



STOP

**SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN FINLAND

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.

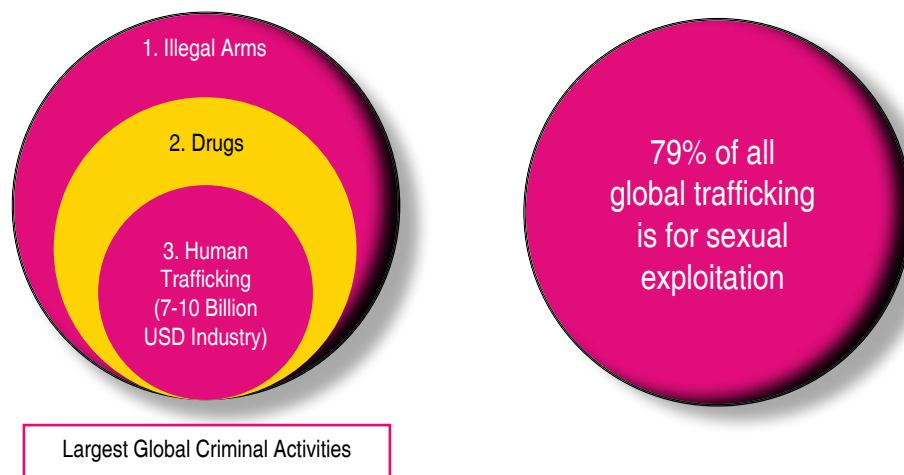
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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 criminal activity in the world, following the international trade in 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



CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN FINLAND

There is a lack of clear information on the extent of the problem of child trafficking in Finland. Most reported cases of sexual exploitation of children are related to child pornography and to child-sex tourism by Finnish nationals in foreign destinations.³

Around the world, 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 be only sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. Finland is a destination country for trafficking victims from within the region and particularly a transit country for women and children being trafficked for sexual exploitation on the way to other European countries and North America.⁴ For example, Russian boys have been trafficked to Sweden through Finland.⁵ Several sources have noted that the majority of trafficked people for sexual purposes are reportedly women, due to the harsher punishment given for trafficking offences when victims are minors.⁶

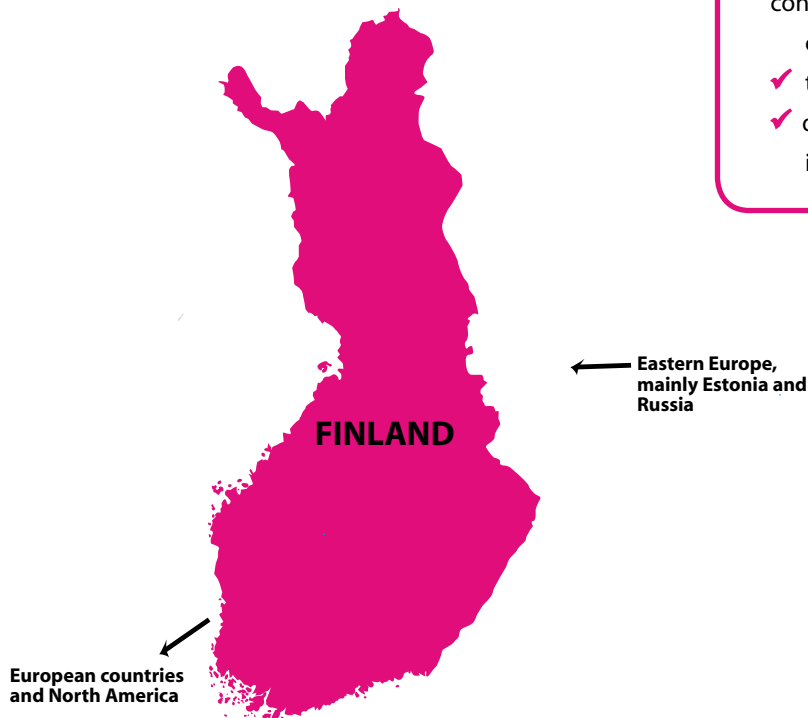
Who gets trafficked?

