STOP
SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
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 of 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. 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
Reliable statistics on the number of children trafficked in the Baltic countries are difficult to provide mainly due to the clandestine nature of the trafficking phenomenon and that it is an under-reported crime.

A study published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2002 estimates that about 2,000 citizens from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania fall victim to trafficking each year. About half of the victims live in Lithuania, while the rest are from Latvia and Estonia. The majority of trafficked people are exploited in prostitution and, although they are mainly women aged 21 to 30, some underage girls are also involved.³

A recent study on assistance provided to trafficked children in the Baltic Sea States found that cases of cross-border child trafficking identified in the Baltic countries from November 2006 to November 2007 were quite limited. The National Contact Points for Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children reported no cases of child trafficking in Estonia, five cases in Latvia and three cases in Lithuania.

The report also highlighted that a few of the minors identified in all the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) countries were trafficked from one CBSS country to another. Apart from confirming that the total number of cases reported was relatively small, this data shows that domestic trafficking, rather than cross-border trafficking, probably constitutes a major part of the trafficking in children in the Baltic Sea region, including in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.⁴

The number of trafficked children who received assistance in the Baltic countries seems to corroborate the conclusion that child trafficking is an under-reported phenomenon. A recent report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on human trafficking revealed that 13 victims of human trafficking received state-funded social rehabilitation in Lithuania in 2006, only one of which was a girl under 18 years old, while victims of trafficking identified by State authorities in Lithuania in the same year were 27 in total, out of whom three were underage girls. In Estonia, NGOs identified about 52 victims of trafficking during the first nine months of 2008 but it is not clear how many of these cases involved minors.⁵

Who gets trafficked?

Minors trafficked for sexual exploitation to, from and through the Baltic countries are mainly teenage girls. Cases of boys trafficked for sexual purposes have not been identified.

Estonia has always been a country of origin of child trafficking, with Estonian children being trafficked mainly to Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, but it has also become a destination (for example, for girls from Latvia), as it presents a more attractive economic situation in comparison to other eastern European countries. Children are usually procured for exploitation in prostitution in brothels or ‘apartment firms’, which do not openly offer sexual services (instead they offer sauna, massage, etc.) but are widely available and advertised through newspapers, the Internet and taxi drivers.⁶

Similar to Estonia, Latvia is known for being mainly a country of origin for child trafficking for sexual exploitation. The main destinations where Latvian girls are trafficked for prostitution include Finland, Denmark and Estonia among others.⁷ Research
published in 2006 found that cases of girls trafficked to Latvia were recently identified, especially from Ukraine and Belarus.\(^8\) Prostitution involving trafficked girls takes place mainly in off-street locations, which makes the phenomenon more hidden and difficult to tackle.\(^9\)

Lithuania is a source, transit and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. It is estimated that approximately 21 percent of Lithuanian trafficking victims are underage girls.\(^10\) Lithuanian girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation to a number of countries, including Germany, Finland, UK and Denmark. Lithuania is also a destination country for child victims from Belarus. Victims are being recruited through advertisements in newspapers where they are promised good jobs (waitresses, dancers, etc.) in foreign countries. Newspapers and the Internet are also used to find customers who are invited for massages. Unconfirmed information shows that some modelling agencies seem to be involved in both trafficking in children and adults. There are strong suspicions that after a while, the children in these cases are being pushed into prostitution.\(^11\)

Internal trafficking was reported to be a problem in all three states, with young girls being moved from rural areas and smaller towns to brothels and sex clubs in bigger cities, particularly to Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), and Vilnius (Lithuania), the capitals of the Baltic States.\(^12\) In Estonia, internal trafficking occurs especially from areas of high unemployment to larger cities such as Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu (especially Pärnu, as it is a tourist destination).\(^13\) In Latvia and Lithuania, no regions of origin of internal trafficking victims were mentioned. In Latvia, however, it was mentioned that internal trafficking victims were moved not only to Riga, but also to the towns of Liepaja and Ventspils.\(^14\)

As in other countries around the world, children are being trafficked from the Baltic countries because they often lack proper livelihood 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 to support their families and may even be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children placed in foster families and orphanages or who have experienced child sexual abuse within the domestic setting, teenagers addicted to drugs, 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. Also at risk are a large number of Russian-speaking children whose families have had difficulty integrating into the society of Baltic countries.\(^15\)

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’ country - where 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.

