

# EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANT CHILDREN: A FOCUS ON BELGIUM

## Contextual framework

The main objective of the Bridge project is to strengthen the response to gender based violence (GBV) against children and youth on the move.

One of the concrete activities of the project is to produce thematic packages, meaning a set of resources (information presented in a user and visual-friendly way) that is featured online. A thematic package can take several forms and helps users learn about GBV affecting migrant children in a quick and accessible way.

This document is an infographic presenting main points of concern and information regarding the exploitation and trafficking of migrant children, with a focus on the state of affairs in Belgium. It was developed in partnership with ECPAT Belgium, the Belgian branch of the ECPAT international network, fighting against child sexual exploitation.



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## What are child exploitation and trafficking?



Characterized by the underlying notion of “reward” (money, gifts, food, promises of a better future...), child exploitation takes several forms and turns children into products.

Trafficking means e.g. recruiting, transporting, accommodating, transferring control for the final purpose of exploiting. The victim's minority is an aggravating circumstance.

Belgium has several laws aimed at prosecuting the various forms of child exploitation, trafficking, and practices that may lead to it such as genital mutilation, forced marriages or rape.



There are different types of exploitation

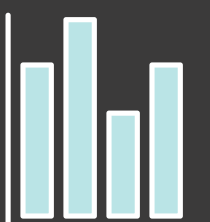
Migrant children are exploited:  
Sexually (in prostitution, abuse material...)  
Economically (shops, restaurants...)  
In begging (on the streets, in shops...)  
For crimes (drug dealing, stealing...)

Most children have paid huge amounts of money to be able to travel.

Exploitation is often gender-based



It takes different forms for girls, boys and LGBTQI+ children



73%

of migrants along the Central Mediterranean route present indicators of exploitation, and the figure is higher for children.

72%

of detected girl victims suffer sexual exploitation

86%

of detected boy victims suffer forced labour

In Belgium, since 2000, the only accommodation and protection centre responsible for migrant children victims of exploitation or trafficking for the French speaking community sheltered



more than 300 children



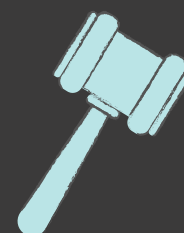
The procedure to be recognized victim of trafficking demands to



- ✓ Break off all contacts with traffickers, even if they are family members
- ✓ Be accompanied by a specialized centre
- ✓ Collaborate with the authorities

However, the guardians and lawyers admit that they often choose not to use the trafficking procedure as it is considered to be long, complex and painful for the young person.

In addition, the principle of non-punishment stating that victims of trafficking in human beings should be protected from prosecution or punishment for criminal activities to which they have been forced as a direct consequence of being trafficked is not well respected as judges often lack training.



Esperanto  
Minor-Ndako  
PAG-ASA  
PAYOKE  
Sürya

If recognized victims of trafficking, children can get access to specialized structures. Esperanto and Minor-Ndako are meant for children only. They are adapted to their special needs as minors, but also as migrant persons.

When they arrive in the Esperanto shelter, children spend their first weeks in safe settings. They cannot use their phone, are educated in the centre, they cannot leave the place alone and the address is kept secret.



Worldwide, migrant children are more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.



Large-scale migration of young people create opportunities for traffickers.

15,000

Children victims of trafficking were detected in more than 100 countries between 2012 and 2014.



Even if good practices arise, many challenges remain



When members of the family are the traffickers and there is a huge fear of reprisals.

The trafficking protection procedure, in Belgium, is not well-known and not used much as it is long and complex. There also often is a strong lack of evidence and children tend not to realise they are victims.



It remains difficult to evaluate the number of victims: identification and access to justice are challenging. Professionals often lack training.

Migrant children disappear. In 2016, Europol announced the disappearance of 10,000 unaccompanied migrant children within the European Union, some of whom were at risk of being trafficked.



Exploitation and trafficking are the subject of many myths. However, for migrant children, they are a reality. They affect their lives in all possible ways, whatever their gender and age. It should be taken into account into all protection practices.

To learn more, please see <https://ecpat.be/en/react/> and available brochures and videos to help address the matter with migrant children.