



STOP

**SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN BENELUX

BELGIUM, THE NETHERLANDS AND LUXEMBOURG

What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

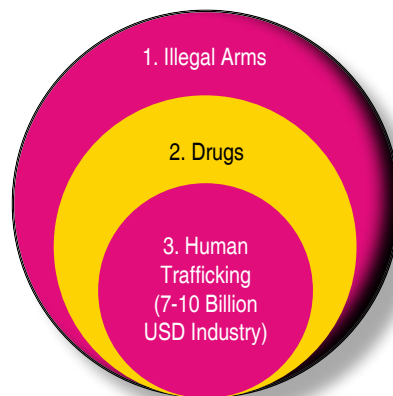
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What's the problem?

GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.¹ Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.²



Largest Global Criminal Activities



CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM, THE NETHERLANDS AND LUXEMBOURG

It is hard to ascertain reliable data on the number of trafficked children involved in sexual exploitation in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. However, certain trends on human trafficking can be indentified from data provided by aid organisations and law enforcement agencies.

Research conducted by ECPAT Netherlands in 2005 identified 230 cases of child trafficking in the Netherlands between 2003 and 2005, 169 of which were for exploitation in prostitution.³ In 2006, 18 of the 120 cases of forced prostitution reported to Meld Misdaad Anoniem ('Report Crime Anonymously') in the Netherlands concerned minors and this number increased to 24 out of 93 reported cases in 2007.⁴

According to the Belgian Immigration Office, 160 victims of trafficking and smuggling into Belgium were identified in 2006. The total number of minors involved is 14. In 2007, the total of minors was nine. In 2008 (January to June) the number of minors was 8. With regard to the type of exploitation, the majority of victims were trafficked for forced labour (65 cases) and sexual exploitation (57 cases).⁵

The Global Monitoring Report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children, produced by ECPAT Luxembourg, reports that information on sexual exploitation within the country is sporadic and anecdotal.⁶ During 2007, Luxembourg law enforcement agencies convicted and sentenced six human traffickers on charges of procuring prostitution, human trafficking, and smuggling.⁷ During the reporting period, law enforcement agencies investigated and prosecuted nine cases of trafficking, all concerning sexual exploitation. Five of these cases concluded with a sentence, and one of these five involved a child victim.⁸

Who gets trafficked?

Child trafficking in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg occurs mainly for sexual exploitation and, to a lesser extent, for other purposes. Research conducted by ECPAT Netherlands in 2005, found that of the total 230 child victims of trafficking in their database, 73.5% were exploited in prostitution only and 9.1 % in prostitution as well as in other formal and informal labour sectors.⁹ While children trafficked to Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg come from a variety of countries, several sources point to the fact that most of the victims are trafficked within the borders. A study conducted by ECPAT Netherlands found that almost 30% of minors trafficked for sexual exploitation in the Netherlands were from the Netherlands and another 30% originated from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. The rest mostly came from countries in Africa and Eastern Europe.¹⁰

A large portion of children trafficked in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are unaccompanied and vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees. In the Netherlands, unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors, who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, represented 6% of victims involved in prostitution.¹¹ In Luxembourg, it has also been reported that asylum-seeking and migrant children who enter the country become victims of sexual exploitation.¹²

While a number of methods are used by traffickers to entrap girls in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, particularly common is the phenomenon of “lover boys,” whereby young men seduce girls by posing as boyfriends and then force them into providing sexual services. Children and young people are rarely exploited as street sex workers or in red light districts, as police checks on such areas are usually stringent. Their sexual exploitation occurs predominantly within illegal escort services, in hotels, in parked cars, in private houses and in illegal private clubs (mostly in towns but also in the countryside). Exploiters are also apparently using the Internet and mobile phones to gain access to children and young people for prostitution.¹³

The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally, while poverty, domestic violence and abuse, discrimination and the desire for a better life makes children vulnerable. Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficked because they may be uneducated, easy to overpower and easy to convince that they must do what an adult tells them to do. Children may also be in a position where they believe they must help to support their families and may be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced, or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

- ‘Sending’ or ‘origin’ - from where children are sent;
- ‘Transit’ - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- ‘Receiving’ or ‘destination’ - where the children finally end up.

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might only be sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three.