Research published in 2006 has shown that the eastern enlargement of the European Union that occurred in 2004 influenced the phenomenon of trafficking in the Baltic countries. While before the accession to the EU, Estonia and Latvia were functioning only as countries of origin and transit. After the enlargement both countries also became countries of destination for trafficking.
in women and children, albeit to a lesser extent. Lithuania however, continued to be a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficked victims.16

While there are clear indications for Latvia that this development is due to the freedom of movement which has become greater since the EU Enlargement (Baltic citizens do not need entry visas anymore), for Estonia such a change has also been linked to improvements in travel methods and national infrastructures (e.g. new airports, etc.).17

According to the same study, the trafficking methods have also changed significantly since the Baltic States’ membership with the European Union. The facilitated movement of girls into sexual exploitation has become “more latent”, with girls increasingly travelling on their own and crossing borders without their recruiters.18 Additionally, the eastern enlargement has resulted in Estonia and Latvia becoming more popular destinations for sex tourism, which has led to an increased level of violence in the local prostitution scenes and to an increase in internal trafficking cases.19
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.

It has been pointed out that demand for sexual services in Estonia and Latvia is not only local but comes also from child-sex tourists. Estonia is a destination for sex tourists from other European countries, particularly Finland. The sex buyers of girls involved in prostitution include: tourists from Finland (45 percent), businessmen from Estonia (23 percent), tourists from other European countries (13 percent, including from Sweden), tourists from Russia (10 percent), and others (9 percent).20 Other sources have claimed that Finns account for 60 percent of brothel visits in Estonia.21

Media articles have recently reported that with the recent development and increase of tourism, Latvia has also become a destination for sex tourists coming from countries such as Ireland, UK and Italy. Riga was even envisioned as the new Bangkok of the Baltic-Nordic region.22

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. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

Estonian criminal groups are reported to be highly organised and compete with Russian (St. Petersburg-based) criminal groups, which control the prostitution circles in Finland. According to the US Bureau of Democracy, mainly organised criminal groups are involved in trafficking Latvian and Lithuanian women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation.23

Judicial statistics referring specifically to child trafficking for sexual purposes are not available in any of the three countries as data are not disaggregated by age and type of exploitation.

Given that there is no legislation specifically criminalising human trafficking in Estonia, no prosecutions or convictions were recorded in the last few years in the country. However, according to statistics, in 2006, 84 persons were convicted of committing crimes related to human trafficking; 77 persons in 2007; and 76 persons in the first half of 2008.24 According to research published in 2003, men as well as women from different age groups (from twenties to middle aged) can be found among local traffickers and procurers. Women procurers have often been previously involved in prostitution themselves. It has also been reported that those who traffic in persons are often also involved with drug trafficking.25
In Latvia, 26 persons (12 males and 14 females) were brought into initial formal contact with the police and criminal justice system for the offence of trafficking in persons in 2006. In all cases, investigations concerned trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, 36 convictions for trafficking for sexual exploitation were reported for 2006.26

In Lithuania, 30 investigations for human trafficking were initiated in 2006, six of which involved female traffickers. With regard to convictions, 12 people were sentenced in 2005 (including two women) and three in 2006.27

CASE STUDIES

Trafficked from Latvia to Estonia
A 16-year-old Latvian girl met a man in a bar and, after a night of drinking, woke up trapped in a brothel in Tallinn. In August 2001, after changing ‘owners’ several times, the girl remained in a brothel in the north of Tallinn where three men and a woman forced her and a Russian-speaking girl from Tallinn, who was a year older, into prostitution. In the summer of 2002, both girls were sold to a brothel in a village in Tartu County. The Latvian girl escaped several times only to be recaptured. Finally, after two years of sexual exploitation in Estonia, the girl was able to approach the police. In April 2003, four persons from Tallinn and four persons from a village in Tartu County were charged with enslavement and luring minors to engage into prostitution.28

