.⁷⁴ As the data does not differentiate between Roma and non-Roma we are not able to quantify the involvement of Roma children in begging activities. That said, these numbers are based on observation and do not provide evidence of trafficking and exploitation in begging. But exploitative practices and child trafficking may exist in the wider context of child begging. Our aim is to illustrate the growth of the phenomenon of child begging - even though by using only one city as an example.

4.1.1 Child victims of begging: profiles, factors of vulnerability, family background

There is a general understanding in the literature and among our interviewees that lack of opportunity in the countries of origin, poverty and the social marginalisation of the Roma community are the main root causes of the migration of Albanian, Romanian and Bulgarian children and families in Greece. Concurrently, taking the limited opportunities for integration of immigrant Roma in the economic life in Greece into account, child begging is considered a socio-economic issue, but one that is also linked to cultural practices: child begging is frequently perceived by our interviewees as an acceptable family survival strategy among Roma. All stakeholders interviewed for this study confirm that over the last years parents and family members are directly and actively involved in child begging. The most frequent child begging situation in Greece is that of children between the age of 0-6 years old begging, collecting or, selling small items alone or in groups with other children and often in the company or supervision of adults.⁷⁵

⁷² Invernizzi, Antonella. "Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki." Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.32.

⁷³ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 170.

⁷⁴ Source: Arsis. Data provided upon request.

⁷⁵ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes.

The nature and conditions of family involvement at all stages of the process of begging differs across nationalities. NGOs like Arsis, which have been doing street-work at different periods throughout the 2000s, have observed a gradual process of professionalisation and a certain degree of integration of the Albanian (mostly Roma) children seen begging in the streets of Thessaloniki. Many of these children have moved away from begging and other marginal economic activities towards selling more valuable items, they have acquired good knowledge of the city streets and local conditions, and they attend school while working around school hours.⁷⁶ Begging and other related economic activities such as vending are organised and supervised by the family, either by parents, grandparents, older siblings or other relatives. Those families have now settled in Greece, renting houses in the city, and their children were either born or grew up in Greece.⁷⁷ Some of these children are undocumented migrants who do not have any identity documents, lacking birth and/or name registration.⁷⁸

Bulgarian and Romanian families, on the other hand, are not as well established in the streets of Thessaloniki or Athens. As an interviewee also notes, they seem to have a higher level of mobility, with circular migration (regular moves and traveling) between Bulgaria and Greece a recurrent feature.⁷⁹ This is facilitated not only by geographical proximity between the northern parts of Greece and Bulgaria, direct train transport from Bucharest, Romania, as well as by the accession of the two countries in the EU since 2007. Bulgarian Roma adults begging with their children, who were contacted by Arsis streetworkers in Thessaloniki, lived in more precarious conditions, in flats which they shared with other women and/or husbands and children.⁸⁰ Their children did not attend school in Greece,

Legislation in Greece foresees compulsory education for nine years (primary and secondary school) for all children.⁸¹ The right to enroll in school at the primary and secondary level is strongly safeguarded regardless of whether a child (and his/her family or parents) is legally resident in the country or not. In practice, there have been difficulties and issues that have arisen with undocumented children's access to education and vocational training. These are related to the children's previous level of education, lack of transportation to school, the absence of a guardian, but also to children and their parents or guardians who may prefer their children to be working instead of enrolling in schools, an attitude that may also be encouraged by discriminatory attitudes and prejudice on the part of educators and the parents of non-

“Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 170.

⁷⁶ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.18.

⁷⁷ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

⁷⁸ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p. 171.

⁷⁹ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

⁸⁰ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, pp.24-26.

⁸¹ Greece / Law 1566/1985 (30.09. 1985)

Roma children.⁸² As in many countries of Europe, the problem of school dropout is especially high for Roma children in Greece.⁸³ Significant rates of dropouts can eventually lead to increasing risks of child trafficking and exploitation, especially in the domain of labour.⁸⁴

The non-attendance of migrant Roma children from Southeast Europe may be the result of lacking the required documentation for school enrollment in Greece, their lack of knowledge of Greek language, and their regular migratory movements between Greece and their country of origin. Reports by NGOs' street-workers relay that Roma children are more likely to be enrolled in schools in Bulgaria, due to the fact that government benefits were conditional upon school enrollment. While this was an incentive to retain Roma children in Bulgarian schools, they irregularly attended school as a result of regular migration to Greece.⁸⁵

The vast majority of adults observed by Arsis begging in the streets while holding babies, toddlers or supervising children who begged, were women. This may in part be explained by the compassion that single women with children are expected to evoke in public, but also and perhaps more importantly, by the necessity in the absence of child care support to generate income while also tending to their children.⁸⁶

4.1.2. Recruitment and exploitation

Roma children who beg in the streets of Greece's large cities with the consent – indeed the initiative of – and supervision by the parents or other close family members may in part be viewed and understood through the lens of exploitation by adults, of which they are the victims, thus rendering partly relevant a trafficking framework of analysis. Existing human rights standards and unquestionably accepted societal norms prescribe that children go to school, that they are not in paid labour before the minimum age for employment established at fifteen.⁸⁷ They must not be exposed to the many and serious risks that working in the streets entails, and they must be nurtured and protected by adults and their family until they reach a level of development and maturity, at which they are ready to make responsible choices of their own. At the same time though, the perspective of exploitation overlooks that such considerations and concerns for some highly marginalised social groups may

⁸² KMOP. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece." January 2014, p.66.

⁸³ According to the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor, 77 % of Roma children attending primary education dropped out in the school year 2006-2007. See KMOP and Defence for Children International – Italy. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). Transnational Analysis." February 2014. p.69.

⁸⁴ KMOP. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece." January 2014, p.70.

⁸⁵ Invernizzi, Antonella. "Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki." Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.30.

⁸⁶ Invernizzi, Antonella. "Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki." Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.28.

⁸⁷ Greece / Law 1837/1989 (23.03.1983).

have to be balanced with the need to secure the basics for living, by pursuing viable and accessible survival strategies to this end.

