



European
Commission

Study on **high-risk**

groups for trafficking
in human beings

Final report



Migration and
Home Affairs



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in human beings

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Executive summary

Children across Europe are trafficked for a variety of criminal and exploitation purposes. They are trafficked within their countries and within and across the EU. Trafficking hinders the development of children and damages them permanently. Trafficked children are excluded from education, health and a safe and protective environment.

This study is a deliverable of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016, which recognised that vulnerable groups, such as children, are at greater risk of human trafficking.

The Study on high-risk groups for trafficking in human beings looked at risk and resilience factors that influence the likelihood of children becoming victims of THB, with a view to establishing risk profiles and developing recommendations for improvements in policies in the EU and Member States (MS). The Study was prepared by collecting information in all Member States from key informants and through desk research. **The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the concrete experience of children and practitioners in EU Member States.** The Study places the experience of children in the centre of the analysis and based on this further elaborates on typologies of child trafficking as well as risk and resilience factors. The Study does not address in detail the issue of demand, but focuses on factors that render children vulnerable. That is to say that vulnerabilities per se do not cause or result in trafficking in human beings. Trafficking in human beings is a demand-driven and profit-driven crime, as well as a grave human rights violation. Trafficking in human beings is about demand for services of victims and goods produced through their exploitation, and it is about profits. Risk factors render people, and in particular children, vulnerable to victimisation.

Key features of child trafficking in EU Member States

Data: In the period 2010-2012, 16 % of the total number of registered victims of trafficking of human beings were below the age of 18, 13 % girls and 3 % boys. Of the registered victims 2 % were aged 0-11, 17 % were registered as aged 12-17, 36 % were registered as aged 18-24 and 45 % were aged 25 or older ⁽¹⁾.

The systematic and comprehensive collection of data on trafficking in general and children in particular requires further improvement, especially related to comparable data. Reasons for this lack of comparable data are amongst others the absence of standardised guidelines for data collection at EU level ⁽²⁾, the lack of detection of child trafficking in combination with the under-reporting of such incidents, and the large number of organisations involved, each recording data related to their own responsibility. Law enforcement often focuses on visible criminal activities such as property crime and shoplifting and less on the potential trafficking case behind this. Also the interpretation of concepts differs strongly, causing strong variations in statistics ⁽³⁾. To this effect, a Europol report confirmed that an increasing number of children are being trafficked throughout the EU ⁽⁴⁾.

Recruitment: Regarding recruitment mechanisms, increases and changing tactics in the practice of grooming were observed in some Member States. Perpetrators were reported to have moved away from an approach based on predominantly exercising physical violence, towards an approach of exploiting the weaknesses and dependent attitudes of their victims. An increase was also noted in the reported incidence of possible sexual exploitation or abuse via social networking sites. A number of interviewed stakeholders noted that the ongoing deinstitutionalisation care in many countries has led to traffickers reorientating themselves to schools as a main source of recruitment of possible victims.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat (2014), Trafficking in human beings, European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20141017_working_paper_on_statistics_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_en.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽²⁾ Europol (2011), Knowledge product, Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/trafficking-in-human-beings-in-the-european-union-2011.pdf> (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽³⁾ Europol (2014), Intelligence Notification, Child trafficking for exploitation in forced criminal activities and forced begging, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/child-trafficking-exploitation-forced-criminal-activities-and-forced-begging>

⁽⁴⁾ Europol (2011), op. cit., p. 8.

Typologies: The Study has identified several typologies of children at risk, such as child victims of war and crisis, the so-called orphans of European labour migration, children in need of care, child victims of family violence, and children from marginalised communities. A number of interviewed stakeholders have observed some new trends with regard to the profile and geographical origin of victims. The Syrian civil war and turmoil in the Middle East and parts of Africa are associated with a strong influx of unaccompanied children, especially to Malta, Greece and Italy. A common denominator to these groups of children is the lack of appropriate care, whether it is due to a war, crisis or other humanitarian catastrophe, or due to an economic situation that is pushing their parents to move abroad for work, leaving their children behind.

Risk and resilience factors

The analysis of risk and resilience factors revealed that the extent to which a child is vulnerable to trafficking is only rarely determined by one particular factor. Rather, children are usually exposed to a combination of circumstances which result in them becoming victims of trafficking. It should be noted that the factors alone do not cause trafficking. Trafficking happens because of the demand for the services of the victims and the goods produced through their exploitation, generating huge profits.

Nevertheless, both practitioners' opinions and descriptions of individual cases made it possible to extract valuable findings with regard to the relative importance of four main groups of factors: **individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural**; the interplay between them; and the key elements within each group that impact on risk and resilience.

At the level of broad categories of risk and resilience factors, a first important finding is that **family structure**, on the one hand, and **socioeconomic characteristics**, on the other hand, are the two most important areas, which also appear to be the underlying cause of individual conditions observed in relation to risk.

Most of the reports demonstrated that two crucial individual factors — **a history of abuse and a vulnerable emotional state** — could often be traced back to a **dysfunctional family situation, underpinned by material deprivation. Similarly, social exclusion and marginalisation were commonly associated with poverty and lack of options**, which influenced both the emotional state of children and their overall risk-taking behaviour, as they sought ways to escape their situation. Poverty is also related to the educational level of children, which was identified as an important (albeit not sufficient per se) resilience factor. Lack of financial means often motivated parents not to send their children to school (and to engage them in the generation of family income instead), but also contributed to parents more naively believing the promises of traffickers regarding opportunities for children to go abroad to receive a better education.

Structural factors

Structural factors, concerning those characteristics, policies and attitudes in a society that go beyond the local level, were considered by practitioners to be particularly relevant as acting in support of or against the influence of crucial family and socioeconomic circumstances, underpinned by individual factors. **As a key structural risk factor, practitioners noted a general culture and tendency in society to discriminate against women and children, and to tolerate violence and exploitation.** The societal attitude can easily influence the family and peer environment, and act as a trigger towards acceptance of abuse and exploitation, hyper-sexualised behaviour, and emotional disorders among children.

Awareness-raising campaigns were once again identified as a strong resilience factor that can counteract such tendencies in society; however, practitioners warned that such campaigns should be undertaken in a targeted manner, and avoid sensational reporting. The other key determinant of resilience is the overall functioning of the child protection and social support system at a local level, including its legal and policy framework. This includes a coherent strategy and implementation of a child protection system; trained and supported legal guardians; and national monitoring and reporting systems identifying children at risk of being trafficked. Regular training of professionals, raising awareness of law enforcement, the judiciary and professionals dealing with children, and structures able to cater for child victims of trafficking were all identified as key elements of a well-functioning protection system.

Socioeconomic factors

Among socioeconomic factors **social exclusion and marginalisation**, especially when paired with lack of employment opportunities and material deprivation, was a key risk factor identified by practitioners. **A culture of tolerance for sexual or labour exploitation involving children in the community was a strong reinforcing factor in this respect.** While marginalisation featured often together with ethnicity, the overwhelming opinion was that **low socioeconomic status and a lack of options among marginalised communities increase the vulnerability of children towards trafficking, rather than ethnicity per se.** In fact, cases of trafficked children demonstrate that marginalisation and exclusion can also occur within cultural or ethnic subgroups, and on the basis of social status within the community, or on the basis of sexual orientation.

In turn, the community level also offered a number of mechanisms that could strengthen resilience, such as access to peer groups, to social protection and to health and educational services. Peer groups, especially among classmates, were singled out as particularly helpful in detecting signs of possible risk of trafficking, and targeted awareness-raising at the level of schools was therefore seen as crucial. Thus, access to school was also regarded as important for resilience, not only because of the possibility to draw upon peer support, but also because of the role that teachers might play in monitoring behaviour and absence, as well as being confidants for children at risk. Similarly, health practitioners were also regarded as important as they could identify signs of physical or mental abuse, as well as emotional disorders that increase the vulnerability of children.

The importance of targeting and equipping practitioners to recognise and take into account the specifics of working with child victims of trafficking was widely considered to be a precondition for effective child protection and support. Finally, the importance of effective intervention strategies at the local level aiming to enhance resilience against trafficking through a coordinated, multi-agency approach was repeatedly stressed by stakeholders and practitioners.

Family-related factors

Family-related factors emerged as the key group of both risk and resilience factors related to the trafficking of children. Among those, a stable structure of the family unit paired with a good, trust-based relationship between a parent and a child, which includes a healthy level of parental monitoring, was found to be the most powerful resilience factor. **Importantly, while a household's economic status was considered very significant in terms of risks, many practitioners seemed hesitant to assign it a strong weight with regard to resilience.** It was commonly observed that many trafficked children come from materially secure families.

As regards risk factors related to the family situation, **a situation of family breakdown was considered especially important as it often manifested itself in neglect, abuse, or abandonment of children.** A disruption of family ties was particularly salient when it resulted in a child running away, entering residential care or becoming orphaned and/or homeless. **Two broad groups of cases were distinguished: children from eastern Europe where parents had either no means of sustaining their upbringing, or had migrated abroad for economic reasons, leaving the children in the care of relatives or in a residential care facility; and children from conflict and poverty-stricken countries and areas who had abruptly lost their families and had to provide for themselves.** In both cases, trafficked children exhibited a limited awareness of risks and excessive trust in strangers, and suffered from a lack of positive role models and material deprivation, which pushed them into the hands of traffickers.

Next to situations of family breakdown, dysfunctional families were also very strongly related to child trafficking, as they usually involved one or more family members as the perpetrator(s). Practitioners broadly outlined three such possible situations. Firstly, in some cases parents had sexually or physically abused their children before pushing them into further exploitation outside the family circle. Secondly, patriarchal family structures and a traditional understanding and social acceptance of arranged child marriages, as well as child labour (including child begging), played a strong role in the decision of parents to be involved in the trafficking of their child. Finally, sending a child abroad was often observed as a part of a family project in which the parents had limited awareness of the level of exploitation awaiting their child in the destination country, as they often considered it to involve a respectable occupation or studying abroad.

Individual factors

Pertaining to individual factors, the extent to which children seemed to be aware of the risks and signs of trafficking was influenced by their degree of attachment to the perpetrator. This happened especially in the cases where the perpetrator was either a family member or someone exploiting the victim on the basis of their need for attention and love that was missing within their family. Nonetheless, while a low level of awareness of the trafficking situation was observed among child victims of trafficking by the majority of country practitioners, few considered that awareness alone was sufficient as a resilience factor. In practical terms, in fact, it often did not matter whether children realised the situation they were in, since they had no options to escape from it, especially when the perpetrators were family members.

Demand and enabling conditions

The country reports confirmed that there is little research on the demand side of child trafficking in Europe, as most research is focused on the supply side. As a result, few country reports were able to indicate research and present a thorough analysis of the demand aspects of child trafficking in Europe.

Demand for sexual services and cheap labour

The demand for sexual services has been identified in many EU Member States (MS) as a primary cause of child trafficking. The legal status of prostitution was pointed to as a factor affecting the demand in some countries. Some national stakeholders indicated that the demand for low-cost labour which is identified as a risk factor for child trafficking has increased due to the economic crisis.

Underlying conditions

- Lifting of controls at the internal borders along with the free movement of people and goods across the EU reduces the chance of detection of traffickers and could potentially open up potential new opportunities for traffickers, as Europol notes in SOCTA 2013 ⁽⁵⁾. Conditions mentioned by the research further include: the availability of cheap flights (within and into Europe) and other relatively easy and cheap possibilities of travelling within Europe; inherent difficulties in detection of THB at the borders; and shortages of border guards at EU borders specially trained on detection of THB).
- Factors related to governance and politics (corruption within the law enforcement agencies and links between organised crime networks and the police, low political interest and fear of intervening on sensitive subjects).
- Factors related to the presence and prevalence of organised crime (traffickers increasingly informed and organised to exploit advantages of trafficking in children).
- Factors related to insufficient institutional provisions (insufficient data systems, staffing of law enforcement and child protection bodies, awareness of professionals, etc.).

The role of the internet as an enabling factor

Particular attention has been paid in this study to the role of the internet as an enabling factor for child trafficking. Stakeholders in 11 of the EU MS indicated that the internet plays no significant role in child trafficking, that no cases have (yet) been identified, or that there is no information available; however in other MS there are indeed cases reported where the internet has played a (major) role. This being said, most experts share the view that the role of the internet might become more important in the near future.

⁽⁵⁾ The EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA), <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/eu-serious-and-organised-crime-threat-assessment-socta> (checked on 7.5.2015).

Who are the children at risk? A typology based on risk profiles

Based on the analysis of the risk and resilience factors, it was possible to identify a number of typical risk profiles, or risk categories. Each risk category is characterised by a specific configuration of risk and resilience factors, although some risk factors are common to more categories. The risk categories have been identified with a view to defining the right intervention approach. One overall finding is that it is not possible to address the vulnerability of children with a single approach, as the reasons for vulnerability and the type of resilience resources they possess are very different.

Child victims of family violence, abuse, and neglect

Children who have been trafficked are often characterised by a history of family violence, abuse or neglect. The research documented many cases of children from broken down, unstable families and unstructured or dysfunctional families. Lack of attention, lack of love, family violence and/or sexual abuse are features that trafficked children in this risk category have in common. In some cases parents were actively involved in the trafficking or abuse of the child. **Poverty often, but not necessarily, plays a role.**

Children subject of a migration project planned by their families

As opposed to children with a history of abuse, the children in this risk category often have a strong family background. **Children are intentionally sent away in the expectation of a better future for the child.** In most cases parents are not aware of the potential dangers for their child. Sometimes the family explicitly or implicitly expects to receive financial support once the child is settled in the country of destination. The family's expectations are typical of a migratory project, planned around and imposed upon a child, which takes the form of a family investment. Organised crime networks intervene to take advantage of the dreams and hopes of the family.

Children left alone

Children left on their own are children without parents or other relatives who take care of them. They may be living on the streets or in institutions for orphans or be left to the care of relative strangers. **These children are very vulnerable to child trafficking.** A particular group of children are the so-called 'home alone children', also referred to as 'children left behind' or '**orphans of labour migration**'. This is reported in this study as a growing problem in some eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Poland and Romania. These children are not materially deprived (e.g. they have access to the internet) but are short of care, structure, supervision, and emotional support.

Child victims of war, crisis and (natural) disaster

Children in post-humanitarian disaster areas are highly vulnerable. A large number of unaccompanied child asylum seekers in Europe arrive from conflict countries and regions, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and recently Syria. These children may have lost their families and are vulnerable to exploitation during and after their journey.

Children engaging in risky behaviour

A particular risk category is children (mainly girls) whose **risk-taking behaviours** put them at a heightened risk of grooming. **There are often profound psychological reasons why children engage in risky activities and seek attention in this way.** For girls, in particular, media-related and social expectations regarding likeability and attractiveness were thought by stakeholders to play a role. Weakened emotional states were also thought to be a risk factor in this respect, rather than necessarily a lack of cognitive abilities.

Children with physical, learning and developmental disabilities

The traffickers take advantage of these vulnerabilities to involve the child in exploitative activities beyond his/her awareness (in the case of intellectual disability), or to exploit prejudiced societal views towards disability. This may be the case for **girls with learning or developmental disorders involved in sexual exploitation as well as physically disabled children exploited in child begging.** There is often a relationship with traumatisation from war and crisis or with a family background characterised by abuse or neglect.

Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods

Sometimes the greatest source of risk for a child to become caught in trafficking networks does not come from individual or family characteristics, but from living in a neighbourhood, community or geographical area which is socially excluded or marginalised from mainstream society. This can be the case with regard to ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma) who are kept confined in special areas or camps, with limited access to mainstream health, education and social services, but also with regard to other marginal communities with no specific ethnic connotation. **The common denominator is that marginalisation blocks the road to regular social, employment and educational integration and paves the way for recruitment into illegal activities by criminal networks.**

Implications for policy and practice

The study concludes with a number of recommendations related to individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural/institutional risk and resilience factors. The recommendations are directed to policymakers, at national and EU level, and aim to contribute to more evidence-based policy development. Finally, these recommendations should be in line with the best interests of the child, be child-centred and follow the rights of the child approach.

Structural factors: promote inter-agency cooperation for stronger child protection systems

Recommendations related to structural and institutional factors include a range of actions at different levels. Law enforcement authorities and all professionals dealing with children at risk, e.g. **prosecutors, teachers, and health professionals, should be provided with adequate training and clear guidelines aimed at implementing a child-centred and victim-centred approach.** The establishment of hotline services, the provision of specialised psychological counselling and more street workers dealing with homeless children and children in conflict with the law have been mentioned as important elements of a strong protection and support system, yet to be realised.

Moreover, it is important to reinforce **interinstitutional cooperation and networks**, at various levels: cooperation at national level of all involved stakeholders and services, ideally under a designated referral mechanism; and intra-EU cooperation, in terms of controls/prevention and in terms of specific mechanisms for the support and reintegration of trafficked children. EU funding provided under the Fundamental Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme already seeks to foster integrated child protection systems and other instruments could usefully foster this approach. To avoid re-victimisation, it is also important to invest in ensuring appropriate support and protection for child victims of trafficking including treatment, follow-up and any judicial involvement. Victims of trafficking should be supported also once they become adult in order to avoid the situation that once the assistance ends (18 years old) they are marginalised from society and become vulnerable again.

And primarily: change societal attitudes, address the demand side

In order to promote a cultural change in societal attitudes towards violence, exploitation and discrimination against children and women, as well as trafficking specifically, it is useful to invest in tailored and non-sensationalist awareness-raising actions. These should be also based on a better understanding of the demand side factors that sustain and foster child trafficking, accompanied by legislative frameworks supporting this normative change. It would be important to acquire better knowledge on how the demand for sexual services affects child trafficking, who the adults seeking sexual services from children are, and the most effective ways to eliminate this demand. The European Commission in particular should further examine the role of demand and publish the report required under Article 23(2) of Directive 2011/36/EU assessing the impact of existing national law and establishing criminalisation of those who knowingly use victims of trafficking, within the context of prevention of trafficking in human beings.

On the same note, an area of equal merit is the demand for child labour. Actions could include the engagement of business leaders and unions within those sectors where child labour exploitation is a particular concern, ensuring that child labour exploitation is taken into account within regulatory frameworks, and stronger enforcement of the prosecution of individuals who receive goods produced via child labour exploitation (in line within Directive 2011/36/EU).

Socioeconomic factors: cater for children's well-being in inclusive communities

Recommendations related to socioeconomic factors revolve around **the need to provide support to marginalised communities, through programmes ensuring their economic and social inclusion.**

As social attitudes towards violence and child labour play a role, **there is a need to promote a culture of zero tolerance towards violence against women and children, as well as child labour exploitation at local level.** This can be done by involving families and communities in awareness-raising programmes specifically focusing on the negative consequences of violent punishment of children and creating a strong opposition towards violence against women, as well as by implementing relevant legislation.

It is also important that the socioeconomic well-being of children is ensured more broadly by providing them with access to adequate resources, quality education and health services, decent housing and a safe environment in which to develop. EU funding (in particular the European Social Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived) should be used to support such initiatives to combat child poverty, as recommended by the European Commission ⁽⁶⁾.

Family-related factors: support safe family environments

The 2013 Commission Recommendation 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage' underlined the need to provide family and parenting support, also with regard to parental labour market integration. This study again underlines the need for multi-agency interventions in this area. In the case of situations of family breakdown, a network of agencies at local level, including schools, should cooperate to **identify and report** risk situations and offer support (family counsellors, social workers specialised in trafficking, dedicated family shelters) to families/parents in order to maintain as much as possible at least one family tie for the child. When this is not possible, involvement of the child protection system should be ensured at an early stage in order to limit risk factors. Economic support should be offered to the family in cases where the economic conditions prove to be a determinant risk factor.

Individual factors: ensure that every child receives appropriate care and protection

Recommendations related to individual factors should focus on ensuring that children receive the care and protection required for their development. Among others, actions should target the need to strengthen children's individual resilience for instance by investing in programmes tailored at reinforcing self-esteem and the value of diversity and individuality. It is also important to inform children about trafficking risks and raise their awareness of the consequences of trafficking, while providing concrete support to them and ensuring that all children receive high-quality care and protection.

Other recommendations are to invest in programmes aimed at providing support in schools and preventing early school leaving, and to directly engage children in defining effective prevention and supporting actions. Their wishes and aspirations should be taken into account when designing and delivering these programmes and when making choices that concern them more generally, as prescribed by Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Strengthening the voice of the child within all services and support systems for children should be a priority. At the EU level, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Funding Programme has in recent years sought to improve the capacity of judicial, child protection and other professionals working for and with children, focusing on the rights of the child and making respect for the views of the child an integral part of any such project. At national level Member States should also invest in this direction.

⁽⁶⁾ Commission recommendation of 20.2.2013 'Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', C(2013) 778 final, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/c_2013_778_en.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

Introduction

With the Contract No: HOME/2013/ISEC/PR/014-A2 - Lot 3, the European Commission entrusted Ecorys and Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini with the implementation of a Study on high-risk groups for trafficking in human beings.

This study is a deliverable of **the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings** (Action 2 under Priority E). The EU legal and policy framework for addressing trafficking in human beings has identified children as inherently vulnerable to trafficking in human beings.

Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims provides in Recital 8 that 'Children are more vulnerable than adults and therefore at greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking into human beings. In the application of this Directive, the child's best interests must be a primary consideration, in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC)'. It goes on to highlight that in the context of this directive, 'particularly vulnerable persons should include at least all children' (Recital 12). As such children are considered as particularly vulnerable victims, and more severe penalties for cases of child trafficking are to be applied.

Taking EU legislation a step further, the European Commission adopted the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016. The EU Strategy places children at its heart and calls for measures to address vulnerabilities and root causes of trafficking in human beings. Member States of the European Union in the October 2012 Council Conclusions on the new EU Strategy affirmed that trafficking in human beings needs to be addressed in an integrated, multidisciplinary way and that measures should be human rights-based, victim-centred, and gender specific, taking into account also the best interests of the child.

With this study the Commission aims to develop knowledge and increase understanding with regard to vulnerable groups that are at greater risk of trafficking in human beings, ensuring a gender perspective. This study is a key deliverable of the EU Strategy, which identifies as such groups (in a non-exhaustive manner) children, especially early school leavers, children left behind, unaccompanied children, and children with disabilities among others.

The study adopts the definitions provided by Directive 2011/36/EU on child trafficking. The directive defines trafficking as 'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation' (Article 2(1)). However 'When the conduct referred to in paragraph 1 involves a child, it shall be a punishable offence of trafficking in human beings even if none of the means set forth in paragraph 1 has been used' (Article 2(5)). Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs (Article 2(3)). The directive also mentions 'illegal adoption or forced marriage in so far as they fulfil the constitutive elements of trafficking in human beings' (Recital 11).

For the purpose of the directive and for this study, in agreement with the UN CRC definition, children are all children up to 18 years of age (Article 2(6)).

The study looked at risk and resilience factors for children with a view to establishing risk profiles and developing recommendations for improvements in policies in the EU and Member States, by collecting information in all Member States from key informants and through desk research.

Specifically, the Study on high-risk groups for trafficking of human beings involved the collection of data and information in 28 EU Member States through country experts and a thorough analysis by the core team. Data collection was divided into national level research (including interviews with national stakeholders — such as NGOs, authorities responsibilities for child protection, law enforcement agencies, etc. — as well as desk research on national studies and reports) and local-level research (including interviews with practitioners of agencies working with vulnerable and trafficked children and — when and if appropriate and possible — focus groups with children).

Overall, about 300 key informants were interviewed (160 national level stakeholders and 137 local level practitioners). Moreover, focus groups and interviews with children were conducted in Croatia and Hungary.

National level interviewees were chosen among officials from ministries of justice, interior, foreign affairs, social affairs, health, children and families; ombudspersons for children; national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms for THB; representatives of police, customs and the judiciary (prosecutors, lawyers); migration and asylum authorities; NGOs working in the field of human trafficking, asylum seekers/migration, protection of women and children and (inter-country) adoption; and other relevant key informants.

Local-level practitioners were identified amongst the workers of local agencies and structures that work with trafficked children and/or children at risk of being trafficked (shelters, residential care centres, asylum and detention centres), run by NGOs or public authorities.

The interviewees provided information on all research items based on a standardised questionnaire. Moreover, they helped with identifying and describing 842 anonymous cases of trafficked children. The results of desk research, interviews and collection of cases at national and local level were reported in a standardised country report template provided by the core team. These reports were thoroughly analysed by the core team and some preliminary findings were discussed with the European Commission in an interim meeting.

This report contains the findings of the study and is divided into five main chapters.

- Chapter 1 outlines the key features of child trafficking within and to EU Member States, including some statistics, information on the position of the countries and the emerging trends.
- Chapter 2 gets into the core of the study: the risk and resilience factors for children are discussed in detail, based on interviews and cases.
- Chapter 3 adds information on the demand side of child trafficking and the underlying conditions facilitating the encounter between supply and demand. It also discusses the role of the internet as a specific enabling factor.
- Chapter 4 provides a categorisation of vulnerable children according to their prevailing risk profile.
- Chapter 5 discusses the implications of research findings for policymakers and practitioners.

1. Key features of child trafficking in EU Member States

1.1 General situation

1.1.1 Data on trafficking in human beings

Children across the EU are trafficked for a variety of criminal and exploitation purposes. They are trafficked within their countries and within and across the EU. Trafficking hinders the development of children and damages them permanently. Trafficked children are excluded from education, health and a safe and warm environment.

In 2014, Eurostat presented a working paper on statistical data on trafficking of human beings. The police in Member States, NGOs, immigration authorities and border guards were the main sources of information for the identification of victims. In the period 2010-2012 16 % of the total number of registered victims of trafficking of human beings were underage, 13 % of girls and 3 % of boys. Not all Member States have provided comprehensive data on the trafficking of children. In view of this, and the differences between national definitions and recording systems, figures should be interpreted with caution.

Several Member States offered data on a breakdown by age across 2010-2012. Of the registered victims in those countries 2 % were aged 0-11, 17 % were registered as aged 12-17, 36 % were registered as aged 18-24 and 45 % were aged 25 or older ⁽⁷⁾.

The systematic and comprehensive collection of data on trafficking in general and children in particular is insufficient in most European countries. Often, one cannot deduce the beginning or duration of cases and the ages, sexes and purposes of the trafficking remain unclear. Reasons for this lack of complete and comparable data are amongst others the absence of standardised guidelines for data collection at EU level ⁽⁸⁾; the lack of detection of child trafficking in combination with the under-reporting of such incidents; and the large number of organisations involved, each recording data related to their own responsibility. Law enforcement often focuses on visible criminal activities such as property crime and shoplifting and less on the potential trafficking case behind this. Also the interpretation of concepts such as what constitutes begging differs strongly, causing strong variations in statistics ⁽⁹⁾. In relation to the above, a Europol report confirmed that an increasing number of children are being trafficked throughout the EU ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Statistics on trafficking in the Member States are collected by a wide range of organisations and institutes. Ministries of justice, ministries of social affairs and youth affairs, police offices and NGOs are the most common bodies keeping greatly track of developments. The number of registered or suspected victims differs strongly within and between Member States as is shown in **Table 1.1** ⁽¹¹⁾. Estimates, for instance, can refer to suspected cases or assisted children, open cases at a certain point in time or all new cases recorded in 1 year.

⁽⁷⁾ Eurostat (2014), Trafficking in human beings, European Union, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/docs/20141017_working_paper_on_statistics_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_en.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽⁸⁾ Europol (2011), Knowledge product, Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/trafficking-in-human-beings-in-the-european-union-2011.pdf> (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽⁹⁾ Europol (2014), Intelligence Notification, Child trafficking for exploitation in forced criminal activities and forced begging, https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/intelligence_notification_thb_child_trafficking_public.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Europol (2011), Op. cit., p. 8.

⁽¹¹⁾ The data reported in the table do not represent national statistics but information collected via the network of national researchers.

