



STOP

**SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE NETHERLANDS

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.

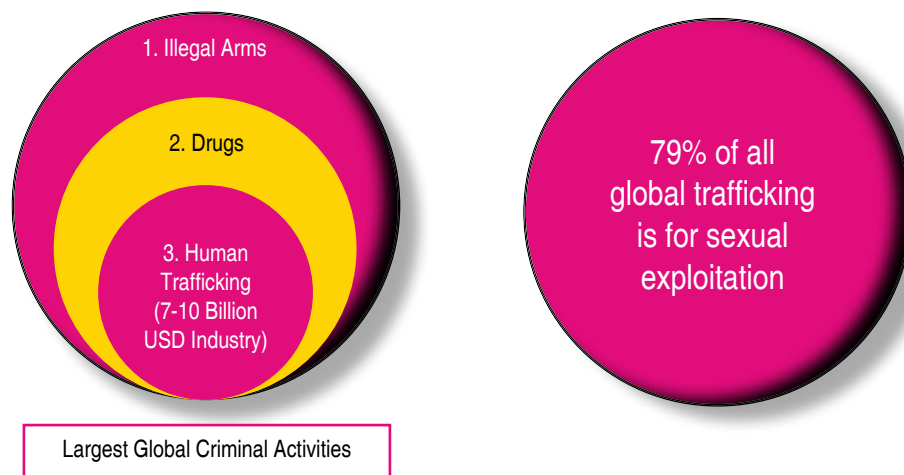
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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 labor 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



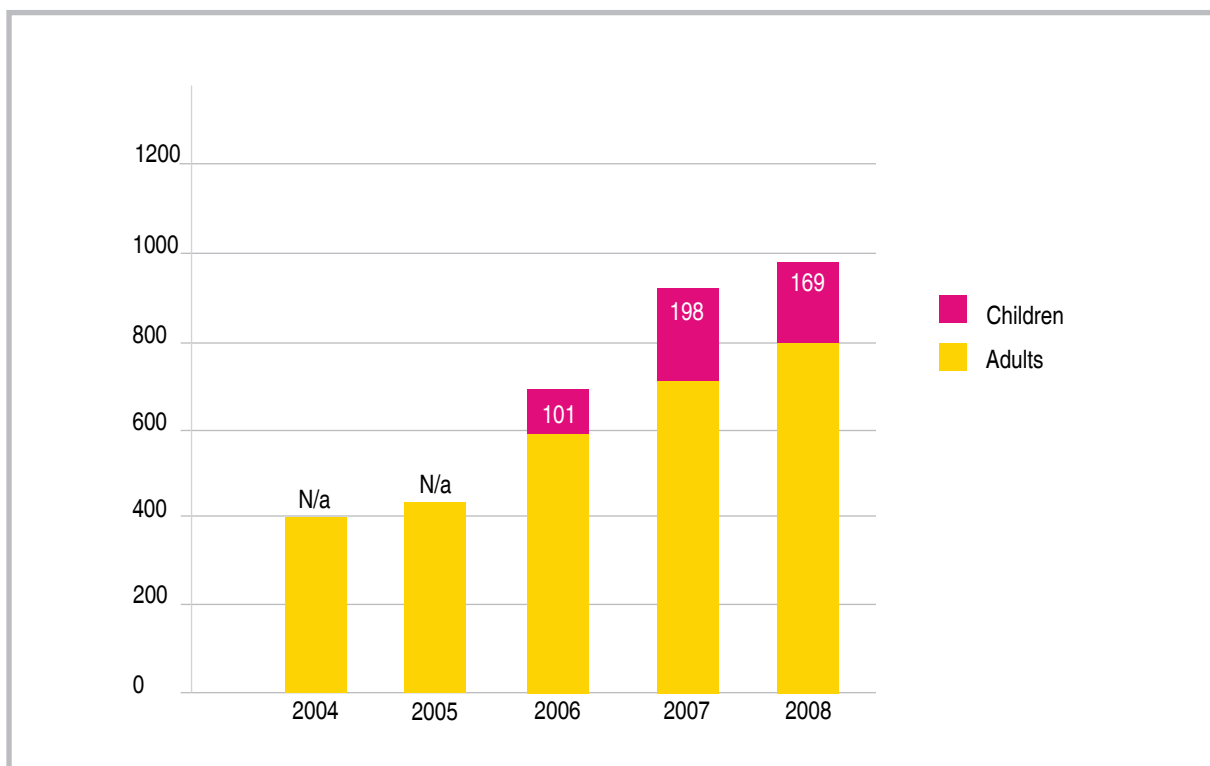
CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE NETHERLANDS