If begging of Roma children is viewed as part of a family survival strategy, the question of what may be in the child's best interest may not be as clear-cut as we assume it to be from a perspective of human rights and children's rights – at least if seen in the micro-context of a community or family affected and distressed by extreme poverty, with few opportunities for gainful and viable employment. The contribution of children who beg as part of work organised by adult family members may improve the conditions for living for all family members. Children interviewed for the purposes of a recent EU-funded study on child begging reported that they passed the money they earned on to a family member - a parent, older brother, grandmother.⁸⁸ As it has been noted by social workers, “this means an adult organising a family survival strategy might be confronted with the dilemma of submitting a child to harmful working conditions or, in the absence of that income, face a decline in the living conditions of this child and also of siblings or other vulnerable members of the family”.⁸⁹ Although such an approach should not relieve the adults who engage their children in street begging and other related activities from bearing responsibility for the serious risks to which they expose their children, it does caution against an assumption of generalised exploitation taking place among Roma communities and families. While exploitation may indeed be involved, detecting and assessing it would require

“knowledge of the family background and the exact living conditions at home, as well as the real alternatives available for this family to generate necessary income and ensure care of children within the family. Allegations of exploitation, as well as abuse, should be based on sound evidence since they carry the risk of stigma and spread prejudice against a population already discriminated against”.⁹⁰

It is not denied that there are cases in which parents, relatives or others who present themselves as relatives force their children to beg. Roma child trafficking incidents for begging by relatives have come to the attention of the authorities. One interviewee working with the NGO A21 in Thessaloniki informed us about such a case involving Roma children, suggesting that victims can be exploited in more than one ways:

⁸⁸ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.179.

⁸⁹ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.29.

⁹⁰ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.32.

“The mother had sent the girl in Greece to live with one aunt and to work. This aunt, who had gathered another 5-6 children from other Roma families send them out to beg. She exploited the older girls also sexually. She booked appointments with clients.”

Interview with anti-trafficking expert at the NGO A21 Campaign, Athens,
June 20, 2014

Despite the substantial amount of street-work that NGOs like Arsis have done, it is extremely difficult to verify the extent to which non-family members, purporting to be relatives or family friends, are part of networks of mutual support and survival or whether they are instead third parties such as traffickers associated with criminal networks or gangs who exploit the children by paying rent to the parents – there is a gray area in which these two very different kinds of networks, underlying different kinds of phenomena, become extremely difficult to disentangle.⁹¹ This difficulty has been remarked on by a number of our interviewees, including police authorities. One interviewee remarked that traffickers from Bulgaria may present themselves as relatives or legitimate guardians of children who beg.⁹²

Our project partners from Bulgaria confirmed that according to the Child Protection Act, children whose families have deceased or whose parents have been deprived of parental rights can be placed in care outside the family. Additionally, the Family Code (Art. 137 (1)) stipulates that persons, who have been temporarily entrusted to care for a child, do not acquire family rights or obligations. At the same time, those persons who are assigned as carers can undertake actions to preserve the life and well-being of the child without the consent of the parents of the child. Perhaps in practice Bulgarian authorities can be too lax and permissive in assigning third parties as guardians to children, also under the entrenched perception that in Roma communities and culture the care of children is commonly transferred to relatives and extended family. It is in this area that further knowledge should be gathered on practices related to family practices, extended family and broader community networks in the areas from which they came. This gap in knowledge can only be filled by focusing on areas, countries and communities of origin, which is also the added value and contribution of the CONFRONT project.

The case of an 11 year old Bulgarian Roma girl who was killed by a bus in the area of Laggadas in Thessaloniki in January 2013 is particularly alarming. The girl had been living in Thessaloniki for about two years, allegedly with some relatives, and had been spotted many times during this period engaging in income generating activities in the streets, mostly in traffic lights cleaning windscreens.⁹³ After the tragic incident the authorities realised that the girl’s passport was fake. Moreover, it was proven that the persons that showed up to claim her body, claiming to be family members were not relatives.⁹⁴ Instances where Bulgarian Roma women with their

⁹¹ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.33.

⁹² Interview with official in the National Centre for Social Solidarity, Thessaloniki, July 7, 2014.

⁹³ Iefimerida. “Paidi twv Fanariwn i 11 Xroni pou tin Patise Lewforeio enw Ekane Podilato sti Thessaloniki” [The 11-Year Old Killed by a Bus in Thessaloniki was a Street-Child]. January 23, 2013. <http://www.iefimerida.gr>.

⁹⁴ Interview with ‘House of Arsis’ social worker, Thessaloniki (Oraiokastros), July 9, 2014.

children were transported by individuals unrelated to family or relatives, who had promised them work and intended to exploit them, have also been also reported.⁹⁵

Most difficult to discern is the occurrence of exploitation within families, which is well known in the field of child labour. Detecting it requires attending carefully to the views of adults and children in order to differentiate exploitation from problematic and abusive parenting practices – the line between the two is not always clear. Undoubtedly, these challenges must be taken up in order to address exploitation within families, yet

“...the unease in applying exploitation criteria is to be found in the risk of fuelling prejudice against sectors of the population where child labour can be found, instead of [engaging in] policy making and planning that appropriately addresses vulnerability and exclusion in which those practices are rooted”.⁹⁶

Whether occurring within the family by parents, or outside of it by third persons, exploitation must be detected. At the same time, the distinction between forced begging and begging as a family strategy is important and should be maintained in order to avoid “undue criminalisation of practices by families from poor backgrounds where income generated by begging is redistributed within the family to cover basic needs and where it is likely that no or limited alternative income strategies exist.”⁹⁷

At the same time, our interviewees generally acknowledge that exclusion and poverty make Roma families and children vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in begging. There are some indications that trafficking of women and children by third persons or by persons from within the extended family or the broader community is still taking place, albeit far less frequently than in the past. For instance, a certain level of organisation in regard to transportation in Greece from Bulgaria and Romania has been observed, involving entire Roma communities who are brought to Greece on the promise of job opportunities.⁹⁸ Such “group” migration is organised by trafficking rings who exploit entire families in begging in exchange for some money, accommodation and food. A study of child begging in Greece reports that groups have been observed transporting Romanian and Bulgarian children in cars or vans to certain parts of Athens to beg overseen by an adult supervisor.⁹⁹ The media has also reported on instances of trafficking networks which recruited children and handicapped adults from the Roma communities in Bulgaria and transported them to Greece by bus and exploited them in begging in various spots in Athens. They

⁹⁵ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.26.

⁹⁶ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.33.

⁹⁷ Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.38.

⁹⁸ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

⁹⁹ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.168.

ensured the families' consent to the transportation by convincing them that they had arranged for them to work in Greece.¹⁰⁰

4.1.3 Identification and referral

The complexity of the phenomenon of Roma child begging renders the identification of trafficking victims among child beggars a challenging task. The domestic legal framework provides for a process for the official identification of someone as a victim of trafficking. But for the process to be set in motion it is essential that the police authorities who have initial contact with the incident have grounds to suspect that the child involved is a (potential) trafficking victim rather than a victim of begging.