Table 1.1 Occurrence of child trafficking in Member States reported in this study

Country	Data source	Year	Cases total
Austria	Ministry of Interior	2013	6
	Ministry of Justice	2013	19
	Drehscheibe	2011	96 assisted
	LEFOE (Intervention and counselling centre for migrant women)	2012	21 assisted
Belgium	(Previously) Centre against discrimination/(Currently) Federal Centre for the Analysis of Migration	2012	5
		2013	1
Bulgaria	State Agency for Child Protection	2013	135 (75 have been repatriated due to bad care and bad living conditions in the recipient country; thus no direct exploitation but considered to be at risk of trafficking and referred to as 'children on the move')
	National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings	2013	67 (It should be noted that these statistics cover all victims of ongoing cases, and should therefore not be treated as annual data)
Cyprus	Office for Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings of the Cyprus Police	2014	2
Czech Republic	Several government bodies	2013	14
	Ministry of Social Affairs	2013	50
Germany	Federal Criminal Police Office	2013	70
	State criminal police office	2012	31
Denmark	The Danish Centre against Human Trafficking	2009-2014	10
Estonia	Crime statistics	2013	8
Spain	Ministry of Internal Affairs	2012	6
Finland	Joutseno Reception Centre, Ministry of Interior	2005-2014	36 suspected victims of child trafficking out of whom 28 have been admitted and fully assisted
France	Séjours Catholique	2009	31
Greece	Hellenic Police	2013	7
Croatia	Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth	2014	16
Hungary	Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities and of Public prosecution	Last years	< 5
	Hungarian Police	Last years	Estimation 50-70 annually
	Interviewee, working in a child protection institute	Last years	Estimation 100-120 annually
Ireland	Anti-Human Trafficking Unit	2012	23
Italy	Department for Equal Opportunities	2000-2012	1 171
Lithuania	The Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau	2013	9
Luxembourg	Police	2009-2013	3
	NGOs	2009-2013	7
Latvia	Interviewee	2013	2
Malta	n/a		
Netherlands	CoMensha, P., Kaandorp, M. and Blaak, M., Kinderhandel in Nederland — Report Unicef and ECPAT, 2013, p. 35	2013	260
Poland	Border Guards data	2013	10
	Prosecutor's Office	2012	16
	National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking	2006-2013	24
Portugal	Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings	2013	49
Romania	Ministry of Interior, National Agency against Trafficking in Persons	2013	300
Sweden	ECPAT	2013	21
	Regional coordinator	2013/2014	23
	County Administrative Board in Stockholm	2009/2011	Approximately 137 children (in 13 % of all municipalities in Sweden)
Slovenia	n/a		
Slovakia	Ministry of Interior	2013	2
	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	2013	4
United Kingdom	National Referral Mechanism data	2013	450

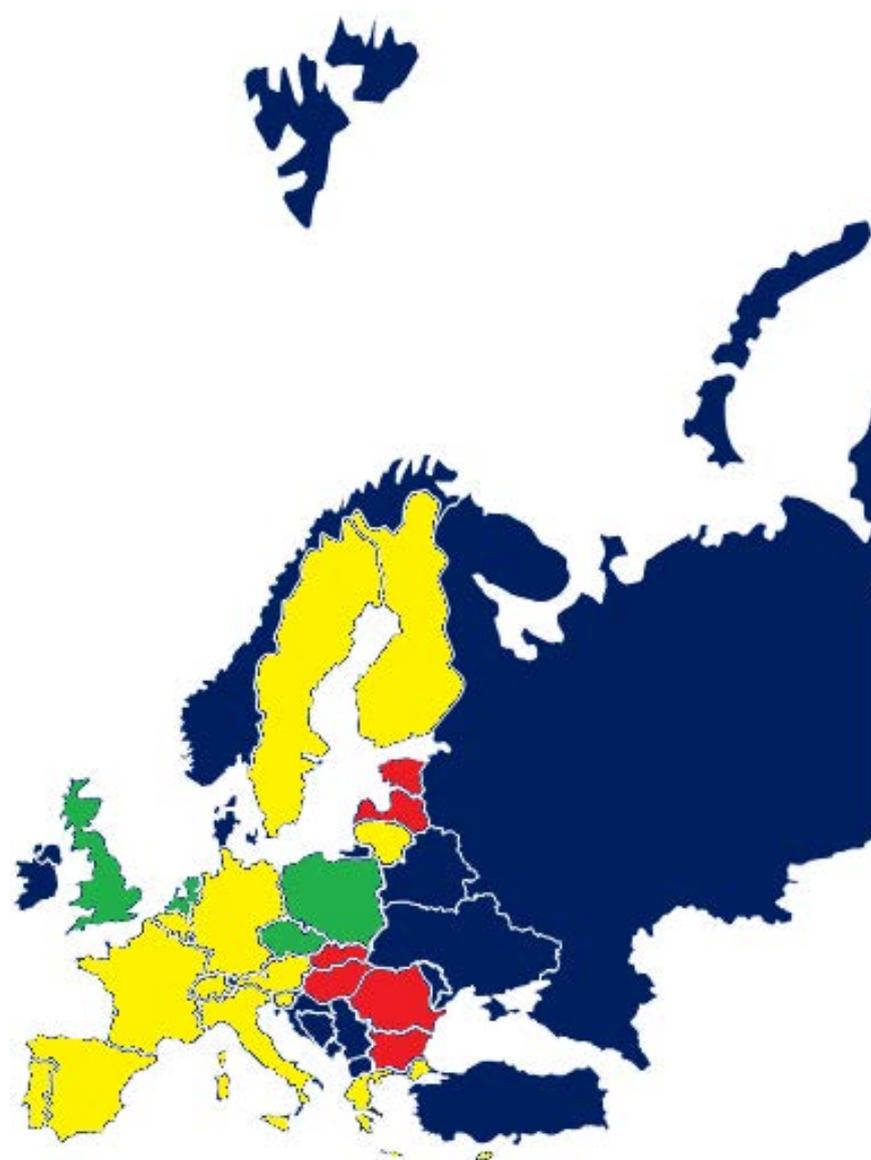
Source: Country reports.

It is known that, generally, numbers of child trafficking cases registered are smaller in comparison to trafficking in adult persons. However, although there is scarce statistical data on child trafficking from and within the EU Member States, the seriousness of the problem has been made clear by interviewed stakeholders. There are grounds to consider that the actual scale of the problem is bigger. It is argued by interviewed stakeholders that the vast majority of trafficking victims go unidentified.

1.1.2 Source, destination and transit countries

The EU Member States differ strongly with regard to being a source, destination or transit country for child trafficking, and on prevalence of domestic trafficking. **Figure 1.1** shows in yellow the countries considered by the country experts ⁽¹²⁾ to be mostly destination and transit countries. In red are the source/transit countries and in green the countries that are considered to be source, transit and destination countries. With regard to Malta the typology is unknown and the country expert from Croatia considers it to be a country with mostly domestic types of trafficking.

Figure 1.1 Destination, transit or source countries



Source: Ecorys, based on country reports.

⁽¹²⁾ Based on available data or an estimation based on experience.

1.1.3 Emerging trends

National-level stakeholders point out that because the number of registered child trafficking cases in general is very low, it is difficult to identify trends. However, they were still able to point to a number of trends driven by specific or structural circumstances in trafficking elements.

Recruitment mechanisms

Recruitment mechanisms are noted to have been changing over time. For example, grooming, while not a new phenomenon in general, and related to 'loverboys' ⁽¹³⁾, was considered a Dutch phenomenon unrelated to Belgium for decades. However, in the last 5 years awareness has increased that Dutch victims of grooming practices do end up in Belgium (particularly Antwerp) and that Belgian girls are becoming victims of similar styles of grooming practices as well. The Sweden and Finland country reports describe increasing levels of grooming too. The Czech and Lithuanian country reports also described a change in tactics. Perpetrators went from predominantly exercising physical violence to achieving their aims by manipulating the weakness and dependencies of victims.

The changing role of the internet is noted by stakeholders in Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia and Lithuania. There is an increase in the reported incidence of possible sexual exploitation or abuse via social networking sites. Children are getting more and more in contact with the internet at a younger age and children can be easily tricked and recruited through social network sites, chatrooms, etc.

Bulgarian stakeholders in the context of this study note that the ongoing process of deinstitutionalisation leads to fewer children being in residential institutions. Many traffickers are now reorientating themselves to schools as a main source of recruitment of possible victims.

Profile of victims

A number of countries have observed new trends with regard to the profile of victims. Stakeholders from several countries, such as Italy and Malta, see growing numbers of girls from Nigeria being the victims of sexual exploitation. In general, in the Spanish, Italian, Maltese and Austrian reports an increase is mentioned in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are at risk of being trafficked.

Bulgarian stakeholders in the context of this study noted a growing number of cases of children with cognitive and developmental disabilities being victims of trafficking, and a growing share of boys. In the German country report the latter was also noted, suggesting that there is a hidden field of paedophile demand for young boys. In general German stakeholders saw the desire and demand for ever-younger children for sexual exploitation in the field of visible prostitution. Hungarian and Dutch stakeholders noted ever-younger children becoming victims of trafficking as well.

Bulgarian stakeholders cited a growing phenomenon of adolescent girls who seem to be aware that they will be taken abroad and exploited. Despite this awareness, however, often they see it as their only chance to escape poverty.

Exceptional circumstances

The Syrian civil war and turmoil in the Middle East and parts of Africa are associated with a strong influx of unaccompanied children to especially Greece, Italy and Malta. Although these children might not be trafficked to Europe, unregulated status, lack of support structures and lack of financial resources render them at high risk of coming into contact with traffickers.

Lifting of controls at the internal borders along with the free movement of people and goods across the EU's borders reduces the chance of detection of traffickers and could potentially open up new opportunities for traffickers, as Europol notes in SOCTA 2013. This was also suggested by stakeholders in Bulgaria, Germany and Lithuania.

In the Cyprus country report it is pointed out that there are problems with areas that are not under the control of the government. The weakened presence of state control in these areas would create a favourable environment for the increase in illegal activities, including trafficking and child trafficking, according to Cypriot national stakeholders.

⁽¹³⁾ Term used in the Netherlands and Belgium for men or boys seducing and pampering girls to eventually exploit them in sexual activities.

Poverty is identified by many stakeholders as having a structural effect on the prevalence of child trafficking. The same goes for lack of family protection/support, low educational levels and discrimination against certain groups of children. In source countries these structural circumstances are pushing victims towards getting lured by false promises of jobs and opportunities. Traditional destination countries like Ireland saw problems with inbound trafficking being tackled partly by protective measures and new legislation. Also the economic downturn in Ireland has reduced the demand for cheap labour and thereby part of the attractiveness of the country to traffickers.

Other trends

A trend that was recently noted in the Austrian country report is traffickers letting children stay overnight in shelters, while in daytime they need to continue pickpocketing or begging.

Several country reports have noted **an increased prevalence of child marriages**. The victims and perpetrators are predominantly from some groups within the Roma community. The upward trend is assumed to be related to the increasingly difficult economic situation of Roma communities, exacerbated by the economic crisis.

The United Kingdom country report mentioned an increasing number of children being trafficked to facilitate a range of benefit frauds in the UK.

1.2 Typologies of child trafficking by purpose

The study follows the definition of trafficking provided by Directive 2011/36/EU⁽¹⁴⁾. The directive defines trafficking as ‘The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation’⁽¹⁵⁾. Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, including begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs. The directive also mentions ‘illegal adoption or forced marriage in so far as they fulfil the constitutive elements of trafficking in human beings’⁽¹⁶⁾.

With this definition of trafficking in mind, six distinct typologies of child trafficking have been identified in country reports. Sexual exploitation is the most frequently reported one and forced labour the second.

The six typologies are:

1. Sexual exploitation
 - 1a. Sexual exploitation (trafficking within Europe)
 - 1b. Sexual exploitation (trafficking into Europe)
 - 1c. Grooming;
2. Forced labour;
3. Participation in criminal activities;
4. Child begging;
5. Child marriage;
6. Illegal adoption.

In the following paragraphs a description of the typologies is provided and the characteristics per country are highlighted, based on the information gathered in national reports.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA (Article 2(1)), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036> (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibidem (Article 2(1)).

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibidem (Article 2(3)).

1.2.1 Sexual exploitation

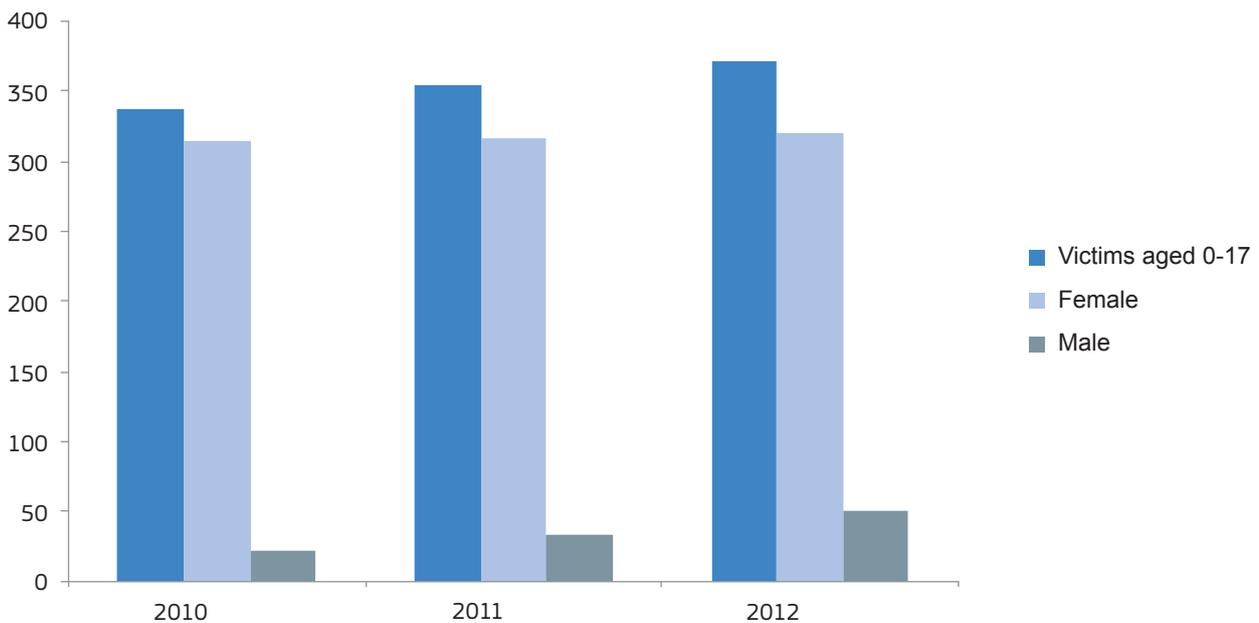
Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children include child pornography and child prostitution⁽¹⁷⁾. Sexual exploitation of children includes in particular: the use of girls and boys in sexual activities remunerated in cash or in kind (child prostitution); trafficking of girls and boys and adolescents for sexual exploitation; child sex tourism; the use of children in sex shows (public or private); and the production of pornographic material with children⁽¹⁸⁾.

Sexual exploitation can be divided into three subcategories:

- 1a. Sexual exploitation (trafficking within Europe);
- 1b. Sexual exploitation (trafficking into Europe);
- 1c. Grooming (domestic trafficking).

Sexual exploitation is the most frequently reported purpose of exploitation. **Figure 1.2** shows the number of victims (identified and presumed) of sexual exploitation in 2010-2012⁽¹⁹⁾. In 2012 there were 6 505 victims of sexual exploitation registered in the EU, for more than half of whom age is unknown. From the other half 5.7 % were under the age of 18. Between 2010 and 2012 an upward trend is visible in the number of victims, as is the diminishing share of girls. It is uncertain if these trends can be attributed to an actual increase in the number of victims or improvements in the collection of data.

Figure 1.2 Number of victims (identified and presumed) of sexual exploitation



Source: Eurostat.

The available data on victims of sexual exploitation varies per country. There are big variations in numbers and for many countries the numbers cannot be broken down by age or by sub-typology.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council Of 13 December 2011 on Combating the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32011L0093> (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽¹⁸⁾ ILO, Commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, The ILO's response, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-addis_ababa/documents/poster/wcms_237022.pdf

⁽¹⁹⁾ Eurostat (2014), op. cit.

Sexual exploitation (trafficking within Europe)

In the first group children are trafficked within Europe for prostitution in brothels. The children are predominantly female but there are indications that boys are also increasingly present among victims. The group is aged between 14 and 18, with many being close to 18. The countries of origin are mainly central and eastern European countries. The main destination countries are western and northern EU countries, especially countries where prostitution is legalised or, at least, largely tolerated by the authorities. Some interviewees have noted that there is an increase in trafficking from eastern European to central European countries (Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia) before moving further to western Europe.

Sexual exploitation (trafficking into Europe)

In this second group predominantly girls between 15-18 years old, but in some cases even younger (13-14 years old) girls, are trafficked from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. They often enter via Spain through Ceuta and Melilla or by boat. Spain, Italy or the UK function often as transit countries to destination countries that have permissive prostitution laws (for instance, the Netherlands). Child victims of sexual exploitation can end up being exploited as adults in the prostitution sector.

Grooming

The third subcategory of sexual exploitation is grooming or the so-called 'loverboy method'. The so-called 'loverboys' are traffickers of human beings who consciously make children, girls and boys, but also women and men, emotionally dependent by starting a love affair with their victims and subsequently exercising force, violence or extortion to abuse and exploit the vulnerable position of these persons, most often in the prostitution business. Victims are predominantly adolescent girls between 12 and 18 years old. The loverboy method is reported in the Belgium, Hungary and Netherlands country reports.

1.2.2 Forced labour

Forced labour is the second most often reported purpose of child trafficking, but to a lesser extent than sexual exploitation. Forced child labour refers in particular to children used for labour who are under the stipulated minimum age, usually 14 at the lowest (ILO, Minimum Age Convention, 1973). This includes, for example, domestic servitude, work in restaurants, factories, domestic labour, and seasonal labour in restaurants. Sometimes trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation is associated with the repayment of debt. This can involve a repayment of debt made by a child's parents, but can also be repayment to the trafficker for one's living expenses or transport costs. Forms may include debt bondage, also called bonded labour — labour to repay a loan.

It must be noted that cultural norms may be of influence. For example, it has been mentioned in the case of Nigerian girls in domestic servitude in Ireland, that neither the child nor the family recognise that domestic servitude is a violation, because it is a cultural norm. Indicators of trafficking are visible through taking away of the passport, forcing to pay off a debt, or threatening the safety of the victim's family in the home country. Children are also maltreated. Reference is also made to the practice of 'adopting' a child from a poor family in exchange for his/her housework. This system produces a situation of exploitation that is very close to slavery and was reported in some southern provinces of Spain (Almeria), in Algerian and Moroccan families. This practice might not be seen as trafficking nor as exploitation by the families, as it is associated to the traditional system of Kafala⁽²⁰⁾. Usually a trafficking case is only revealed when the subject runs away, there is a medical emergency or via immigration.

With regard to common countries of origin or destination, there is no general recognisable pattern or typology. There is only anecdotal evidence from some country reports (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Austria and United Kingdom). Children come from neighbouring countries (in particular North Africa), poor countries (Africa, in particular Nigeria) or conflict-ridden countries (for example Afghanistan). The countries of destination are EU countries.

⁽²⁰⁾ International Social Service — International Reference Centre for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family (ISS/IRC), Fact Sheet No 51, Specific case: Kafalah, <http://www.iss-ssi.org/2009/assets/files/thematic-facts-sheet/eng/50.Kafala%20eng.pdf> (checked on 7.5.2015).

Victims of forced labour are both boys and girls in an age ranging from 7 to 18 years old. They are mainly from poor backgrounds and trying to escape from poverty or conflicts. With regard to their recruitment there is often involvement of organised crime groups. Recruitment happens via word of mouth through local social networks, assuring the family or community that the child will be moving for better opportunities (pretext of education and work). Traffickers often operate with the consent of the family; parents are told they will receive money for the family. In the case of agricultural settlements in Spain, it has been mentioned that exploited children can be sons or daughters of the workers (who can also have been victims of trafficking).

The role of the internet is often not relevant or at least not as widespread as with other forms of trafficking. Internet use might not be widespread in the country or region of origin.

1.2.3 Participation in criminal activities

Participation in criminal activities has been mentioned often as a trafficking purpose. Children are often trafficked to participate in the trade of illegal drugs, and are forced to act as drugs couriers (drug mules) or as decoys for adult drug traffickers or drug dealers (and often they get paid in drugs). Children are also involved in petty crime that may include pickpocketing, bag-snatching, ATM theft, counterfeit DVD selling, and shoplifting. A striking example is the case of 1 000 children from one town in Romania who were trafficked by one criminal network, which was discovered during Operation Golf ⁽²¹⁾. A report from Save the Children identifies children that are in conflict with the law as a risk group. Children may be trafficked to pursue illegal activities and, according to the report, not much attention is given to a potential link with trafficking when investigating these crimes ⁽²²⁾.

It should be noted that there is a clear link between participation in criminal activities and other forms of exploitation. For girls who are trained in stealing, other forms of exploitation usually follow. In particular, at age 12-13, girls are being sold to other families (usually in the form of child marriage). They are usually abused by their new families and continue with petty crimes and stealing until adolescence, at which stage they are further sold into prostitution.

Victims are both boys and girls in the whole age range below 18. They come from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and are trafficked to a variety of EU countries. The majority of the children belong to the Roma ethnic group. Children are often part of big family groups travelling around Europe. Peer (or family) pressure causes them to commit crimes. However, victims do not consider their activities as committing crime because they grow up in families that have been living this way for generations. Children often identify themselves with the perpetrators.

Escaping from a situation of exploitation is difficult, as children are brought abroad in groups of the extended family and there are strict arrangements being made for them not to stay too long in one place. Often a deal is made between parents and organised crime networks operating from eastern Europe to other European countries. The parents are involved, as they received a cancellation of their debts in exchange for their son or daughter. Victims are instructed by the perpetrators on how to behave when in custody, when talking to governmental institutions: absolutely no information is given by the child victims themselves, not even false names of the child or of alleged relatives.

1.2.4 Child begging

Forced child begging is a type of begging in which boys and girls under the age of 18 are forced to beg through psychological and physical coercion. Forced begging also includes dancing, singing, washing windshields and selling flowers.

Victims who are trafficked for child begging are mostly Roma boys and girls who originate from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and are trafficked to Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy or Austria. The children are aged between 0 and 7 years old. Usually, the younger the child, the better, as it is thought to evoke more compassion and thus generate more income. Physical disabilities, as well as fairer skin complexion, are also sought-after characteristics by traffickers, research reports. Any skills and talents such as singing, playing an instrument, being charming and outspoken or an ability to learn a language can also play a role.

⁽²¹⁾ http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/child_trafficking_for_forced_criminality.pdf

⁽²²⁾ Position Paper on Prevention and Responding to Trafficking of Children in Europe — Save the Children, pp. 20-21, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/545ca8264.pdf> (checked on 7.5.2015).

Due to a high level of mobility of the groups, the exact recruitment mechanisms are not clear — thus it is not clear whether children are mostly sold, borrowed, allowed to join the group by their parents or are begging under the supervision of their own parents or guardians. In a Study of the European Commission on child begging in the EU the common origins of many begging children from the same localities raised the suspicion that organised networks were sometimes involved ⁽²³⁾. In any case, the authorities suspect strong involvement of parents and/or extended family members in recruitment. Children either beg with their mothers or other females or on their own. Children that go begging alone are aged between 9–14 years and mostly Romanians. The children belong to the so-called beggar mafia and they have to collect a certain amount every day.

For victims it is difficult, not to say impossible, to escape their situation. The organised groups are characterised by a high level of mobility and when they become the subject of investigation, they leave the place of begging and continue traveling to another city or country. And, if these children are identified by the police and are brought to the centres for children, their own parents/relatives (perpetrators) are the ones who can pick them up.

1.2.5 Child marriage

Girls are the main victims of trafficking for child marriages. This type of trafficking is reported to happen for several reasons. This includes, for example, marriage with non-nationals to obtain a residence permit or sexual exploitation under the pretext of marriage ⁽²⁴⁾. Early marriages are considered to have a significant impact on the vulnerability and risk for a girl to be trafficked, which is the reason it is included here. Girls forced into marriage at young age (about 14) often escape after a few years and easily become victims of other types of trafficking.

Girls who married illegally under the age of consent are usually older than 10 years (most are aged 13–15). Early marriages are typical for some parts of the Roma community (Kalderasg, Yerelii, Vlax communities), and are considered by many a tradition. Marriages are arranged between the families of the girl and the groom. The parents of the boy pay a money dowry to the parents of the girl, the amount of which depends on her personal characteristics. Appearance, skills and status of the family all play a role. However, there are cases in which the family of the girl is indebted, and thus gives the girl for marriage in order for their debt to be waived. Often, young girls who are very good at pickpocketing are fictitiously married and then forced to continue stealing, until they reach around 16 years of age, by which age they enter into prostitution. In cases when the new family abuses a young bride, she may decide to escape. However, she cannot go back to her family, as it has accepted (and probably spent) the dowry. Thus, they become highly vulnerable to trafficking.

12.6 Illegal adoption

Illegal adoption can under some circumstances be labelled as child trafficking. Children can be trafficked for adoption purposes, especially if all safeguards are not in place and if the rights of the child are not respected or adoption procedures are not clearly regulated. The most important document governing the international adoption of children is the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (or Hague adoption convention). This also deals with child trafficking (child laundering ⁽²⁵⁾), which could accompany international adoption. The Convention has been considered crucial because it provides a formal international and intergovernmental recognition of intercountry adoption and ensures that 'Intercountry adoptions shall be made in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights'. It also aims to 'prevent the abduction, the sale of, or trafficking in children' ⁽²⁶⁾. The Hague Convention ensures that adoption procedures are aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 21, which states that when children are adopted the first concern must

⁽²³⁾ European Commission, Report for the Study on Typology and Policy Responses to Child Begging in the EU, December 2012, https://ec.europa.eu/anti-https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/report_for_the_study_on_typology_and_policy_responses_to_child_begging_in_the_eu_0.pdf

⁽²⁴⁾ Discussion paper Child Trafficking for Forced Marriage, ECPAT, http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/forced_marriage_ecpat_uk_wise.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽²⁵⁾ Child laundering is a scheme whereby intercountry adoptions are effected by illegal and fraudulent means. It usually involves the trafficking of children and may involve the acquisition of children through monetary arrangements, deceit and/or force. The children may then be held in sham orphanages while formal international adoption processes are used to send the children to adoptive parents in another country.

⁽²⁶⁾ Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=69 (checked on 7.5.2015).

be what is best for them ⁽²⁷⁾. The same rules should apply, according to UNCRC Article 21, whether the children are adopted in the country where they were born or taken to live in another country.

Both sexes and all age groups are to be found amongst the victims of trafficking for illegal adoption, although this mainly affects newly born and very young children. The nationality of trafficked children has shifted over time, as traffickers often work in specific countries and then move on when the authorities close them down. For example, Romania saw a peak in trafficking in the 1990s, whilst Haiti, Guatemala, Russia, and Ethiopia have all been significant countries of origin at various points in time. EU countries are the countries of destination.

There are several trafficking mechanisms reported, for example: the 'soft approach' whereby international agencies wait in maternity hospitals, looking for vulnerable women and offering them money for their child; the establishment of residential institutions (orphanages) where children are kidnapped or bought; or through 'child miners' who go into villages and aggressively recruit children from families.

⁽²⁷⁾ Article 21, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child — Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with Article 49, https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=treaty&mtmsg_no=iv-11&chapter=4&lang=en (Checked on 7.5.2015).

2. Risk and resilience factors

Introduction

The vulnerability of children to trafficking depends on a number of risk and resilience factors, which can be broadly defined as individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural/institutional. Firstly, **individual factors** such as level of education, age or physical appearance, but also the cognitive and emotional condition of a child and their overall propensity towards taking risks, could be a determinant of the likelihood that they become a victim of trafficking. The second layer of factors pertains to the **family background and environment** the child is exposed to, in terms of strength of family ties, existence of situations of abuse in the family, material well-being, and also the relationship between parents and children. Thirdly, **the socioeconomic environment**, understood especially at the level of the community within which a child develops, can play a strong role especially when it comes to vulnerable groups of society, which experience material deprivation and some form of discrimination. Cultural beliefs and traditions also fall within this group of factors. Finally, the broader level of society, including the existence of policy, protection, judicial and support systems, as well as the overall awareness of the problem of child trafficking, form the layer of **structural factors**.

In order to arrive at a more elaborate and accurate list of specific factors under each broad area, risk and resilience factors were identified and probed in a three-step process with regard to their importance and the extent to which they interact with each other. The initial list was compiled on the basis of an in-depth literature review ⁽²⁸⁾, paired with the findings from a first round of scoping interviews with stakeholders from European-level institutions and organisations involved in addressing child trafficking. In a second step, the detailed list of factors was discussed with national-level stakeholders from the 28 EU Member States, who gave their expert view on the importance and interplay between the categories and the factors under each of them, based on concrete experience and evidence they possessed. Finally, practitioners working directly with children at risk or victims of trafficking were asked to comment and discuss in detail the circumstances preceding and following trafficking. Importantly, consultation with practitioners aimed at gathering evidence and concrete examples, rather than just yielding another set of opinions. Practitioners also gave their views with regard to the most powerful resilience factors and strategies.

Through this process, a final list of risk and resilience factors was compiled, by comparing and synthesising the findings from each country, in order to draw overall conclusions. It should be noted that especially at the last level, practitioners provided some additional, more nuanced views on specific characteristics, which led to a final edit of the list. This final overview is presented at the end of this chapter, and enumerates factors in the order of their relative importance within the broader category they have been placed in.

The analysis in this chapter examines in detail the four main categories and discusses the relative importance of the various specific factors found in each of those, as evidenced by the findings of the national and local research. Individual cases described in the reports from the Member States have been used as an illustration and an example of how these factors manifest themselves in practice.

