



CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS UNIT



TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN THE EU: THE INVOLVEMENT OF WESTERN BALKANS ORGANISED CRIME 2006

Public version

Please note that the intelligence collection plan for this report was finalised in late 2005 and this document is based entirely on information available at the time and does not deal with the situation subsequent to 2005. The referendum held in Montenegro on 21 May 2006 and the subsequent declaration of independence by the Republic of Montenegro on 3 June 2006 is therefore not dealt with. As a 'public version' this report has already been subject to much editing and whilst it is recognised that the 'split' between Serbia and Montenegro is a significant milestone in the history of the Balkans, to ensure that the narrative of the document is not further affected the original text has not been altered to reflect this or any other development.

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Trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation in the EU: The involvement of Western Balkans Organised Crime

1. Executive Summary

This report seeks to provide an overview of the nature of the involvement of organised criminals in the traffic of women and children for sexual exploitation and, more specifically, deal with a region that is core to the current level of trafficking present in the European Union and to determine what, if any, threat is posed by organised criminals operating from the Western Balkans.

The report is based on information from the 25 Member States and international organisations combined with research undertaken by the responsible authorities at Europol.

The role and involvement of organised crime in trafficking human beings is evident in all aspects of the crime and this is highlighted in the first part of this report. The prime motivation is the profit that can be made from a crime that has been variously described as one of the most lucrative organised crime activities generating a global multibillion dollar a year income. As such, it attracts all levels of criminal interest from the amateur or low level trafficker, the smaller groups operating on a more permanent basis through to the international or high level networks with the capacity to deal with large numbers of trafficked victims who will have bases and connections in the source, transit and destination countries. These groups will also reinvest profits from trafficking in persons in arms sales and drugs, as well as legitimate business ventures.

There has been a significant increase in trafficking in Europe in recent years and much of this is due to the lack of any real or sustainable deterrent, so much so that the crime was always associated with the phrase 'low risk-high reward'. Now, as a result of much more law enforcement awareness and Member State commitment in providing specific anti-trafficking legislation and prioritising the crime as one requiring the same level of response as other organised crime activity, the climate is gradually changing. However, in the absence of a common response across Europe from all levels of law enforcement and the judiciary, organised crime continues to target vulnerable women and children both in and beyond the European Union.

Organised crime groups from Albania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Nigeria, Romania and the Former Yugoslavia are the most prevalent. The countries they commonly target, the 'source countries', are Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation and Ukraine. The reasons why females from these countries are targeted lies in what are known as 'push factors' and can be readily associated with the reasons behind regular and irregular migration throughout the world. The most common are unemployment or lack of employment opportunities, poverty, gender, racial or ethnic discrimination, escaping persecution, domestic violence or abuse and the perception of increased opportunities elsewhere.

The main destination countries in Europe are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. However, it is unlikely that there is a single country in the European Union that is not affected by trafficking in human beings and with this in mind the following routes are important to note: the Balkans Route, the Eastern Route, the Central European Route, the Eastern Mediterranean Route and the North African or Southern Route.

The recruitment of women and children has a common denominator – deceit. The profits are made through the forced prostitution of the victims. Consequently, this aspect is never discussed and so an alternative method to entice the victim is used. The most common methods of ‘recruitment’ are connected to a false offer of employment, a false offer of marriage or a relationship with a ‘lover boy’ and the involvement of a family member or a friend acting on behalf of the trafficker. Once recruited, the victim will then be transported either internally within the country of recruitment, which is increasing, or to another country, crossing the border clandestinely, or through the use of legal or counterfeit travel documents.

Victims will then be forced to become sex workers providing sex for men who will engage with them in clubs or bars or arrange appointments through newspaper or magazine adverts or through the Internet. There is an increase in the number of victims who are being forced to work behind closed doors. For example, they may be locked in apartments where the customer is brought to the premises, they will work in saunas or massage parlours under the control of a pimp or be transported from one premises to another. This is designed to reduce the opportunities for the victim to escape and for identification or detection by law enforcement.

Western Balkans based organised crime groups do not operate that differently from other nationalities of organised criminals but their main advantage lies within the region where they conduct their business.

A decade of war in the Former Yugoslavia led to the breakdown of civil law and order across the region, resulting in porous and weak borders, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of displaced persons and fractured communities once held together by rigid moral codes and poverty. This has created a climate where illicit trading, illegal activity and corruption have become more acceptable if not a way of life for some.

The aftermath of the war saw tens of thousands of international peace keepers sent to the region and this deployment was a catalyst for the creation of a sex industry servicing the international community. This industry was driven by organised crime groups, many of which were active before the wars, allowed to continue operating under the auspices of being part of a military unit, and then given a free hand after the cessation of hostilities.

An important aspect of the operations of these groups and individuals is that they are organised and they are comfortable with cross border criminality. They operate in a relatively risk free environment because they have not been targeted

by law enforcement and corruption has been used as a tool to ensure that this remains the status quo. Corruption in the Western Balkans is a factor that has to be taken into account in consideration of the lack of any real success by the authorities in combating organised crime in the region and trafficking specifically.