Trafficked from Estonia to Sweden
In December 2002, Swedish police apprehended a 52-year-old Finnish citizen. Over two years, in four apartments in Stockholm, the man had prostituted a total of 36 women. Eight of them were Swedes and the remaining 28 women came from Estonia. The Swedish police found a register of women on a computer in the man’s apartment. At least two Estonian girls trafficked by the Finnish pimp were only 17 years old. They had been attracted by job offers in newspaper advertisements for escorts, striptease dancers, masseuses, and models. The girls answered the advertisement and met a pimp in Tallinn who promised that they would have the option of whether or not they would provide sexual services. The girls accepted the job and travelled to Stockholm within the week, where they were forced into prostitution. The manager of the brothel was sentenced to four years in prison for procuring. The trafficker was sentenced for procuring only, not for trafficking in women or sequestration.29

Trafficked from Lithuania to the UK
Elena’s story begins in 2004, when she was 15 and looking for work during the school holidays. Lithuania had just joined the European Union. Elena and her friends were eager to go to London and when her best friend was called with an offer of work, the girls got excited.

Elena needed parental permission and asked her father and mother, still her legal guardians, though she had been living with her 76-year-old grandmother from a young age. Her father was happy to sign. Elena’s friend was unable to get permission in time, but the girls planned to meet in London.

Four days later Elena was collected by a man named Kastas, 18, who drove her 150 miles north to Siauliai and to the flat of a middle-aged woman named Jolanta and her 10-year-old daughter.
Two days later, Kastas drove her across the border to Riga in Latvia and escorted her on a flight to London. The moment they were through passport control, Elena was forced to hand over her passport and was taken to a Heathrow airport bar to meet two Albanian men, Shaban Maka and Ilir Barjami.

They took her to central London, to a bar where they met more Albanian men. The next day, without explanation, she was taken to a tube station. She watched as money and her passport changed hands and was then told to go with an Albanian man named Bledi. As soon as Bledi got Elena to his London flat, he raped her. The next morning she was taken to a brothel in a council house in Yardley Wood, Birmingham. That first evening she was forced to have sex with five English men.

Elena tried to escape, asking the brothel manager to help, but when she refused to go back to Bledi, she was taken to Coventry and sold for £3,000 in a car park to Albanian Xhevahir Pisha. He too kept her prisoner, taking her out only to buy her fast food and to work at a Leicester sauna.

After being sold two more times, Elena was finally able to run away. Elena has now returned home and to school. She says she doesn't need to think any more about what happened and hopes to have children in the future.28

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The legal framework for child trafficking offences must be strengthened. More specifically, legislation that specifically defines and criminalises trafficking in children according to the Trafficking Protocol standards must be adopted in Estonia.
- Considering that the Baltic States are also destinations for men from neighboring countries where the purchase of sexual services is forbidden (see, for example, Sweden), Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania may consider criminalising sex buyers as a deterrent strategy to reduce child trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- National legislation and procedures in all three Baltic countries should allow for girl victims of trafficking to receive compensation including for personal suffering due to physical and psychological stress.
- National witness protection schemes must be adapted to ensure the safety and security of trafficked girls, taking into account the specific control mechanisms, violence and criminality that pimps and sex industry actors are involved in.
- Strict legal control over employment agencies and their activities in facilitating employment abroad should be established and enforced.
- Development and enforcement of stricter rules to control and monitor the travel of minors abroad are urgently required in all three Baltic countries.
- Law-enforcement officials, migration officials and border police must be given constant training on how to identify and support trafficking victims, taking into account the special needs and rights of children trafficked for sexual exploitation and paying also particular attention to the increasing problem of internal child trafficking.
- Adequate human and financial resources must be allocated in all three Baltic countries to ensure child trafficking cases are identified, investigated and prosecuted in a timely way.
Given that cooperation on human trafficking has improved over the past few years but was not focused on child trafficking, it is important that more efforts to increase international, regional and bilateral cooperation against child trafficking for sexual purposes specifically be promoted.