At the same time, both the national and the local-level analysis have demonstrated that those four areas of key factors of risk and resilience are characterised by complex interdependencies. This is also confirmed by the various cases described by practitioners, which reveal that **there is rarely one predominant strain of factors, but rather an amalgamation of various specific factors from all areas, with each one triggering the next one to form either a risk or a resilience mechanism**. One such example is the existence of ethnic discrimination in a given community (socioeconomic factor), which may lead to a conflict and cause a dramatic disruption of family ties as well as material deprivation (family factors). In such situations, children can be lured to go abroad with the promise of a better livelihood, with no awareness of the risks involved (individual factors), and may end up in a situation where their unclear migration status enhances their vulnerability (structural factors).

⁽²⁸⁾ See section 2.1.1.

Therefore, the discussion of risk and resilience also aims to highlight such chains and mechanisms of occurrence of interrelated factors, with the objective of underlining the relative importance of the four main categories.

2.1 Individual factors

The analysis of individual factors demonstrates that **the two main characteristics, which are most widely recognised as determinants of vulnerability are a history of physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse, and a low level of awareness of risks.** Closely related to a history of abuse is also the existence of emotional or cognitive problems, which are strongly aggravated upon an episode of trafficking, and are often associated with a higher propensity towards risk-taking behaviour. On their part, the level of awareness is to a certain extent dependent on the educational level and on the cognitive skills of a child, and is particularly limited among children with developmental and learning disabilities. However, awareness, albeit an important resilience factor, should be backed up by mechanisms to tackle emotional vulnerability and material dependency in order to prevent victimisation. It should be noted that **history of abuse and level of awareness are also linked, as a child may consider an abuse and trafficking situation as normal and not register it to be a risk.**

Crucially, some individual risk factors play a stronger role for re-victimisation than for victimisation. This is particularly the case for alcohol and substance abuse, which often appears only during trafficking, but becomes a determinant for victimisation. **As regards the importance of individual factors for avoiding or escaping a situation of trafficking (resilience), the educational level appears to be the only individual factor noted by practitioners,** and is closely related to awareness level and general risk-taking behaviour; however it is also dependent on age, and is not considered to be a sufficient condition to avoid a possible situation of trafficking.

The table below indicates which specific national and local-level reports have identified a certain factor to be influencing risk (–) or resilience (+). It should be noted that some characteristics, such as gender, age and sexual orientation, were omitted from the table as they were broadly found by practitioners to be of little particular relevance, and generalisations seemed very difficult.

Risk/resilience factor	Country reports where it was mentioned — national-level interviewees	Country reports where it was mentioned — local-level interviewees
History of psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse (–)	BG, IT, HU, PL, NL, SI, UK	BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, LT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK (risk) IT (factor considered not determining by some practitioners).
Awareness level on risks (+/–)	DK, DE, IE, IT, HU, AT, PL, RO, SI	BE, BG, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, LT, HU, AT, PT, SI (risk when lacking awareness) CZ, ES, LV, LU (resilience when high)
Education level (+/–)	CZ, DE, IE, ES, IT, HU, AT, RO, UK	BE, DK, IE, EL, MT, PT, RO, SI, SK (resilience when present) IE (risk as it may be a false pretext used by traffickers)
Emotional and cognitive state, physical, learning and developmental ability (–)	BE, BG, CZ, DE, NL	BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, LU, HU, PL, PT, RO, SK, FI (risk) DK, AT (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
General risk-taking behaviour (offline and online), substance use/abuse (–)	CZ, HU, UK	BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, IT, CY, LT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK (risk) DK, IE, HU (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Legal status, migration status (–)	BG, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, AT, UK	DK, DE, IE, ES, AT, FI (risk)

2.1.1 History of abuse (–)

The majority of trafficked children have experienced some form of abuse, often leading to strong post-traumatic and emotional disorders. The incidence of prior abuse is particularly strong among girls trafficked for sexual purposes and unaccompanied migrant children. Abusers are commonly close family members.

The most commonly cited individual risk factor is the existence of **a history of physical, sexual or psychological abuse (or a combination of those)** of the child. Local practitioners from the majority of Member States single out the history of any of the three forms of abuse as the common denominator among child victims of trafficking. According to one interviewee ‘98 % of trafficked children have been abused in their past’ (BG).

A German girl was sexually abused by her father from early childhood, probably around the age of three. Her parents were divorced. The father was part of an organised crime group and then forced her into prostitution. It was only when the girl reached adolescence that she gathered strength to seek help. In another example from Germany, a girl was abused by her grandfather, who also passed her on to his circle of paedophile friends and 'rewarded' her with money and gifts; she got used to the behaviour and the material benefits coming from it, and then continued in prostitution when she was a teenager.

Not surprisingly, a history of sexual and physical abuse prior to trafficking has been noted as an especially relevant factor for cases of girls trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation (HU, AT, PL, PT and RO). Mostly, the abuser is a family member, and it is often him who from abuser turns into trafficker, with the aim of gaining also some monetary benefit from the abuse. In cases where abuser and trafficker differ, the latter often takes advantage of the emotional state and the pronounced need for attachment and care of abused girls. Sexual and physical abuse by one or more family members may moreover result in a situation of dependency towards the perpetrators, where the abusers effectively dictate every aspect of a child's life, as the child may want to prove themselves in order to deserve the love of its family/perpetrators (HU, AT, PL).

A history of abuse has been highlighted especially for unaccompanied migrant children, who represent a particularly vulnerable group. The French, Greek and Spanish country reports all stress the link between domestic violence and abuse in the home country and the decision to migrate.

Importantly, while abuse is understood in the first place to be targeted directly towards the child, its sheer presence, as for instance **abuse exercised towards other members of the family, can be just as damaging, especially as it may inhibit the child from recognising a situation as abnormal and dangerous.** This also holds true for cases of emotional abuse, which often manifests itself in neglect and disregard towards a child. The Estonian country report specifically points out that **abuse may not necessarily be direct or physical, but can also be the result of very limited parental skills.** In cases of psychological abuse and neglect, it appears that the risk towards trafficking increases because of the strong need of the child for attachment, recognition and love that she/he does not find at home (DE, HU). This is a situation often reflected in child trafficking cases where the perpetrator was using the 'fake boyfriend' (also known as 'loverboy') pretext in order to gain access to the victim.

The strong **link between a history of abuse and emotional and post-traumatic stress** disorders should be highlighted. The trauma inflicted upon children by abuse may have severe and long-lasting effects, and make them more susceptible to risks (SI, UK). In this regard, abused children often suffer from emotional traumatic disorders, which negatively influence their awareness of risks and may also increase their risk-taking behaviour. Furthermore, a history of abuse is linked to an increased incidence of alcohol and substance abuse in the individual child. This also points towards the difficulty of distinguishing the exact causal relationship between abuse, emotional and traumatic disorders, risk-taking behaviour and trafficking.

As the Irish report concludes, **'Victims of domestic violence can find themselves not only physically abused but also isolated, intimidated, and without access to the financial and emotional support needed to leave the abusive situation, which puts them at high risk of exploitation'**. This situation is also recognised by the Croatian national report, which describes it as 'multiple traumatisation'.

2.1.2 Awareness level of risks (+/-)

Very often, children who have been trafficked recognise their situation only when it is too late. Especially when children are strongly attached to their perpetrator (if a parent or a false boyfriend), they may vehemently deny the exploitation. Being able to detect signs of danger of trafficking may help in certain circumstances, but awareness is not a sufficient resilience factor in the absence of other reachable opportunities.

The second most important individual factor that contributes to the vulnerability of children towards trafficking is the insufficient or lack of awareness of the potentially or already dangerous situation they are in. Importantly, awareness can also be a resilience factor, although the prevalent opinion is that it is not a sufficient condition to avoid victimisation, especially in the presence of emotional vulnerability and material dependency.

According to a large number of local-level reports, **children are very often not aware that they are being trafficked** (BE, BG, IE, ES, FR, IT, HU, AT, PT, SI). As noted in the national-level research, risk awareness is lower for younger children with limited life skills and experience. Often, growing up into a situation of trafficking may cause children to believe that their exploitation is perfectly normal. Awareness is also very limited among children with limited cognitive skills or mental disabilities. Those have been identified in some reports as one of the most vulnerable groups for trafficking, precisely because of their inability to judge a situation, to estimate risks and to protect themselves (BG, HU, AT and RO).

Next to age, **awareness appears to be strongly influenced by the degree of attachment to the perpetrator**. The Belgian report notes that **low awareness is especially evident in those cases where a close relationship between the child and their perpetrator can be observed, such as when the perpetrator is a family member, a fake boyfriend or another person that has gained the trust of the child. In such cases, a certain degree of denial among children has been observed**, even in such cases when children were in general aware of the nature and risks of trafficking, e.g. through participating in awareness-raising campaigns in school (BG, IE, FR). An example that illustrates this point is trafficked children who have been forced by their families to beg or pickpocket. While they may well be aware of the criminal nature of their actions, those children often do not see themselves as victims, but rather feel proud that they are contributing to their family's income (AT). As illustrated by the cases of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation according to the grooming model reported by the practitioners, girls often fail to register any danger signs whatsoever (travel to another country, first instances of sexual exploitation by others). It is only when the exploitation becomes paired with regular physical abuse, threats and confiscation of travel documents that the victim might start to realise her situation, and even in such cases she may often be nonetheless willing to make excuses for her perpetrator and take the blame herself.

A 16-year-old Romanian girl was promised a job in Greece by her aunt. Upon arrival, the girl was introduced to an older man, whom she fell in love with and considered her boyfriend, although in fact he was a trafficker working together with the aunt. Soon she became sexually exploited, and was also subjected to forced labour. The girl was illiterate and came from a single mother household.

The role of awareness on the trafficking phenomenon has been recognised by practitioners at the local level as an **important resilience factor** (CZ, ES, LV, LU). The Greek and Spanish country reports specifically link awareness-raising to the socioeconomic context, and emphasise the need for information and education on the topic of trafficking among deprived, marginalised and disadvantaged households and groups, who may lack sufficient general education and means to recognise the dangers early on.

However, some reports are cautious about the extent to which actual knowledge about the situation can actually make a difference when a child is at risk or realises that they have been trafficked (DE, IE, AT, FI). **Firstly, awareness appears to be insufficient in those cases when the child is in one or another way dependent on his perpetrators**. Already during the national-level research, the German country report remarked that **even when they are very aware that they are trafficked, victims often have no real chance to escape the pressure, threats and violence and are manipulated into trafficking** (DE).

As mentioned above, children may tend to deny the situation they are in, due to their relationship to the perpetrator, and may even put the blame on themselves rather on their exploiters (IE). Therefore, **awareness does not appear to be a sufficient factor to avoid victimisation**. This is highlighted in the Austrian country report: 'Awareness among vulnerable children, families, communities, is of course important, but without other reachable opportunities such awareness-raising initiatives are relatively without effect.'

Secondly, for many adolescent children, the desire to escape poverty and material deprivation may be so strong that they could be willing to accept some degree of exploitation upon arrival in the destination country, if the alternative is to remain in their current situation. Expectations are often intentionally manipulated by the perpetrators who are grooming children by producing a false image of Europe as a place of endless opportunity, where they can easily earn money and live a good, carefree life (IT, AT). Also the media may be contributing to this image. Thus, in such cases, **victims may find the prospects of economic, social and cultural emancipation from poverty, unemployment, war, environmental disasters or gender and ethnic discrimination to be too tempting even if there is some awareness on the risks involved** (SI).

2.1.3 Education (+/-)

Education is important to enhance the awareness and the ability of children to recognise and react to the situation they are in, and can increase resilience through enabling children to read and access specialised information on support possibilities. The wish for better education can, however, also be manipulated, as traffickers may use this as a pretext to lure parents to send their children abroad.

The level of education is often mentioned as a resilience factor by practitioners (BE, DK, IE, EL, LU, RO). Thereby, education is understood more in terms of 'life skills' (IE) and 'intellectual abilities' (UK) rather than formal classroom training education, and is therefore closely related to the overall ability to recognise risks, and thus to the level of awareness among children about the pitfalls of trafficking. Some basic educational level, especially when it comes to literacy, is seen as vital in facilitating escape, as it gives victims the ability to identify possible support structures and seek assistance (LU, AT). Naturally, **educational level is linked to age, thus younger children appear particularly vulnerable in this regard**. The German national-level report concluded that less-educated children are more easily brought into dependence, especially when it comes to labour exploitation. The increased awareness of help through ability to access specialised information is particularly important in the cases of children trafficked from abroad, who often find themselves in a foreign country with no understanding of the local language. In such cases, **literacy and some language skills can be invaluable for children to identify and take advantage of opportunities for assistance and escape from trafficking**.

Nevertheless, some reports do question the influence of education as a resilience factor, and point out that especially in the case of trafficking for sexual exploitation, a low level of education does not seem to be a defining factor of vulnerability, as there have been many cases of trafficked children from good high schools (BG, ES, UK).

The level of education can also bring risks, e.g. when traffickers manipulate parents with the promise of a better education abroad for their child (IE). This has been observed especially for cases from Sub-Saharan Africa, where materially secure families where both parents and children had a good level of education were lured by traffickers to send their child to Europe to go to a good school and learn languages. In such cases, the family not only consents to the child going abroad, but often also has to pay a large amount of money to the perpetrator as a form of reward.

16-year-old A. from Nigeria was trafficked for sexual exploitation first in Italy and then in Germany. Her parents had believed the promises of the perpetrators that she would go to Europe for university studies. A. finally escaped by devising a smart plan to catch the attention of authorities without attracting the suspicion of her perpetrators. While on her way to visit clients, whereby she was constantly monitored, she purchased a wrong metro ticket and was thus caught by the inspectors, who alerted police.

2.1.4. Emotional and cognitive state, physical, learning and developmental ability (-)

Girl victims of trafficking are more frequently reported to suffer from an emotional disorder than boys, and can also be specifically targeted if they have a learning or developmental disability. Emotional disorders are more commonly cited than cognitive ones, but are also often the result, rather than the cause of, trafficking. They are linked to a prior history of abuse or neglect and may trigger stronger risk-taking behaviour.

An emotional or psychological disorder in a child has been found by a number of practitioners to be a factor related to vulnerability (BG, CZ, DE, FR, HR, IT, CY, HU, PT, RO, FI, UK). This may include the **need for attention or a strong attachment to the perpetrator**, but may also manifest itself in a very bad relationship with the parents and episodes of aggravated anger. Subsequently, such conditions may make children more vulnerable to traffickers and easier to be manipulated by them (CZ, EE). However, most of those countries point out that it is difficult to distinguish whether psychological conditions have been present before, or only after the trafficking has occurred (DE, IT). In any case, **an unstable emotional state is particularly detrimental when it comes to the probability of re-victimisation**.

A gender difference is observed by practitioners in some countries like Belgium, Bulgaria and Germany, with girl victims of trafficking often reported specifically as suffering from some form of emotional or psychological vulnerability. Also, some reports do note a higher vulnerability for girls with learning or developmental disabilities, who seem to be specifically targeted by traffickers due to their limited perception of risk (BG, EE and ES). The Latvian and

Lithuanian country reports also mention cases of trafficked children with **learning disabilities**. As regards physical disabilities, those are mentioned in some country reports (BG, RO, SI) in connection with trafficking of children for the purposes of begging, as it is considered that such children may evoke more compassion and thus higher donations from passers-by. However, both the Bulgarian and Romanian reports mention that there is little actual evidence to back up the extent to which physical disabilities may actually be a vulnerability factor and increase the chance of children becoming victims of trafficking.

As noted previously, practitioners often emphasise the link between different individual factors, especially in the context of psychological and emotional disorders (BE, FR, LT, LU, RO, SK, UK). In particular, there appears to be **a strong link between a history of abuse or neglect and the emotional state of a child** victim of trafficking (BG, DE, IT, HU). This is furthermore linked to the overall awareness of trafficking and the ability to recognise risks and exploitation as such.

In the Belgian country report, low self-esteem and need for attention, as a result of prior abuse and neglect, have been identified as underlying factors for cases of girls who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The report also remarks that **the bond between the victim and the perpetrator can eventually grow so strong that the former does not want to admit or get out of the situation she is in, even when she is confronted with the facts**. Both Belgium and the United Kingdom thus highlight the occurrence of a 'Stockholm Syndrome' ⁽²⁹⁾ among victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Cognitive limitations appear to be a less pronounced vulnerability factor than emotional ones. Whenever recognised by practitioners, they are mostly related to limited learning and intellectual capability, which in turn influences the perception of risk, and also limits the resilience potential of children (BG, FR and HR). In this context, it is important to repeat the finding that pertains to overall level of education and literacy, which can be a powerful tool for children at risk of being trafficked, or already experiencing trafficking, to gain access to information and support services (UK).

Similarly, **a low social status and limited material well-being have also been linked to emotional and cognitive states that can be conducive to trafficking** (DK, UK). This is for instance the case with regard to children who are trafficked by their parents and through their activity contribute to the family income, with feelings of blame and reward having a strong influence on the child's awareness and judgement of its own situation. This may cause children to reject assistance and deny that their parents are forcing them into doing something illegal.

A 15-year-old girl from the Czech Republic was noticed and questioned by police, while she was intrusively begging in front of the shopping centre. Her two older male companions were waiting for her in a nearby parked car. A check in the system revealed that there was an international missing person alert for the child. When questioned, she refused to acknowledge any abuse or exploitation, even though there were clear signs thereof. She said the two men were her boyfriend and his friend.

Emotional and cognitive disorders are also linked to risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse, and tend to aggravate during and after a trafficking episode, thus increasing the vulnerability towards re-victimisation. As the Belgian country reports notes: 'The interrelationship between self-image, a history of sexual abuse, risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse have been mentioned frequently, particularly in cases of sexual exploitation'. This interconnection is also pointed out in the Latvian report, which also clarifies that emotional and cognitive disorders may be both an underlying factor and a consequence of abuse or trafficking. The latter case also demonstrates the role that such conditions play in cases of re-victimisation, where a child's vulnerability is strongly increased by the trauma and stress suffered from the trafficking experience. The Germany, France, Finland and United Kingdom country reports also tend to define emotional and cognitive disorders as a consequence of trafficking rather than an original factor. Nonetheless, generalisations in this regard are difficult, and the causal chain will vary from case to case.

⁽²⁹⁾ The Stockholm Syndrome is when victims feel compassion and loyalty toward their captors. Fitzpatrick, L.; Brief History: Stockholm Syndrome; *Time International* (South Pacific Edition) 9.4.2009, Vol. 174 Issue 10, p. 11.

2.1.5 General risk-taking behaviour (offline and online), substance abuse (-/+)

General risk-taking behaviour increases vulnerability to trafficking through a higher exposure to dangerous and criminal situations (contact with strangers, including online, petty crimes, substance abuse) paired with a lack and in some cases conscious avoidance of support mechanisms. However, it may also trigger a higher level of alertness and self-preservation among children and thus act as a resilience factor.

The prevailing notion in the country reports is that a certain degree of risk-taking behaviour and substance abuse is noted among trafficked children; however, similarly to emotional and psychological problems, they appear to be often the result, rather than the cause of, trafficking (IT, PL, PT, SI). In this regard, most of the practitioners do not place a strong emphasis on the role of such factors. Some country reports, like the Irish and the Hungarian ones, even state that risk-taking behaviour is not common among trafficked children.

General risk-taking behaviour of children can take different forms, all of which may increase the vulnerability through exposure to risks. Common forms are the **excessive trust of strangers** (e.g. those they have made contact with online) and committing **petty crimes** as a form of adventure and thrill-seeking (HR). The Croatian country report clarifies that in the latter case, perpetrators may specifically target risk-seeking children in order to capitalise on their wish for adventure. According to the Italian country report, risk-taking behaviour may also be exhibited in aggression and use of fake ID cards, which gain children access to nightclubs, where they can run into potentially dangerous older people.

Risk-taking behaviour and limited perception of risks appear to be closely linked to the social and family environment of children and have a **strong gender dimension**. According to the Bulgarian country report, risk-taking behaviour can be 'a consequence of emotional and cognitive disorders, low educational level and the influence of the social environment (which may cause girls to post provocative pictures online, to behave in certain promiscuous ways, and also to be less suspicious [of] offers sounding too good to be true)'. A similar notion is expressed in the Spanish country report, which flags the combination of limited parental supervision and low educational level as a root cause of risk-taking behaviour. British practitioners link the tendency of children to take risks to 'a culture of sexualised behaviour', as well as to a history of sexual abuse (UK). Gender constructs prompt girls to expose themselves, while boys are encouraged to behave as 'bad guys', treat girls as objects, etc. Nonetheless, the same British report points out that luring a child into trafficking may more likely be facilitated by a lack of options to avoid the situation than a higher propensity to take risks. This also comes across from an example given in the Bulgarian report about young boys trafficked for sexual exploitation, who are often homeless, engage in prostitution on the streets and are addicted to glue-sniffing, and thus have only very limited options to escape the traffickers.

Alcohol and substance abuse also appears to increase during episodes of trafficking (DE, LT, HU, PL and RO). Children may use alcohol and drugs as a way to withstand and ease the suffering they experience while in trafficking. In some cases it may be the traffickers themselves who make their victims dependent on drugs as a way to control them and make them even more dependent. The German country report also notes that dependency may also be linked to drug dealing by trafficking victims, who may see this as an opportunity to make some additional income.

As regards online risk-taking behaviour as a special subtype among this group of factors, **unsupervised and potentially dangerous contacts made online** have been mentioned in the Bulgarian, German, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and UK country reports. Those have been linked to a certain degree of neglect by the parents (BG); however it has also been noted that parents often have too limited IT skills themselves to monitor their children's activity on social platforms (HU, RO). Nevertheless, the growing influence of social platforms and, linked to that, the impact of the hyper-sexualisation of society on girls have been noted too. Ten of the 95 specific cases of child trafficking described by practitioners describe a recruitment pattern in which the perpetrators first identify their victims on social media and then either start a romantic relationship, as a part of the grooming strategy, or use online contact to gain the trust of the children and make them believe in some nice-sounding employment opportunities abroad.

A Romanian girl aged of 16 from a small rural town was contacted by an older man on a social media website. After about a month of online communication, he convinced her to go meet him at his place in Bucharest without telling her parents. He told her there would be a party there, but when she arrived, there were two other girls who had been tricked in the same way. The perpetrator locked them up and forced them to offer sexual services to strangers.

Finally, some countries note that some degree of risk-taking behaviour and **self-preservation instincts may also act as a resilience factor** and help children to avoid or escape the situation they are in. This may mean a higher level of independence and mistrust towards others due to experience in delinquency, or a willingness to embrace dangerous escape routes due to the severity of the situation (BG, DE, HU). However, those children also tend to display a lack of trust in the judicial system (HU).

2.1.6 Other individual factors

The analysis of individual characteristics such as age, gender, physical appearance, and sexual orientation, did not yield any conclusive or clear-cut findings as to the influence they exert on risk or the resilience of children to trafficking.

Gender appears to be a characteristic that may make a difference in cases of child marriages or trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, where girls appear to be more affected. Boys are usually trafficked from north Africa and Asia (Bangladesh, Afghanistan), for the purposes of labour exploitation in order to send money back home, while victims from Nigeria and Somalia seem to be predominantly girls trafficked for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude (ES, IT, UK). Nonetheless, the Spanish country report notes that in the context of the 'Kafala' system where children are 'lent' to other families to do housework, girls and boys seem to be affected equally.

Sexual orientation has only rarely been mentioned as a risk factor (BG, FR). Sexual orientation can be a cause of repression or exclusion from a country or family. Those who migrate for this reason can also be isolated in the destination country, which is a factor of vulnerability.

Age, on the contrary, does not seem to be a factor on its own (apart from influencing to some extent the type of exploitation, as older children are more able to undertake physical work) but may rather reinforce vulnerability, e.g. since younger children may be less aware of risks, while older ones may travel more easily and may have a tendency towards risk-taking.

In specific countries like Spain, Italy and Malta, where irregular migration is high, the **unclear legal status** of a child is considered as a vulnerability factor for trafficking.

2.2 Family-related factors

Family-related factors emerge as the key group of risk factors related to trafficking of children. Also, they are often greatly intertwined, thus producing an amalgamation of circumstances that may severely affect the vulnerability of children, also through impacting on individual characteristics, such as emotional state and awareness of risks.

Among family-related factors, the structure and stability of the family unit of a child, the relationship and the level of trust between parents and children, as well as the material and living conditions of the family, are recognised overwhelmingly by practitioners as the most important determinants of risk and vulnerability and, in turn, of resilience.

Importantly, households where there is a situation of family breakdown are often also economically deprived (and vice versa) — a combination that appears to be particularly prominent among many trafficked children. **Orphans, children in care, and unaccompanied migrant children (especially those that have experienced war and violent conflicts) are especially at risk.** Furthermore, family members often are the ones forcing a child into trafficking and exploiting them, though sometimes they may be themselves coerced by others to do so.

Some important findings coming from the local-level research refer to **the role of parental monitoring which, albeit per se an important resilience factor, may also be counterproductive, as a child may feel too constrained and controlled.**

Similarly, while access to other adults outside the family environment can enhance resilience as a part of a protection strategy, it can also be a further risk factor in those cases when the adult is either not prepared to take up a role as a guardian, or is an exploiter himself.

The extent to which family-related factors are reflected in national and local-level reports is summarised in the table below.

Risk (-)/resilience (+) factor	Country reports where it was mentioned	Country reports where it was mentioned — local-level interviewees
Family structure (+/-)	DE, EE, IE, HU, NL, PL, SI, UK	BE, BG, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, CY, LT, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, UK (risk in situations of family breakdown) FR, RO, FI, UK (resilience) BG, CZ, ES, IT, PL (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Household socioeconomic status and poverty (+/-)	BG, DK, DE, IE, ES, IT, CY, LT, LU, NL, PL, RO, SI, FI	BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, LT, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE, UK (risk when material deprivation present) RO (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Relationship with parents (+/-)	CZ, ES, LT, NL, RO, SI	See situations of family breakdown and parental monitoring
Parental monitoring (+/-)	ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, PL, RO	EL, FR, MT, PT, RO, SK, FI (resilience when exercised) BG, DE, CY (risk when too strong) See also situations of family breakdown
Experience of homelessness, being unaccompanied or being a runaway (-)	CZ, EE, IE, CY, PL	BE, BG, CZ, CY, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, LV, LT, LU, HU, PL, RO, SI, SE (risk) EE, ES, IT, PT (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Being in care (-)	BG, IE, IT, CY, HR, HU, PL	BG, CZ, DK, IE, ES, FR, LV, LT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, UK (risk)
Level of access to adults outside of the family/care unit (+/-)	RO	BG, CZ, DK, ES, FR, LT, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI (resilience) BG, DE (risk when adult is not trustworthy)

2.2.1 Family structure, relationship with the parents, parental monitoring (+/-)

A situation of family breakdown, especially when linked to material deprivation, is a very strong risk factor that often manifests itself in neglect and abuse towards the child and is associated with lack of parental monitoring. This may cause an emotional disorder in a child, or push it to run away.

Particularly grave are cases when the family becomes the perpetrator, by forcing the child into some form of exploitation, whereby patriarchal family structures, cultural traditions and perceptions about child labour play an important role. The most powerful resilience strategy involves a combination of a stable and loving relationship between a parent and a child, and an appropriate degree of parental monitoring.

Unstable family conditions have been identified as an underlying risk factor by the majority of local-level practitioners (BE, BG, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, CY, LT, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, UK). Such conditions usually manifest themselves in the form of neglect, and there is often also a link to abuse and coercion to exploitation and trafficking. About 25 % of the specific cases of trafficked children identified some form of disruption in the family structure as a key risk factor and trigger of the recruitment and exploitation. In contrast, having a close and trusted relationship between a parent and a child is a powerful resilience factor, as recognised in a number of reports (FR, RO, FI and UK). Parental monitoring is closely related to the family structure, and is in general regarded as a resilience factor, although whenever practiced too restrictively, and in the absence of a relationship that builds on trust and respect, it may also be counterproductive and increase the risk of a child becoming a victim of trafficking.

When it comes to the situations of family breakdown in the context of trafficking, the importance of first having a clear definition of what is meant by it is noted by the Portuguese country report: 'The cultural aspect is crucial and people must be aware that what is considered a family breakdown in Portugal may not be so in other contexts'. Several constellations of family breakdown have been described in the country reports.

Situations of family breakdown can be considered as those households where one parent is missing (CZ, EL, AT, PL). While this is already seen as a high risk factor, some reports note that the risk is lower among such one-parent households where the single parent can count on support from others (e.g. grandparents) with regard to care, supervision and financial resources; or where the missing parent is deceased, and the child does not see itself as abandoned by the parent.

Several reports warn that **a situation of family breakdown, especially understood as a single parent household, is not necessarily a risk factor, as long as it is paired with a certain degree of economic stability, parental care and emotional attachment from the parent in charge thus contributing to a stronger family unit** (LT, PT, UK).