Reliable estimates of the number of children trafficked for sexual exploitation within, through and to the Netherlands are difficult to provide. However, certain trends can be identified from data provided by aid organisations and law enforcement agencies. Research conducted by ECPAT Netherlands in 2005 identified 230 cases of child trafficking that occurred between 2003 and 2005, 169 of which were for exploitation in prostitution.³ According to the Coordination Centre for Human Trafficking

(Comensha), which provides a central reporting and registration point for female victims of human trafficking, the number of (possible) victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) has grown annually, from 403 in 2004 to 424 in 2005 and to 579 in 2006. Cases of human trafficking involving minors have significantly increased in 2006, with a total of 101 victims identified (i.e., 18% of all victims) most of whom are aged between 15 to 17 years (16%).⁴ In 2007, 198 of the 716 victims reported to Comensha were children and in 2008, 20% of the 809 victims reported by Comensha were minors (169 child victims), among which 104 had Dutch nationality (i.e. 60% of them); the other 65 came from 23 different countries.⁵

In 2006, 18 of the 120 cases of forced prostitution reported to Meld Misdaad Anoniem ('Report Crime Anonymously') concerned minors. In 2007, this number increased to 24 out of 93 reported cases.⁶

While the police estimate that children make up less than 10% of the total number of victims of trafficking,⁷ judicial statistics show that over the entire period from 2002 to 2006, at least 17% of all cases involved under-age victims.⁸



Victims of trafficking. Source: Comensha

Who gets trafficked?

Child trafficking in the Netherlands 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, 9.1 % in prostitution as well as in other formal and informal labour sectors, and 17.4% were exploited specifically in other sectors, such as domestic labour, the hotel and restaurant sector, the cleaning business, the drugs trade and in other criminal activities. Cases of child trafficking for adoption were also identified.⁹

While children trafficked to the Netherlands come from a variety of countries, several sources point to the fact that most of the victims are trafficked within the borders (in the South East Brabant region, for example, almost 95% of the trafficking cases are internal). Almost 30% of the minors trafficked for sexual exploitation in the ECPAT Netherlands study 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. It is worth noting that unaccompanied asylum seeking minors, often mentioned as being particularly vulnerable to exploitation, represented almost 6% of the victims involved in prostitution.