Many times it is the police that first spots child begging incidents through daily patrols or special operations. Begging is under the competence of the local police stations. Departments dealing specifically with cases involving minors - such as juvenile delinquency and those involving children as victims, related, inter alia, to child abuse, harassment and neglect involving care givers – operate within the Security Divisions of Athens and Thessaloniki as well as within the Security Subdivisions of Herakleion and Patras. As the begging of children is considered a misdemeanor, child beggars are brought in for further investigation. When the child is accompanied by a parent or when the parent appears before the police to claim the child, the case is most of the times - if not always - treated under the begging legislation. This means that the police take down the beggars' details and let them go or they may arrest and charge the parent for neglect of child supervision and incitement to beg in line with the provisions of the begging legislation.¹⁰¹ It needs to be noted, however, that the possibility of children being penalised for begging exists, though in practice it is a not generally applied.¹⁰²

At this first point of contact, the role of the police in detecting signs of trafficking in the child begging incidents that come to their attention is crucial. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, standardised procedures requiring that a preliminary assessment of the incident for potential signs of trafficking be performed do not so far exist. Therefore any effort to detect signs of trafficking in child beggars, to the extent that it takes place at all, does so in an ad-hoc manner. This means that the interpretation of a case as a trafficking incident or a begging situation may differ substantially even within law enforcement.

It transpires from our research that Roma child begging and involvement in other street based activities is often conceived as a family-based income generating strategy in the context of poverty and exclusion facing the Roma and as such, it is

¹⁰⁰ Eleftherotypia. "To Emporio Zitianwn sta Xeria tou Organwmenou Egklimatos" [Trafficking of Beggars in the Hands of Organised Crime]. April 7, 2011. Accessed December 1, 2014. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=265920>.

¹⁰¹ The police authorities submit a case file (*dikografia*) to the public prosecutor to decide whether charges shall be brought against the suspect.

¹⁰² Art. 45A of the Code of Criminal Procedure encourages Prosecutors of Minors to avoid pressing charges against children for misdemeanours or petty crimes, which include begging. Cited in: ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.176.

somehow tolerated by the police. This assumption though, while at times perfectly accurate, may at other times crucially undermine the eagerness of the police to properly examine whether in the child begging cases that they handle, elements of exploitation and trafficking are present. The possibility of links to organised exploitation, also with parents themselves being the victims of trafficking are, similarly, not necessarily recognised and further investigated. It has been reported that police authorities mention staffing and high workloads as preventing them from adequately addressing child begging.¹⁰³ A step in a positive direction is the launch of a number of training programmes for police officers nationwide aiming at addressing precisely this issue through the development of criteria and guidelines for the first level identification of victims of begging.¹⁰⁴

In 2013 a rare instance of cross-sectoral coordination took place in Thessaloniki. Law enforcement, with the assistance and cooperation of service providers, undertook an operation to respond to the issue of child begging in the city. The operation targeted children involved in begging and auxiliary to begging activities in the streets. Eighteen children were arrested begging with their siblings, and they were brought to the police quarters. The majority of them came from Roma communities in Bulgaria. None of those children were identified as victims of trafficking. In all cases, the parents (who were in most cases aware, monitoring the begging situation) were identified and the families were immediately sent back to Bulgaria where arrangements had been made for their referral in social services.¹⁰⁵ We are not aware whether the Greek authorities followed-up on those cases. Still, it needs to be noted that some interviewees were critical of the child detention practices under the operation.

Suspicious that a child beggar is a potential victim of trafficking - rather than of parental neglect and begging - are usually generated at the stage of initial investigation when there are suspicions that the child's identity papers are fake. Our interviewees acknowledge that the risk of counterfeited identity papers is high among Roma child beggars. Law enforcement explained to us that in order to address this risk when it is so suspected, they request proof of the child's and of the (alleged) parent's real identity papers. This is done through cooperation with the Police Liaison Officers attached to the relevant Embassies in Greece or with the cross-border Contact Center at Kulata - Promahonas, the control station at the major border crossing point between Bulgaria and Greece. The proper identification of someone who presents himself or herself as parent or legal guardian can however, be problematic. Several interviewees expressed concerns about the diligence that the authorities show in investigating whether the people who claim to be parents or relatives are in fact third parties, who may hold forged documents proving their right to child custody. If the parents or the legal guardian of the child are not traced in Greece, the Police – Minors' Department – is responsible for tracing the child's

¹⁰³ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.176.

¹⁰⁴ Through for instance the EU co-financed project Euro TrafGuID (see <http://fei.gouv.fr/index.php/fr/nos-projets/focus-sur/euro-trafguid>, accessed December 1, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Thessaloniki court district, Thessaloniki, July 11, 2014. Interview with police officers at the Department for Minors, Thessaloniki Security Division, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

family in the country of origin, often by cooperating with INTERPOL, or with the competent police authorities in the country of origin.¹⁰⁶

Suspicions that a child beggar is a potential victim of trafficking are generated when signs of violence, abuse or exploitation by third parties are detected. If this is the case, the police authorities refer the incident to one of the anti-trafficking units in charge of handling such cases for further investigation. The officials in these units have received special training as to how to deal with potential trafficking victims. Potential trafficking incidents reach the anti-trafficking units also through reports or complaints filed by individuals and social service providers. In fact, social service providers and NGOs involved in anti-trafficking or child-care are often the first contact points with the victim. It was highlighted by our interviewees that observation during streetworking and attention to the situation of the children that resort to emergency aid or drop in at day-centers is crucial in detecting potential trafficking situations.

Once a potential trafficking is reported, the anti-trafficking unit in charge follows through on the respective case or cases in order to observe their living conditions and detect signs of trafficking, most crucially the involvement of third persons rather than the children's own family in their begging activity.¹⁰⁷ If such signs are observed, then the anti-trafficking officers are required to report to the Public Prosecutor, the authority responsible for the formal identification of a victim of trafficking through a "Characterisation Act" (hereinafter the Act). The Act grants the victims a reflection period of three months, five in the case of minors, during which they shall not be deported and enjoy access to interim assistance and protection. After the end of the reflection period the victim can request a temporary residence permit.¹⁰⁸

In practice the procedure of granting the Act is cumbersome, eventually preventing victims who need it from getting access to it. The victim's active cooperation with the prosecuting authorities by providing information about the traffickers and participating as a witness in the investigations and in trial is no longer a necessary requirement for the Act to be issued.¹⁰⁹ But it is, nonetheless, essential that the victim thinks of himself/herself as a victim and testify at the stage of police investigation revealing some information about the trafficking situation.¹¹⁰ In reality though, persons who have been victims of trafficking are unlikely to go to the police or judicial authorities to file a complaint, because psychologically, they are unlikely

¹⁰⁶ Cazenave, Pierre. "Protecting Migrant Children in a Freedom of Movement Area." *Terre des hommes*, December 2012, p.37. Accessed December 1, 2014. http://s3.amazonaws.com/rcpp/assets/attachments/1563_Tdh_english_original.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with police officers at the Anti-trafficking Unit, Thessaloniki Security Division, Thessaloniki, July 7, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Articles 49-53 of Law 4251/2014 (01.04.2014).