A 16-year-old girl from Slovakia was trafficked and sexually exploited after she was convinced by a girl that she considered to be her friend to go on a trip to Austria. The girl was from a one-parent household and had a good relationship with her mother. Thus upon her return she confided to her what had happened during the trip. Meanwhile, the mother had already reported her daughter missing, and after hearing the story also called the national trafficking helpline to get specialised assistance for her child.

In contrast, **situations of family breakdown seem to be a particularly strong risk factor whenever no additional assistance from relatives can be expected**, there is a shortage of money and thus poor living conditions and where there is lack of sufficient time to take care of the child. Other examples of more serious disruptions with a link to risk of trafficking are those where the other parent has left the family and neither helps, nor takes part or shows interest in, the child's life, thus giving him/her a sense of abandonment and lack of love (DE, IE, CY, RO, UK). Cases of a parent remarrying and the new parent not accepting the children from the previous marriage have also been identified (DE). Therefore, as noted in the Greek country report, when it comes to risk of trafficking, it is 'ignorance rather than intentional abuse' that is the common denominator in situations of family breakdown. In such cases, children may feel a strong need for attachment, which can even result in an emotional disorder. Those may make them more vulnerable and susceptible towards the advances of traffickers, e.g. in the so-called loverboy situations (EL).

Particularly alarming in terms of the degree of risk and vulnerability are situations when breakdown in the family is defined in terms of alcoholism, abuse and neglect by the parents (LT, LU, PL, UK). While the severe consequences of sexual, physical or psychological abuse directed towards the child have been discussed in the previous chapter, importantly, abuse may also be exercised towards other family members and may thus serve as a bad example and lead to an unbearable atmosphere at home, causing a child to run away and increasing vulnerability (LT). It may also cause a child to consider and accept physical or emotional abuse as normal. In turn, this may limit its awareness of trafficking. Aggressive behaviour can easily be triggered by alcoholism, which moreover is often a cause of inability to work and provide for the family.

A situation of family breakdown has been prevalent among trafficked children from non-European countries who had abruptly lost their parents in conflicts or due to an epidemic, and were forced into a situation where they needed to provide for themselves, their dependent family or younger siblings. In those situations, orphaned children have sometimes been discovered acting as servants in the houses of their extended family that had agreed to take care of them (ES).

Those circumstances have been repeatedly highlighted as a key factor of vulnerability that may lead to trafficking into another country for purposes of sexual exploitation of girls, and for forced labour of boys and girls (IE, EL and UK).

A 15-year-old girl from Uganda was found trafficked in the Netherlands. As a result of AIDS and war, she had lost her entire family. She had also been raped, after which she went to a refugee camp. There she met a European man who brought her to the Netherlands with the promise of a normal life there. In the Netherlands the man handed her over to two other men. She was brought to a house where more girls resided and forced into prostitution.

Another specific type of family breakdown pertains to cases (mainly from eastern Europe) where the **parents have emigrated abroad**, leaving their children in the care of grandparents, other relatives, or even older children. In those cases the relationship between parents and child is distant, and grandparents cannot exercise enough monitoring over the child and his/her activities, putting him/her at a higher risk of engaging in delinquent activities and becoming a victim of trafficking (BG, IT, UK). Austrian practitioners refer to this phenomenon as 'EU orphans', when related to EU mobility (intra-EU migration), and point out that in the extreme case of no guardian whatsoever in charge of the child that has been left behind, the abandoned children suffer social exclusion, as well as serious psychological and health issues. The French country report mentions that such children are also at a higher risk of becoming runaways

or homeless. This situation is also used as a grooming method for perpetrators, who promise children that they will facilitate a meeting with their parents in the country in which they work, but instead they traffic them (RO, UK).

There are cases where families are not broken but highly dysfunctional, with the **parents being the perpetrators themselves** (BG, DK, ES, CY and AT). Both mothers and fathers have been reported as forcing their children into prostitution, pickpocketing and begging, as well as organising arranged marriages while their children are still underage. The Austrian country report notes the cases of single mothers who wilfully 'lend' their daughters to traffickers and the Bulgarian report touches upon the specific problem of illegal adoptions, where poverty-stricken expectant single mothers with a high number of children are targeted and groomed to bear their child in Greece and register a person chosen by the traffickers as the father, after which they leave the baby with him.

The presence of perpetrators among the family has been linked by several reports to gender stereotypes, **gender inequality** and **patriarchal and closed family structures**, cultural beliefs and traditions among most notably Roma families, which see the children as legitimate means of earning a living (IT, RO, SI, UK). The Czech country report describes such practices at length, and concludes that begging and petty crimes may be seen as a traditional way of livelihood, and the involvement of children in the 'family business', including their relocation abroad for such purposes may be accepted and encouraged by the family. In addition, those families may often be materially well-off (BG, PL). Similarly, forced marriages have also been traditionally arranged, not only in Roma families, but also in a number of other cultures, societies and geographical areas, for instance the Maghreb or South Asia.

In other cases, especially of children trafficked from northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, **relatives from the extended family are also involved as perpetrators**, whereby the parents may consent to the transfer and trafficking of their child. In the context of the Kafala customs, where an adoption outside formal procedures and legal paths of a child by a wealthier, more respected family is encouraged, parents may thus send their children without being fully aware of the degree of exploitation awaiting them in their new family, in what they see as an investment in a better economic future and a source of income-generation (ES, IT, UK). Furthermore, in some cultural contexts, like South-East Asia, a different perception exists with regard to the permissibility of child labour, which may contribute to the family pushing their child into exploitation.

In a case from France, a 7-year-old girl was sent, without her knowledge, but with the explicit consent of her mother, to a family in France. There, she was subjected to forced labour and abuse, and did not attend school regularly (as had been the expectation of the mother).

Whenever the family is involved as perpetrators, there are inherent difficulties in identifying child victims given that they either consider the behaviour of the parents as normal; are afraid to oppose the parents' will; or are in denial and do not want to believe that the family would do this to them (BG). The onus though does not lie with the children to self-identify as victims, but rather is placed with the services in charge of child protection. The family can also play a negative role for re-victimisation, in those cases when a child is rescued by authorities from a situation of exploitation, but nevertheless is returned to its family. They may however still insist on the child returning to exploitative activities and use the family's reliance on the money sent back home as an argument to convince and groom the child (IE, EL, PL, SI). Feelings of guilt, responsibility and pride of being able to contribute to a family's income form a strong inner barrier for a child to seek assistance or undertake anything to change its situation. Also, if a child is told from a young age that she/he should not talk to the police it is harder for the police to prosecute and to protect the young person (UK). Often in such situations, it can also be the case that parents have been trafficked themselves (e.g. a mother trafficked for prostitution), passing on the dependence from the perpetrator to children (HU).

Several reports explicitly recognise **a stable family structure as an important resilience factor** (FR, RO, FI, UK). Nonetheless some reports note that a number of trafficked children come from stable and caring families (BG, ES and PL). As an example, in the Czech Republic, neither the national nor the local-level research yielded any evidence that children from single parent households were more at risk of being trafficked. Therefore, a certain degree of caution is needed when speaking of a structured family as a resilience factor.

Next to the importance of a stable family structure, the combination of a good relationship with the child and a certain degree of parental monitoring emerges as the most powerful resilience strategy. The Slovakian country report summarises the position of interviewees, noting that 'the most important factor is the fact that they [children]

have parents who love them (thus there are emotional ties), and regularly monitor their contacts'. **The relationship between a child and its parents, understood in terms of the closeness and affection between them and the child's inclination to trust and share with parents and listen to their opinion and advice, is underlined as a resilience factor** by many national and local-level reports (CZ, DK, HR, LT, RO). A good relationship with parents can help assess risks of e.g. a job offer that may be too good to be true (CZ). Also, it can help a child to share a situation he/she is otherwise ashamed of (RO). As a risk factor, whenever the relationship is not good, it may serve as a motivation for the child to seek ways to leave home. Also, as previously noted, in the context of strong patriarchal structures where the influence of the parents over the child's life is very substantial, obedience and acceptance of the parent's decision may also mean that a child becomes vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation (SI).

Awareness and knowledge about a child's social contacts through **parental monitoring is mentioned by a number of reports as a resilience factor** (EL, FR, MT, PT, RO, SK and FI). However, many of those link parental monitoring to the importance of the relationship between a parent and a child, which should be one of care, attention and trust.

In the absence of trust between a parent and a child, a **strict monitoring by parents can turn into a risk factor**. Both the German and the Bulgarian reports warn that strict parental monitoring may be counterproductive and push a child into isolation, and risk-taking behaviour, as it may feel alienated, misunderstood and not trusted by its parents. Another clarification from the Bulgarian country report is connected to the cases of Roma children trafficked for begging and petty crimes, where parental monitoring is actually very strong, and children live in a closed family circle.

A 14-year-old girl from Bangladesh, who had migrated with her family to Austria, was forced by the father to go back to Bangladesh and marry a much older man who was unknown to her. This was conceived as a form of a punishment after the father had discovered that the girl had a boyfriend at her Austrian school. The girl escaped from the marriage after contacting a local NGO in Bangladesh.

2.2.2 Household socioeconomic status (-)

Material deprivation in the family may cause both children and parents to believe traffickers' promises of a better life abroad, and be less vigilant in terms of risks. Indebtedness of the family may be exploited by powerful individuals in the community who force the parents to give up their child, but families may also knowingly and purposefully push their child into exploitation in the expectation of it generating income.

The socioeconomic status of the family, and especially a situation of material deprivation and poverty, has been considered by practitioners to be among the key risk factors, with far-reaching consequences in terms of the behaviour of both the children and their family (BE, BG, DK, IE, LU, LT, AT, PT). Economic deprivation is a factor directly influencing vulnerability to trafficking because it pushes a child to seek employment and opportunities to get out of the poverty experienced in their families. Sometimes paired with experience of homelessness and a sense of abandonment and despair, children in such circumstances are much less vigilant in terms of possible risks. The socioeconomic status of a family has been identified as among the drivers of vulnerability for about two thirds of all cases of trafficked children described in the country reports.

Economic deprivation in families of trafficked children is very often intertwined with a disruption in the family structure (BG, DK, ES, LT, AT, PL and PT). According to the Bulgarian report, 'All interviewees noted that a broken family most often automatically means that households are economically deprived'. This can be the case for single parent households, or when lack of education or skills, alcoholism, disability or imprisonment may prevent a parent from working. **Children from larger families with several siblings may also be at a higher risk of being trafficked**, as the economic means necessary for the parents to provide food and subsistence are bigger and thus demands and lack of opportunities may push parents to neglect, or even knowingly agree to a child engaging in some form of exploitation (IE). Thus, material deprivation can be a push factor both for parents and for children, to succumb to the promises and pressures of traffickers. Children may be tempted more easily by the promises of traffickers, which can materialise in toys for younger children, or clothes and a luxurious lifestyle for older ones. Most reported cases have been of adolescent girls lured into sexual exploitation by the promises of a very well-paid job as a waitress, au pair or a nanny and of adolescent boys who were promised agricultural or construction work (BE, HR, SI).

Economic deprivation appears to be a more important factor among victims from eastern Europe and Africa, while for domestic victims it is the disruption of family relations that is more often observed (BE). The German country report also confirms that poverty seems to be more relevant among children trafficked into the country than among domestic trafficking victims. In Poland, a country that had been found to be increasingly a transit country for trafficked children from other eastern European countries (Moldova, Ukraine), a similar tendency is observed, and the family background of victims was observed to be characterised by unstable employment, benefit dependency, and lack of education. As regards trafficked children from non-European countries, several reports highlight that the combination of political instability, conflict, loss of family members and material deprivation places children at a higher risk of trafficking (IE, ES, and FR).

Parents can be lured by promises of their child finding a better future abroad, and thus trafficking may be part of a family project to send a child abroad, e.g. thinking it is going to study there or will be employed in a decent job (ES, RO, UK). The Italian country report describes how families that may even have a certain economic base have sold everything they had to finance their child's trip to Europe, only to realise that it has been forced into exploitation and placed in a much different reality than anticipated. Usually, the perpetrators are relatives or other persons in their community with access to the parents who may make false promises sound trustworthy. In addition, Austrian and British practitioners note the **role of powerful individuals in the community or close environment that may exploit the dependency of the family and force them to agree to their child being exploited**. Austria refers to such individuals as 'capos' (heads of the community) and notes that their importance grows in the absence of other support and social structures at the community level. Such 'capos' may lure parents to send their children abroad, and sometimes there may be a direct material dependency of the family, such as debt bondage of sorts.

Three Vietnamese brothers, aged between 15 and 17, were rescued in Prague as they were about to be trafficked to their final destination in the UK. The parents had borrowed a very large amount of money from creditors and paid the traffickers to smuggle their children to the UK, with the promise that they would organise work for the boys upon arrival so that they could send money home.

Poverty and economic deprivation can turn into a strong motive for families to intentionally use their children to secure the family income through making them work or through passing them on to traffickers, with a clear idea of the exploitation awaiting their child. This is particularly the case for **child marriages** which, despite stemming from a cultural tradition among some **Roma and Turkish minorities**, have been increasingly motivated by economic considerations. Particular reasons for child marriages happening are not because of respect for the tradition, but because of the expectation of some financial benefits including economic gains from the dowry that is paid to the girl's family, or the expectation that a child married in a better-off family will not only be able to escape poverty, but also to provide for his parents (BG, HR, SK, SI).

As noted in the national-level research, **child marriages can also be a facade to transfer girls with particularly good pickpocketing and begging skills to a new family; moreover the next step could be trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation**, when the girl outgrows the young age needed to invoke compassion when begging (BG). The strong gender dimension of child marriages should be highlighted, especially when linked with cultural and socioeconomic factors.

Also in cases of **illegal adoptions**, it is single mothers with several children that are targeted by traffickers as most likely to agree to sell their unborn or youngest child in exchange for some means to support the older ones (EL). Nevertheless, pregnancy can also be a resilience factor among women victims of trafficking because the perspective of having a child motivates them to fight against their circumstances (BG).

A 16-year-old girl from Romania sought assistance after her aunt forced her into marrying her cousin. It turned out that the girl, whose parents were in jail, was being raised by her grandmother, and was forced to beg and steal for years by her own and other relatives, before eventually being married off within the family.

While having a certain degree of material wealth may increase the chances for a child to avoid trafficking, a number of reports are cautious in assigning economic stability a strong weight as a resilience factor. This is stressed by the German country report, especially in the context of domestic trafficking, and also underlined by the Bulgarian, Spanish and Polish country reports for cases of children trafficked for begging and petty crimes, where families have been seen not to be materially deprived. Also according to the Portuguese country report, it is wrong to consider that 'good economic conditions equal absence of risk'. The report goes on to comment that, similarly to cases of disruption of family ties, it is the presence of love, care and support by the parents that acts as the strongest resilience factor. The Estonia and Slovakia country reports confirm this view, noting the importance of emotional ties between parents and children.

2.2.3 Experience of homelessness, being a runaway or unaccompanied (–)

Homeless children, runaways and unaccompanied migrant children are at a high risk of being trafficked. Runaways tend to have higher risk-taking behaviour, while among homeless children it is material deprivation that is the underlying risk factor. Unaccompanied migrant children are especially vulnerable, and also are more difficult to reach by social services.

Running away from home, deciding to migrate to another country and being homeless are often three extreme manifestations of the particularly harmful combination of economic deprivation, broken family ties and lack of (or too strong) parental monitoring. While no generalisations can be made on the basis of the reports in terms of the causal relationships between those factors, practitioners overall agree that while not common, homelessness and running away can be strong determinants of vulnerability (BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, PL, RO, SE).

Running away appears to be a more common vulnerability factor than homelessness, and is also associated with risk-taking behaviour, lack of parental monitoring, and experience of abuse and material deprivation (BE, BG, CZ, LT, PL and RO). The Lithuanian country report explicitly mentions that running away is not only more common than homelessness among trafficked children, but also more difficult to monitor as it involves the collaboration of social services at several locations, the school, friends, and the family. The Belgian country report makes a distinction between child victims of economic exploitation, who more often run away on their own decision, and those who become trafficked for sexual purposes, where convincing the child to run away may be part of the grooming strategy adopted by the perpetrator. According to the Polish country report, child victims of trafficking have sometimes fled from their family in order to avoid abuse or rejection by the new partner of their parent. The Czech report notes that young teenage children, who run from villages to bigger cities, can fall victim to sexual exploitation in order to earn money for a living. The Romanian country report links the tendency among teenagers for substance abuse (so-called 'ethnobotanics', which can be legally bought in the country) and the risk of running away from home and falling into dependency and trafficking. The report also notes that such children usually run away to friends, rather than start living on the streets, thus running away does not always result in homelessness. In relation to drug addiction, the Bulgarian country report links **homelessness and drug addiction** among very young children from the marginalised Roma community and cites it as one of the most severe combinations of risk factors that lead to **sexual exploitation**.

Homelessness has been noted by fewer reports as among the determinants of vulnerability towards trafficking, except for the particular group of very poor economic migrants from eastern Europe, especially in Germany and France. In such cases, children were considered to be particularly vulnerable due to the destitute conditions they live in. According to the BG country report around one third of all Bulgarian children repatriated from other EU countries on suspicion of being trafficked or at risk of trafficking were found to live in desolate conditions (tented camps or run-down houses) on the outskirts of cities in Germany, France and Italy. The situation of such children living in so-called 'shantytowns' has been recognised in the French country report: 'Living in a shantytown is also a factor of risk, due to obstacles to access their rights for people and families living in it, especially in France, where shantytowns are regularly and very often destroyed. Families and children are forced to move and to find new ways of earning money and are then more vulnerable to those who are exploiting this poverty'.

Finally, **unaccompanied migrant children represent a separate risk group**. Economic reasons as well as fear of conflict in their home country are most commonly cited as reasons for such children to embark on the uncertain journey to Europe (ES, IT, LT and LU). Including such children in any form of social service or monitoring their activities is very difficult. This is also an additional reason why traffickers may target those children as they are considered to attract less attention from authorities.

2.2.4 Being in care (-)

Children from residential care facilities and also living with foster families are a very vulnerable group. Orphaned or coming from broken and dysfunctional families, and often lacking both attention and monitoring from care personnel, such children can be targeted by traffickers, as they are less aware of risks, often with limited cognitive skills and thus easily exploited using small gifts and promises.

Similarly to homeless and runaway children, a number of factors and circumstances come together to make the situation of children living in care institutions, especially in countries from southern and eastern Europe, particularly risky in terms of trafficking (BG, CZ, DK, IE, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, AT, RO, SK). These include a situation of family breakdown, lack of supervision and care, limited awareness of risks, and material deprivation. Nonetheless, the French and UK country reports also mention that children from French/British care institutions are targeted by traffickers, therefore the high risk potential of such circumstances should be assumed regardless of the geographical context.

Often orphaned or coming from situations of family breakdown or dysfunctional families with low socioeconomic status who cannot take care of them, children grow up in a residential childcare facility, which is often hardly supportive. Given the ongoing presence of institutionalised foster care in eastern Europe for child victims of trafficking from this region, both countries of origin and recipient countries note the overall inadequate functioning and resources of residential child care facilities there and link them to trafficking (IE, LT, LU, HU). Children grow up without developing essential life skills, lack awareness, often lack role models, and can be very easily deceived by perpetrators offering care, material goods, or both. The Austrian country report notes that children are frequently shifted between facilities, making them feel even more isolated and vulnerable.

At the same time, **monitoring and supervision of children**, as well as providing them with counselling, guidance and **affection, is usually impeded by the lack of sufficient staff** in residential facilities to keep track of the children's social contacts. As a result, **perpetrators may have easy access to the children**, both physically and emotionally. Sometimes children have been found to actively seek the attention of adults outside the facility as a way to escape from the restrictive regime that they have to follow in an institution (RO). Bringing to the children food, cigarettes and clothing, and giving them small amounts of money with the promise of more to come, are common grooming strategies observed by practitioners working with children from care institutions. The Irish country report mentions that due to insufficient staff, and thus lack of supervision, children from care institutions are more likely to be subjected to abuse and maltreatment from peers, which may make them more susceptible to risks of trafficking by adults pretending to be loving and caring. The Bulgarian country report notes that there are situations when children living in residential care facilities go missing, but this does not get reported to the police, as it would draw unwanted attention to the facility and eventually lead to its budget being cut. Allegedly such issues point to the interdependence with structural factors and especially the quality of existing protection and support systems that may aggravate the potential risk.

Moreover, the Bulgarian national-level report draws attention to two specific groups of children from care institutions who are considered as being at particular risk of being trafficked. Firstly, there are **those who have only recently turned 18** (thus no longer children from a legal point of view), but who are often so lagging behind in their development (social, educational) that they have the behaviour and attitude of a child, including a very low risk awareness. Another such group is **children with learning or developmental disabilities living in care facilities**, who are considered to be the group with the highest risk of being trafficked, due to the combination of very low risk awareness and lack of supportive family environment and monitoring. A case from Hungary in which an orphaned girl was in a foster family (thus not in an institution), but was raped by the foster parent and forced to run away after falling into the hands of her perpetrator reveals that even outside the context of residential facilities, being in care can entail a risk factor.

A girl victim of domestic trafficking in Croatia was recruited directly upon graduating from the residential facility for orphans where she lived until 18. Contact with the perpetrators had started prior to her turning 18, and they had lured her by promising her a job and a place to live. There was limited supervision from the staff in the institution, although the area was known for its high levels of criminality.

2.2.5 Level of access to adults outside of the family/care unit (+/-)

Trusted adults, such as teachers, social workers and parents of friends, can increase the resilience of children at risk by being a confidant and a person of authority. Establishing such contacts is in practice not always easy, as vulnerable and exploited children are often suspicious and often feel the need for secrecy.

In the context of situations of family breakdown and a bad relationship between parents and children, many reports emphasise the important role of having some other adult person to turn to in times of need (BG, DK, ES, FR, IT, HU, PL, RO, SI). **Teachers, reliable older friends or parents of friends have all been mentioned as possible trusted adults** who can contribute resilience against first-time trafficking, e.g. by providing advice and shelter and also by assisting children without judging them. In this sense, the child should not only trust an adult, but it should also have a certain degree of respect towards this person, so that it can follow the advice even if it may not seem the obvious choice for the child. Examples have been given mainly of social workers and other support staff that have worked over a longer period of time with victims of trafficking, gaining their trust and being there for them even after the official involvement has ended. Therefore, the role of trusted adults can be crucial in preventing re-victimisation (IT).

Nonetheless, most reports point out that **in practice it is very difficult to form such a relationship**. Firstly, according to the Danish country report, 'the question is how children who are already involved in trafficking and who are very smart in hiding out can meet such adults. This is particularly the case for those involved in crime and drugs.' Secondly, there is **a risk that those who come across as reliable and trusted adults**, offering advice and replacing dysfunctional relationships with the parents, **are in fact traffickers** (BG). For example, in Croatia, a 14-year-old boy fell into the hands of a paedophile, who had befriended the boy's family. Finally, in cases where relationships form after a child has experienced trafficking, those have taken several years to form, as children are usually very closed and suspicious towards any adult. This is particularly the case for unaccompanied migrant children, who tend to avoid mentioning any prior experience of ending up in the care of authorities, due to fear of being sent back.

2.3 Socioeconomic factors

Among the factors related to the socioeconomic environment at the community level where the child is brought up, the strongest risk factor pertains to the level of **social exclusion and marginalisation of vulnerable groups**, including ethnic minorities. This may also be linked to the broader level of societal cohesion, as well as the existence of employment opportunities at local level and for specific marginalised groups. A second crucial risk factor is the extent to which the community tolerates specific forms of exploitation of children, e.g. child labour, as this influences both the family's and the child's view on whether or not a certain activity is considered exploitation and trafficking.

With regard to resilience, the general level of access of children and their families to protection and support is considered a very strong mechanism to avoid victimisation, with specific intervention strategies at the community level greatly enhancing the chances of detecting children at risk and assisting victims to prevent a recurrent trafficking episode. As supporting factors of resilience, practitioners have also emphasised access to education, including on online safety and rights of the child, as well as access to health care. Having a system of guardianship has also been identified among the socioeconomic determinants of resilience, although this seems less important than the others. Peer networks are influential, and it is critical to note that they can act both as resilience and as a risk factor.

Risk/resilience factor	Country reports where it was mentioned	Country reports where it was mentioned — local-level interviewees
Level of social exclusion and marginalisation of particular vulnerable groups (-)	BG, CZ, DK, ES, FR, CY, LT, HU, PL, RO	BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, FR, LT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK (risk) IT, HU (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Employment opportunities at local level (-)	ES, AT, PL, RO, SI, UK	See also level of societal cohesion
Level of social cohesion (+/-)	CZ, IE, FR, IT, PL, SI, UK	CZ, IE, AT (risk when absent)
Prior prevalence and tolerance in the community of cases of sexual exploitation, child labour and child begging (-)	BG, DK, DE, EL, IT, SI	BG, DK, IE, ES, IT, AT, PL, PT, SK, FI, UK (risk)

Risk/resilience factor	Country reports where it was mentioned	Country reports where it was mentioned — local-level interviewees
Existence of peer groups (+/-)	BG, ES, CY, SI	BG, DK, DE, CY, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, FI, UK (resilience) BG, DK, ES, HU, RO (risk) MT (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Access to education (+)	DE, EL, ES, CY, PL, RO, SI	BE, BG, DE, FR, IT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, FI, UK (resilience) DK (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Access to education on online safety (+)	EL, CY, LT, HU	DK, ES, FR, LV, HU, MT, PL, PT, RO, FI (resilience)
Access to education on rights of the child (+)	ES, CY	DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK (resilience)
Access to health care (+)	DE	FR, IT, CY, HU, MT, RO, FI, UK (resilience) DK (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Existence of intervention strategies at the grass roots/community level (+)	LT, HU, MT, RO, SI	BG, DK, EL, MT, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK (resilience)
Access to protection and support (+)	BG, DK, EL, LT, HU, RO	CZ, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, UK (resilience)

2.3.1 Level of social exclusion and marginalisation of particular vulnerable groups, including discrimination, lack of employment opportunities and social cohesion at local level (-)

Social exclusion and marginalisation are among the key determinants of vulnerability, as they are linked to discrimination, poverty, lack of employment options, and propensity towards taking risks and believing the promises of traffickers. Passing on of dependency and trafficking from parents to children is more common among marginalised groups. Generalisations on the link between marginalisation and ethnicity have been advised against by practitioners.

Most country reports agree that **belonging to a socially excluded and marginalised group in society is among the most important risk factors related to trafficking of children** (BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, FR, IT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, UK). Mainly, marginalisation is associated with discrimination, isolation, poverty and lack of employment and economic opportunities, but marginal groups in society might also lack access to education and health care opportunities. Most commonly, **marginalisation fuels sentiments of lack of options, despair and propensity towards taking risks** in order to avoid the situation one is in. The Slovenian country report notes that social exclusion paired with lack of income can motivate a tendency towards tolerating or encouraging practices of child labour and begging. This is confirmed by several reports that acknowledge that some form of abuse or exploitation towards the child has been more commonly observed among marginalised communities (CZ, IT, PL). Thereby, there is also a strong interplay with family factors such as material deprivation, and also with some form of family disruption (e.g. when the parents are forced to migrate and leave the child in the care of relatives).

A 17-year-old girl from a marginalised community in Bulgaria started contact online with her traffickers. The lack of prospects for finding a job, her minimal social contacts, as well as a limited awareness of risks, made her believe their promises of a job as a waitress, and were crucial for her ignoring strong signs of danger when transported to Austria. Only when her passport was taken away and she was physically assaulted did she realise she had been trafficked.

The **link between social exclusion and ethnicity** has been noted by many practitioners (BE, BG, CZ, DE, AT, PT, SI, SK). Ethnicity is in turn connected to the existence of specific customs and traditions in the community that may impact the vulnerability to trafficking. Children from the Roma community have been observed to be more commonly trafficked for the purposes of begging and pickpocketing, which are considered as common and accepted forms of income generation among certain Roma groups (BG, CZ, PL). Child victims of trafficking from Somalia, Ghana and Nigeria often were also often found to belong to some marginalised ethnic groups, and exploiting and sending them abroad was influenced by beliefs and traditions such as Kafala and Juju⁽³⁰⁾ (BE, CY, PT, UK).

⁽³⁰⁾ Juju, sometimes known as voodoo or magic, is a significant part of West African culture. Juju involves the manipulation of spiritual powers and was feared because of the harm this could bring. What is Juju?, <http://www.antitraffickingconsultants.co.uk/juju> (checked on 4.5.2015).

Nevertheless, researchers appear to agree that, firstly, **generalising the link between ethnicity and trafficking is not correct** and, secondly, that even when a certain association between the two can be made, it is **discrimination, exclusion and the resulting poor socioeconomic status that are the main factors influencing the risk of being trafficked rather than ethnicity as such** (BE, EL, CY, AT, RO, SI). This is pointed out in the British and Bulgarian country reports, which demonstrate for the African and Roma context respectively, that there is a stronger exclusion among certain subgroups within the ethnic community, and in turn there is a higher occurrence of child trafficking among those. The Finnish report also speaks of the exclusion within communities rather than of communities as such, including belonging to a family with a lower status, or being orphaned. This is also seen in specific instances of discrimination and exclusion of LGBT children within certain African communities, which pushes such children to run away and live in fear and uncertainty (UK).