Within the region that encompasses Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, child sex trafficking routes and patterns differ. Most of the girls trafficked for sexual exploitation to and through Belgium originate from Balkan and CIS countries (mainly Russia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania), as well as from West Africa (particularly Nigeria). Despite the vast majority of child victims being females, young foreign boys exploited in prostitution can also be found in the main Belgian cities such as Brussels, Antwerp and Gant.¹⁴ Belgium is considered both a country of destination and a transit point for children trafficked onwards to other destinations in Europe, such as the UK and especially Flanders.¹⁵

Despite the Netherlands being considered primarily as a destination for child trafficking, the country has also been identified, to a lesser extent, as a transit point for children trafficked onwards to the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.¹⁶

Luxembourg is a destination country for the trafficking of persons transnationally for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation with young women being trafficked from Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine. According to the Luxembourg Red Cross, an increasing number of women from Africa and Latin America are engaged in prostitution in the country, and could be victims of trafficking.¹⁷

For child trafficking, **Belgium, the Netherlands** and **Luxembourg** are primarily considered as:

- origin countries
- ✓ transit countries
- ✓ destination countries
- ✓ internal/domestic countries



Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions.

Tourists from Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg travel to destinations such as the Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Morocco, the Gambia,¹⁸ Thailand and Cambodia¹⁹ to seek sex with children. In the Netherlands, perpetrators of sexual exploitation of Nigerian underage girls include African, Dutch and Moroccan men, as well as male tourists.²⁰

Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organized criminal network that 'recruits' children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

In Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, traffickers can be both male and female. In 2006, the most recent year for which comprehensive prosecution statistics are available in Belgium, the Government prosecuted 451 trafficking cases.²¹ Despite persons convicted for trafficking offences mainly being males, cases of females have also been reported (there were 44 in 2005).²² Furthermore, it has been noted that trafficking networks to France have moved outside of the country, mainly to Belgium and Germany, due to increasing prosecution of traffickers.²³

Girls are also forced by their pimps to recruit others, including underage girls. According to one aid worker, Nigerian women and girls in the red light districts in the Netherlands tend to be well organised, legal, and work for themselves. Some of these women assist their pimps in recruiting younger girls who are forced to work in prostitution in He Bijlmer district in South East Amsterdam. African girls involved in prostitution in the Netherlands have also been found with African madams, some of whom came to the Netherlands a number of years ago as victims, finally paid off their debts and became pimps themselves.²⁴

Common nationalities for traffickers are Albanian, Belgian, Nigerian, Russian and Bulgarian, but also Ecuadorean and Brazilian. It has been reported that in Belgium, Albanian trafficking networks traffic women and children from Albania, as well as from Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and Bulgaria. Chinese syndicates, which are traditionally engaged in drug trafficking, money laundering and extortion, have also become involved in trafficking in persons in Belgium.²⁵

CASE STUDIES

Girls trafficked from Bulgaria

A young Bulgarian girl was enticed by a man, later proven to be a pimp, to leave Bulgaria with the promise of a better life. The young waitress from Sliven was taken out of the country on a bus to Brussels, along with two other girls. The bus driver was an accomplice of the man.

In Brussels, the girl was met by another pimp and was forced into prostitution. She was eventually returned back to Bulgaria only to be resold as a prostitute and was sent to the Netherlands. Eventually she managed to escape and to get in touch with her mother. They filed a complaint with the police and the girl was placed under police protection. The people involved in the girl's trafficking, including the bus driver, have been tried and sentenced. In 2008, police officers in Brussels who deal with human trafficking were investigating 70 cases from Sliven, with a total of 2000 prostitutes identified from this city in the last few years. Often they are in Brussels only in passing, and are sent to other countries.²⁶

Trafficked to Belgium through Italy

A 15-year-old Albanian girl arrived in Belgium in 2000. Through the mediation of her aunt's sister-in-law, a husband had been suggested for her and money was paid to her parents to take her to Italy to be 'married'. Once in Italy, though, the sister-in-law explained that the intended husband was already married, and the girl was taken to Brussels, where she was forced into prostitution.²⁷

'Voodoo' child trafficking ring smashed

In 2007, police in the Netherlands cracked a crime ring that had allegedly trafficked Nigerian children into Western Europe to work as sex slaves. At least 19 people were arrested in the Netherlands and five other countries including the US and Britain. According to police, traffickers supplied the victims with false travel documents, flight tickets and instructions to seek asylum upon arrival at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. The minors were placed in open shelters in the Netherlands, which made it

relatively easy for the criminal organisation to keep control over the victims. Traffickers also used voodoo (witchcraft) to gain a hold over children before smuggling them abroad by scaring them into believing that a spell had been cast on them and that they or their family members would die if they did not do as they were told or tried to escape.²⁸

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Capacity building of judiciary and police who combat child prostitution and child trafficking for sexual purposes should be carried out on a permanent basis and focus not only on the prosecution aspect but also on how child victims fall into exploitative situations, and what this means for the victims and their environment. This should be the case not just for exploitation in prostitution, but also in other formal and informal sectors.
- Allocation of adequate human and financial resources and the establishment of a monitoring mechanism are necessary conditions for combating child sex trafficking in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.
- Cooperation at the international and European levels between these three countries and others in the European Union must improve in the coming years. The Governments should be more active than at present in stimulating workable international and European agreements on combating trafficking in human beings. The fight against trafficking in children must spearhead these efforts.