¹⁰⁹ The Act can be issued irrespectively of whether the criminal prosecution procedure has been initiated when the Public Prosecutor considers that there is a risk of direct harm to the victim's life, physical integrity and personal and sexual freedom or because the victim's family is under threat - provided that two psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers affiliated to one of the cooperating public units or NGOs submit their written assent to the Prosecutor (Article 4(2)(a) of Law 3875/2010 as amended by Article 1(1)(a) of Law 4251/2014).

¹¹⁰ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014. The law requires the presence of a child psychologist, child psychiatrist or, in case one is not available, a psychologist or psychiatrist at the stage of interviewing a child witness-victim of trafficking (Article 4 of Law 4198/2013).

to have the necessary sense of trust towards them and they are simply very afraid to do so. Victims are unlikely to be ready to talk even to a lawyer about such a painful, stigmatising, and emotionally as well as mentally damaging experience, unless they have already received substantial and specialised support and counselling that encourages and prepares them to do so. Victims are far less likely to report their exploitative situation on their own than if they are under social support and counselling, and build a relation of trust with social workers.¹¹¹

Like adult victims of trafficking, many times children are reluctant to give evidence either because of fear, or simply because they do not see themselves as victims. This is especially true for Roma children trafficked into begging who often see begging as a job and are convinced that they must help their families financially.¹¹² As a result very few, if any at all, of these children are granted the official verification of the status of a victim.¹¹³ Quite importantly, the official verification of the status of a victim of trafficking is not an eligibility condition for accessing interim assistance and support (see section 5). But it ensures that victims who are non-EU nationals shall not be immediately deported and, thus, it is important as far as Roma children from Albania are concerned. There are however, Prosecutors who, acknowledging the necessity to offer protection to a child and the difficulties hampering the official verification procedure (unclear legislation, bureaucracy creating delays, etc.) refer the child for protection and assistance on grounds of *suspicion* that it is a victim of trafficking.¹¹⁴

The aforementioned analysis indicates that while a referral system for victims of trafficking exists, Roma trafficked children are largely excluded from it because indicators of trafficking may not be properly detected. In the cases of EU migrant children who are not identified as victims of trafficking, the Public Prosecutor refers the child to the child protection services to be protected according to the general provisions on the protection of childhood.¹¹⁵ Similarly, children may be placed in foster care when the Court decides on the removal of parental custody because parents have abused their rights or violated their duties. The discharge of parental custody is by all means the last resort - when all other available measures are insufficient, or do not suffice in order to prevent danger to the physical, mental or psychological health of the child. Until the Court decides on the case, the child is entitled to receive interim protection and assistance (hospitalisation, shelter, etc.) by order of the Public Prosecutor.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Interview, Ms Kapetanaki, UN High Commission for Refugees, Athens, October 9, 2014.

¹¹² ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012. Accessed December 1, 2014, p.169.

¹¹³ Interview with police officers at the Anti-trafficking Unit, Thessaloniki Security Division, Thessaloniki, July 7, 2014.

¹¹⁴ KMOP. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece." January 2014, p.139.

¹¹⁵ Cazenave, Pierre. "Protecting Migrant Children in a Freedom of Movement Area." Terre des hommes, December 2012, p.27.

¹¹⁶ Greece / Article 1533 and 1532 of the Civil Code as amended by Article 22 Law 3346/2005.

4.2. Child trafficking for pick-pocketing

No official data on child victims of trafficking for the purpose of pick-pocketing is collected in Greece. As explained in the overview of the anti-trafficking legal framework, the lack of data collection is a direct result of non-recognition of exploitation for pick-pocketing as a form of trafficking explicitly in law. Greece does not explicitly recognise exploitation for participation in criminal activities as a form of trafficking. At the same time, due to the lack of identified instances, we have not been able to ascertain whether, and under what conditions, trafficking for pick-pocketing would qualify as a form of labour trafficking. Service providers in the field of child protection and victim assistance have virtually no knowledge about the existence and the forms of this phenomenon among Roma children, and they were unable to draw upon case histories in order to inform our analysis. The Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection has reported that a child victim of pick-pocketing trafficked into Greece had been returned to Bulgaria in 2013.¹¹⁷

Despite the lack of data and the limited attention of stakeholders, police investigations have indicated that there may be a link between pick-pocketing and Roma child trafficking in Greece. The Public Prosecutor in the Athens district reported to us that there are suspicions that criminal rings are trafficking young Roma teenage girls from Bulgaria to Athens where they are forced to pick pockets. He noted that these girls got into contact with the police, often repeatedly, while being exploited, as they were taken in by the police when found to have committed pick-pocketing offences. Getting in contact with the police did not, however, effectively lead to the identification of the suspected trafficking conditions leading to the commission of the offence. Our interviewee explains that:

“We experience that daily. These teenage girls have been trained in stealing wallets and so on, well trained. The rings that traffic them into Greece know how the legal system operates here. A petty theft-act is considered a misdemeanor (a low-level offense) when committed for the first and second time and so these girls are usually released. But even when they get arrested more than twice for picking pockets, which qualifies as a professional criminal activity and thus a felony, we still cannot detain them. By the time of the trial... they do not appear in court and they are tried in absentia. I guess that in the meantime they have been moved somewhere else... None of those girls ever denounced their situation. They kept their lips sealed.”

Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district,
Athens, February 2, 2014

Three tentative observations can be made. First, trafficking for the purpose of pick-pocketing may involve organised rings, who are aware of the domestic situation and therefore able to maneuver and escape prosecution. Yet, according to the MARIO project report, experts consider that the role of families in trafficking for pick

¹¹⁷ Official Letter from the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) to the Center for the Study of Democracy from 19.08.2014, in response to request for information.

pocketing or other forms of criminal activity should not be ruled out.¹¹⁸ Secondly, the identification of trafficking for pick-pocketing cases seems to depend more on the victims' willingness to report the situation rather on the readiness and capacity of the authorities to investigate suspected incidents of trafficking. But, as with the exploitation of begging, Roma child victims are usually reluctant to do so, thus remaining in exploitative situations. Thirdly, quite significantly, when the trafficking situation is not identified, the victims may be wrongly prosecuted by Greek law enforcers.