In Romania, a country with a significantly high Roma population in the EU, the country report stresses that originating from or belonging to an ethnic minority is not per se a factor of vulnerability; this is also confirmed in the Bulgarian country report, which clarifies that contrary to the common belief that child begging or selling children for marriage are a widespread practice common for all Roma families, according to specialists, only small numbers of Roma families from specific subgroups are engaged in such practices.

It should be noted that **marginalised groups might also exhibit a multi-generational tendency with regard to trafficking and exploitation** (CZ). This means that trafficked children can be from families in which also the parents were at one point trafficked or exploited. The Finland, Ireland and Germany country reports all refer to cases of trafficked children with mothers who were in prostitution. The Danish country report notes that in some cases, marginalised groups tend to try to resolve their lack of income by travelling to other parts of the country and abroad, looking for employment opportunities. As a consequence, **the culture of mobility may be perceived by children as a normal part of coping strategies, hence making children easier to coax into travelling, ultimately leading them to engage in risky actions.**

The degree of social cohesion is a less important, though specific, factor that can influence child trafficking (CZ, IE, FR, AT, PL, SI, UK). It is thus both a risk and resilience factor. As noted in the French report, the fewer social ties and less commitment towards common well-being that exist in a community, the higher the probability that children at risk find themselves in isolation and therefore with less defence vis-à-vis adult criminals (FR). Nonetheless, most reports abstain from noting specific regions as bearing a higher risk for children to become victims of trafficking. Wherever mentioned, geographical factors and living in a structurally deprived region have been identified because of the high degree of poverty and marginalisation that exist there, rather than because of lacking social cohesion (IE, AT). Poverty may drive families and communities apart in their efforts to improve their individual situation. Here, the Romanian country report notes the link to seasonal work, during which a large part of the family emigrates, and consequently the parental monitoring and care over children, and the possibility of any support from the community, weaken. Also noted by some reports are notions of shame and unwillingness to confront situations of abuse or suspected trafficking by some members in the community, who feel that reporting what they observe may bring them trouble with their neighbours (BG, IE).

Prior existence in the community of cases of sexual exploitation, child labour and child begging (–)

A community with a high incidence of prior cases of sexual exploitation can increase vulnerability of children by making those both more exposed to potential perpetrators and more prone to accept the exploitation once it occurs. Children trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation often come from communities where working from a young age is considered normal.

Many country reports note that children coming from communities where there have been previous cases of exploitation are at a higher risk of being trafficked, and many of the trafficked children indeed come from such communities (BG, DK, IE, ES, IT, AT, PL, PT, SK, FI, UK). In addition, those communities are usually the ones identified as marginalised and characterised by poverty and social exclusion. In these, there appears to be some difference between sexual exploitation and child labour and child begging. The Spanish report explains how stories of the potential success of migration spread around in a community and thus create false expectations and desire to explore such opportunities. Those may prompt parents to agree to sending their children abroad, knowing or not knowing that they could be trafficked. It may also create a situation where a family sees other families benefiting from sending their children abroad and closing their eyes to the possible exploitation, and engages, in turn, in this behaviour.

As regards **sexual exploitation, this is linked to the existence of specific areas and regions where prostitution is widespread** and the community knows and tolerates this as it is a source of income for many (HU, AT). In these cases, poverty and a low socioeconomic status are key drivers and may push adolescent girls and boys into entering such practices, as they know they are not only lucrative, but also accepted by the local community. There may be widespread and long-lasting practices of exploitation of children in a certain (marginalised) community, which are based exclusively on pressure and coercion by a large group in the community, as evidenced by a widely publicised case of child trafficking in the British city of Rotherham. As previously noted, prior prevalence of sexual exploitation relates to cases where parents in prostitution make their children follow in their footsteps (DE, IE, AT).

A report by the Rotherham Borough Council found that over a period of 15 years (1997-2013), at least 1 400 children, some as young as 11, were raped by multiple perpetrators, abducted, trafficked to other cities in England, beaten and intimidated. Both the authorities and the wider community were found to have known what was going on, but had failed to intervene.

Child labour, as well as forcing children to beg, is more strongly linked to **traditional practices and perceptions in the community as to what constitutes exploitation and what does not**. Several reports point out that in the culture of certain ethnic groups, such as parts of the Roma minority, as well as in some South-East Asian countries (Vietnam, parts of China), both child labour and sending children to beg are considered acceptable sources of family income, and are not necessarily seen as an act of crime and exploitation (CZ, ES, PL, PT). At the national level, the Bulgarian country report described how in some Roma communities, girls are trained from a very young age to pickpocket, and are then sent abroad to earn the family income, which can be considerable (AT). Therefore, material deprivation may not necessarily be a factor; however the combination of cultural beliefs, patriarchal structures in the family and discrimination against girls emerges as a powerful determinant of vulnerability. This can also be confirmed by examples of trafficked children from certain African and Asian communities, where child labour is considered normal.

2.3.2 Existence of peer groups in the community (+/-)

Peer groups may provide substantial resilience to children, by spotting signs of risk and exploitation and replacing parents as confidants; however, albeit less pronounced, peer groups can also increase the risk of being trafficked, as peers can be themselves linked to the perpetrators.

Peer groups, most commonly established at school or in the neighbourhood, have been identified as influential in the context of child trafficking by many country reports (BG, DK, DE, CY, HU, MT, AT, PL, RO, SI, UK). The Austria, Germany and Bulgaria country reports stress that **a peer-to-peer information flow, especially among school peers, can be a strong resilience factor for children who are for the first time at risk of being trafficked**. Firstly, it can provide an additional push for children to take notice of awareness-raising campaigns on the topic of trafficking in schools. The children's interest is often only triggered when their peers appear interested in the subject as well. In Austria, following an awareness-raising campaign on forced marriages, peer networks appeared to be effective in taking up the issue in their informal discussions. Secondly, it may enable **children who would otherwise not confide in their parents or families to discuss with their peers** their situation and the potential risk they might suspect. Thirdly, it may spread the word about different possibilities for assistance, e.g. NGOs and designated support groups. Finally, peer-to-peer support may work even without the potential victim asking for assistance. This is the case when a friend or a schoolmate has some awareness and knowledge on the topic of trafficking and recognises risk signs of abuse and potential of trafficking even before the victim does (SI).

A Dutch girl of 15 years was being groomed by an older boy who she considered to be her boyfriend. After a while, he convinced her to have sex with other men in order to help him solve his financial difficulties. A schoolmate of the girl noticed changes in her behaviour, and, after observing the boy being aggressive to her, notified the school authorities, which in turn contacted youth protection services and placed the girl in a protected emergency shelter.

Peer networks appear even more important in the context of prevention of re-victimisation (CY, HU, AT, PL and UK). In this context, **peer support is understood mainly as coming from children with similar experiences** (UK), however, some practitioners also point out how important it is that the overall school environment is understanding and supportive of a child that has gone through trafficking in order to avoid stigmatisation (BG, PL). Having access to children who have had similar experiences, for instance in self-help groups, may facilitate the contact with specialised support structures like helplines and shelters; it may also help children feel accepted and not judged by their peers. As stated by one British practitioner, ‘Having peer support makes a huge difference and turns people’s lives around — because you know you’re not the only person it has happened to’.

On the other hand, a number of country reports point out the risks involved in having peer networks. Denmark explains that **peers, especially those who have been victims of trafficking themselves, may become active recruiters** at a later stage, and may exercise a substantial level of pressure and control over younger children in an effort to keep them affiliated to the traffickers. The Hungarian and Romanian reports also acknowledge that peers should not be excluded from the potential list of possible recruiters, and several practitioners in both countries enumerate cases where indeed the peer network has been a strong and leading risk factor, working through a combination of grooming, leading by example, and pressure. In Bulgaria, according to the country report, in the context of trafficking of girls for sexual exploitation, the role of girls who display a luxury lifestyle and legitimise and promote prostitution and trafficking towards their peers has been highlighted.

2.3.3 Access to protection and support (+)

The majority of local-level reports emphasise the importance of having access to the various services of the social protection system, including social workers, housing, psychologists, childcare facilities, cultural mediators, child protection services, law enforcement and police. The latter two have been commonly noted as services that may lack understanding towards child victims of trafficking and treat them as perpetrators instead. In order for those various services to be a part of the resilience strategy in cases of child trafficking, they should function in coordination and coherence, following an inter-agency approach.

Among the most important protection and support mechanisms mentioned in the reports are **social workers that carry out outreach work** (CZ, DK, DE, ES, FR, CY, HU, PL, SI). Social workers have a dual role: firstly, they can be crucial with regard to identification of children at risk and provide first instance intervention, counselling and prevention advice, including information on designated specialist facilities and services; and secondly they are greatly involved in the follow-up support for victims. The majority of reports emphasise that in order to be effective in their support for child victims of trafficking, social workers require specific skills and training. The Germany country report explains that staff need to be aware of the hidden signals and hints that children may give in order to identify and understand cases of child trafficking. Spanish and Slovenian practitioners underline proactiveness and flexibility, coupled with freedom to be able to intervene, as the necessary approach for social workers in the field. At the same time, the Czech country report draws attention to the difference that may exist between the availability and quality of social workers in rural areas, an issue that has also been flagged in the Bulgarian national-level report.

Austrian social workers played a crucial role in identifying an underage victim of trafficking in the red light area in Vienna. They approached her by pretending to be giving out flyers, and managed to secretly talk to her. Social workers also collaborated with the police to intervene under a false pretext, so that they did not jeopardise her safety by revealing that she had asked for help.

The Austria, Cyprus and UK country reports emphasise the **crucial role of emergency housing and shelter services**, which should provide a child with much-needed rest and a feeling of some safety before any further intervention is made in terms of assessing their situation and referring it further. Access to specialised psychological counselling is a further step that has been identified by practitioners in Hungary and Luxembourg, especially in order to prevent re-victimisation, but also to assist victims in realising and coming to terms with what has happened to them. As a more advanced approach, the availability of **specialised housing and shelters to provide assistance to child victims of trafficking** is identified as a fundamental part of the resilience strategy by several country reports, such as those from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Romania, where such services exist. Although not without criticism about how they function (e.g. Bulgarian practitioners disapprove of the practice of mixing child trafficking victims with delinquent adolescent children, and also boys and girls in the specialised shelters), such shelters appear

to be most equipped to cater for victims of trafficking due to the mix of legal, health, psychological and social services they provide. In the context of comprehensive care, the Italian report also mentions the role that additional services might play for prevention of re-victimisation. Among those identified are sport, culture and leisure opportunities, as well as having an alternative plan for livelihood, e.g. through gaining access to vocational training (IT).

Access to police and law enforcement agencies has also been noted as a part of the protection and support services that should be at the disposal of children at risk of trafficking (CZ, DE, IE, EL, FR, IT, HR, CY). However, most of the reports that acknowledge the importance of police and law enforcement also note **the ambivalent role that police officers, judges and prosecutors may have whenever they lack appropriate training on how to deal with child victims of trafficking**. Often, children are treated as offenders and not recognised as victims in their own right. This is particularly the case for children involved in prostitution or pickpocketing (CZ, DE, IE, EL, FR, IT). As noted by a practitioner quoted in the Greek report ‘when a girl victim of sex trafficking is around 16 years old she might be treated as a prostitute instead of a victim’. This opinion is shared in several other country reports, with the German country reports emphasising that given that the police are one of the first institutions that trafficked children might turn to in an effort to escape from their situation, ‘there is a huge need to sensitise and train police officers on the topic’. The Danish report offers another perspective on this problem, namely whenever the child fears that it might be deported due to its status as an irregular migrant. In this respect, cultural mediators and specialised linguists with more understanding of the social and specific cultural background of the child could offer added value to the ‘standard’ social and protection services in cases of unaccompanied migrant children (ES, IT).

In the context of the various social and protection services, many country reports explicitly point out the **need for coordinated, multi-agency referral systems and child protection systems**, which provide comprehensive and timely, targeted support to children at risk (BG, DE, EL, FR, IT, LU, AT, PT, RO, FI). The German country report is affirmative in saying that ‘No authority, institution or organisation can handle a good and adequate support of child victims alone, but needs to cooperate with others’. The lack of sufficient cooperation has been seen as an important risk factor, which may greatly increase the risk for vulnerable children (FR, IT). The Greek country report refers to this precarious situation as the ‘compartmentalisation between services and strategies’. A comprehensive approach towards the provision of services, a continuous exchange of information between practitioners, collaboration between state services and NGOs, and competence and professionalism of all those involved are all desired characteristics of strong protection and support.

2.3.4 Access to education (+)

Access to education is an important resilience factor not only in terms of formal classroom training, but crucially as it can give children a sense of a long-term direction and goal in life. It is also important in terms of access to peer networks and monitoring by teachers, however there is a certain bias as often the most vulnerable children are those that will not be attending school regularly.

Beyond providing a basic level of literacy, education can be a resilience factor at the individual level, as being able to attend school is recognised by many country reports as important for preventing trafficking for several other reasons. According to the Belgian country report, ‘Schools and child services play another important role in detecting behavioural changes in the child that may indicate a situation of trafficking’.

Firstly, several country reports point out that **access to education allows children access to peer groups** and also subjects them to some level of **monitoring by teachers** (BE, IT, LU, PT, SI). In fact, peer groups in school are the most commonly mentioned ones in the context of the previous section. The role of teachers in this respect is also crucial, as underlined by the Italian and Luxembourg reports. Teachers have a formal role in monitoring attendance and contacting parents if they see a child is absent without a reason. However, they also may act as trusted adults and role models, providing advice and even replacing specific parental functions whenever such are missing. Thus, teachers have a role that ‘goes beyond that of mere didactic education’ (IT).

In Estonia, a 14-year-old girl who was trafficked within Estonia by her own mother and channelled into prostitution caught the attention of teachers at school, due to her frequent absences and odd behaviour. The girl confided in the teachers, who alerted the police. The mother was arrested, convicted and lost her parental rights, and the girl was moved into a shelter.

Access to education, especially one that includes professional training, may give children a sense of longer-term direction and a goal in life, by giving them opportunities for continuing their education and developing a vocation (BG, DE, FR, IT, SI, FI). Bulgaria, Germany, France and Italy all underline that children who regularly attend school may increase their resilience by developing a certain vision on how they want to develop and which direction they want to take, including choosing a specific educational path. This may make them less prone to the promises of traffickers. The Slovenian country report points out that enrolment in and completion of high school is particularly important for developing certain life skills. In this respect, the French country report links access to education to critical thinking and the ability to develop a 'critical sense of reality', something which is also mentioned in the report from Italy. It should be noted that developing such awareness is not necessarily linked to the level of formal education, but rather to the role of schools in developing life skills and abilities. The same report also specifically underlines that attending high school is a strong resilience factor in the context of forced marriages. Another crucial aspect of having access to education is that attending school keeps children occupied and away from other potentially more dangerous environments and milieus, such as the street, hanging out in cafes, etc. (AT).

Access to education seems to be **linked to the socioeconomic situation of the parents**. In cases when the family encourages child labour, be it for reasons related to cultural traditions, or due to material deprivation, it most often comes at the expense of attending school (PL). In the national-level reports from Bulgaria and Romania, access to education has been highlighted as important especially for some Roma girls, who are more likely to be kept away from attending. The Hungarian country report notes that vulnerable children usually drop out very early from the traditional educational system. This is also confirmed by the Austrian and British reports, which note that among cases of trafficked children, many have never or rarely attended school, or are illiterate despite some formal attendance. The Slovenian country report links illiteracy to the educational services not being adequately adjusted to the educational needs of children. This concerns especially those children coming from vulnerable groups, and includes the insufficient standards and methods used to deal with their limited attendance and unsatisfactory grades. Sometimes, poor education may also have to do with marginalisation and simple lack of geographical access to educational facilities, especially with regard to high schools and vocational training for children from rural areas (RO).

2.3.5 Access to education on online safety and on rights of the child (+)

Because of their direct reference to the subject of trafficking, educational campaigns and sessions targeting online safety as well as children's rights have been often mentioned as a supporting resilience factor. Yet the importance of such campaigns and initiatives depends on their quality, on participation, and on having overall access to school.

The general importance of education on online safety is recognised by the France, Poland, Portugal and Romania country reports, while concrete examples of how this has worked in practice come from Denmark and Latvia. In Latvia, there is a dedicated organisation called Netsave, which provides training in schools on online safety. The Italy country report also mentions that there are specialised organisations that provide awareness-raising in schools on topics of online safety and children's rights. In this context, a Bulgarian practitioner made a somewhat critical remark about the integration of such activities within the normal school curriculum, and noted that in Bulgaria they are usually offered as an elective class on top of the usual hours, which makes it less visited by children. The practitioner therefore suggests that **specific education and awareness raising related to trafficking should be obligatory, particularly in more vulnerable communities and areas**, and should be followed up by discussions and regular reflection. Whenever provided in this form, it has been found to be effective.

Denmark has developed and launched a comprehensive pilot information and awareness-raising campaign targeted towards young Afghan children who have become victims of trafficking, with the goal of preventing re-victimisation. The participants recognised detection of risks, including through online contacts, as well as knowledge of their rights, and of possible support mechanisms and facilities, as key benefits of the programme.

Another group of country reports emphasise **the importance of knowledge on rights of the child** (EL, FR, CY, RO). The Romanian country report points out that it may be more important as a resilience factor than knowledge of online safety, as in rural areas access to internet is not a given. The Ireland, Spain and Italy country reports all point out that there is insufficient information in this regard, and children are often lacking awareness of what is lawfully right and wrong and where they can obtain specialised help. French and Cypriot country reports point out that such education is best given by using concrete and specific examples of different situations where rights are violated, including those where a child becomes a victim of trafficking. The Greek country report concludes that such

initiatives may be rolled out in schools also for younger age groups, by using adapted examples and **an accessible language and visual material**.

2.3.6 Access to health care (+)

Access to health care services and medical examinations can increase resilience by discovering signs of abuse and exploitation, but it depends on the adequate training and understanding of medical staff.

Having access to health care services is an important resilience factor, as it might **detect specific health issues in a child**, e.g. related to abuse, but also psychological problems, which could be the trigger for involving social and other protection services (FR, RO). The Italian country report also highlights that health care services and screening of children can accurately detect situations of trafficking. In Malta, access to health care services has also been described as important for providing a confidential setting, where a child may be more inclined to disclose some information it has been hiding. In this respect, the country report points out the importance of having medical staff adequately trained and alert towards the sensitivities of the trafficking problem and the signs related to it, both in terms of prevention of first occurrence of trafficking and of re-victimisation. The UK country report confirms this view, and cites practitioners who criticise **the lack of specific and targeted mental health support mechanisms**, and notes that mainstream mental health practitioners do not possess the required understanding and sensitivity concerning the needs and problems of trafficked children.

2.3.7 Existence of intervention strategies at the grass roots/community level (+)

A local-level coordinated intervention strategy, including awareness raising, child protection services and employment promotion, can strongly support resilience. Attracting elders as champions and equipping members of the community for specialised work can be particularly helpful among marginalised groups.

Specific, community-focused intervention strategies that aim to reduce the risk of trafficking were acknowledged as a resilience factor by several reports (EL, AT, PT, RO, SI, UK). Such a strategy might comprise the **provision of outreach, child protection and counselling services at local level and according to needs**, but also includes devising employment promotion measures in an area characterised by a higher degree of marginalisation and social exclusion. Such intervention strategies at the community level should also be developed and implemented in a **holistic and coordinated manner** and act as an auxiliary measure next to a general multi-agency approach described in the previous section. Also noted by practitioners were the provision of information and awareness-raising campaigns, activities targeting parents, as well as training of professionals that come from the community itself. **Targeting community elders and leaders** and making them champions of the fight against child trafficking is emphasised by the Slovenian country report in the context of ending the practice of child marriages, and by the UK country report for cases of domestic servitude linked to certain African communities.

2.4 Structural factors

Structural factors that may influence vulnerability or resilience among children at risk of trafficking relate to those characteristics, attitudes and policies that go beyond the community level and are relevant for the broader country or societal level. Among such factors, the most important ones with regard to risk are related to **gender inequality, gender stereotypes, the overall societal attitude and tolerance towards child abuse, violence, discrimination and inequality**. Whenever there is a general culture in society that assigns a lower status to women and children and sees domestic violence as normal and acceptable, this is considered as a strong trigger for family-risk factors, such as abuse and maintaining of patriarchal structures, especially in interplay with material deprivation. Subsequently, this may impact on an array of individual factors, such as level of education, awareness level towards risks, and psychological condition. This is also related to the issue of demand and criminalising those who abuse, exploit or use victims. Practitioners do note differences in the culture of tolerance towards discrimination, violence and inequality among the different Member States, and also point out the role of media and awareness raising as resilience tools to form and influence public opinion and attention towards the extent of trafficking and exploitation in the country. Biased, sensational reporting of the media, and lack of knowledge on how to recognise and report situations of risk, as well as lack of understanding and empathy towards victims of trafficking are therefore manifestations of the general culture in society with regard to gender-based violence and discrimination. Less common

risk factors that have nevertheless received some acknowledgment from practitioners are the role of humanitarian emergencies, which may trigger a whole causal chain of tragic events leading up to child trafficking, but which are nevertheless confined to certain countries and regions; the legal and policy framework for migration and asylum; as well as the quality of the legal system, especially the interpretation and application of child-friendly law and the duration of legal proceedings.

As regards resilience, the key factor cited by practitioners from the local-level reports is the overall functioning of the child protection and social support system, which, similarly to what has been concluded at the community level, should be able to establish efficient links between its different branches. The strength of the national reporting and monitoring system that focuses on children is an important supporting resilience factor, as is the existence of designated intervention strategies at the national level targeting the issue of child trafficking. **The system of guardianship**, which is another part of the child protection system which was discussed at the level of socioeconomic factor, was also mentioned by several reports as a resilience determinant at the broader societal level.

Risk/resilience factor	Country reports where it was mentioned	Country reports where it was mentioned — local-level interviewees
Culture of tolerance towards violence against women, youth and children, sexual violence, inequality and gender discrimination (–)	DK, ES, FR, IT, HR, CY, HU, RO	BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, FR, CY, LT, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK (risk)
Visibility of victims and awareness of the societal level of exploitative practices(+)	BG, CZ, IE, EL, FR, RO, SI, UK	BE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, CY, LV, HU, MT, AT, PL, RO, SK (resilience) BG, IE, IT, LT, PT (especially on publicising individual cases not recognised as helpful)
Access to a well-functioning system of legal guardianship (+)	EL, FI	DK, DE, FR, IT, MT, PL, FI, UK (resilience)
Development of protection and support systems for children in general (+)	BG, CZ, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, IT, CY, HU, MT, AT, PL, RO, SI, SK, UK	CZ, DK, EE, ES, IT, CY, LT, LU, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, FI, UK (resilience)
Existence of national monitoring of children in situations of vulnerability (children left behind, children of imprisoned parents, children in care, etc.) (+/–)	BG, EL, ES, FR, MT, UK	DK, FR, LT, MT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI (resilience) UK (factor considered not determining by some practitioners)
Intervention strategies at country level against trafficking and child trafficking (both on supply and on demand factors) (+/–)	FR, HU, AT	CZ, DK, ES, LT, LU, MT, AT, PT, RO, SK (resilience)
Humanitarian emergencies (armed conflicts, natural disasters) (–)	EL, IT, CY, AT, PT	BE, CZ, DE, EE, IE, HU, AT, PT, RO, SK, FI (risk)
Other (*): Awareness of child protection law in the judicial system and among the police (+/–)	BG, DK, HU, UK	BG, FR, PL, SI, UK (risk when lacking)
Other: underdeveloped/scattered policies (–)	PT	IT, LT (risk)
Other: Legal framework for migration and asylum (–)	IT	DK, DE, IE, ES, IT, AT, FI, SE (resilience when strong)
Other: Child labour legislation and monitoring system (+/–)	DK, IT	
Excessive duration of legal proceedings		BG, DE, PL (risk for re-victimisation)

(*) Other factors are discussed in the context of the overall development of protection and support systems, but have been flagged as separate elements in order to underline their importance.

2.4.1 Culture of tolerance towards violence against women, youth and children, sexual violence, inequality, and gender discrimination (–)

Discrimination and violence against women and children may increase vulnerability by enforcing dependency and expectations to accept imposed behavioural norms, including sexualised behaviour, child labour and forced marriages.

Many country reports recognise that a **general attitude in society to assign a lower status to women and children**, and to tolerate violence, including sexual violence, and exploitation thereof, is a crucial risk factor that **may aggravate more specific individual or family-based determinants of vulnerability** for child trafficking (BG, EE, IE, ES, FR, IT, CY, LT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, FI, UK). Country reports like those from Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland and Romania specifically

note that women and children are more often discriminated against, and there is a general tendency to accept domestic violence and corporal punishment. The Romanian report notes that children are raised to believe and accept such behaviour as normal, and in turn grow up to pass it on to the next generation. Therefore, several reports link the societal attitude with the history of abuse in the family (CY, LT, PL). As regards women and girls, the Bulgarian and Portuguese country reports note that **gender-based discrimination manifests itself in a trend towards machismo, combined with objectifying women** and hyper-sexualisation of children. In turn, this may also increase the risk of a girl accepting a situation of trafficking, especially in the cases of grooming, which often start with the perpetrator asking the girl to have sex with a friend of his as a 'favour'. The Italian country report explains that trafficking of girls and women of 16 to 20 years old from Romania, and other eastern European countries is based on the 'confused role of being partner and trafficker' (IT). In turn, the Polish country report notes that in such circumstances victims may be afraid to turn to the police due to social stigma and fear of being mistreated by police. This is also confirmed by the Germany country report, which describes an understanding among staff of existing support structures that prostitution is a cultural phenomenon linked to certain ethnicities and societal groups rather than a real problem. As a consequence, support for victims of sexual exploitation may be of lower quality.

A 14-year-old Estonian girl with learning and developmental disabilities from a rural area was sexually abused and exploited by a large group of men from the local neighbourhood. They kidnapped her and brought her to other towns where they forced her into prostitution. Despite signals from her family to the police and to social services, and a widespread knowledge among the community about what was going on, it took over 2 years to acknowledge the situation and start an official investigation.

It should be noted that a higher level of tolerance of violence against women and children and gender-based discrimination is also noted for other countries besides eastern and southern European ones. The UK country report mentions the situation in some Caribbean societies, where strongly sexualised behaviour of very young girls is encouraged, and there is an acceptance of sexual relations between an adult and a child. A similar situation is described in the Irish report about trafficked girls from Nigeria, where there is a culture of acceptance and a prevalence of prostitution, sexual exploitation and abuse against women. Nigerian girls trafficked to Ireland for the purposes of sexual exploitation were found to have in general no expectations other than getting married young, usually into an arranged match. Thus, a situation in which the girl and her family agree to be sent abroad for the purposes of marriage does not raise any concern in terms of risk of trafficking. In other cases, violence against children finds its expression in the encouragement and acceptance of child labour, as for instance in countries like the Philippines, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where children are expected to work from a very young age and are punished severely if they refuse to comply with their family's will. In such cases, patriarchal family structures also play a strong role, as does the existence of poverty and material deprivation in the family, which may form a powerful combination of risk factors for a child to be placed in the hands of traffickers (AT). Similar linkages between gender-based violence and discrimination against women with other risk factors have been described for parts of the Roma community, especially as regards child marriages and labour exploitation of children (PL, RO, SI), but also in view of the lower societal status attributed to girls. An interesting perspective is offered by the Italian country report, which explains that even if there is no explicit tolerance towards violence and exploitation of women and children, the mere denial of its occurrence is just as detrimental.

4.4.2 Visibility of victims and awareness on the societal level of exploitative practices (+)

The visibility of victims in terms of their stories being known and awareness on the societal level of exploitative practices is a crucial resilience factor, according to many country reports. However, it is often not present, and thus works counterproductively as a factor increasing the risk for a child to become a victim of trafficking. Awareness-raising campaigns in the media, which have also targeted specific institutions and authorities, have been recognised as helpful, although opinions do diverge as to whether specific cases of trafficked children should be used as an illustration.

A scoping study exploring the nature and extent of child trafficking in Scotland found **generally low levels of awareness and differing attitudes towards child trafficking in society** (UK). Also in Belgium, practitioners have noted very low levels of awareness among police and the public about domestic trafficking. Grooming and child trafficking are mostly still seen as a cross-border phenomenon, focused towards trafficking of babies and similar sensational types of exploitation, whereas the prevalence of domestic trafficking for sexual exploitation is widely disregarded. Finland

points to the same issue, and underlines that there is a widespread belief that children who are trafficked are only asylum seekers or immigrants. A similar conclusion is presented in the Czech country report, noting that in general, risks of child trafficking in society are underestimated. A passive role of the community is also observed in Romania: due to a lack of information and awareness on the characteristics of the phenomenon of trafficking, the community does not take action to protect or prevent child trafficking (RO).