Country	Date Acceded/Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; Date report(s) submitted	Date Acceded/Ratified The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	Date Acceded/Ratified The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children
1. Belgium	1995 Initial Report- 1994 First Report- 2000 Second Report- 2008	2006 Initial Report- due in April 2008, submitted February 2009.	2004	2002
2. Netherlands	1995 Initial Report- 1997 First Report- 2001 Second Report- 2003 Third Report- 2007	2005 Initial Report- 2007	2005	2002
3. Luxembourg	7 March 1994 Initial Report-1996 First Report- 2002	Signed 8 Sep 2000 but are yet to ratify	Signed Dec 2000 but are yet to ratify	21 March 2001

PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- There is a need to create more residential structures and shelters to provide assistance to child trafficking victims, both girls and boys, especially in smaller cities.
- Awareness raising campaigns on commercial sexual exploitation of children must become part of every school curriculum. Campaigns must be broad, covering issues such as sex, male-female relationships, respect, self-integrity, perceptions of sexuality, group behaviours and group-induced pressure.
- Tailored information must be provided to vulnerable groups that run additional risks of exploitation, such as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and ‘illegal’ children.
- Measures are needed to protect the interests of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Such measures should include: immediate referral to a competent guardian, periodic assessment of placement, priority for procedures concerning trafficking of children, adequate information about the risks of trafficking and measures to supervise them and give them extra attention. Return to the land of origin may only occur if no further risk exists that the child should come to irreparable harm. Children at risk of being (re-) trafficked should only be sent back to their land of origin if adequate measures have been taken to protect them.

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

Belgium:

Child Focus supports investigations in disappearance, abduction or sexual exploitation of children, including child trafficking. The emergency number **116 000** is active 24 hours (every day).²⁹

Netherlands:

Reports can be made anonymously through the national crime hotline “Meld Misdaad Anoniem - Crime Stoppers” at the number 0800-7000.³⁰

Minor victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking can be reported to Comensha, the coordination centre against trafficking in human beings at www.comensha.nl; tel 033-4481186.

Luxembourg:

The SCAS (Le Service d’Aide aux Victimes du Service Central d’Assistance Sociale) is a government organisation that assists child and youth victims and those vulnerable to violence or sexual exploitation. In addition, a phone number called “Bobby” (12321) was set up by the “youth protection” unit of the police in the Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

KannerJugendTelfon (KajuTel) is a phone and email support service in Luxembourg that offers children and youth the opportunity to receive assistance and support for various problems. For more information see: www.12345kjt.lu. For direct assistance, call: 12345.

MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT Group in Belgium: www.ecpat.be
- ECPAT Netherlands: www.ecpat.nl
- ECPAT Luxembourg www.ecpat.lu
- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : www.thebodyshop.com/stop

Endnotes

- ¹ UNICEF. *UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children*. 16 June 2007. Accessed from: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html
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- ⁴ Meld Misdaad Anoniem, 2008. Available at www.meldmisdaadanoniem.nl
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- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Children's Rights Information Network, "Child rights references in universal periodic review," <http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?ID=19641> 2009.
- ¹³ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Netherlands*. Bangkok. 2006.
- ¹⁴ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Belgium*. Bangkok. 2006.
- ¹⁵ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Belgium*. Bangkok. 2006.
- ¹⁶ "Dutch smash 'voodoo' child trade". *BBC online*. 25 October 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7061145.stm>
- ¹⁷ US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Accessed from: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008>
- ¹⁸ Protection Project. *Belgium*. Available at: www.protectionproject.org
- ¹⁹ Cambodia gets tough on child sex trade. *The Christian Science Monitor*. 27 September 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0927/p06s01-woap.html>
- ²⁰ Van den Borne, Anke and Kloosterboer, Karin. *Investigating Exploitation: Research into Trafficking in Children in the Netherlands*. ECPAT Netherlands in cooperation with DCI NL, UNICEF NL and Plan NL. Amsterdam. 2005.
- ²¹ US State Department. *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*. Accessed from: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008>
- ²² UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 12 February 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

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- ²³ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: France*. Bangkok. 2006.
- ²⁴ Van den Borne, Anke and Kloosterboer, Karin. *Investigating Exploitation: Research into Trafficking in Children in the Netherlands*. ECPAT Netherlands in cooperation with DCI NL, UNICEF NL and Plan NL. Amsterdam. 2005.
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- ²⁶ *Every Other Prostitute in Brussels Is from Bulgaria's City of Sliven – Report*. Sofia News Agency. 25 November 2008. Accessed from http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=99230
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NOTES



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