4.3. Child trafficking for sexual exploitation of boys

As discussed in the previous section of this report, the available data on identified boy sex trafficking victims do not allow for the distinction between Roma and non-Roma. But even if data was disaggregated so as to allow for such a distinction, it would not have been particularly helpful for our purposes due to the very small number of cases. During the period 2010-2013, the police identified 3 boys trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, all of Bulgarian origin (see Table 1):

The lack of official data is coupled with extremely limited anecdotal evidence about the extent of this form of trafficking among Roma boys in Greece. The Public Prosecutors for minors in the two major Greek cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, and police officers at the department for Minors' in these cities that we interviewed reported that no sex trafficking cases involving Roma boys had been brought before them.¹¹⁹ Similarly, NGOs working in the field of victims assistance or streetwork have not so far focused their attention on the issue and were, thus, not in a position to discuss the extent to which it takes place and its characteristics. The lack of cases can be perceived as an indication that the problem is not so severe in Greece. On the other hand, it may well be considered as illustrative of the lack of understanding and awareness of the trafficking processes that are at play. Taking into account the difficult situations that street children experience daily, their vulnerability to the risk of sex trafficking should be considered.¹²⁰

Stakeholders from the field of service provision recognise that even though indications of Roma boys being involved in prostitution exist, the issue of sex trafficking has received little attention. He noted:

“This is an issue we should be concerned about. I personally think that it [sexual exploitation of Roma boys] exists but it is very hard to identify it. No such cases have turned up to us or have been referred to us by the police, as far as I know. There are some places in down town Thessaloniki where you

¹¹⁸ See Invernizzi, Antonella. “Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking of Bulgarian Children and Adolescents in Greece. A Case Study of Street Based Survival Strategies in Thessaloniki.” Project Mario in collaboration with Arsis, Budapest, 2011, p.39.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014; Interview with police officer at the Department for Minors' Protection, Attica Security Division, Athens, February 12, 2014. Interview with police officers at the Department for Minors, Thessaloniki Security Division, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

¹²⁰ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Thessaloniki court district, Thessaloniki, July 11, 2014.

notice a large concentration of young boys either Roma or non-Roma. This is a personal observation of mine. We have not carried out any research on that and I cannot tell you how the authorities would have treated such cases had they identified any.”

Interview with anti-trafficking expert at the NGO A21 Campaign, Athens, 20 June 2014

The vulnerability of Roma street children to the risk of sex trafficking and prostitution as a result of the difficult socio-economic conditions they face should not be overlooked. Surviving on the streets involves many risks and Roma children often experience sexual assault or harassment.¹²¹ One of our interviewees noted, in particular, that Albanian Roma boys who have been brought to Greece or have come with parents or other family members and live in exploitative conditions may be involved to occasional prostitution. She explains how:

“We came across a number of Albanian Roma children, most of whom, it appeared, had come here with their parents...They were involved in begging and they were mostly boys. And with boys what happened was that they had to bring back home a daily quota of money. Had they not been able to gather that much they could not go home. Many times the children we hosted here told us stories about other children who, in order to make enough money to get back home went to Aristotelous street (in Thessaloniki) where they knew that they could find some old gentleman who would give them money in return for certain sexual acts. ‘This is something everybody knows’ they were telling us. This happened many years ago, I do not know if this is still the case today.”

Interview with ‘House of Arsīs’ social worker, Thessaloniki (Oraiokastro), July 9, 2014

This observation suggests that Roma boys who are subject to trafficking may experience various form of exploitation in the process as a direct or indirect result of their trafficking. In those cases, prostitution was not the purpose of these boys’ trafficking but a practice to which they ‘resorted’ in order to cope with the cash demands imposed on them by their exploiters. It emerges from our research that it is critical for all involved stakeholders to be particularly attuned to these specificities and their context and explore a course of action in order to address them in anti-trafficking efforts.

5. Victims assistance and protection mechanisms

Anti-trafficking legislation recognises the victims’ right to life, physical integrity and personal and sexual freedom.¹²² Victims of the human trafficking crimes defined in the Penal Code are provided assistance, food, accommodation, medical care, psychological support, legal advice and interpretation services. Child victims of

¹²¹ Interview with Roma expert and representative of the NGO Kentro Paidiou kai Oikogeneias (Centre for the Children and the Family), Athens, December 11, 2013.

¹²² Greece / Article 12(1) of Law 3064/2002 and Article 2 of Presidential Decree 233/2013.

trafficking in particular are entitled to access to public education and cross-cultural education programmes while those between 15 and 23 years old can have access to vocational training.¹²³ Assistance and care is provided by a number of ‘Protection and Assistance Units and Services’ (hereinafter the units), i.e. public child welfare institutions, counseling centers and children’s shelter’s defined in legislation.¹²⁴ These are further required to ensure, in collaboration with the police, the safety and security of the victims and to protect them from potential threats by their traffickers during their period of stay.¹²⁵ Besides these units, assistance and care to victims of trafficking is provided by several NGOs with which the state has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation for this purpose.¹²⁶ The National Centre for Social Solidarity operates as the coordinator between state agencies and NGOs for the protection of victims of trafficking. We need to note that data on the number of victims of trafficking that have received assistance and protection is not disaggregated by age or ethnic origin.¹²⁷

Quite importantly, victims and potential victims enjoy access to assistance and support irrespectively of whether they have been officially granted the status of a victim though the “Characterisation Act”; it suffices that they resort to any of the bodies entitled to offer such services, which are then required to inform the police and the judicial authorities about the incident.¹²⁸ Trafficking victims may report the incident or seek assistance in person, or through the relevant helplines. The National Centre for Social Solidarity, currently under the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare operates a national 24/7 emergency helpline and, since 2011, also the National Child Protection Helpline, functional 24/7 and staffed by social workers and psychologists, which is addressed to children at risk due to abuse, neglect, trafficking or any kind of exploitation.¹²⁹ The NGO Smile of the Child runs the ‘National SOS Helpline for Children 1056’ for children-victims of abuse or neglect and the 116000 European Hotline for missing children. The anti-trafficking NGO A21 also operates a hotline for reporting cases and requesting services and assistance.¹³⁰ These helplines are addressed both to victims and individuals who wish to report an incident, providing counseling and referral to emergency services, organizations serving trafficking victims and law enforcement.

Anti-trafficking legislation makes no clear distinction between interim and long-term assistance. Assistance and protection are provided for as long as it is considered necessary by the facilities responsible for providing these services on a case by case basis.¹³¹ In practice, each of the facilities involved has more or less its

¹²³ Greece / Articles 5 and 6 of Presidential Decree 233/2013.

¹²⁴ These bodies are listed in the Appendix of Presidential Decree 233/2003.

¹²⁵ Greece / Articles 4 of Presidential Decree 233/2013.

¹²⁶ Memorandum of Cooperation “for Combating Human Trafficking and Assisting Victims” signed in 2005 between the Ministries involved in anti-trafficking efforts, a number of Greek NGO’s and the International Organization of Migration.

¹²⁷ Some NGO’s like A21 keep collect data on the ethnic origin of the victims to which they have provided assistance.

¹²⁸ Article 2 of Presidential Decree 233/2003.

¹²⁹ Nevertheless, due to lack of human resources in the context of diminishing public funding there concerns that the Centre shall not be able to maintain this helpline 24/7. Cited in: KMOP. “Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece.” January 2014, p. 137.