Awareness-raising campaigns in the media and also integrated in the school curriculum are seen as an effective measure to sensitise the general public towards the issue of child trafficking (BE, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, FR, CY, LV, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK). Most reports suggest that the publication of real stories and cases, under strict adherence to anonymity rules, is the most effective way to draw the attention of society to the many signs and pitfalls of trafficking, and to end common misperceptions and ignorance on the subject. As summarised in the Greek country report, 'short audio-visual content raises interest and a story is much more attention-catching than an informative leaflet'. In Poland, according to the country report, higher levels of public reaction were noted after cases were broadcast on television. Concrete cases of children being trafficked were found to have an impact in awareness-raising campaigns among children, who may recognise and identify some similarities between the cases described and their own personal situation (EL, MT, PT, and SI).

However, country reports like those on Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain and Italy are **more critical of the effectiveness of awareness-raising media campaigns focused on using specific cases as examples**. In the Bulgarian country report, there is concern that although reporting by using specific cases may attract attention, publicising of certain dramatic stories of child trafficking is perceived as sensationalist. Moreover, using real life cases may lead to issues with protecting the anonymity of the victims. In Spain, the researchers point out that the selection of specific, more sensational cases to be published in the media leads to a situation of misrepresentation, where there is a lot of attention given to certain types of trafficking, such as illegal adoption of babies and sexual exploitation, while others like domestic servitude or child begging are much less noted in media, although in reality they are also prevalent. In Italy, some practitioners have suggested that publicising the stories of traffickers and exposing their practices in more detail may be more effective for the purposes of awareness raising than the stories of child victims.

Awareness-raising is considered to be more effective when done in a well thought out, targeted manner (IE, LT, PT, RO, SI). The Ireland country report notes mixed views on the usefulness of general awareness-raising campaigns, and emphasises a **differential approach towards specific vulnerable and marginalised communities**, as well as towards the institutions and authorities involved, as more appropriate. The Portugal and Romania country reports also underline the importance of targeted awareness-raising campaigns, for instance by reaching out to schools in marginalised areas, by supporting peer-to-peer awareness raising activities, and also presenting to specific communities cases of victims of trafficking (RO). The Slovenian country report suggests that the latter may be a particularly helpful approach in relation to child marriage, in order for girls at risk to hear from someone with a similar cultural background that child marriage is exploitation and illegal. Latvian practitioners point out that while targeting may happen towards parents at school, the parents of the children most vulnerable towards trafficking are often the ones who will not attend teacher-parent meetings, due to lack of interest or lack of time.

2.4.3 Access to a well-functioning system of legal guardianship (+)

A guardian is of high importance for improving the resilience among the particularly at-risk group of unaccompanied migrant children, and can assist not only in legal terms, but also act a confidant and assist in identifying victims of trafficking among unaccompanied migrant children. However, in some countries, the system of guardianship seems to be inefficient and underdeveloped ⁽³¹⁾.

The timely appointment of an adequately trained guardian has been especially noted for unaccompanied migrant children as a factor that may positively influence resilience (DE, FR, IT, MT, SI, FI, UK). German practitioners in the context of this study agree that **guardians play a key role** not only for liaising with the legal system that the trafficked child is usually not familiar with, but also for promoting the well-being and development of children that have been deprived of parental care. Guardians **can also be instrumental in detecting risk cases** among unaccompanied

⁽³¹⁾ For more information on guardianship across the EU, see 'Guardianship for children deprived of parental care: A handbook to reinforce guardianship systems to cater for the specific needs of child victims of trafficking', FRA-European Commission, 2014, https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/guardianship-children-deprived-parental-care-handbook-reinforce-guardianship-systems-cater_en

migrant children, and can act as a link with the police and support services (SI). The proper functioning and the preventive role of the system of guardianship was stressed in the French, Italian and UK country reports (for Scotland), but in countries like Italy, Malta and Germany, according to the country reports, there appear to be problems regarding its effectiveness, given the only **superficial level of interaction between guardian and child**. For instance in Italy there is one person ('commissioner') acting as legal guardian for all children, which makes the development of a personal relationship of mutual trust at the individual level of each child very difficult. Finally, the French country report touches upon an important issue that has been noted in several other reports as well, namely that 'what is often missing is the possibility for a foreign child to directly denounce his/her traffickers and ask for asylum and protection on the grounds of trafficking.' This suggests that a trafficked child may choose not to turn to the authorities out of fear of being brought back to the country of origin.

2.4.4 Development of protection and support systems for children in general (+/-)

One of the most important and complex factors is the development and functioning of the overall protection and support systems for children. Those are crucial both in countries of origin and in destination countries, and should fulfil a specific role in terms of first instance prevention of victimisation on the one hand, and avoidance of re-victimisation on the other hand. As such, they can be both a resilience and a risk factor. Regular training of professionals and especially of social workers and law enforcement staff, a multi-agency approach, alignment between national and local level strategies, and a strong focus on support and reintegration of victims are crucial determinants of resilience.

As a resilience factor, the development of and investment in well-functioning child protection and support systems has been noted in several countries as an important issue — both in terms of those that are actually working, and those that require further attention (CZ, EE, IE, CY, PL, PT, FI, UK). For instance, in Austria, according to the country report, the perceived improvement of policy efforts in this area in Bulgaria and Romania, paired with strong cross-border cooperation, has resulted in fewer children being trafficked to this country, according to interviewees. In Ireland, according to the researchers, the creation of a dedicated child and family agency, Tusla, has resulted in great improvements in the care for victims of trafficking. The particular advantages of this new agency lie in the integrated approach it employs towards the trafficked and separated children. In Poland, practitioners have highlighted the work of another central agency with a specific mandate for trafficked children, the National Consulting and Intervention Centre for the Victims of Trafficking, as useful.

Regular training of professionals dealing with trafficked children is also noted as a successful approach. Specific training for prosecutors on how to deal with child victims of trafficking, the establishment of hotline services, the provision of specialised psychological counselling, more street workers dealing with the homeless and children in conflict with the law, and the setting up of shelters have all been mentioned as important elements of a comprehensive protection and support system, yet to be realised (HU). The UK country report mentions the need for continuous investment in training and sensitisation of staff likely to come in contact with child victims of trafficking. For unaccompanied migrant children and children arriving from conflict zones, the role of welfare services to welcome migrants through cultural and linguistic mediators was noted (IT). The Polish country report underlines the role of special legislation that allows for a smoother identification and placement of unaccompanied migrant child victims of trafficking from refugee centres to specialised facilities that cater for child victims of trafficking. This is also confirmed by the Irish country report, which highlights the need to provide specialised foster and residential care to vulnerable children. In Portugal, according to the country report, the role of regulation and legislation, as well as of cooperation between social, child protection and law enforcement and judicial authorities, was seen as part of the resilience approach that focuses on strengthening and further developing the child protection system.

Other crucial aspects include the **cooperation of all involved stakeholders and services**, ideally under a **designated referral mechanism**; a **dedicated police trafficking unit**; as well as a **strong legal framework in the area of guardianship, adoption and immigration** (CZ, IT, CY, PL, SK, UK). A multi-agency approach has been emphasised in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and UK country reports. For instance in the UK, the Paladin team that was based at Heathrow Airport and was dedicated to the identification of potential victims of trafficking was highlighted as a good practice, as was the network of institutional support existing in Trento, Italy. In another Italian city, Palermo, this also included the strengthening of cooperation between formal and informal networks, such as between authorities, NGOs, and community leaders. Another innovative approach was given as an example from the Ireland country report, where DNA testing has been applied in order to verify claims of adults that they are parents of a child, when no further evidence exists to confirm such claims. Such testing has proven successful in

cases of child trafficking for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation of children under the false pretext of family reunification (IE).

Whenever the **child protection system and policies** and their application were regarded as **insufficient**, practitioners as well as national-level stakeholders have tended to include this as a **major risk factor that influences victimisation** (BG, DE, ES, HR, LT, HU, RO, SI). This comprises not only specific actions and mechanisms for cases of suspected trafficking, but also extends to cover family abuse and neglect, adoption standards and procedures, as well as general support to poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups in certain areas. Also the **lack of a suitable intervention strategy at the country level** was noted as part of the development of protection and support systems. As noted in the Lithuanian country report: 'Legal and administrative frameworks, as well as certain policies in the area of human trafficking in Lithuania are lacking funding, long-term based approach, systematised action plan, coordinating institution, and finally, a long-term strategy to fight against human (child) trafficking'. Spanish practitioners have also been critical of the fragmentation of competences and the lack of a comprehensive approach to child protection systems and policies.

The **weaknesses in legal systems** and their **lack of alignment to child protection policies** are another aspect with a high risk potential. The German country report states that criminal structures involved in trafficking are able to arrange trafficking channels through a well-developed network, with excellent knowledge of the German legal system (DE). A similar issue is reported for Spain as regards children trafficked illegally from Africa. Issues in the legal system and its application are also underlined by the Romanian report, which notes that even when other social support services function well, poorly formulated laws may prevent quick intervention, especially in cases when the family is suspected to be the perpetrator.

The **lack of funding** may also hamper the functioning of the child protection system. This is confirmed in the Bulgarian report, which noted that specific issues related to the organisation of funding of institutional care facilities (as the formula for calculation is based on number of children in the institution) may influence late identification and signalling for children at risk of being trafficked living in the institution, as directors of such facilities are afraid that reporting problems will jeopardise funding. Also, **lack of sufficient funding and training for child support and welfare services**, as well as weak cooperation and coordination, are also found to play a major role in countries of origin (FR, AT). In Croatia, according to the country report, a high turnover of social workers led to a situation where staff that had been trained to identify potential victims changed positions, and there was no additional funding to train newly appointed staff.

Another aspect that may undermine the protection and support system and increase risk for children is the **lack of a well-functioning referral mechanism**. When missing, it may prevent the identification of potential victims, as for instance noted for Hungary, where cases of child prostitution are not reported to the referral system for child trafficking. Also in the Austria and Romania country reports, the lack or the poor functioning of the referral mechanism were underlined as very problematic for the early identification of victims.

Weaknesses in the specific mechanisms for the support and reintegration of identified trafficked children are a major risk factor, especially for re-victimisation. This concerns especially victims who are sent back to countries of origin. In some countries, like Cyprus and Slovenia, there are no dedicated child-focused institutions and mechanisms that are especially equipped to deal with child victims of trafficking. Thus in the case of return of children from other countries, they might be placed in juvenile educational institutions for children with behavioural problems, which are not appropriate to cater for trafficked children (ES, SI). For unaccompanied migrant children, it has been noted that once they are in the Bulgarian institutional system, they are accommodated in the same residential facilities as adults, and authorities hardly exercise any control over who the child communicates with and why.

But **even in those countries where such structures do exist, they are not fully equipped**. The **Bulgarian country report notes that** for instance the crisis centres for trafficked children in Bulgaria are not guarded by police. According to the report, the location of those centres is known, and very often traffickers await the victims outside upon their release and traffic them again (BG). The Spanish country report notes that there is **insufficient adaptive focus of the shelters for children** and they do not sufficiently support the trafficked victims in their reinsertion into society once they become adults: 'The victim care system lacks both the authority and the capacity to help the adequate social reintegration of victims' (ES). In Hungary, according to the report, assistance to victims is found to be of an ad hoc nature and is provided only for a short time period. The same report also underlines that the poor support provided to victims of child trafficking leads to these individuals lacking trust in the system and perceiving it as a sanctioning measure rather than a support structure. This also **prevents effective follow-up and reintegration**

measures, as children do not want to cooperate. Finally, the Austrian country report highlights the importance of reintegration assistance projects for victims (sufficiently long in duration and including the close environment of the victim) as a powerful strategy to avoid re-victimisation. In this respect, the rehabilitation of victims appears to be most successful if such projects can provide long-term perspectives to victims (permanent housing, education and adequate psychological assistance) (LU).

2.4.5 Existence of national monitoring of children in situations of vulnerability (children left behind, children of imprisoned parents, children in care, etc.) (+/-)

Proper monitoring of children in situations of vulnerability (and especially unaccompanied migrant children) by institutions is considered to be a strong resilience factor, which can enable identification and provide targeted support to children at risk.

Several reports acknowledge the resilience potential of a strong monitoring system for children at risk (DK, FR, MT, PT, SI, UK). In Denmark, according to the country report, the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking functions as a national observatory and experts are actively involved in cases of vulnerable children where trafficking is suspected. The Centre also has a coordination role and gathers, centralises and analyses key information on trafficking. French practitioners insist that all cases of suspected child trafficking from the French childcare system should be reported and encompassed in statistical data. The Slovenian country report highlights the need for monitoring of all children in vulnerable situations, including their school attendance.

The lack of such monitoring is a risk factor. As mentioned in the UK report, children ‘outside of normal societal structures’ tend not to be monitored closely enough, resulting in a lack of reliable data on the actual numbers of children in care in some countries of origin. This results in lack of knowledge on the numbers of children at risk and on missing children, and hampers policy development and analysis. In fact, British practitioners tend to be somewhat sceptical of the use of retrospective data as compared to real-time data as a tool to counteract and prevent child trafficking. In Denmark, the low level of awareness and sensitisation among municipal public servants seems to have contributed to a low level of screening of children.

Monitoring is especially underlined as insufficient for unaccompanied migrant children, who are traditionally a high-risk group for a cluster of countries like Spain, and Malta, but also increasingly in Member States that joined the EU more recently, like Bulgaria. The Maltese country report notes that regular checks of work permits of migrant workers make it highly unlikely that an employer (or potential exploiter) would incur the high risk of forcing a trafficked child into labour.

2.4.6 Humanitarian emergencies (armed conflicts, natural disasters) (-)

Humanitarian emergencies are relevant only for a small subset of trafficked children, but can be a powerful risk factor. Most commonly, they result in disruption of family ties (and especially orphaned children) and material deprivation, which dramatically increase vulnerability to trafficking.

The detrimental impact of humanitarian emergencies has been touched upon throughout the analysis of risk factors with respect to the disruption of family ties, the aggravated material and socioeconomic conditions it brings. Examining this particular factor goes beyond the scope of this study, as it requires a broader analysis of how conflict and humanitarian emergencies influence vulnerability and prevalence of trafficking in human beings. **Some reports highlight crisis as a particular risk factor** (CY, DK, EL, IT).

Children who come from a war-affected zone are more at risk of being trafficked, especially when there are established transport and trafficking routes from such countries. In the past, within the EU, trafficked children came mainly from the Balkan region (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo ⁽³²⁾), while nowadays it is mostly children from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan that are mentioned by practitioners as being at risk (DE, CY). Other countries of origin that have been mentioned are Mali, Somalia, Congo and Eritrea, which are all countries suffering or recovering from a violent armed conflict.

⁽³²⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

The low socioeconomic development in a country (as a result of an armed conflict, for example) appears to be a stronger push factor than the presence of a war as such. Nigeria is an illustrative case in this respect. As noted by the Danish country report, even though officially no armed conflict exists at the country level 'certain Nigerian regions can be compared to emergency settings including areas where Boko Haram reigns, inducing fierce conflicts and local displacement'. In fact, almost 20 % of all cases reported by practitioners refer to victims from Nigeria. Nevertheless, an analysis of the determining factors seems to suggest that the main risk factors were material deprivation, disruption of family ties, the socioeconomic status of the family, and the limited risk awareness. Thus, the Slovenian country report notes that an overall situation of poverty in the country might be a stronger risk factor than a humanitarian crisis.

2.5 Conclusions

The analysis of risk and resilience factors revealed that the extent to which a child is vulnerable to trafficking is only rarely determined by a single particular factor. Rather, children have usually been exposed to a combination of circumstances which have resulted in them becoming victims of trafficking. The analysis of cases provided by practitioners revealed that drawing overall conclusions on the causal relationships between factors may be particularly difficult, since each individual episode of trafficking is motivated by a specific chain of events and factors. Nevertheless, both practitioners' opinions and descriptions of individual cases allowed for the extracting of findings with regard to the relative importance of the four main groups of factors, the interplay between them, and the key elements within each group that impact risk and resilience.

At the level of broad categories of risk and resilience factors, a first important finding is that **family circumstances and socioeconomic characteristics were the two most important areas, and also appear to be the underlying cause of individual conditions** observed in relation to risk. In this sense, most of the reports demonstrated that two of the crucial individual factors — a history of abuse and a vulnerable emotional state — could often be traced back to a dysfunctional family situation, often underpinned by material deprivation. Similarly, social exclusion and marginalisation were commonly associated with poverty and lack of options, which influenced both the emotional state of children and their overall risk-taking behaviour, as they sought ways to escape the situation they were in. Poverty was also related to the educational level of children, which was identified as an important (albeit not sufficient per se) resilience factor. Lack of financial means either motivated parents not to send their children to school (and engage them in the generation of family income instead) or also pushed parents to more naively believe the promises of traffickers that they would arrange for their children to go abroad to receive better education.

Furthermore, self-identification becomes more difficult for children abused and exploited by their family members or others exploiting their vulnerable position (e.g. emotional needs). Many of the child victims do not identify themselves as such, as is expected in cases of violence and abuse.

Family-related factors emerge as the key group of risk and resilience factors related to trafficking of children. Among these, **a stable structure of the family unit accompanied by a good, trust-based relationship between a parent and a child, which includes a healthy level of parental monitoring, were found to be the most powerful resilience strategy.** Importantly, while a household's economic status was considered to be very significant in terms of risks, many practitioners seem hesitant to assign it a strong weight with regard to resilience, noting that many of the children that get trafficked come from families that are not materially deprived. As regards risk factors related to the family situation, **a situation of family breakdown was considered especially important, as it often manifested itself in neglect, abuse, or abandonment of children.** A disruption of family ties was particularly relevant when it resulted in a child running away, ending up in care or becoming orphaned and/or homeless. Two broad groups of cases were distinguished under this characteristic, namely children from eastern Europe where parents had either no means, or had migrated abroad for economic reasons, leaving the children in the care of relatives or in a residential care facility; and children from conflict and poverty-stricken countries and areas, who had abruptly lost their families and had to provide for themselves. In both cases, trafficked children exhibited a limited awareness of risks and excessive trust in strangers, and suffered from a lack of role models and material deprivation, which pushed them into the hands of traffickers. Next to situations of family breakdown, **dysfunctional families were also very strongly related to child trafficking, as one or more family members were usually involved as the perpetrator(s).** Practitioners broadly outlined three such possible situations. Firstly, in some cases parents had sexually or physically abused their children before pushing them into further exploitation outside the family circle. Secondly, gender inequality and stereotypes, patriarchal family structures, traditional understanding and social acceptance of arranged child

marriages (e.g. in certain Roma communities), as well as child labour (also child begging), played a strong role in the decision of parents to be involved in the trafficking of their child. Finally, sending a child abroad was often observed as a part of a family project, in which the parents had limited awareness of the level of exploitation awaiting their child in its destination country, as they often considered they would be involved in some form of respectable occupation, or would go to study abroad.

Among socioeconomic factors, social exclusion and marginalisation, especially when paired with lack of employment opportunities and material deprivation, was a key risk factor identified by practitioners. Prior existence and tolerance of cases of sexual or labour exploitation involving children in the community was a strong reinforcing factor in this respect. While marginalisation was commonly associated with ethnicity, the study found that it is the low socioeconomic status and the lack of options among a marginalised community that impacted the vulnerability of children to trafficking rather than the ethnicity as such. In fact, cases of trafficked children demonstrate that marginalisation and exclusion can also occur at the level of ethnical subgroups, and on the basis of social status in the community or sexual orientation. In turn, **the community level also offered a number of mechanisms that could strengthen resilience, such as access to peer groups, social protection, health and educational services.** Peer groups, especially among classmates, were singled out as a particularly helpful way of detecting signs of possible risk of trafficking, and therefore targeted awareness-raising at the level of schools was seen as crucial. Thus, access to school was also regarded as important for resilience, not only because of the possibility to draw upon peer support, but also because of the role that teachers might play, firstly in terms of monitoring behaviour and absence, and secondly as confidants to children at risk. Similarly, health practitioners were also regarded as important as they could identify signs of physical or emotional mental abuse. **The importance of targeting and equipping practitioners to recognise and take into account the specifics of working with child victims of trafficking was stressed as an underlying condition with respect to the provision of protection and support** ⁽³³⁾. Finally, any intervention strategy at the local level aiming to enhance resilience against trafficking has to be done through a coordinated, multi-agency approach, involving the different social services, law enforcement structures, and community representatives.

The final group of risk and resilience factors, namely structural factors, concerns those characteristics, policies and attitudes in a society that go beyond the local level. These are considered by practitioners to be particularly relevant in the context of supporting or mitigating the influence of the three other groups of factors. As a key structural risk factor, practitioners noted a general culture and tendency in society to discriminate against women and children, and to tolerate violence and exploitation. The societal attitude can easily influence the family and peer environment, and act as a trigger towards acceptance of abuse and exploitation, sexualised behaviour, and emotional disorders among children. Awareness-raising campaigns have once again been identified as contributing to a stronger resilience that can counteract discriminating or abusive tendencies in society; however practitioners warn that such campaigns should be effected in a targeted manner, and avoid sensational reporting. Similarly to the local level, **the other key determinant of resilience next to awareness-raising is the overall functioning of the child protection and social support system, including its legal and policy framework.** This includes the need for an integrated child protection system, the strengthening of the institution of legal guardianship, and a national monitoring and reporting system aimed at capturing children at risk of being trafficked. Regular training of professionals, increasing of awareness especially among law enforcement and judiciary officials dealing with children, and specialised structures on support and reintegration of child victims of trafficking, such as emergency shelters, have all been identified as key elements of such a system.

⁽³³⁾ Training of officials likely to come in contact with the victims is a legal obligation under Directive 2011/36/EU.

3. Demand, underlying conditions and the role of the internet as an enabling factor

Introduction

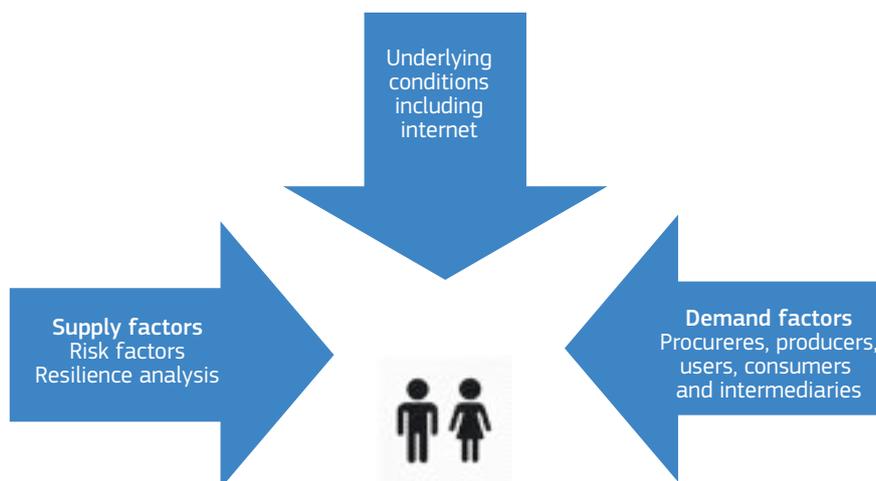
Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims explicitly urges Member States to ‘take appropriate measures, such as education and training, to discourage and reduce the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings’ and to consider criminalising those who knowingly use the services of victims of trafficking’ (Article 18). Understanding and reducing demand is one of the prevention-related actions of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016.

Although this study mainly focuses on risk and resilience factors that are directly related to those considered vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking in human beings (in this study: children in the context of their family and the socioeconomic context) due attention should also be given to factors shaping the demand side of child trafficking in the EU, since it is ultimately the demand for sexual exploitation, for cheap labour and domestic workers, for organ removal and sale, for illicit adoption and forced marriages or for criminal activities or child begging that fosters child trafficking.

The study does not address in detail the issue of demand, but focuses on factors that render children vulnerable. That is to say that vulnerabilities per se do not cause or result trafficking in human beings. Trafficking in human beings is a demand-driven and profit-driven crime, as well as a grave human rights violation. Trafficking in human beings is about demand for services and goods by victims, and profits. Risk factors render people and in particular children vulnerable to victimisation.

This chapter will add elements to the risk and resilience analysis by mapping out the dimensions of this demand as it relates to child trafficking in Europe. The demand analysis should be contextualised in the broader structure of this study’s analytical framework as follows.

Figure 3.1 Factors influencing child trafficking



The country reports therefore included the following key questions related to demand factors and enabling factors. *Demand factors.* What are the main factors that fuel the demand for trafficked children? Has the demand evolved in recent years? What are the main trends?

Underlying conditions. Are there any especially important factors that facilitate child trafficking into, from, through or within this country? For example the availability of transportation routes, weak border controls, corruption, organised crime.

Internet. How is the diffusion of the internet influencing the typologies, demand and supply of child trafficking in this country?

3.1 Demand factors

Many interviewees acknowledge that the main driver behind child trafficking is the demand for sex, cheap labour, criminal activities, domestic servitude, organs and, for example, young children for adoption. However country reports show that there is little research on the demand side of child trafficking in Europe of which national stakeholders are aware (BE, CY, FR, AT). Most research is focused on the supply side. As a result few of the country reports were able to refer to research and present a thorough analysis of the demand aspects of child trafficking in Europe.

With respect to the demand for child trafficking, traditionally a distinction has been made between European source and destination countries or regions. Demand comes mainly from western European countries, where the income level and wealth is much higher compared to most countries of origin and (rural) areas with high unemployment rates (SK). However, this distinction is getting blurred, as demand for children for sexual exploitation is increasingly recorded in central European countries as well (BG).

Research from 2006 points out that 15 % of the male population purchased sex in Hungary. In all four countries where the research was conducted clients preferred younger women, and they reported that they wouldn't buy sex from children. However, they also reported that they never ask the age of the women in prostitution.

Source: Ecorys report Hungary, 2014.

There are some longstanding factors that support demand such as the demand for sex services, the profitability of the sex industry (and the lack of monitoring thereof) and of transnational trafficking, the demand for cheap labour, the restrictions of migration policies, gender inequality and the undervaluing of the position of women and children in society (EL).

3.1.1 Consumer demand

The demand for sexual services has been identified in many country reports as a primary cause of child trafficking (EE, ES, HR, CY). In some countries the normalisation of prostitution as part of leisure represents an important risk and demand factor (ES). Other reports point to the legalisation of prostitution in several countries as a specific factor contributing to child trafficking (DK, LT, NL, AT). It has been suggested that the penalisation of the purchase of sexual services, following examples in the UK, Sweden and Norway, would help curb this demand and help combat child trafficking for sexual exploitation (IE).

Some country reports indicated that the demand for low-cost labour, identified as a risk factor for child trafficking, has increased due to the economic crisis (EL, IT). An interviewee in Greece stated that in the organisation's experience the main factors that support the demand for trafficked children in Greece as a destination country are 'the economic crisis that fuels the demand for children trafficked for labour exploitation and online social networks which fuel the demand for children trafficked for all forms of exploitation' (EL).

3.1.2 Demand by intermediaries

The main driving force for traffickers is to make money and profits. According to the ILO's 2014 report, forced labour and trafficking in human beings generates USD 150 billion annually in the private economy, with two thirds of the profits originating from sexual exploitation⁽³⁴⁾. The UNODC report 'Trafficking in persons to Europe for sexual exploitation' shows that this is one of the most lucrative illicit businesses in Europe, where criminals are making around EUR 2.5 billion per year through sexual exploitation and forced labour⁽³⁵⁾. As children can be more easily controlled than adults, they are preferable targets for traffickers to exploit. Also, children often cannot be held responsible for

⁽³⁴⁾ ILO, Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour, June 2014, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_243391.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽³⁵⁾ UNODC, Trafficking in persons to Europe for sexual exploitation, Chapter extracted from 'The Globalisation of Crime — A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment' Report, http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/TIP_Europe_EN_LORES.pdf (checked on 7.5.2015).

criminal activities, which might lower the risk for traffickers that their 'source of income' will be taken away, if they are found by the police.

The Belgian country report points to the perpetual circle of previous victims becoming perpetrators. 'There are also cases of "Nigerian madams", who are ladies using Nigerian women and girls in prostitution. Children are often kept in-house for prostitution whereas adults may work in "windows". One of the demand factors is the perpetual circle where a woman who has "bought" her freedom by earning enough (the Belgian report notes she has to earn the madam EUR 60 000) then without having any other means to fall back onto turns into a madam herself. The line between child and adult sexual exploitation is rather blurred in these cases and it is not uncommon for women to be registered as victims of trafficking as adults even though they entered the situation as a child' (BE).

'One interviewee highlighted that one of the enabling factors is that those involved in organised crime, regardless of their national or ethnic origin, have started to understand that the services provided by Belgian NGOs and the government may pull the victims out of their situation. To prevent this, the pimp/leader etc. may offer some form of financial compensation or at least a sense of ownership or power over a process related to their situation that results in the trafficked victims not leaving the situation they are in' (BE).