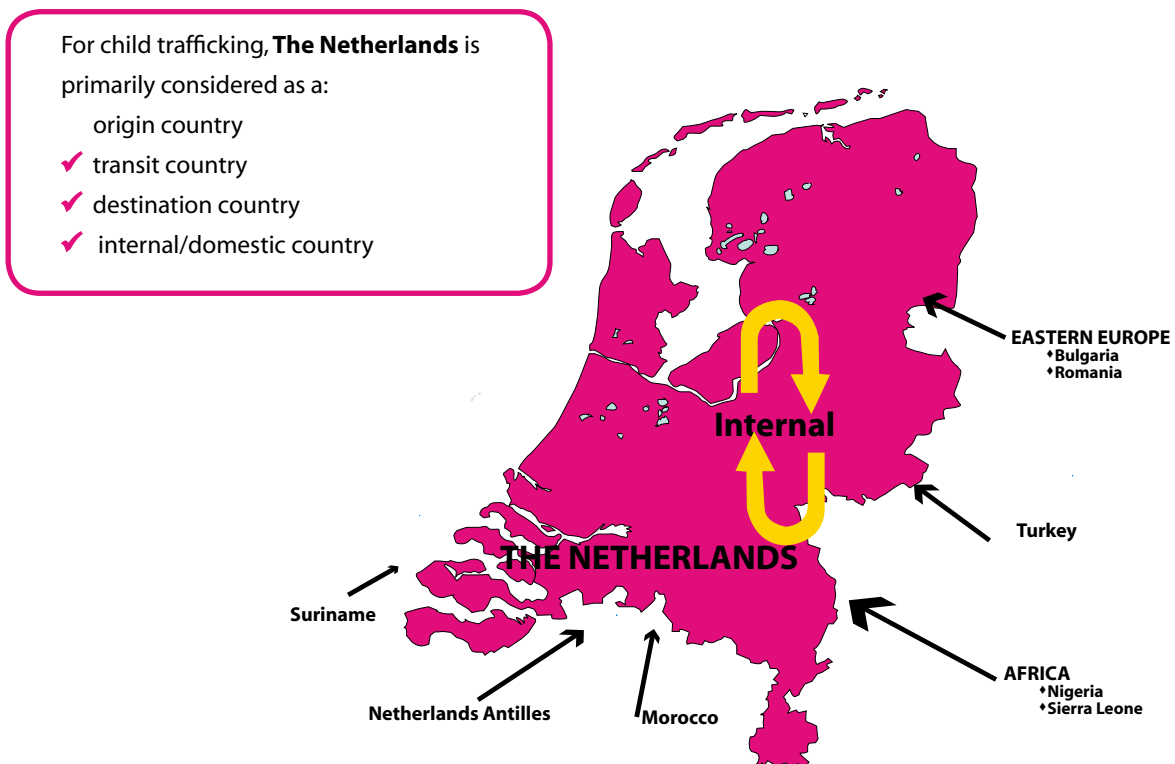
Additional information on the nationality of child victims are provided by Comensha. According to this agency, of the 101 under-age victims of trafficking identified in 2006, 35 were Dutch, 32 were Nigerian, six were Chinese, six Sierra Leonean, five Bulgarian and four Romanian. The other under-age victims had 13 different nationalities.¹⁰ Child trafficking for prostitution affects girls aged mainly between 16 and 17 years. However, there are reports that young eastern European males involved in prostitution include minors.¹¹ While a number of methods are used by traffickers to entrap girls, 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. Most children are exploited in the illegal prostitution sector, as pimps are aware that the prostitution of children is a criminal act. At the same time, care organisations and the police have discovered cases of girls being displayed in the windows of sex shops when they turn 18. Children and young people are thus rarely exploited as street sex workers or in red light districts, as checks on such areas are usually stringent. The sexual exploitation of children 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). Some of these clubs are situated within the jurisdiction of local authorities that exert weaker controls. According to interviewees from the Trafficking in Human Beings Information Unit (IEM), exploiters are using the Internet and mobile phones to gain access to children and young people for prostitution.¹²

As in other countries of the world, children are being trafficked to the Netherlands because they lack life opportunities, are poorly educated, easy to overpower and easy to manipulate and control. They are also in a position where they believe they must help support the family and may even be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, child migrants, asylum seekers who disappear from asylums and unaccompanied minor (UAM) centres, and 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 be only sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. 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.¹³



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.

Perpetrators of sexual exploitation of Nigerian underage girls in the Netherlands include African, Dutch and Moroccan men, as well as male tourists.¹⁴ The Netherlands is also a source country for tourists seeking sex with children, travelling to destinations such as Brazil, Cambodia, Vietnam, The Gambia and Morocco.¹⁵

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 organised criminal network that 'recruits' children and supplies them with fake identification. In the Netherlands, trafficking within the borders involves mainly individuals who have one or two girls associated with them. Connections between pimps and small networks do also exist.

Research on the 'lover boy' problem shows that there is an informal circuit, but this is not organised. 'Lover boys' are usually Dutch men with an ethnic minority background, aged between twenty and thirty years old. They are often known to the police and the courts for violent offences and have a number of convictions to their names.

The police have the impression that traffickers rarely work in organised networks in the Netherlands. Nowadays, girls are forced by their pimps to recruit others, including underage girls. According to one aid worker, Nigerian women and girls in the red light district 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 Bijlmer district in South East Amsterdam. African girls involved in prostitution in the Netherlands have also been found with African madams. Some of these came to the Netherlands a number of years ago as victims, finally paid off their debts and became pimps themselves.¹⁶

According to judicial data collected by the Dutch National Rapporteur on Human trafficking, 201 suspected traffickers were identified in 2006, and 70 were convicted for human trafficking offences. Of this total, 81% were aged between 18 and 41 years while 6% (four convicted offenders) were minors at the time of the offence. As for the nationality, most of the persons convicted of trafficking in human beings in 2006 were Dutch (although the proportion born in Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Morocco was quite high). The number of convictions of Bulgarians, Romanians and – to a lesser extent – Turks seems to be declining. Interesting data about the gender of convicted offenders have also been provided. A review of the convictions for trafficking in human beings in 2006 shows that 13 of the 70 persons convicted – in the first instance – were women. They came from the Netherlands, Morocco, Romania and (former) Czechoslovakia among other countries.¹⁸

CASE STUDY

'Voodoo' child trafficking ring smashed

In 2007, Police in the Netherlands uncovered a crime ring which 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 on how 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 the 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 if they tried to escape.