More efforts are being made in the region by the governments through the implementation of national action plans to tackle trafficking and it is likely that these will provide a platform for a sustainable counter trafficking programme. This, combined with a raised awareness as to how the crime should be properly investigated and how the victims should be properly treated, will begin to produce results. The same or similar results that can be seen within EU Member States where investigations, which have led to convictions and long terms of imprisonment together with the seizure of assets, are sending a clear message to the traffickers. It is likely that this more robust response from European law enforcement will have a 'knock on' effect and in fact, may already have. There are more indications that internal trafficking within the Western Balkans is increasing.

Internal trafficking involves less risk for the trafficker; it reduces the opportunity for law enforcement to identify a victim and therefore the best opportunity to detect the trafficker. This therefore presents a continued and increased threat in the Former Yugoslavia and Albania and presents law enforcement and policy makers with more challenges in tackling the 'domestic THB market'. This is one of the conclusions of the report and it is from these conclusions that the recommendations have been drawn. Whilst the conclusions are specific to crime groups operating in the Western Balkans, the recommendations are almost generic in that they describe what should be considered as best practice and best policy; the default approach required to prevent and combat trafficking more effectively.

The main conclusion is that there will be no increase in the threat to the EU posed by Western Balkans organised crime groups involved in the traffic of women and children for sexual exploitation but that internal trafficking will increase and this will pose a greater threat to those vulnerable individuals targeted by the traffickers and to the Western Balkan states as a whole.

2. Introduction

It was no doubt anticipated or expected that the legislation passed in Europe at the beginning of the 19th Century abolishing the slave trade would stop once and for all any trade or traffic in human beings (THB). Over the past three decades a new slave trade has emerged; women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. A trade driven by a demand for purchased sex and a sex industry which has created markets in almost every country in the world.

In the 1970s, trafficked women came mainly from South East Asia. In the 1980s, the second and third 'waves' of women came from Africa and Latin America. The latest traffic, the 'fourth wave', are females from Central and Eastern Europe. Thousands of women and children are trafficked annually to the EU for the purpose of sexual exploitation and whilst it is difficult to put a precise figure to this trade in human beings what all 'actors' involved in the fight against THB agree upon is that the level of trafficking has reached an all time high and is increasing. Although not all aspects of the sex industry are linked to criminality, the movement of women and children around the globe for the purpose of sexual exploitation is.

The escalation of this crime within the EU can be linked to the enormous profits that can be made by the traffickers, pimps and bar and club owners who supply and cater for the demand in purchased sex that exists in Europe. Another just as important factor is the fact that the trafficking networks operating in the EU have been able to do so with very little risk to themselves or their operations.

Trafficking in human beings is considered to be the fastest growing criminal business in the world, generating massive profits for international criminal organisations. Not surprisingly, trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation represents a global challenge of the same proportions as trafficking in drugs and weapons and can be easily linked to the forgery of documents, money laundering and people smuggling.

Given the nature of the crime and the lack of accurate data concerning trafficked victims and the perpetrators, it is often difficult to support these statements with specific figures. Law enforcement relies heavily on reporting from the international organisations (IO) and non governmental organisations (NGO) working in this field and their estimates of the scale of the problem which are based on the most reliable information available. One such report is the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Regional Clearing Point's (RCP) Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South East Europe. Figures provided by the United Nations (UN) support the Council of Europe (CoE) estimates quoted above.

Traffickers target regions and areas that are subject to poor social and economic conditions, particularly where those conditions have already led to an increase in illegal activity or increased vulnerability of sections of the population. Besides the obvious, i.e. economic recession including inflation and growth in foreign debt, rising unemployment, social upheaval and discrimination, armed conflict is also a factor.

For Europe, the most significant, recent and relevant armed conflict that has had a direct impact upon the scale of THB in the EU have been the wars in the former Yugoslav republics. Between 1991 and 2001 there have been armed conflicts in all of the former Yugoslav republics, effectively two sets of successive wars. In 1991 to 1995, there were wars in Croatia and Bosnia involving forces from Serbia and, between 1996 and 1999, the war in Kosovo followed by conflicts in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Southern Serbia. The sexual slavery of the war years did not cease upon the conclusion of hostilities but was

followed by the organised trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.

These wars and their consequences did not bypass Albania. Civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, together with the rebellion of 1997 in Albania, were the pillars which underpinned anarchy, crime and economic poverty. It is not a coincidence that the Former Yugoslav republics, Albania and Bulgaria were identified as countries most involved in organised crime in the last decade.

The IOM estimates that 120.000 women and children are trafficked through the Balkans alone each year. Before the war, there was no evidence of trafficking in this region.

It is clear that the trafficking of women and children through and from this region by organised crime groups (OCGs) poses a significant threat to the vulnerable communities and individuals targeted by the traffickers. It is also now evident that networks of traffickers from the Western Balkans are operating in Europe and are targeting and exploiting EU nationals in the same way. As such, the question of what sort of threat, if any, is posed by the activities of these trafficking networks to the EU Member States (MS).