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 are often 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.

In the case of women and girls trafficked to Finland, they are often recruited in countries nearby, within the region. The majority of them come from Russia, the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe.⁷ In addition, Estonians are among the most commonly found nationalities among the women and girls in the Finnish sex trade. The majority of the women are in their twenties. However, there are reports of girls 15–18 years of age being recruited.⁸

Many of the girls recruited to the sex trade belong to minority groups in their home countries, such as the Russian-speaking minority in Baltic countries and the Roma people in Eastern Europe.⁹ Poverty and discrimination seem to be two key factors making girls vulnerable to traffickers. Among individual factors, researchers have found social problems such as youth delinquency, school dropouts, drug abuse and family violence increase a child's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

Finnish police reportedly believe that some children in Finland provide sex services to adults in exchange for money, for example, by selling themselves near Helsinki's Central Railway Station.¹⁰ Some children working in the sex industry in Finland are Finns; others are from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia.



For child trafficking, **FINLAND** is primarily considered as a:

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

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 no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all types of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. Finland is also a source country for tourists seeking sex with children. Finnish buyers who want to purchase sex with a minor are more likely to travel abroad, to neighbouring countries such as Estonia and Russia, where the risks of being caught are lower.¹¹

Research has shown that Finnish tourists make up a majority of the exploiters that travel to border towns in Russia and Estonia, particularly Vyborg, Sortavala, Petrozavodsk, Saint Petersburg, Narva¹² and Tallinn (in this last town, one in four of those in prostitution are underage) to engage in sex with children and adolescents.¹³ In the case of Estonia, research estimates that between 45% and 60% of the sex tourists are Finns.¹⁴

CASE STUDY

Adult men in Helsinki caught paying for sex with teenagers with alcohol and gifts

The buying of sexual favours from teenagers by adult men has reportedly become increasingly common in Helsinki, even though buying sex services from someone who is under the age of 18 is a crime. If an adult has sex with someone under 16,

the age of consent, an additional crime of sexual abuse of a child applies. In 2008, police in Helsinki learned of at least 178 cases in which an adult man paid for sex with an underage girl or boy. The police and the Family Federation of Finland believe that the number of cases that have come to light are just the tip of the iceberg.

Clothing, music CDs, alcohol or drugs are reportedly the most common way that adults “pay” a teenager for sex. When cash is involved, police say that the price is very low. The teenagers involved are between the ages of 13 and 17 (a third of the cases being boys). All of the perpetrators were men.¹⁵

Who are the traffickers?

The pimps involved in trafficking can be either male or female, and they are usually either Estonian or Russian (mainly female) or Finnish. However, the police have also come across cases where pimps from Iraq, Turkey, Tunisia and former Yugoslavia are working in cooperation with Estonian and Russian traffickers.¹⁶

According to the police, more than 90% of the prostitution market is controlled by criminal gangs, originating mainly from Russia and Estonia.¹⁷ Finnish criminals are no longer a serious force in procurement, because foreign criminals are now used to the scene in Finland, and use their connections to contact immigrants from their own cultural backgrounds to help them organise their business.¹⁸ The police characterise the Russian gangs as being much harsher than the Estonians. For example, a Russian female prostitute who is arrested will not cooperate with the police for fear of reprisal, while an Estonian may.

Victims are often recruited through employment advertisements in newspapers or magazines. Money is used in several ways in the recruitment phase, primarily as a tool for control. By paying for the journey to the destination country, the traffickers acquire a debt from the women and the girls, thus forcing them to work to pay off their debts.