3.2 Underlying conditions

The national reports have revealed a long list of potentially enabling underlying conditions. Some have been identified in several reports; others have been cited only once but might apply to other EU MS as well.

It is possible to distinguish different, partly overlapping, categories:

- related to border controls;
- related to politics;
- related to the presence of organised crime;
- related to insufficient institutional provisions.

3.2.1 Border controls and crossing internal and external borders of the EU

Lifting of controls at the internal borders along with the free movement of people and goods across the EU reduces the chance of detection of traffickers and could potentially open up new opportunities for traffickers, as Europol notes in SOCTA 2013. This question has been identified in country reports as an underlying condition particularly related to child trafficking (BG, DE, HR, PT, UK). Related to this, the shortage of border guards and police with specialised training in the identification of vulnerable children, along with the inherent difficulty in identification of victims of trafficking, was reported to be another enabling condition. Lack of adequate human and financial resources, but also prioritisation of THB over other crime areas, has been raised. For example in the UK country report it has been mentioned that in major ports such as Dover often the priority is to identify and report 'illegals' and terrorism suspects, making it difficult to go 'hunting for trafficking' (UK) and 'Immigration officers do have the power to refer children to local authority children's social care in the area the port is located (London Child Protection Procedures), but officers' opportunities to assess the child's welfare are limited. Adults bringing the children into the country are able to hide any irregularities in their relationship with a child, and may threaten children so that they behave appropriately' (UK).

In this context, **the need for enhanced and operational international law enforcement cooperation** between resource and destination countries (PT, LT) was raised. As one interviewee noted: 'National law enforcement agencies only have a national authority. We have Interpol and Europol of course but these are very much connected to national structures. We have 21st century mobility but we have 20th century law enforcement agencies' (PT).

In some reports the **geographical position of the country** is presented as an underlying condition (EE, EL, IT, NL, PT, SI):

- the distance between Tallinn and Helsinki is 80 km, and there are also fast transport possibilities (EE);
- Greece's geographical position near the Balkan area is an enabling factor for this phenomenon, while the accessibility of arriving and leaving from Greece via the sea route facilitates trafficking practices (EL);
- there are two main transportation routes accessing Italy: Maghreb-Sicily and from the eastern border (IT);
- the presence of Schiphol Airport with good connections to 'supply countries' can be considered as an enabling factor (NL);
- links between Portugal and its former colonies make it easier for citizens from these countries to enter Europe through Portugal than from anywhere else (PT);
- Slovenia is situated on the crossroads and is mainly considered as a transit country for the trafficking of children, with the majority of groups transiting through the Hungarian borders (which are considered easier to cross) (SI).

3.2.2 Governance and politics

In some national reports **corruption** within the law enforcement agencies and links between organised crime networks and the police are mentioned as an underlying condition for child trafficking (BG, EL, IT, HR).

In some country reports **low political interest** has been mentioned, including a 'vague attitude of authorities towards the problem, non-compliance to international standards and a lack of comprehensive legal definitions of child trafficking' (DE, HU, LT).

Another factor that could potentially influence trafficking to a country is the fact that prostitution is legal there. For example, in Austria, asylum seekers are allowed to be self-employed 3 months after being accepted into the actual asylum procedure. Since prostitution is a form of self-employment, asylum seekers can thus legally work in prostitution. Reports have been made that Nigerian women are trafficked to Austria and then instructed by their traffickers to apply for asylum so that they can then work in prostitution. Legalised prostitution can thus be misused in a targeted fashion to exploit individuals (AT).

With respect to the specific problem of **illegal international adoptions**, legal frameworks in the EU sometimes still facilitate illegal (private) adoptions and child trafficking, especially from countries that have not ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (AT).

With regard to the trafficking of **Roma children**, several specific enabling factors have been identified: hesitation in taking action by public authorities, due to insufficient knowledge and understanding of the social norms and culture of the Roma community and to the fear of resulting in discriminatory practices; lack of adequate, effective and timely intervention of responsible institutions in cases of child marriages and child begging, where this might be considered as a cultural practice, and somehow acceptable for Roma families (HR, SI); and a lack of political will to address marginalisation and structural exclusion of Roma communities.

3.2.3 Organised crime

The presence of powerful organised crime networks is important, sometimes with trafficking channels established and functioning for decades (BG, IT, HR, LT, PT, SK, SE, UK). These groups might sometimes be specialised in trafficking of children for begging, theft as well as sexual exploitation (SE). Organised crime is important because it is associated with cross-border crime. It has a structure and flexibility that law enforcement agencies are not able to have (PT).

It must be noted that a major impediment to the identification of child trafficking cases is that the children have no control over their situation and might be unaware of the extent of that lack of control. In some cases, especially for sexual exploitation, organised crime networks ensure that children are moved frequently within and

across countries to stop them establishing relationships which might lead them to reveal their situation, to maximise profit, and to avoid detection, which in turn facilitates child trafficking. Children are also being used to pay off their debt (for the cost of getting them to Europe to work on the promise of a better life), and this is used to control them by the traffickers, who threaten their families back home.

The UK country report states that the gangs know how to control their victims. But much less is known about the perpetrators than the victims. Criminal gangs know that the age of criminal responsibility varies. An interviewee said that the younger children are brought to the UK and then when they look older they are taken to Spain, for example, where the age of criminal responsibility is 12 years old. Quite often, trafficking within communities makes the child more isolated as the traffickers speak their language and they worry that interpreters will know their traffickers. In other examples, the perpetrators adopt different strategies, either pretending to care for and groom a child or by carrying out brute violence or threatening behaviour to manipulate their victims — for example using threats of family debt, voodoo spells. One girl was told by a criminal that through Juju he could see through people's eyes so he would know if she told anyone. Even now she will not make eye contact, reports an interviewee (UK).

3.2.4 Insufficient institutional provisions

A variety of enabling factors can be included under the heading 'insufficient institutional provisions' such as:

- **Insufficient controls.** Police controls mainly focused on aspects related to migration status, and lack of focus on indicators related to potential cases of trafficking. There is a need for greater attention to these risk factors both at land borders and in airports (ES). In Germany no *Land* (state) police has a special department for child trafficking (except for Berlin), and not all states have a police department for human trafficking. This enables child trafficking, because child victims remain undetected and offenders feel safe (DE).
- **Insufficient data and systems for the identification** of victims (age assessment), weakening the level and quality of information available to authorities (DE, ES, FR). For example, there is no interconnection of information systems (birth registers) among EU countries (SK).
- **Insufficient availability of adequate financial and human resources** for the services which are supposed to provide adequate protection and support to trafficked children (FR, LT, FI).

One of the interviewees also mentioned a case involving a 16-year-old boy from Uganda. He was staying at a home for separated children and he himself tried to bring attention to the fact that he was being trafficked for sexual purposes. He could even provide the staff with names. The home raised an alarm and three other boys were also identified as victims of child trafficking. The border control did not however have the time or resources to take him in for questioning and the boys were sent to different places in the country.

Source: Ecorys report Sweden, 2014.

- **Insufficient staffing and security of crisis centres** for child victims of trafficking, enabling traffickers to immediately identify and get hold of those who have sought protection with the authorities (BG).
- **Insufficient knowledge and awareness** among the general population, within the judicial system and among institutions and professionals (DE, FR, LT, SK): 'When professionals meet victims under the age of 18 they neither consider them as children nor as victims of human trafficking' (HU). Several of the interviewees state that the limited knowledge of child trafficking among civil servants makes it more difficult to identify cases and proceed with the existing protocols (SE). Child trafficking is considered only as a sub-area of adult human trafficking, and the existing mechanisms which work for adults are considered to work equally well for children (DE, LT).
- **Insufficient specialist care and lack of coordination between relevant authorities.** This is highly relevant with respect to potential re-victimisation: 'Specialist provision of services is not given to them (because such a service for the assistance to trafficking victims does not exist), and they return to the same abusive environment which they tried to escape from' (HU).

3.3 The role of the internet

Particular attention has been paid in this study to the role of the internet as an enabling factor for child trafficking. In some MS, country reports indicated that the internet plays no significant role in child trafficking, that no cases have (yet) been identified, or that there is no information available. However in other MS there were cases reported where the internet has played a major role. Many experts share the view that the role of the internet might become more important in the near future.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the country reports on the role of the internet in child trafficking. In cases where there is evidence on the role of the internet the following patterns emerge.

Table 3.1 The role of the internet

	Comments
Austria	No evidence can be obtained on the effects of the internet on child trafficking. Exception: International adoptions. There seems to be a clear link between the diffusion of the internet and the facilitation of potentially irregular private adoptions or surrogacies abroad.
Belgium	Very few reports and interviews highlight the internet as a specific influence on the typologies, with the exception of online child sexual abuse and grooming.
Bulgaria	The internet plays a big role especially as regards trafficking of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation: the internet is being used as (i) recruitment method, (ii) for the posting of job offers online, which promise easy and good payment.
Croatia	No cases.
Cyprus	Recruitment through social networking sites is developing (two cases).
Czech Republic	No cases, but observed increase of 'cyber grooming'.
Denmark	No cases, only suspects.
Estonia	Tool to make initial contact. Children expose themselves on the internet.
Finland	No cases, but identification of a global trend of exploitation of children in front of web cameras, which makes it difficult to trace victims and perpetrators. Evidence on the rising prevalence of grooming, also amongst peers. Tool in creating contact between victims and perpetrators and among perpetrators.
France	The internet represents a fertile ground for trafficking. Online forums, social networks, webcams and sexual ads are a fertile ground for cybercrime and are used as means for recruiting both victims and clients. The internet is often used by adults to get in contact with children, often through the use of online forums.
Germany	Significant role in illegal adoption. The internet supports demand. Recruitment through social networking sites. Online grooming.
Greece	The internet supports demand. There have been cases of online adverts soliciting individuals, or traffickers establishing contacts with potential victims through social media networks, although there is no specific data about children.
Hungary	No evidence. If any influence, then in recruitment through social media.
Ireland	The internet brought significant changes to human trafficking and organised prostitution in general.
Italy	The internet is the place in which prostitution meets the clients. For the digital native generation the internet plays a crucial role in recruitment.
Latvia	No information.
Lithuania	Sometimes used as a tool to make initial contact with the victim.
Luxembourg	No indications.
Malta	No information available.
Netherlands	The internet is relevant in recruiting, exploitation, moving money and establishing connections. It also widens the market and ensures anonymity. It can play a positive role in the detection of runaway children from protected shelters.
Poland	The internet enables perpetrators to easily get in touch with their potential victims, especially in the case of sexual exploitation. The internet is also used by exploiters to advertise girls by posting their photos. Due to the anonymity of the internet it became easier to organise trafficking of human beings using fictional email addresses.
Portugal	The internet only plays a secondary role. No risk factor on its own.
Romania	The internet provokes risk-taking behaviour by (unsupervised) children on social networks. The internet is used to get in touch with clients (prostitution).
Slovakia	No cases but increasingly important as a risk factor.
Slovenia	No cases, but the internet has an effect on the supply and demand for sexual exploitation.
Spain	Enabling factor through enlarging of the businesses related to child trafficking. Social networking sites are being used as an instrument for recruitment of children.
Sweden	No specific studies. Cases of grooming and risk-taking behaviour of young girls. Trafficking overall has benefited from the internet.
United Kingdom	Varies depending on the child trafficking purpose. Mainly related to sexual exploitation.

In general social networking sites play a role in the recruitment of children — in particular for sexual exploitation. Also, widespread access to handheld technologies such as mobile phones with cameras is an enabling factor, as this makes it easier for younger children to share images and come in contact with perpetrators. **The use of chat rooms by children, online for social media, makes them vulnerable to online grooming** ⁽³⁶⁾. This seems to be becoming a growing problem in many European countries. For example in Sweden, there have been several judicial processes regarding young girls harming themselves and posing in front of web cameras after pressure by older men (SE). More specifically, for the digital native generation the internet plays a crucial role in the recruitment process as grooming starts in and is managed through social networking websites.

Traffickers use social network sites to get in touch with potential victims. The internet is actively used as a tool for recruiting potential victims, as an instrument to post deceitful job advertisements and lure children into sexual exploitation.

The internet also facilitates organised crime networks. Traffickers use the internet for the search of information on legislation and to move money (money laundering). The internet also enables an important business proliferation of child prostitution and allows for vital diversification, both in terms of ages and ethnic origins.

Perpetrators also use the internet to advertise the available 'services' as well as to disseminate and commercialise materials derived from child trafficking, including online sexual abuse.

In addition, **the speed at which images taken of child victims can be shared, for example, means that the traffickers have another form of control over their victims.** A specific reference to social networks as a tool of control and contact between the victim and the perpetrators was also made in the Spanish country report in the case of Cameroonian girls who were trafficked for sexual exploitation. In these cases, the criminal organisation opened a social networking profile for the trafficked girls, who in this way could easily communicate with the perpetrators.

It has been suggested that the internet might also have a **norm-changing role**. Children already involved in prostitution often use the internet (social networking sites) to bring in their peers and friends. Children whose mothers are involved in prostitution and look for escort work abroad are socialised to this behavioural norm and prostitution becomes part of their lives (HU). It has also been raised in the country reports that sexualised images have become common currency, which in turn can increase social tolerance of child sexualisation and increase demand (UK).

In 2012, the national police made special efforts to prevent sexual abuse of children. During this period they investigated a number of cases where men had been able to contact children through internet ads. They also discovered cases where those who had bought sex or other sexual services had carried on selling the child to others. During this time the police contacted people who were advertising online, in cases where there was suspicion that the person in question was a child. The majority of girls who had posted an advertisement of themselves showed signs of suffering from severe self-harm syndrome. The police work was carried out in collaboration with the social services in Stockholm County. The aim was to be able to offer the girls the proper help and support. During this period the police developed their methods to be able to reach out and interview young girls. As a result the number of cases increased to 24 in 2012, compared to seven in 2011 ⁽³⁷⁾.

Source: Ecorys report Sweden, 2014.

The role of the internet varies depending on the child trafficking purpose and the source country. For example, cases in the United Kingdom of domestic servitude that originated in Nigeria did not involve heavy internet use, as recruitment happened via word of mouth and access to the internet is poor in source areas.

⁽³⁶⁾ See also Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA.

⁽³⁷⁾ The National Police Annual report 2013 and 2014.

The internet seems to play a role in illegal international adoptions. By providing research opportunities, exchange in online forums or even service webpages with detailed information and pictures of available children or surrogate mothers, the internet has an important role in the demand and supply structure of inter-country adoptions. Although private or even illegal adoptions and illegal surrogacies do not constitute child trafficking per se, these phenomena need to be recognised as potentially exploitative and contrary to children's rights.

4. Groups of children most at risk of THB: a typology based on risk profiles

Introduction

Based on the analysis of the risk and the resilience factors discussed in the previous chapter, a number of typical risk profiles, or risk categories, were identified. Each risk category is characterised by a specific configuration of risk and resilience factors, although some risk factors are common to more than one category. The risk categories have been identified with a view to defining the most appropriate approach. One overall finding is that it is not possible to address the vulnerability of children with a single approach, as the reasons for vulnerability and the type of resilience resources they possess are very different.

The process for developing the risk profiles has been the following:

- first, risk categories have been defined based on the analysis of the individual risk and resilience factors as discussed in the interviews;
- second, the categories were applied to the concrete cases of child trafficking collected in the country reports, in order to examine feasibility of categorisation;
- third, the identification of risk profiles has been revised in light of this empirical test.

4.1 Overview and analysis of the cases

The study collected a total of 84 ⁽³⁸⁾ cases of child trafficking across most EU MS ⁽³⁹⁾. The country reports have been asked to collect three different cases and describe these cases in as much detail as possible:

- gender and age of the child;
- origin and trafficking destination;
- trafficking history;
- perpetrators;
- exploitation purpose;
- withdrawal process;
- enabling factors;
- risk and resilience factors (individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural factors).

An overview of the main characteristics of the cases is presented in the following tables and in **Table 4.4** at the end of this chapter.

About half of the cases examined are related to children that were trafficked from non-European Union countries into the European Union (**Table 4.1**). The other half (48 %) of the cases are linked to child trafficking within the EU (cross-border and domestic trafficking). The majority of the non-EU cases have a link with Sub-Saharan Africa (32 % of all 84 cases), in particular West Africa. This includes 15 cases of girls that have been trafficked from Nigeria into Europe (Nigeria accounts for 59 % of all Sub-Sahara Africa cases).

⁽³⁸⁾ 80 cases involve one child, two cases involve two children and another two cases involve three children.

⁽³⁹⁾ No cases from Italy, Malta and Finland.

Table 4.1 Overview of the child trafficking cases collected for this study

	No of cases	% of total
From Sub-Saharan Africa into the EU	26	32 %
From North Africa and the Middle East into the EU	5	6 %
From Asia into the EU	6	7 %
From non-EU European countries into the EU	5	6 %
From the EU to Asia	1	1 %
Intra EU	39	48 %
Total cases	84	100 %

Source: Ecorys, child trafficking research, national reports, 2014.

The 39 intra-EU child trafficking cases can be divided into 14 cases of domestic child trafficking (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Netherlands, Romania) and 25 cases of intra-EU cross-border child trafficking. The large majority of cross-border trafficking cases are related to children trafficked from central and eastern European countries to a wide variety of EU countries.

Destination countries in the sample cases are: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina (non-EU), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom. However, central European countries become more and increasingly destination countries (BG).

Table 4.2 Overview of intra-EU child trafficking cases collected for this study

	No of cases	% of total
Domestic trafficking	14	36 %
Cross-border trafficking	25	64 %
of which from:		
Bulgaria	7	18 %
Romania	7	18 %
Slovakia	3	8 %
Lithuania	3	8 %
Czech Republic	2	5 %
Poland	1	3 %
Eastern Europe	1	3 %
Italy	1	3 %
Total intra EU	39	100 %

Source: Ecorys, child trafficking research, national reports, 2014.

In a large majority of cases collected in this study (86 %) the victims of child trafficking are girls. The main exploitation purpose for girls is sexual exploitation and related exploitative forms of child marriage (90 % of the cases involving girls), while for boys (14 % of all cases) the exploitation purpose is more diverse: labour, (petty) crime and drug-related crimes. However boys are also trafficked for sexual exploitation. Both boys and girls are sometimes exploited for domestic labour or servitude. The forms of exploitation are often, but not necessarily, connected with other types of exploitation (sexual, labour). The database of cases does not contain clear-cut cases of child trafficking for illegal adoption; however the national research has identified illegal adoption as another issue of concern (BG, DE).

4.2 Risk categories

The cases were analysed in order to identify and categorise groups of children that are specifically at risk of becoming victims of child trafficking.

The categorisation is based on a detailed analysis of the underlying risk factors and has classified cases in seven major risk categories:

1. Child victims of family violence, abuse, and neglect;
2. Children subject of a migration project planned by their families;
3. Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods;
4. Children left alone;
5. Child victims of conflict or environmental disaster;
6. Children engaging in risky behaviour;
7. Children with physical, learning and developmental disabilities.

The risk categories are not bound to particular geographical areas or ‘trafficking corridors’, nor are they linked to specific forms of exploitation. The main distinguishing factor is what type of circumstances makes a child more or less vulnerable to trafficking: individual characteristics of the child, geopolitical events or crises, family or neighbourhood circumstances, etc. Risk categories might be overlapping. For example, child victims of war, crisis and (natural) disaster are often ‘left alone’ (orphaned or having lost track of their relatives), but this is not necessarily always the case. Children seeking attention or under peer group pressure sometimes are from unstable family backgrounds (neglect, abuse, violence), but there are also cases and research findings about trafficked and exploited children from well-functioning middle-class backgrounds. The risk categories as deduced from research findings shed a different light on the root causes of the problem of child trafficking and provide for more targeted intervention strategies.

In **Table 4.3** overleaf, an overview is provided of child trafficking cases by main risk category. In some cases the circumstances when child trafficking started are unclear (10 % of the cases). The other cases have been analysed by main risk category (more than one risk category per case possible). The table shows that — based on the sample — in the majority of the cases, active parental responsibility or involvement is an important factor, either through a family background of violence, abuse or neglect (37 % of the cases), or through active involvement by ‘sending’ children abroad, knowingly or unintentionally leading to exploitation of the child (29 % of the cases). Other important risk categories are children left alone (23 % of the cases) and children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods (14 % of the cases). It is not possible in this study to establish to what extent the collected cases are representative of the prevalence of child trafficking cases (as this is unknown); therefore these numbers have to be interpreted with caution. However, they demonstrate that all the seven risk categories do exist.

Table 4.3 Overview of child trafficking cases by risk category

	No of cases	% of total
Total sample of cases	84	100 %
Cases with unclear child trafficking circumstances	8	10 %
Child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect	31	37 %
Children subject of a migration planned by their families	24	29 %
Children left alone	19	23 %
Child victims of war, crisis or (natural) disaster	4	5 %
Children engaging in risky behaviour	8	10 %
Children with physical, learning or developmental disabilities	8	10 %
Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods	12	14 %

Source: Ecorys, child trafficking research, national reports, 2014.

4.2.1 Child victims of family violence, abuse, and neglect

There is a clear link between the family background of a child and the risk of victimisation in child trafficking. Children who have been trafficked are often characterised by a history of family violence, abuse or neglect. The study revealed many cases of children coming from situations of family breakdown, unstable families and unstructured or dysfunctional families. Lack of attention, lack of love, family violence or sexual abuse are features that trafficked children in this risk category have in common. In some cases parents are actively involved in the trafficking or abuse of the child — for motives other than providing a better future for the child are often — but not necessarily — correlated with poverty.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- family structure (+/-);
- history of psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse (-);
- relationship with parents (+/-);
- level of access to adults outside of the family/care unit (-);
- access to health care (+);
- culture of tolerance for violence against women, youth and children, sexual violence, inequality and gender discrimination (-).

This risk category applies to both **European** and **non-European** children. There is a clear relationship with both **family-related** and **individual risk factors**. Children who are victims of family violence, abuse and neglect suffer from a weak family structure, unsafe relationships with the parents, and weak parental monitoring. In addition, they are often characterised by emotional disorders, low level of education, and low level of risk perception.

There were major elements of family neglect, violence or sexual abuse in 29 out of the 84 cases. The majority of cases are related to children trafficked and exploited within Europe; however five instances of family neglect, violence or sexual abuse are found in cases with children from non-European countries (Algeria, Nigeria, Cameroon and China). There is an overlap between the risk categories of child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect and children left alone (six cases), children from marginalised communities and neighbourhoods (seven cases), children the subject of family investment (three cases) and other risk categories (**Table 4.4** at the end of this chapter).

A girl (16 years old) came from a dysfunctional family. Her father died before she was born and her mother was partially deprived of parental rights. The girl was born with a foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) due to her mother's alcohol addiction. She was abused sexually when she was 16 years old by the cohabitant of her mother. She met two Bulgarian men with whom she spent some time in hotels and bungalows. She later entered into prostitution in a brothel in Germany.

4.2.2 Children subject of a migration project planned by their families

Conversely to children with a history of abuse, the children in this risk category often have a strong family background. Children are intentionally sent away in the expectation of a better future for the child. In most cases parents are not aware of the potential dangers for their child. Sometimes the family explicitly or implicitly expects to receive financial support once the child is settled in Europe. The family's expectations are typical of a migratory project, planned upon a child, which takes the form of a family investment. Organised crime networks take advantage of the dreams and hopes of the family. In a few cases, families themselves are already involved in an organised crime network and they are aware that the child will be involved in some illegal activity; in others they are not. For these children, protection systems addressing their migration status represent important structural resilience factors.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- household socioeconomic status and poverty (+/-);
- prior existence in the community of cases of **sexual exploitation**, child labour and **child begging** (-);
- legal status, migration status;
- (lack of) awareness level on risks (+/-);
- access to education (+);
- development of protection and support systems for children in general (+).

This risk category applies in particular to trafficking of non-European children to Europe. A strong relationship can be observed with in particular socioeconomic risk factors. The main driving factor is poverty and lack of local employment opportunities, often, but not always, in combination with low education levels, limited access to education, and limited awareness of risks.

A large majority of the children in this risk category are from non-European countries (in the sample: Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and Vietnam), however there are also 'family investment cases' of children from relatively poor European regions (Bulgaria, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Estonia). There is an overlap with 'the abused' (2 cases) and 'left alones' (3 cases: children without parents in the care of relatives or strangers).

The following cases illustrate some variants of this risk category.

The extended family members had sent a Palestinian boy from Lebanon to Europe for drug dealing. This was no hidden act but public: a huge celebration took place on the last night at home before this journey. The perpetrators were well known on in the European drug scene. When the boy was arrested by the police and brought to a closed youth welfare institution he opened up and completed a traineeship. Back in society he tried to develop new prospects but the exploitative mechanisms in his extended family obliged him to engage again in the drug dealing business (DE).

A Nigerian girl (17 years old) came from a family that was neither poor nor uneducated but belonged to the upper middle class. The family's appreciation of the value of higher education made them susceptible to false promises of a university degree by a wealthy Nigerian woman operating as part of an organised criminal network. In order to pay back the debt of USD 15 000 the girl was forced into brothel prostitution. She eventually managed to escape (DE).

A Vietnamese boy (17 years old) came from an economically deprived household. He was under pressure to earn money for his family but also wanted to go to school. Under pressure from his mother, who had financial problems, he decided to travel to western Europe to earn money for the family. His mother took on a debt to finance his journey. He travelled first to Russia and then to his destination country where he was basically detained in a warehouse and forced to work for a Vietnamese man, who took from him his documents (PL).

Two girls from Nigeria were trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation. Their mothers both worked at a market and were approached by the mother of a 'madam' in a European brothel. This lady began grooming them with the promise of arranging an opportunity for their daughters to study abroad, get jobs and send money back home. The mothers and the daughters were told they would have a better life. The grooming process took a few months before the children were moved to Europe. There was a network of perpetrators. The mother of the madam running the brothel led the initial grooming of the mothers at the market. A number of men were then involved in arranging the documentation. Other men came to collect the girls when they arrived at the airport in Europe (UK).

The trafficking history of a girl from Guinea began when she was 15 years old. After her parents died, she went to live with her grandmother and three brothers and sisters. A European man came to her village and made an offer to her grandmother to bring her to Europe where, he said, she could attend school. To gain her trust, he offered her money to help her family. In Europe she was sexually exploited, got a sexually transmitted disease and got pregnant (FR).

4.2.3 Children left alone

These children are children without parents or other relatives entrusted with their care. They may be living on the streets, in residential care homes or institutions or are left to the care of distant relatives. Such children are very vulnerable to child trafficking. In the sample of 84 cases, 19 cases are of children who have no (grand)parents who care for them or have lost track of their families.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- (lack of) parental monitoring (+/-);
- experience of homelessness, being unaccompanied or being a runaway (-);
- being in care (-);
- level of access to adults outside of the family/care unit (+);
- existence of a well-functioning system of legal guardianship (+);
- development of protection and support systems for children in general (+);
- existence of national monitoring of children in situations of vulnerability (children left behind, children of imprisoned parents, children in care, etc.) (+/-).

Children without appropriate care are being trafficked from both EU countries and non-EU countries into Europe or elsewhere in the world⁽⁴⁰⁾. There is some overlap with children who are victims of war, natural or other humanitarian disaster. In terms of risk factors, there is a particular connection with all four categories of risk factors: individual (left-alone children might face a history of abuse, and/or suffer from emotional and cognitive disorders), family-related (they may have run away from their dysfunctional family), socioeconomic (for example no access to protection and support) and structural factors (conflict regions or humanitarian crises).

This group of children are a particularly vulnerable group, both within Europe (in the sample cases with children from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania, Kosovo, Russia) and elsewhere in the world (in the sample cases with children from Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Morocco, China). There is overlap with most other risk categories (for example left alone children with a history of family abuse).

A particular group of children are the so-called 'home alone children', also referred to as 'children left behind' or 'orphans of labour migration'. This is reported in this Study as a growing problem in some eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania. These children are not materially deprived but are short of care and protection, structure, supervision, and emotional support.

Structural resilience strategies for such children include child protection systems, addressing the situation of institutions where these children are placed, particularly good systems of identification and care for street children — both within and outside the EU.

A boy from Kosovo grew up with his grandfather after losing both his parents in the war. He does not remember his mother. His grandfather died when he was about 8 years old and he had to take care of himself. He has never gone to school. He has been recruited several times by different men, first to work on two farms in the mountains where he experienced violence if he didn't work hard enough. Then when he was about 12 years old a man took him to Pristina and promised that he could go to school. In Pristina he was forced to beg and steal in the streets (AT).