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<tr>
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<td>Initial report -2008</td>
<td>UN Committee has not yet reported back</td>
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<td><strong>The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress &amp; Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women &amp; Children</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</strong></td>
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<td>(b) Review and revise the 2002 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and strengthen legislative and other measures to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and trafficking in children and to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and that strong penalties are applied;</td>
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<td>(c) Conduct nationwide awareness-raising campaigns to improve understanding of the issues of trafficking and recognise the root causes and factors that place children at risk of such exploitation;</td>
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<td>(d) Provide adequate programmes of assistance, recovery and reintegration for sexually exploited and/or trafficked children;</td>
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<td>(e) Conduct training for law-enforcement officials, migration officials and border police on the causes, consequences and incidence of trafficking and other forms of exploitation, to enable them to identify and support children at risk of becoming victims of trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation; and</td>
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<td>(f) Strengthen efforts through increased international, regional and bilateral cooperation.</td>
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  a) Undertake research on the effects of the previous actions taken and on the nature and extent of sexual exploitation of children, in order to identify children at risk and to address the root causes of the problem;  
  b) Adopt a more comprehensive and targeted approach to interventions by incorporating prevention, recovery and reintegration measures, with particular focus on vulnerable groups of |
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**PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE**

- Prevention programmes should pay specific attention to vulnerable groups such as children without proper parental care, those placed in foster families and orphanages, and Russian-speaking minority children. Trafficking prevention programmes targeting children in high schools should also be developed or expanded.
- Research on child-sex tourism in Latvia and Estonia needs to be conducted to properly understand the modalities and scope of the issue as well as its linkages with internal and cross-border trafficking; the study should be used to develop specific prevention measures to specifically address the problem of demand, including through awareness-raising campaigns.
- Campaigns to raise awareness should be arranged to enlighten and inform the public and at-risk groups about how recruitment of children to the sex industry occurs. Information and awareness-raising activities should also target families.
- Systems and training in identifying victims of trafficking should be developed in all countries so as to facilitate the detection of cases involving children.
- Appropriate and specialised assistance, including social reintegration and physical and psychological recovery, should
be ensured to all child victims of cross-border and internal trafficking in the Baltic countries.

- The Baltic countries must enhance the possibility for child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation to be granted both short- and long-term residence permits based on their personal situation and on the basis of humanitarian reasons. The individual situation of each victim and the best interest of the child must be taken into account.
- Measures to ensure appropriate training, particularly legal and psychological, for persons working with child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation should be developed in all three countries.
- Returns to countries of origin should be ensured only when it is in the child's best interest. In this context, safe return should include a risk-assessment and preparation/planning period before the return.

TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

**Estonia:**
Hotline for trafficked children (24 hours) - 116111
The NGO Living for Tomorrow runs the Human Trafficking Prevention and Victim Support Hotline +372 6607320, which provides services weekdays from 10 AM till 6 PM. Even though the hotline mainly targets victims of trafficking, their families and at-risk groups, it can be used to anonymously report any suspected incident of child trafficking.

The children’s information and help-line (phone number 1345) funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Tallin City Government enables citizens to report cases of child trafficking, child sexual exploitation or mistreatment of children, while ensuring rapid assistance to victims.

**Latvia:**
The NGO Marta runs a telephone hotline (tel. 80002012) that provides information on human trafficking and safe work abroad while ensuring support and assistance to trafficking victims. This service can also be used to anonymously report a suspected incident of child trafficking.

**Lithuania:**
The NGO Missing Persons Families Support Center operates a free helpline (inside Lithuania only – tel. 8 800 261 61; from outside Lithuania, tel. 00370 248 33 73) for trafficking victims, their families and at-risk groups. It can also be used to anonymously report any suspected incident of child trafficking.

**MORE INFORMATION**

- Tartu Child Support Centre, ECPAT Affiliate group in Estonia: http://www.tugikeskus.org.ee
- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign: www.thebodyshop.com/stop
Endnotes

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.


22 “Sex-tourism revolt in the ‘Bangkok of the Baltic’. <<Times on line>>. 1st June 2007. Available at: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article2009996.ece


27 Ibid.


29 Ibid, pp 41-42.

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