CASE STUDIES

Finnish citizen accused of trafficking women and girls for sexual exploitation

A 45-year-old Finn was accused of trafficking in persons. He was allegedly involved in an organised international crime ring that was prostituting women from Estonia, Latvia and Russia to Finland. The trafficking began in 2003 when at least 30 women were forced into prostitution in seven Finnish towns. The youngest known victim was a 17-year-old Latvian girl. The person who forced her into prostitution may, under Latvian law, receive a 15-year prison sentence. The trafficked victims were controlled from a 24-hour call centre located in Tallinn and the trafficking victims provided sex services in rented apartments in Tallinn and around Finland. Five local women worked in the call centre as “dispatchers”, diverting calls from men wishing to purchase sex directly from the respective girls. All five women later pleaded guilty to the charges brought against them. Their accomplices, however, received comparatively mild sentences.¹⁹

Finland falls short in helping human trafficking victims

According to a steering group from the Ministry of Labour, Finland often fails to identify victims of human trafficking, including those exploited in the sex market. Hundreds of human trafficking victims are estimated to pass through Finland annually, while for many victims, Finland is the final destination. In the summer of 2006, the Helsinki District Court sentenced seven people

in a human trafficking and procurement case. According to the steering group, more needs to be done to recognise human trafficking victims, such as better training for officials working on such cases and better methods for identifying cases of child trafficking. The group also proposed nominating an independent human trafficking rapporteur, who would be responsible for analysing and assisting in human trafficking cases.²⁰

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Finland needs to ratify the main international instruments relevant to commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking to ensure greater protection for children: the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Optional Protocol)*, the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol)* and the *Convention on Cybercrime*. It should also sign and ratify the *Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*.
- Training on the specificities of child sexual exploitation and trafficking for police, prosecutors, judges, and other persons in contact with victims of cases concerning crimes against children should be conducted. Capacity building should include modules on child victims' identification and child-friendly procedures during investigation, prosecution and the entire recovery process.
- Border control personnel should be trained to be more receptive to signals of child trafficking and risk situations. Police and border guards should initiate strategies for preventing presumptive victims from entering the country, and when they do enter, improve follow-up of suspected cases.
- Specific guidelines on how to deal with cases of sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking should be implemented by the National Police Board.
- Finland should identify ways to improve and sustain the distribution of the resources dedicated to combating trafficking throughout all border areas within the country, allocate resources to make police trafficking and procuring units permanent and allocate resources to the social services and others involved.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Finland	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Finland
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1991	Initial report submitted in 1995 Second report submitted in 1998 Third report submitted in 2005	In their concluding observations, the Committee expressed their concern about the child victims of trafficking that are known to enter or transit Finland. Therefore, the Committee encourages the government of Finland to strengthen their efforts to identify, prevent and combat child trafficking for sexual purposes. The Committee also calls for the ratification of other relevant international instruments such as UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Finland	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for Finland
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Not yet ratified	N/A	
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	Not yet ratified	N/A	
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	2002	N/A	
Council of Europe Convention on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings	Not yet signed	N/A	

PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- More research on the trafficking of children for sexual purposes is needed to assess the scope of the problem in Finland since little data are available.
- Campaigns to raise awareness should be carried out in origin countries to enlighten and inform the public and at-risk minors about how recruitment to the sex industry is conducted.
- Cooperation between police, border guard personnel and ferry lines, airlines and other transport companies should be improved through specialised training for these actors and the development of joint preventative initiatives. Informational materials can be developed and spread on these modes of transport. The material should include information for victims of trafficking about how and where they can go for help in destination countries. Brochures should also include brief information in the languages of potential victims about laws and related matters.
- Action must be taken towards addressing the demand for sexual services from young girls and boys and changing people's attitudes about going to other countries for activities that are not socially and legally acceptable at home.

- Improved cooperation is needed among victim advocacy actors, such as social services, NGOs and women's shelters working with victims in destination and source countries, so that victims can be followed up after their rescue and return home to prevent their re-trafficking, with specific attention towards minors and their needs.