¹³⁰ The A21 Campaign cooperates with an interpretation service and can therefore provide interpretation by phone in 170 languages.

¹³¹ Greece / Article 2(2) of Presidential Decree 233/2013.

own house rules on length of stay, depending on the kinds of victims it receives and resources. That said, none of these facilities addresses solely child victims of trafficking. Child victims of trafficking are usually hosted in a facility that accommodates all categories of children (orphans, abused and neglected children, unaccompanied minors). We also need to note that generally applicable minimum standards for the provision of assistance and care do not exist. This means that each facility follows its own best practices depending on resources and no consistent and structured methodologies for the provision of support services of child victims are being followed nationwide. No doubt public services and NGOs act in line with professional standards in assessing the child's best interest and catering to its needs. In fact, during our research we encountered several good practices in this respect which we outline below. But, nonetheless, the lack of standard procedures is quite naturally translated in a lack of monitoring and evaluation of these schemes with respect to the extent to they support the victim's recovery and wellbeing.

As discussed under section 4.1.3, because they are not usually identified as victims of trafficking, Roma child victims of begging are more likely to be treated under the standard protection system for children at a vulnerable condition. This means that the Public Prosecutor may order the provision of short-term emergency accommodation until a decision about their definite placement in a child welfare institution or their return to the country of origin is reached. The child protection services are coordinated by the National Centre of Social Solidarity. Accommodation is provided by any child shelter or welfare institution which means that children beggars may be provisionally sheltered in one of the facilities that are also entitled to host victims of trafficking. In practice, however, there is a great shortage of available places in any kind of facility - as service providers interviewed for this study repeatedly pointed out. Cut-offs and financial restrictions imposed on public services and welfare subsidies in the context of austerity have severely impacted the capacity of public childcare facilities to respond promptly to the caseload. Similarly, NGOs are struggling to maintain services with the limited resources available.¹³² The result is a significant emergency protection gap at the stage of interim care. It is not uncommon, for instance, for children to be provisionally hosted in hospitals, where they are referred to for the necessary medical screening, until a place in a shelter becomes available. Needless to say, hospitals are not the appropriate type of facility: they lack specialised personnel and are not even safe with children often running away.¹³³ Even worse, a Roma expert informed us about an incident where it took the authorities 40 days to find an available place for Roma siblings found on the streets. During this period, in order not to run away, the children were held in a police cell.¹³⁴

For children who are identified as victims of trafficking, the Court may decide the definite placement of the child residential care facility when handing them over to their country of origin is not possible, or when return is considered contrary to the child's best interest. Long-term placement in child welfare is also reserved for children who are not identified as victims of trafficking but whose family cannot be traced or for whom parental custody has been removed. The child welfare system

¹³² KMOP. "Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece." January 2014, p. 33.

¹³³ Interview with Public Prosecutor for Minors in the Athens court district, Athens, February 2, 2014.

¹³⁴ Interview with Roma expert and representative of the NGO Kentro Paidiou kai Oikogeneias (Centre for the Children and the Family), Athens, December 11.

features both centralised and decentralised elements: in addition to public child welfare institutions a number of NGOs are entitled to provide long-term residential care, protection and education to neglected, abused, orphaned and destitute children until they reach the age of majority.¹³⁵ As no recent research on the general child protection system has been published we are not able to make an assessment of the services that the various facilities provide. On the one hand, it is important that Roma child victims of trafficking and exploitation, no matter what their country of origin is, are entitled to receive long-term protection and residential care under the child protection system in Greece in line with the provision of the Convention for the Rights of the Child.¹³⁶

On the other hand, however, these children too are subject to the general lacunas of the system which several interviewees highlighted. Institutionalisation and reliance on a “one-size fits” all approach have been cited as some of them.¹³⁷ Unwieldy bureaucratic procedures coupled with the shortage of facilities, staff and resources, intensified in recent years due to the austerity measures that are being implemented add up to the problems. According to our interviewees and a number of reports, austerity measures have had a deteriorating impact on the effectiveness of the child protection system in catering for the protection and care of the children under their responsibility.¹³⁸

When it comes to child victims of trafficking and exploitation with a recent immigration background, several stakeholders share the view that the option of safe return to the country of origin should be prioritised. Such preference is grounded on the acknowledgment that the domestic child care system suffers from deficiencies and cannot effectively ensure their integration in the Greek society in the long run. Safe return would entail a risk assessment for the possible return and reintegration of victims in light of the child’s best interest through bi-lateral cooperation between the responsible authorities in the two countries. But it requires that a series of actions such as a case-by-case assessment of the family and social environment and the availability of appropriate protection and assistance facilities in the country of origin be undertaken before the decision about the victim’s return is taken.

If a minor is a victim of trafficking, measures are taken with regards to repatriation. Provided that the child’s family is found and/or the Prosecutor decides that the return serves the best interests of the child, a return decision is issued. The return is coordinated by the International Organization for Migration which runs an assisted voluntary return programme addressed to victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and children within families through coordination with authorities in the countries of origin and destination. The IOM’s data on assisted voluntary returns is not made publicly available.

¹³⁵ NGOs offering long-term residential care placement services to children subject to statutory child protection intervention are required to be licensed. Licensing, granted by the respective municipality, serves make sure that the services meet the standards outlined in legislation, ie. Article 1 of Law 2345/1995 (12.10.1995), and Decision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, Number D27/oik34481/1562 (17/10/2014).

¹³⁶ Law 2101/1992 (2.12.1992).

¹³⁷ Interview with NGO Arsis social worker, Thessaloniki, July 8, 2014.

¹³⁸ Law 4109/2013 (23.01.2013) mandated the merger of several institutions, reducing the number of public child care facilities from 87 to 23. See also KMOP. “Improving and Monitoring Protection Systems Against Child Trafficking and Exploitation (IMPACT). National Report Greece.” January 2014, p.152.

For EU migrant who are not identified as victims of trafficking but who are nonetheless in a situation of vulnerability an order of return may be issued by the Public Prosecutor on the basis of information on the social, economic and family situation through a social inquiry in the child's country of origin. No standardised procedures exist concerning the conduct of such inquiries. Previous research has identified that in a number of return cases, the social inquiries on which the decision of return was based did not include any adequate risk and security assessments in the environment of origin of the child.¹³⁹

Some stakeholders expressed worry about the extent to which repatriation of children of Albanian origin may be taking place prior to the conduct of family tracing and social inquiry. Greece and the Republic of Albania have signed a bilateral agreement which provides for the assistance and the facilitation of safe repatriation of children (identified and suspected) victims of trafficking who are Albanian nationals.¹⁴⁰ It stipulates that the responsible social services of the two countries (in Greece that is the National Centre for Social Solidarity) shall jointly decide on a case-by-case basis on a permanent solution that guarantees the child's interests, prioritising safe and voluntary repatriation when possible.¹⁴¹ Officials in the Centre interviewed for this study, consider that in practice the agreement is inactive with unaccompanied Albanian minors, picked up and deported without prior reporting of the incident to the Centre for further investigation.¹⁴² This means that children may be deported on the assumption that the Albanian authorities will assume responsibility for assessing the child's situation.