4.2.4 Child victims of war, crisis and (natural) disaster

Children in post-humanitarian disaster areas are highly vulnerable. A large number of unaccompanied child asylum seekers in Europe arrive from conflict countries and regions, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and recently Syria. These children may have lost their families and are on their journey vulnerable to exploitation. In the dataset four child trafficking cases (Algeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda) are related to children who have been victims of war, a natural disaster or another humanitarian crisis. Illegal adoption may also occur in the aftermath of a crisis; however no evidence of this was found in the research.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ See also 'Guardianship for children deprived of parental care: A handbook to reinforce guardianship systems to cater for the specific needs of child victims of trafficking', FRA-European Commission, 2014, at https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/guardianship-children-deprived-parental-care-handbook-reinforce-guardianship-systems-cater_en (checked on 7.5.2015).

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- humanitarian emergencies (armed conflicts, natural disasters) (-);
- legal status, migration status (+/-);
- experience of homelessness, being unaccompanied or being a runaway (-);
- access to education (+);
- access to a well-functioning system of legal guardianship (+);
- access to protection and support (+).

Child victims of war, crisis and (natural) disaster are mainly from non-European countries with major conflicts and disasters and relatively insufficient and ineffective shelter and protection of children. Children may be without family or any other relatives (in the sample two cases) and often suffer from trauma or other severe psychological problems (as described in two cases of the sample).

A girl from Uganda was forced to become a child soldier by the age of 11 after a rebel attack in her village killed her mother, when she was kidnapped. Together with other children she managed to escape at night from the place she had been taken to. She went to Juba, the first sizeable city after the Uganda–South Sudan border, where she was homeless, living on the street. There she met a European who promised her education in Europe. He brought her to the Netherlands, where he kept her in a house in the countryside, and later to Germany. At this time the girl was almost 16 years old. The girl claims to have not been abused sexually, but at the same time she has almost no memory of the time when she was kept at the house of this man in the Netherlands (DE).

A girl survived an attempted manslaughter in Algeria. She was living on the street when a woman pretended to know her father and offered to bring her to France to join him. She accepted this and, when she was 13 years old, travelled to France illegally with someone else's passport given by the woman. The family which brought her to France exploited her for domestic labour (FR).

4.2.5 Children engaging in risky behaviour

A particular risk category is children (mainly girls) whose behaviour puts them at a heightened risk of grooming. There are often profound psychological reasons why children engage in risky activities and seek attention in this way.

This form of domestic child trafficking is also labelled as the 'loverboy method'. The 'loverboys' are men who consciously make women (or men) emotionally dependent by starting a love affair with their victims and subsequently exercise force to involve them in prostitution and sometimes other criminal activities like fraud with phone subscriptions, ATM cards and credit cards, or drug trafficking. The internet is used to recruit victims. Victims are identified through the internet and/or asked to send compromising pictures of themselves. Compromising images are used to blackmail them. It is important to note that even if children demonstrate risky behaviour, they are not to blame for their exploitation. There are often profound psychological reasons why children engage in risky activities, such as neglect and abuse.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- gender (+/-);
- (lack of) awareness level on risks (+/-);
- general risk-taking behaviour (offline and online), substance use/abuse (-);
- emotional and cognitive state, physical and mental ability (-);
- existence of peer groups (+/-);
- access to education on online safety (+);
- access to education on rights of the child (+);
- access to health care (+).

In the sample, victims within this risk category are from all over Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Romania, and Slovakia). There is often a link with family neglect or abuse, but this is not a necessary correlation.

This risk category applies in particular to European children and individual risk factors such as: a history of psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse, a low awareness level on risks, emotional and cognitive issues, substance use and general risk-taking behaviour (offline and online). In many cases family-related factors also play a role. Resilience-strengthening strategies include education about the dangers of risk taking behaviour (through the internet), for example through large-scale education campaigns, and above all adequate psychological support.

A girl (17 years old) from a small village in Germany established contact with a boy online. They met in real life and she fell in love with him. The boy pretended to want to build a future with her, and convinced her to enter into prostitution in Berlin as a way of earning money for their common future. Given the emotional dependency she could not refuse. The girl was from a middle class background but had no stable relationship with her mother. There were also conflicts with the mother's new partner. Even during the trial — after discovery and exit from prostitution — the girl was emotionally very attached to the perpetrator: first she testified before the court, and then she tried everything to get him out of prison. The perpetrator's power over the girl did not end with his imprisonment; he kept influencing and controlling her via letters. (DE)

A girl from Bulgaria repeatedly fell victim to trafficking. She came from a poor household in one of the poorest regions in Bulgaria. Her mother abandoned the family. Her father tried the best he could. There was a widespread acceptance by the girl and her peers that girls should display a certain provocative behaviour and accept a level of abuse by men in order to succeed in life. She was chosen and targeted because of her social networking website profile with provocative pictures of herself. She was identified by an organised group of traffickers and targeted in an orchestrated manner. She was forced into prostitution in Vienna by offering her a job opportunity as waitress. She was identified by social workers in Vienna and brought back to Bulgaria. A few months later she fell into the same pattern, met a boy, went with him to Greece and was exploited again. (BG)

4.2.6 Children with physical, learning and developmental disabilities

The study included eight cases involving children with intellectual or physical disabilities or personality disorders (Algeria, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, Slovakia, Netherlands and Uganda). The traffickers take advantage of these disabilities and involve the child in exploitative activities beyond his/her awareness. This may be the case of girls with learning or developmental disorders involved in sexual exploitation as well as physically disabled children whose appearance is used to move passers-by in child begging. There is often a relationship with traumatising from war and crisis or with a family background characterised by abuse or neglect.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- (lack of) awareness level on risks (+/-);
- emotional and cognitive state, physical and mental ability(-);
- access to health care (+) (mental health care);
- access to protection and support (+).

A girl (16) lived together with her mother — without a father — in a disadvantaged part of the city, infested by criminality, use of drugs and violence. She was long-term sick and became partly physically disabled, shortly before the trafficking took place. She was befriended by a woman who gained her trust and invited her to a music festival in Hungary. When they arrived she was taken to a flat where she was forced into prostitution (SK).

4.2.7 Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods

Sometimes the greatest source of risk for a child to get caught in trafficking networks does not come from individual or family characteristics, but from living in a neighbourhood, community or geographical area which is socially excluded or marginalised from mainstream society. This can be the case with ethnic minorities who are kept confined in special areas or camps, with limited access to mainstream health, education and social services, but also with other marginalised communities with no specific ethnic connotation. The common denominator is that marginalisation blocks the road to regular employment and social and educational integration and paves the way for recruitment into illegal activities by criminal networks.

The key risk and resilience factors for this category are:

- level of societal cohesion (+/-);
- employment opportunities at local level (-);
- level of social exclusion and marginalisation of particular vulnerable groups (-);
- prior existence in the community of cases of sexual exploitation, child labour and child begging (-);
- existence of peer groups (+/-);
- access to education (+);
- access to education on online safety (+);
- access to education on rights of the child (+);
- access to health care (+);
- existence of intervention strategies at the grass roots/community level (+).

In the sample cases (12 cases) related to marginalisation these mainly include children from Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in particular belonging to some Roma minorities. The characteristic of this risk category is that it is not possible to address the risks at family or individual level only, without addressing broader community inclusion issues.

A girl aged 13 went from Romania to Greece with her mother and her mother's boyfriend. The two went to Spain and left the girl in Greece, where she stayed with a Roma family. When the family wanted to move to another city, they sold the girl to five Pakistani men. The men locked her up in an apartment, abused her and forced her into prostitution. After a report from neighbours, the police raided the house and released the child (EL).

A girl was sold by her parents to traffickers who transported her and other children of her age to Hungary and Italy for begging. When she was identified and brought to a shelter in Hungary she could hardly speak Hungarian or Romanian — as there had been almost no one to speak to her for years (HU).

Table 4.4 Overview of child trafficking cases: overlap between the risk categories

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Gender	Origin	Destination	Exploitation type	Source (report)
Child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect	Children subject of a migration project	Children left alone	Child victims of war, crises or natural disasters	Children engaging in risky behaviour	Children with physical, learning or developmental disabilities	Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods					
A	A		D		F		Girl	Algeria	France	Domestic, Crime, Sexual	France
A	B						Girl	DR Congo	Turkey, Poland	Sexual, Labour	Poland
A	B						Girl	Slovakia	United Kingdom	Sexual	Slovakia
A		C					Girl	Czech Republic	Czech Republic, Germany	Sexual	Czech Republic
A		C					Girl	Lithuania	Germany	Sexual	Lithuania
A		C					Boy	Nigeria	Luxembourg	Labour	Luxembourg
A		C					Girl	Cameroon	Netherlands	Sexual	Netherlands
A				E			Girl	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Sexual	Cyprus
A					F		Boy	Lithuania	Switzerland, France	Crime	Lithuania
A						G	Girl	Romania	Greece	Sexual, Labour	Greece
A						G	Girl	Romania	Greece	Sexual	Greece
A						G	Girl	Slovakia	Germany	Sexual	Slovakia
A						G	Girl	Bulgaria	Greece	Labour, Begging	Greece
A		C				G	Girl	Romania	France, Spain, Romania	Begging, Marriage, Crime	France
A							Girl	Poland	Germany	Sexual	Poland
A							Girl	Serbia	Belgium	Crime	Belgium
A							Girl	Romania	Romania	Sexual	Romania
A							Girl	Bulgaria	Poland	Sexual	Poland
A							Girl	China	Luxembourg	Domestic, Labour	Luxembourg
A							Girl	Germany	Germany	Sexual	Germany
A							Girl	Eastern Europe	Spain	Sexual	Spain
A							Girl	Czech Republic	UK, France, Slovenia	Begging	Slovenia
A							Girl	Eastern Europe	Ireland	Sexual	Ireland

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Gender	Origin	Destination	Exploitation type	Source (report)
Child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect	Children subject of a migration project	Children left alone	Child victims of war, crises or natural disasters	Children engaging in risky behaviour	Children with physical, learning or developmental disabilities	Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods					
A							Girl	Italy	Bosnia	Sexual	Croatia
A							Boy	Algeria	Scandinavia	Drugs	Sweden
A							Girl	Romania	Spain	Sexual	Spain
	B	C					Boy	Vietnam	France, UK	Labour (cannabis)	UK
	B	C					Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
	B					G	Girl	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	Sexual, Marriage	Bulgaria
	B					G	Girl	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Slovenia	Marriage, Labour	Slovenia
	B						Girl	Sub-Saharan Africa	France	Domestic labour	France
	B						Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
	B						Girl	Nigeria	Italy, Germany	Sexual, Labour	Germany
	B						Girl	Nigeria	Germany	Sexual	Germany
	B						Boy	Lebanon	Germany	Drugs/Criminality	Germany
	B						Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
	B						Girl	Guinea	Spain, France	Sexual	France
	B						Girl	Nigeria	Sweden	Sexual	Sweden
	B						Boy	Vietnam	Russia, Germany	Labour	Poland
	B						Boy	West Africa	Cyprus	Sexual	Cyprus
	B						Girl	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Belgium	Forced Marriage	Belgium
	B						Boys (3)	Vietnam	Czech Republic, UK	Labour	Czech Republic

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Gender	Origin	Destination	Exploitation type	Source (report)
Child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect	Children subject of a migration project	Children left alone	Child victims of war, crises or natural disasters	Children engaging in risky behaviour	Children with physical, learning or developmental disabilities	Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods					
	B					Poor mother — promise of a better life.	Girls (3)	Sub-Saharan Africa	United Kingdom	Sexual	UK
	B					Poor mother — promise of a better life.	Girls (2)	Nigeria	United Kingdom	Sexual	UK
	B					Poor rural family with no awareness of risks.	Girl	Nigeria	Italy, Czech Republic	Sexual	Czech Republic
	B					Promise of a better future.	Girl	Nigeria	UK, Spain	Sexual	Spain
	B					Recruited for forced marriage. Poor family.	Girl	Estonia	Estonia	Forced Marriage	Estonia
	B	C				Orphan promised a better life.	Girl	Nigeria	Denmark via Italy	Sexual	Denmark
		C				Abandoned by parents and sold by foster mother.	Girl	Russia	Sweden	Sexual	Sweden
		C				Grew up in orphanage. Sold.	Girl	China	Netherlands	Domestic labour, Sexual	Netherlands
		C				No family support. Needed money.	Girl	Lithuania	Italy, Denmark	Sexual	Lithuania
		C				Parents and grandparents died.	Boy	Kosovo	Kosovo	Crime, Begging	Denmark
		C				Parents unable to care. Fell into hands of traffickers.	Boy	China	Luxembourg	Labour	Luxembourg
		C				Sold by uncle with promise to get a job.	Girl	Central Africa	Czech Republic	Sexual	Czech Republic
		C				Street child since age of seven.	Boy	Morocco	Europe, Denmark	Crime	Denmark
		C	D			Fled from village (religious sect).	Boy	Sierra Leone	Netherlands	Sexual	Netherlands
		C	D			Survived manslaughter. Lived on the street.	Girl	Uganda	Netherlands, Germany	Child soldier, Sexual	Germany
			D		F	Lost parents, intellectual disability, adopted.	Girl	Uganda	Netherlands	Domestic, Sexual	Netherlands
				E	F	Lived with mother in disadvantaged area (criminality).	Girl	Slovakia	Hungary, Austria	Sexual	Slovakia
				E	F	Low self-esteem. Got attention from a boy.	Girl	Netherlands	Netherlands	Sexual	Netherlands
				E		No stable relation with the mother. Lack of love.	Girl	Germany	Germany	Sexual	Germany
A				E		Difficult family conditions and family breakdown.	Girl	Bulgaria	Netherlands, Greece	Sexual	Bulgaria
A				E		Difficult family conditions and family breakdown.	Girl	Bulgaria	Austria, Greece	Sexual	Bulgaria
				E		Established contact via social media.	Girl	Estonia	Estonia	Sexual	Estonia

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Gender	Origin	Destination	Exploitation type	Source (report)
Child victims of family violence, abuse or neglect	Children subject of a migration project	Children left alone	Child victims of war, crises or natural disasters	Children engaging in risky behaviour	Children with physical, learning or developmental disabilities	Children from marginalised communities or neighbourhoods					
A				E			Girl	Romania	Romania	Sexual	Romania
					F		Girl	Germany	Germany	Sexual	Germany
					F		Girl	Estonia	Estonia	Sexual	Estonia
					F		Girl	Estonia	Estonia	Sexual	Estonia
A						G	Girl	Bulgaria	Austria	Crime, Begging, Sexual	Austria
		C				G	Girl	Romania	Belgium	Crime	Belgium
A		C				G	Girl	Romania	Austria	Sexual	Austria
						G	Boys (2)	Romania	Czech Republic, UK	Crime	Czech Republic
						G	Girl	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Crime	Czech Republic
							Girl	Austria	Bangladesh	Forced Marriage	Austria
							Girl	Ghana	Spain, Germany	Sexual	Spain
							Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Portugal
							Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
							Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
							Girl	Nigeria	Spain	Sexual	Spain
							Girl	West Africa	Ireland	Sexual	Ireland
							Girl	Croatia	Croatia	Sexual	Croatia
							Girl	Croatia	Croatia	Sexual	Croatia

Source: Ecorys, child trafficking research, national reports, 2014.

5. Policy recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents some policy recommendations based on the results of the analysis and on the suggestions of national stakeholders and local practitioners.

As shown in the previous chapters, the research has identified a set of risks and resilience factors having an influence on the vulnerability of children to trafficking.

These factors have been defined as individual, family-related, socioeconomic and structural/institutional; their inter-relations contribute to creating **categories** of children particularly at risk of child trafficking, as identified on the basis of the 84 cases collected in the study and presented in Chapter 4.

The recommendations are directed to policymakers at national and EU level and aim to contribute to more evidence-based policy development.

In the following sections, a number of recommendations are provided addressing these four levels.

5.1 Recommendations related to structural and institutional factors

5.1.1 Information, sensitisation and training for police officers, judicial authorities and other relevant stakeholders

One of the main findings of the study is the need to follow an integrated child protection approach that brings together all duty holders. The overarching goal of child protection systems is to protect children from violence. A rights-based approach to child protection implies taking all actions necessary to protect children's rights through preventing as well as responding to violations of those rights. This is also in line with Directive 2011/36/EU and with the EU Strategy ⁽⁴¹⁾.

Increase awareness and capacity of law enforcement and other practitioners to identify indicators of trafficking, and particularly child trafficking. Child victims are not recognised and are sometimes treated as children in conflict with the law and criminalised (e.g. begging, child sexual exploitation, children involved in petty crimes). At the same time ensure that all staff likely to come in contact with child victims are trained on the rights of the child, on child protection law and procedures and more generally on child development ⁽⁴²⁾.

Provide training for professionals dealing with children at risk, for instance specific training for prosecutors on how to deal with child victims of trafficking, and also teachers, and health professionals. Ensure that they receive training on the rights of the child, on child protection law and procedures and more generally on child development. The protection and support should be given to all child victims of trafficking. The establishment of hotline services, the adoption of specific child-friendly questioning in court procedures ⁽⁴³⁾, the provision of specialised psychological counselling, more street workers dealing with homeless and children in conflict with the law, and the setting up of safe shelters for child victims of trafficking have all been mentioned as important elements of a strong protection and support system, yet to be realised. Making professionals aware of the different risk factors and risk profiles, as discussed in this study, would facilitate a better response in terms of services.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Under Priority A: Identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking, Action 3: Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings the development of guidance on child protection systems is envisaged as a deliverable.

⁽⁴²⁾ Frontex is collecting and establishing good practices to identify and protect children on the move and at risk at airports. The initiative is called Vega Children, a specialised version of the existing Vega Handbook, the guide for border guards on the detection and disruption of human trafficking at air borders, <http://www.ksmm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/ksmm/aktuell/veranstaltungen/2014/vega-leaflet.pdf> (checked on 7.5.2015).

⁽⁴³⁾ In line with Directive 2011/36/EU, Articles 14-15.

Ensure **guardianship** is available and accessible for all children deprived of care, while at the same time making sure that professionals and practitioners working in this field are committed and competent, with an appropriate training background in child protection, child development, and the specificities of child trafficking ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Invest in further research into domestic (in-country) child trafficking, which emerges as a growing area of concern within the EU.

5.1.2 Reinforce interinstitutional cooperation and networks

Reinforce the cooperation at national level of all involved stakeholders and services, ideally under a designated referral mechanism ⁽⁴⁵⁾. A large number of country reports explicitly indicated the need to promote a **multi-agency approach** including the creation of a multi-stakeholder network (including formal and informal organisations such as NGOs) in order to reinforce the efficiency of identification and protection mechanisms and especially reduce the time needed to detect vulnerable children who are potential victims of trafficking. It also includes the suggestion to invest in a well-functioning referral mechanism, which can make the difference in supporting children at risk at an early stage.

Reinforce inter-agency cooperation in order to reinforce integrated child protection systems. Several reports have underlined the need to put the child at the centre of an integrated protection system and to ensure that sufficient cooperation exists amongst different agencies to implement such a system.

Reinforce intra-EU cooperation, in terms of controls/prevention and in terms of specific mechanisms for the support and reintegration of trafficked children. Child victims of trafficking who wish to return to their countries of origin often are faced with inadequate support mechanisms ⁽⁴⁶⁾. In some countries there are no dedicated child-focused institutions or mechanisms that are especially equipped to deal with child victims of trafficking. Thus in the cases of return of children from other countries, they might be placed in juvenile educational institutions for children with behavioural problems, which are not able to cater for the specific needs of child victims of trafficking.

Define and adequately invest in an intervention strategy on preventing child trafficking at the country level. This comprises not only specific actions and mechanisms for cases of suspected trafficking, but also extends to cover family abuse and neglect, adoption standards and procedures, as well as general support to poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups in certain areas. Additionally, it is recommended to avoid the fragmentation of competences and to adopt a comprehensive approach to child protection systems and policies. Furthermore, this is also relevant to the investment of adequate resources in child protection systems at country level. In some countries (e.g. BG) the lack of funding and adequate investments and training for child support and welfare services limits the efficiencies of the system itself.

5.1.3 Provide appropriate reception and care for trafficked children

Invest in creating appropriate conditions for accommodation and shelter that caters to the specific needs of child victims of trafficking ⁽⁴⁷⁾. Attention should be paid to the location of these shelters, ensuring privacy of children and avoidance of re-victimisation. Such facilities should follow the broader integrated child protection system, ensuring care and support. They should be focused on **supporting the trafficked victims in their reinsertion into society once they become adult**, in order to avoid the situation that once the assistance ends (18 years old) they are marginalised from society and vulnerable again. Such mechanisms should be **included in reintegration assistance projects for victims**, as a strategy to avoid re-victimisation (AT). They should provide **long-term perspectives to victims** (permanent housing, education and adequate psychological assistance) (LU), also in order to **reinforce children's trust in the system and avoid being perceived as a sanctioning measure rather than a support structure**.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Guardianship is set forth for unaccompanied children within the context of Directive 2011/36/EU.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Of note, the EU Strategy encourages Member States to ensure that formal, functional national referral mechanisms are established. Funding has become available from the European Commission to establish development of national and transnational referral mechanisms.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Article 16, paragraph 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU obliges Member States to take the necessary measures with a view to finding a durable solution based on an individual assessment of the best interests of the child.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Article 11, paragraph 5 of Directive 2011/36/EU sets forth the obligation of Member States to provide measures of assistance and support for child victims, including the provision of appropriate and safe accommodation.

5.1.4 Promote a culture of change in societal attitudes towards violence, exploitation and discrimination towards children and women and address demand that fosters exploitation

Invest in implementation of legislation promoting normative effects. It would be important to gain better knowledge on how the demand for sexual services affects child trafficking, and who the adults seeking sexual services from children are. As mentioned earlier, child trafficking does not happen because children are vulnerable. It happens because it is profitable and because there is demand for the services of victims. A child is sexually abused because someone, a client, a user or abuser, is creating a demand for this. A child becomes vulnerable to this abuse, because of the risk factors elaborated in this study. It is thus crucial to ensure that exploiters and abusers of child victims are criminalised. The Commission in particular should further examine the role of demand and publish the report required under Article 23(2) of Directive 2011/36/EU assessing the impact of existing national law criminalising those who knowingly use the victims of trafficking.

Invest in tailored and non-sensationalist awareness-raising campaigns against violence and discrimination towards women and children. As a key structural risk factor, practitioners noted a general tendency in society to discriminate against women and children, and to tolerate violence and exploitation towards them. The societal attitude can easily influence the family and peer environment, and act as a trigger towards acceptance of abuse and exploitation, hyper-sexualised behaviour, and emotional disorders among children. Awareness-raising campaigns have once again been identified as a resilience factor that can reverse these attitudes in society. Awareness-raising campaigns should be focused on fighting gender stereotypes. They should be also based on a better understanding of the demand-side factors that sustain child trafficking, accompanied by legislative frameworks supporting this normative change.

Develop more effective measures to raise awareness and address the demand side of trafficking, with regard to child labour exploitation. Actions might include the engagement of business leaders and unions within those sectors where child labour exploitation is a particular concern, also enhancing legislation and enforcement in line with Directive 2011/36/EU.

5.2 Recommendations related to family factors

5.2.1 Support vulnerable families

Offer professional support and economic assistance to families where ties are unstable and material conditions are insufficient. A stable structure of the family unit paired with a good, trust-based relationship between a parent and a child, which includes a healthy level of parental monitoring, were found to be cornerstones of an effective resilience strategy. Services (family counsellors, social workers specialised in trafficking, dedicated family shelters) should be provided in order to support as much as possible the maintenance of at least one family tie for the child. When this is not possible, adequate shelters should be provided at an early stage in order to limit risk factors. Economic support should be offered to the family if the economic conditions prove to be a determinant risk factor (it proved not to be relevant in all cases).

Support safe investment projects of families in their children. It transpired from the research that, in certain cases, families are neither broken down nor dysfunctional, and on the contrary can be very solid, but still fall into the networks of traffickers, because they believe in their promises of employment or education opportunities for their children. In this case, the approach should be to provide alternatives for the investment of these families, both in their home country or abroad, in the context of safe educational and work-related mobility projects. Also, a strict control should be exercised over employment intermediaries. When found in the recipient countries, unaccompanied migrant children should be protected and offered livelihood and educational opportunities, and special attention should be paid to the fact that these children may be expected to send money back home. This could push them (again) into the hands of traffickers. The motivations behind the departure from the family should be investigated as thoroughly as possible.

5.2.2 Ensure the timely removal of children from highly dysfunctional families only when deemed in the best interests of the child.

Provide protection and professional support to children at risk in situations of family breakdown/dysfunctional families. While the removal of a child from his/her family is undoubtedly an action of last resort, in the cases where the family itself is a dysfunctional environment and is involved in the exploitation of the child, the focus should be on early detection and provision of alternative care solutions. Such measures should be in line with the UNCRC and relevant international standards, e.g. the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The particular importance of such measures is explained by the very low level of awareness and resilience among children forced into labour, begging and also early marriages. Residential care institutions in fact have been proven to be often risky environments due to lowered monitoring and inability to keep children engaged, thereby increasing their vulnerability to traffickers. Therefore appropriate accommodation in a family-like environment and generally de-institutionalisation of children, with provision of psychological support for children from dysfunctional families, should be prioritised.

5.3 Recommendations related to socioeconomic factors

5.3.1 Provide support to marginalised communities

Promote programmes supporting the inclusion of marginalised communities. The marginalised status of certain communities (e.g. some parts of the Roma community in certain Member States) may result in increasing other risk factors. Programmes promoting the economic and social inclusion of marginalised groups and areas will enhance resilience factors for those children, who are at greater risk because of the socioeconomic environment they are surrounded by. Integrated community strategies, benefiting from the championship of community leaders and with the involvement of cultural mediators, can be instrumental in raising the level of awareness of entire communities on trafficking and making them more resilient to the penetration of organised crime.

5.3.2 Zero tolerance on violence against women and children

Promote a culture of zero tolerance towards violence against women and children at local level. Tolerance towards violence has proved to be a risk factor for all categories of trafficked children. It lowers the level of sensitivity towards signals of danger and it makes situations of exploitation and abuse acceptable, leading the way to the criminal entrepreneurship of child traffickers. Local social control mechanisms can increase or decrease the level of tolerance towards violence. Involving families and communities in awareness-raising programmes specifically focusing on the negative consequences of corporal punishment of children and creating zero tolerance towards violence against women may result in increasing resilience. Campaigns should focus on the risks deriving from hyper-sexualisation, and the possible links between hyper-sexualisation, pornography, prostitution and trafficking.

Decrease tolerance of child labour exploitation. The tolerance towards the labour exploitation of children is in certain contexts to be linked to a different attitude towards child labour. This subject should be addressed at the level of local communities in order to curb any form of tolerance towards the worst forms of child labour at the minimum. It should also be accompanied by an adequate legal framework related to child labour. The attitudes towards child begging should be addressed as well in this context.

Most importantly ensure that societies are aware and supportive of the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence. There are concerted efforts to inform the public, including children, about children's rights and encourage action to prevent violence against children. Make children and societies aware that they are persons and not subpersons.

5.4 Recommendations related to individual factors

5.4.1 Strengthen children's individual resilience

Invest in programmes which ensure that every child is treated with dignity and as a unique and valuable human being with an individual personality and needs with due regard to the child's right of participation. Investments should be made in guidance and vocational training programmes supporting children at risk, and especially left alone children, in building their future, acquiring a 'sense of direction' and believing in the possibility of a future. Reinforcing self-esteem and the values of diversity/individuality may act as a resilience factor for **children seeking attention or under peer group influence and for children from marginalised communities.**

Inform children about trafficking risks and raise their awareness, while providing concrete support. More generally, inform children of their rights, seek to strengthen their resilience and ensure they are aware of risks, including from trafficking. Children should be warned about 'signals of danger'. Activities in the school or in the community targeted towards awareness raising should be carefully planned. At the same time, children at risk should be presented with concrete opportunities for action and offered immediate and accessible support services (anti-trafficking contact persons in schools, hotlines).

Invest in programmes aimed at providing support in schools and countering dropping out. Educational institutions can provide concrete support in helping children at risk reinforce their individual resilience factors. Teachers should be trained to detect signals of danger at an early stage and to support children at risk. Children at risk should be included in programmes supporting their presence at school by closely monitoring attendance rates and immediately addressing absences. Education, and more generally being included in a training pathway, has proved to be an individual resilience factor. The EU should support this through the European Social Fund and by identifying and disseminating best practices through the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI).

Ensure children are treated as rights holders, and that measures are in place to empower children to protect themselves and claim their rights. Ensure that no child is discriminated against and that children have access to and benefit from national child protection systems on an equal basis.

Strengthen the voice of the child (Article 12 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) within all services and support systems for children, and particularly those who fall within the high-risk groups for trafficking. This might include training to ensure that the rights of the child under Article 12 are understood and acted upon by all professionals who come into contact with children, and especially so those who work within child protection systems (e.g. social workers), alongside more targeted funding to support the testing and replication of frameworks designed for this purpose. The **See Me, Hear Me** ⁽⁴⁸⁾ framework in the UK is one such example of a framework with the objective of embedding child participation within the everyday practice of professionals working in the field of child protection.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ <http://www.seeme-hearme.org.uk> (checked on 7.5.2015).

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