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

- Since January 2009, the Finnish Ombudsman for Minorities is acting as **National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking**. Incidents of child trafficking can be reported to the customer service number +358 (0) 9 160 43 444, which is active weekdays from 10am - 12pm and 1 - 3pm. Additional useful numbers are: the Ombudsman for Minorities - Ms. Johanna Suurpää, +358 9 160 43445; Trafficking Cases Senior Inspector - Ms. Venla Roth, + 358 9 160 43481.
- **Finnish Police** – Telephone: 112
- The NGO **Victim Support Finland** (Rikosuhripäivystys) runs a nationwide helpline 0203 16118 which provides services to victims of crimes in Finnish and English (active Mon-Wed from 3 - 6pm).
- **Multicultural Women's Association & Women's Resource Center (MONIKA)** - This umbrella organisation provides services for women from minority groups, especially migrants, who are suffering violence. They offer services, support, advocacy and peer group activities for women and children who have experienced intimate relationship violence. Easy access crisis and social rehabilitation services are available free of charge in 19 different languages. They run a national hotline service: 358 9 692 23 04, active 24 hours a day.
- **Prostitute Counselling Centre and Meritähhti-Seastar project** – Performs outreach social work in Helsinki and Tallinn, where it focuses on female sex workers, clients and other persons in similar situations. The target group of sex workers consists mainly of women from Russia and Estonia. In addition to street work, counselling centres (one in each city) have also been opened in Helsinki and Tallinn. These centres offer prostitutes free anonymous counselling as well as test facilities. Alongside the prevention work, a key project task is to perform public relations work to counteract both the taboos and discrimination to which sex workers are subjected. Telephone: 358 0 9 7262 877
- **The Rape Crisis Centre in Tukinainen** – Offers professional help and support for women and girls who have been sexually abused or assaulted, as well as guidance for persons close to them. Tukinainen offers therapeutic and legal services (consultation and assistance) to victims of sexual violence and abuse. They also run a free crisis telephone service and hold counselling sessions in groups or on an individual basis. The Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen Help Line 0800-97899 is active Monday-Friday from 9 -3 pm and Saturday-Sunday from 3-10 pm.

MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : www.thebodyshop.com/stop

Endnotes

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- ² UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- ³ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children - Finland*. Bangkok. 2006. Available at: http://www.ecpat.net/A4A_2005/PDF/Europe/Global_Monitoring_Report-FINLAND.pdf
- ⁴ "Hundreds of Human Trafficking Victims pass through Finland each Year". *Helsingin Sanomat*. 1 April 2005. Accessed from: <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Hundreds+of+human+trafficking+victims+pass+through+Finland+each+year/1101978995843>
- ⁵ US Department of State. *Trafficking in Person's Report 2008*. Accessed from: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105387.htm>
- ⁶ Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organisation of Human Trafficking. A study of Criminal Involvement in Sexual Exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008. Available at: <http://www.jure.se/ie/default.asp?url=visatitel.asp?tuid=12681>
- ⁷ Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. *The Organization of Human Trafficking: A study of criminal involvement in sexual exploitation in Sweden, Finland and Estonia*. 2008 Available at: http://www.lft.ee/tf.oigus/tf.failid/20061019142448/theorganisation_of_trafficking_Sweden,_Finland_and_Estonia.pdf
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ "No Indication of Widespread Organised Child Prostitution in Finland". *Helsingin Sanomat*. 1 July 2002. Accessed from: <http://www2.hs.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20020612IE7>
- ¹¹ Elina Ihamäki, 2004. Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes. Update country report: Finland.
- ¹² Interpol, 2002. National situation reports, Finland report.
- ¹³ European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, 2002. Trafficking in Human Beings, Illegal Migration and Finland.
- ¹⁴ Alec Charles, 1 July 2004. "Sex Tourism on the Rise in Estonia," *Baltic Times*.
- ¹⁵ "Adult men in Helsinki caught paying for sex with teenagers with alcohol and gifts". *Helsingin Sanomat*. 3 March 2008. Accessed from: <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Adult+men+in+Helsinki+caught+paying+for+sex+with+teenagers+with+alcohol+and+gifts/1135234514777>
- ¹⁶ Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. 2008. Op.cit.
- ¹⁷ Ihamäki, Elina. 2004. Op. Cit.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ IOM. *Trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. An analysis of the situation in Estonia*. 2005. P. 41. Accessed on 27 April 2009 from: http://iom.fi/files/books/trafficking_in_estonia_eng.pdf
- ²⁰ "Finland falls short in helping human trafficking victims". *Helsingin Sanomat*. 6 December 2007. Accessed from: <http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/left/id76859.html>



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