Dutch authorities had been investigating the disappearance of 140 Nigerian children from asylum-seeker holding centres since January 2006. Several of the children were later found involved in prostitution in France, Italy and Spain. Thirteen arrests were made in Dutch cities and towns while a further six people, all Nigerians, were detained in New York, Madrid, Dublin, Coventry and Antwerp. Germany and France were also involved in the police operation but did not give details of any arrests there, though it seems that “dozens” of arrests and searches of premises had been made there. Those arrested were suspected of people-trafficking and involvement in a criminal organisation, falsifying travel documents, fraud and money-laundering. The Hague also asked for the suspects arrested abroad to be extradited to the Netherlands.¹⁹

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The government must clearly identify the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking in general, and trafficking of children in particular. This must also be the case for other stakeholders. In order to tackle the problem effectively, the capacity available to different stakeholders should be expanded. The investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, and thus also trafficking in children, should form part of the performance-related contracts of the police and the Public Prosecution Service.
- The police and local authorities must undertake more research into illegal prostitution and make active use of checks on hotels. They must make checks on offers of sexual services publicly advertised via channels such as daily and weekly papers, the Internet, and 06- mobile phone numbers. In order to achieve this, more resources should be available within the police. Administrative sanctions and legislation must be made applicable for such checks.
- Local authorities must become more active, both with respect to the license system and with the supervision of (illegal) prostitution. The license system must be applicable to all those offering sexual services, including escorts and prostitutes working from home. A national register should be set up listing all businesses licensed by local authorities.²⁰
- Cooperation at the international and European levels must improve in the coming years. The government is required to become more active in stimulating workable international and European agreements on combating trafficking in human beings. The fight against trafficking in children must spearhead these efforts.
- Use must be made of alternative methods for starting an investigation, other than a victim’s report. In the case of serious suspicions of trafficking, intelligence-led investigative techniques must be used to gather various kinds of evidence that can demonstrate that a case involves trafficking in human beings.
- Judges must inform themselves about the offence of human trafficking, 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.

| International Conventions/Laws | Date of Ratification by the Netherlands | Date of Reports Submitted | UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for the Netherlands |
|--|---|--|--|
| Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) | 1995 | Initial Report – 1997 (First) 2001 (Second) 2003 (Third) 2007 | In response to the 2007 report, the UN Committee made the following recommendation in terms of child trafficking: 1) develop measures to avoid the problem of detention of unaccompanied children and of children disappearing from reception centres; 2) develop a comprehensive national strategy to prevent trafficking and sexual exploitation specifically of children; 3) strengthen efforts to reduce and prevent the occurrence of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and child sex tourism, through, inter alia, undertaking a comprehensive study and data collection; and training law enforcement officials, social workers and prosecutors on how to receive, monitor and investigate complaints in a child-sensitive manner. |
| Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography | 2005 | Initial report - 2007 | In response to the 2007 report, the UN Committee made the following recommendation in terms of child trafficking: 1) strengthen efforts to reduce and prevent the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, through, inter alia, ensuring a uniform register and undertaking a comprehensive study of the occurrence and the dimension of the problem, design and implement comprehensive preventative strategies and policies, ensure the prosecution of perpetrators and train law enforcement officials, social workers and prosecutors on how to receive, monitor and investigate complaints and prosecute perpetrators in a child-sensitive manner; 2) ensure specific shelter and care facilities for child victims of offences under the Protocol, including trafficked children; 3) improve the safety of the reception centres for unaccompanied foreign children. |
| The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children | 2005 | N/A | N/A |

| International Conventions/Laws | Date of Ratification by the Netherlands | Date of Reports Submitted | UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for the Netherlands |
|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour | 2002 | N/A | N/A |

PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

- (Potential) clients of prostitutes must be made aware of indications of trafficking and called to account for their responsibility in fighting human trafficking. Information sharing can find a place via national awareness-raising campaigns, the Internet, and information folders in sex institutions. People must be made to realise that having commercial sex with children is a criminal offence. In addition, clients must be educated about the effects of exploitation on its victims. It must be possible to report crimes or suspicions of crimes easily and anonymously. To be effective it must be clear that the police will act in response to tip-offs.
- Awareness-raising 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 behaviour and group-induced pressure.
- Specially tailored information must be provided to vulnerable groups that run additional risks of exploitation, such as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and 'illegal' children.
- In addition to providing information in schools, more information must be given by, among others, care institutions, youth workers and people working with street children. These people come into contact with potential victims, and can refer them to potential sources of help and a means of escape. In such cases, the specific needs of the target groups should be kept in mind.
- Measures are needed to protect the interests of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. Such measures should include; immediate referral to a competent guardian, periodic assessment of placement, priority for procedures concerning trafficking in children, adequate information about the risks of trafficking and measures to supervise them and show 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.
- Measures must be introduced to protect children in asylum centres. Children must be given secure accommodation that is separate from adults, and girls separate from boys. Staff must be alert to indications of trafficking. Given the number of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers that come to the Netherlands, this country must be able to offer these children adequate protection and guidance.

PROTECTION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

- If there are doubts about the age of a victim, in principle, one should assume that they are dealing with a child. The immigration police should not deport a victim before his or her case has been investigated.
- Children should be interviewed by trained experts. The latter must be given sufficient time for the process and make use of techniques that take into account the child's age and gender. The interview must take place in a child-friendly and secure environment.

- If there is knowledge or serious suspicion that a child is a victim of human trafficking, the child should be given a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, regardless of whether he or she files a report. At the same time, better care should ensure that more victims are prepared to file reports.
- More specific relief and assistance possibilities must be made available to child victims of human trafficking. These must be available to girls and boys, and to victims of all kinds of exploitation. Assistance must be tailored to the culture-specific needs of victims from the Netherlands and from abroad. Research into victim's experiences of the system is essential.

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

The national crime hotline “Meld Misdaad Anoniem - Crime Stoppers” has a free service where reports can be made anonymously. The telephone number is: (0800-7000).²¹

Incidents of the sexual exploitation and trafficking of minors can be reported to Comensha, the coordination centre against trafficking in human beings at www.comensha.nl; (033-4481186)

MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT Netherlands: www.ecpat.nl
- 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, 2007. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html
- ² UNODC, 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al. *Trafficking in human beings. Supplementary figures. Sixth report of the Dutch National Rapporteur*. 2008. Available at: <http://english.bnrm.nl/reports/index/>
- ⁵ Coördinatiecentrum Mensenhandel, Comensha, 2008. Available at: <http://www.comensha.nl/>
- ⁶ Meld Misdaad Anoniem, 2008. Available at www.meldmisdaadanoniem.nl
- ⁷ 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.
- ⁸ C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al. *Trafficking in human beings. Supplementary figures. Sixth report of the Dutch National Rapporteur*. 2008. Available at: <http://english.bnrm.nl/reports/index/>
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- ¹⁰ C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al. *Trafficking in human beings. Supplementary figures. Sixth report of the Dutch National Rapporteur*. 2008. Available at: <http://english.bnrm.nl/reports/index/>
- ¹¹ ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – Netherlands*. Bangkok. 2006.
- ¹² ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report. Netherlands*. 2006.
- ¹³ “Dutch smash ‘voodoo’ child trade”. BBC online. 25 October 2007. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7061145.stm>
- ¹⁴ 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.
- ¹⁵ Protection Project. *Netherlands*. Available at: www.protectionproject.org/human_rights_reports/report_documents/netherlands.doc . and ECPAT International. *Global Monitoring Report. Netherlands*. 2006.
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- ¹⁷ C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al. *Trafficking in human beings. Supplementary figures. Sixth report of the Dutch National Rapporteur*. 2008. Available at: <http://english.bnrm.nl/reports/index/>
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ “Dutch smash ‘voodoo’ child trade”. BBC online. 25 October 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7061145.stm>
- ²⁰ Asante, A. & K. Schaapman (2005). *Het onzichtbare zichtbaar gemaakt: Prostitutie in Amsterdam anno 2005*. Amsterdam: PvdA-fractie Amsterdam.
- ²¹ “710 crimes solved as a result of national hotline.” 10 February 2009. *Radio Netherlands/Expatica*. Accessed from: http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/local_news/710-crimes-solved-as-a-result-of-national-hotline_49461.html



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