Good practices

So far, the report paints a rather gloom picture of the assistance and protection schemes for child victims of trafficking and the child welfare system in general. In this section we present some good practices we identified in this respect.

- NGOs Arsis and Praksis undertake street-work on a regular basis in common begging spots in Athens and Thessaloniki (occasionally also in other cities) under the project "Mobile School". The aim is to establish a trusting relationship with children engaging in begging and other street income-generating activities and, thus, be able to understand their situation, record instances of exploitation and approach the child and family. Street working is done by trained professionals, some of them native speakers of Bulgarian, Romanian and Albanian or speakers of Romani. In addition to outreach work, the NGOs run day centers in Thessaloniki that further operate as a contact point for street children and the families who want to ask for help and support. They provide psycho-social support, counseling, liaison with social services and opportunities for children to be involved in educational and leisure activities. The combination of these practices offers a framework for intervention appropriate to the needs of the street

¹³⁹ Cazenave, Pierre. "Protecting Migrant Children in a Freedom of Movement Area." *Terre des hommes*, December 2012, p.36

¹⁴⁰ Greece / Law 3692/2008 (25.08.2008)

¹⁴¹ Considering family reunification as a priority. See Greece / Article 12 of Law 3692/2008.

¹⁴² Interview with officials in the National Centre for Social Solidarity, Athens, December 14, 2013; Interview with official in the National Centre for Social Solidarity, Thessaloniki, July 7, 2014.

child in question. At the same time, the building of trust with children allows for suspected trafficking incidents to be detected, and to be referred to the police authorities for investigation and to the National Centre for Social Solidarity for assistance.¹⁴³ Both NGOs run shelters for unaccompanied minors, while Arsis also runs a short-term stay shelter particularly addressing mistreated, neglected and children victims of trafficking and exploitation in the outskirts of Thessaloniki.

- A21 is an NGO focused on addressing the human trafficking problem in Europe and in Greece. It does so through awareness raising and advocacy and in partnership with law enforcement, the judiciary and relevant stakeholders. It also provides assistance and protection to victims. In addition to operating a human trafficking hotline, A21 runs the only accommodation facilities particularly addressing victims of trafficking, women and girls. It is a crisis shelter where enhanced safety measures are followed, and it offers food, accommodation and counseling services lasting up to six weeks on a voluntary basis. Girl victims are enrolled in school and usually stay in the crisis shelter longer than 16 weeks. Women, on the other hand, move to transitional residence where career counseling, financial management, and educational enhancement are provided.
- The National Centre for Social Solidarity is in the process of launching ‘e-pronoia for the citizen’ an e-platform for the registration of information on all cases dealt with by welfare service providers in Greece. The creation of this database is expected to facilitate the coordination, cooperation and horizontal interconnection of child welfare services, including facilities offering assistance to victims of trafficking and to facilitate collection and analysis of data on the type and quality of services provided.¹⁴⁴

6. Conclusions and recommendations

In response to the rise of new forms of human trafficking, the definition of this phenomenon has gradually expanded to include exploitation in begging and criminal activities alongside sexual and labour exploitation and the extraction of organs. This shift in the definition of the crime of trafficking is reflected in international legal instruments adopted by the European Commission and the UN with a view to strengthening inter-EU and international coordination of anti-trafficking efforts and to facilitating convergence in national approaches. The EU anti-trafficking Directive and the Palermo convention set a list of guidelines for the prevention of trafficking, the prosecution of offenders and the rights of the victims, including the right of access to adequate protection and assistance facilities. Both instruments further recognise the particular vulnerability of children to victimization. They call on Member States to ensure that the child’s best interests must be a primary consideration in anti-trafficking and victims assistance policies.

¹⁴³ In addition both NGOs participate in support actions in specific Roma communities and settlements in Greece. Interview with officials in the National Centre for Social Solidarity, Athens, December 14, 2013;

¹⁴⁴ Interview with officials in the National Centre for Social Solidarity, Athens, December 14, 2013.

Overall, Greece generally complies with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention, the Palermo Protocol and the EU Anti-trafficking Directive. At the same time, efforts to increase cooperation between relevant state and non-state actors with the aim to promote the effective identification of trafficking victims have intensified over the years. Opportunities for knowledge sharing between stakeholders have grown, training schemes for law enforcement officers have been developed and a number of projects have been carried out, mostly through EU funds to raise awareness about new forms of trafficking. Guidelines developed for the detection of victims of trafficking encourage police officers to be alert for signs of trafficking in exploitation in begging and criminal activities particularly among street children and migrant children without guardians. However, in practice anti-trafficking efforts are still mainly focused on trafficking for sexual exploitation among women and girls.

Trafficking for exploitation in begging is unanimously is considered by our interviewees to have a significant impact on migrant Roma children. Albania, Romania and Bulgaria are considered the main countries of origin of the victims. Our findings indicate that there is a high degree of uncertainty about the criteria to apply in determining the risk status of Roma children beggars - and thus the applicable legislation and the threshold of intervention in order to protect the child. Service providers and law enforcement encounter the increasing involvement of parents and relatives in the extended family as transporters of their children in Greece to beg, or sell small items in the street. In practice, it is generally considered that the frame of family decision-making and control under which the migrant Roma child begging frequently takes place dissociates it from the phenomenon of trafficking. Child begging, accordingly, is associated with the crime of human trafficking only when elements of exploitation by third parties (non-family members) are detected. On the other hand, though, the fact that exploitation may well take place within the immediate and extended family, including from parents themselves vis-à-vis their children is often neither acknowledged, nor further investigated. The issue of how law and social support services can detect, assess and address exploitation taking place within a family frame is extremely complex.

In light of the above, it can be argued that the numbers of victims of trafficking for begging detected by the Greek police significantly underestimate the reality of the problem. The number of boy victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation is similarly low. Interviews with stakeholder were not very helpful in the gathering of information and discussion of the actual extent of the phenomenon and its impact on Roma boys. As to victims of trafficking for pick-pocketing, as domestic legislation does not explicitly recognise this form of trafficking, no data on the victims exist. Overall, it transpires that due to gaps in the implementation of legislation and lack of awareness, often a common response among the responsible actors is indifference and inaction.¹⁴⁵

First, a main part of the problem in tackling child trafficking (and trafficking in its other forms) is the identification of victims. As mentioned in our discussion in the main body of this report, people and especially children who are exploited in a

¹⁴⁵ ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. "Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU." JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.311.

trafficking situation are highly unlikely to report their situation on their own due to lack of awareness, but also lack of trust, insecurity and fear. The difficulties at detecting child victims of trafficking who are Roma are further compounded by the inherent ambivalence as to whether they are victims at all when their parents or relatives are those who oversee their involvement in such activities. Such ambivalence, often leading to denial of the phenomenon by law enforcement authorities, which is also entrenched in the legal anti-trafficking frame, is a major obstacle in victim identification, and it is not surprising that the officially registered numbers of VoTs annually are low.

There is no doubt that identification of child labor exploitation in the form of begging and other related activities when third parties are not apparently involved is no easy task. It requires specialised training and the development of a multi-faceted social intervention approach premised upon synergies among different actors and providers, non-governmental and public service providers. It also requires a certain kind of awareness and understanding among those officers, psychologists, lawyers, social workers and others involved, which does not perceive the Roma in a stereotyped, demeaning and stigmatising manner but views them as individuals, families and communities who struggle to make ends meet and survive. Some social workers whom we have interviewed have thoroughly worked out these issues of prejudice and perception in their own work with children in the streets, but much more work needs to be done among the broader circle of social providers and law enforcement authorities on this front.

Our findings also suggest that improving the referral of children who beg or who are at risk remains a significant challenge. As to child begging in particular, regardless of how it is understood under the existing legal framework - ie. as a trafficking or as begging incident - child protection and assistance is a cross-cutting concern. Protection is generally offered under the standard child protection framework from public institutions and NGOs for children at risk and potential risk rather than from facilities addressing victims of trafficking in particular. The effectiveness of the child protection framework in catering for the specific protection needs of these children in line with their best interest has been questioned by our interviewees. It is questioned in reference to the limited resource capacity of the respective facilities, which has intensified as a result of the austerity measures that Greece is implementing. Overall, our research shows that there is a significant protection gap mostly at the level of interim, emergency care.

Data collection must be improved in order to implement effective assessment of the services provided. First, the information available in the various administrative data sources should be shared and coordinated between the various authorities. Data collection processes should seek to ensure complementarity and coherence. Moreover, the possibility of merging existing databases held by law enforcement, judicial authorities and service providers should be considered with a view to providing a more holistic picture of the phenomenon.

In the longer run, micro level measures in Greece as a country of destination cannot be successful in changing effectively and sustainably a situation, unless supported, by the macro-level in the countries of origin. Measures and policies must be pursued with the aim of reducing poverty in Roma communities, enhancing their social inclusion and improving their access to education. These are socio-economic

conditions that increase, or can conversely reduce the vulnerability of Roma communities to the exploitation of children through begging.

In light of the above, our recommendations are the following:

- Strengthen coordination of anti-trafficking efforts between Greece and the countries of origin of Roma child victims. The development of multi-level cooperation and partnerships of relevant stakeholders (policy makers, judiciary, law enforcement, service providers and Roma representatives) should be enhanced.
- Introduce concrete monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of anti-trafficking policy from a human and children rights perspective.
- Undertake a systematic assessment of the situation of children in street situations in order to obtain an accurate picture of the root causes and magnitude of the problem.¹⁴⁶
- Intensify efforts to promote the identification of Roma child victims of trafficking. This could be achieved in the following ways:
 - Seek regular research-based knowledge about Roma child victims of trafficking, their profiles, the factors of vulnerability and patterns of exploitation. Cross-disciplinary dialogue and knowledge-sharing between all relevant stakeholders should be sustained and promoted.
 - Develop identification manuals and screening procedures which include guidance on the detection of signs/indicators of exploitation of children trafficked for exploitation in begging and criminal activity.
 - Support competence development of law enforcement on child trafficking and exploitation in all its manifestations. Specialised training should be provided on methods to be used to investigate the situation of any child engaging in begging in order to identify elements of trafficking and other exploitative patterns beyond and within the family.¹⁴⁷
 - Law enforcement officers must draw a clear distinction between children who are trafficked and exploited through begging and children who beg outside of the context of trafficking. Measures are needed to ensure that the situation of detected child beggars is analysed and addressed on a case-by-case basis by qualified professionals. The best interests of the child must be the primary objective.¹⁴⁸
 - Improve the resource capacity of the Offices of Public Prosecutors of First Instance Courts.

¹⁴⁶ This recommendation is mentioned in: Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: Greece, CRC/C/GRC/CO/2-3, 13 August 2012, para. 67.

¹⁴⁷ This recommendation is mentioned in: ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.331.

¹⁴⁸ This recommendation is mentioned in: ICMPD, ECORYS Nederland BV, ECPAT Austria, Save the Children Europe Group, Salvati Copiii (Save the Children Romania), Save the Children Denmark, Save the Children Italy, Terres des hommes. “Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU.” JLS/2009/ISEC/PR/008-F2, 2012, p.331.

- Develop a comprehensive national identification and referral mechanism built on a formalised system of cooperation among stakeholders at the national and local level. The mechanism should be grounded on a human rights and child rights based approach.
- Ensure the availability, sustainability and effectiveness of assistance and protection measures for child victims. This could be done through the following actions:
 - Strengthen the resource-capacity of shelters that provide accommodation to child victims of trafficking and child protection facilities. The aim should be to ensure that child victims have access to emergency, interim and long-term assistance and protection in line with their best interests. The possibility of establishing specialised facilities for child victims of trafficking should be explored.
 - Address gaps in data collection on protection and assistance measures addressing child victims of trafficking and exploitation.
 - Develop minimum standards for victims' assistance and protection schemes in line with the child's best interest through consultation with stakeholders. Ensure that a review of the implementation of these standards is regularly carried out and deficiencies are promptly addressed.
 - Ensure that care and assistance is appropriate and respects the child victim's cultural identity and origin, gender and age.¹⁴⁹
- Perform a risk assessment prior to taking any decision about the return of child victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and children at risk in general. The coordination of the range of stakeholders involved in the process of commissioning and conducting social inquiries prior to the return should be strengthened.
- Make efforts to address the issue of child begging more broadly through ensuring that Roma families resorting to such practices for income generating purposes have access to social protection services and alternative income-generating opportunities.
- Raise public awareness about the vulnerability of children belonging to marginalised communities to trafficking and exploitation with due attention to preventing the stigmatisation of Roma the community. Trafficking should be addressed in the context of vulnerability due to poverty, deprivation and marginalisation.

¹⁴⁹ This recommendation is mentioned in: UNICEF. "Guidelines on the Protection of Child victims of Trafficking." September 2006, p.22. Accessed December 1,2014. http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/0610-Unicef_Victims_Guidelines_en.pdf.

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