3. Aims and objectives

The focus is upon the involvement of organised trafficking networks operating in and from the Western Balkans and the potential threat they pose to the EU. In the context of this report, the term 'Western Balkans' shall mean the countries of Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Serbia Montenegro including Kosovo.

4. Methodology

As a result of a series of meetings between the experts in the Trafficking Human Beings Group, a data collection plan was agreed upon. The purpose of the plan was to obtain some answers to a series of fundamental questions concerning OC involvement in the Western Balkans. A questionnaire was forwarded to the MS at the end of 2004 for completion and the responses to that document are taken into account in this report, although it is right to highlight that the usefulness of any information provided by the MS on the subject matter is almost negligible. This will be commented upon in the conclusions of this report.

In addition to requesting the competent experts in the MS to complete the questionnaire, it was also forwarded to appropriate international organisations for

their input in recognition of the role played by those organisations that are based in, operate from or are represented in the region. The information provided has underlined once again the value of the data collected by non law enforcement agencies and its usefulness in drawing the 'big picture' for law enforcement.

Operational visits were undertaken to Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina with a view to gathering intelligence from 'the persons on the ground'. The information provided 'in country' was highly relevant, informative and allowed for a better understanding of the issues surrounding THB in that region. Much of the intelligence gathered was 'in confidence' and the actual sources will not be identified in this report but all are known to the authors.

Open source research, observation, comment and the opinions of the Europol THB experts working within the Crimes Against Persons Unit are used to complement the 'hard' data and as such underlines the principle of this report in that it is an assessment based upon the perspective, conclusions and recommendation of those officers.

5. Definitions and abbreviations

Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) - For the purpose of ease and common understanding, references in this report to trafficking in human beings should be read with Article 3 of the United Nations 'Palermo Protocol in mind; The protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children supplementing the United Nations convention against transnational organised crime. That is;

(a) 'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of 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 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) Child - shall mean a person under the age of 18 years.

BiH – Bosnia Herzegovina

FYR - Former Yugoslavia Republics - The countries that formed the original state of Yugoslavia 1945 -1991 i.e. Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, FYROM, Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo and Slovenia

FYROM – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Kosovo - United Nations Administered Province of Kosovo and Metohija

OC - Organised Crime - see below

OCG - Organised Crime Group - see below

UNMIK – United Nations Mission in Kosovo

VoT – Victim of trafficking - this term is used throughout the report to describe the individual who has been trafficked and subjected to exploitation and abuse. It emphasises the fact that the individual is first and foremost a victim of crime and underlines the 'best practice' policy of a victim oriented approach. Other reporting on the subject often refers to the same individuals as 'trafficked persons' or 'presumed victims of trafficking'.

6. Organised Crime and Organised Crime Groups

The terms 'trafficking network' and 'organised crime group' (OCG) are some of the labels applied and are used frequently to describe the individuals who are involved in trafficking human beings. In most cases, the descriptions work in that the words 'network' and 'group' have obvious meanings and can be related to the actions of criminals working in cohort. The general use of these terms is acceptable when discussing the actions of a number of criminals working together but in consideration of establishing exactly what the scale and nature of the criminal activity is, especially for the purpose of an investigation, a 'legal' definition is useful. Whereas the phrase 'trafficking network' has no legal definition, the following are two examples of how organised crime has been defined and offer some insight into the key points to prove.

"Organised Crime Group shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one

or more serious crimes, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit”¹, and

“At least 6 of the following characteristics have to apply, four of which must be those numbered 1, 3, 5 and 11, for any crime or criminal group to be classified as organised crime”²

1. A collaboration of more than 2 people
2. Each with own appointed tasks
3. Exists for a prolonged or indefinite period of time (a reference to stability and potential durability of the group)
4. Uses some form of discipline and control
5. Suspected of the commission of serious criminal offences
6. Operates at international level
7. Uses violence or other means suitable for intimidation
8. Has a commercial or businesslike structure
9. Is engaged in money laundering
10. Exerts influence on politics, media, public administration, judicial authorities or the economy
11. Is determined by pursuit of profit and/or power

6.1. How Crime Groups and Networks Evolve

Over time, the activities of established serious organised criminals tend to become more complex and sophisticated. This is because of their wish to handle larger quantities of illicit commodities, to diversify into new areas of criminal activity, to conceal accumulated assets, to guard against the threats from other criminals and law enforcement, or to become more 'hands-off'. By the same token, criminal relationships become more extensive and varied, the use of routes and methods more flexible and adept, and criminal organisations more resilient and surveillance-aware. Opportunities may also arise for some to establish specialist or niche roles. Some 'top' criminals exploit their reputations and extensive networks and move into bankrolling, brokering or 'fixing' the criminal activities of others, maintaining a distance from the activities themselves but taking a cut of the profits.

¹ Council of Europe Recommendation Rec. (2001)11 on guiding principles on the fight against organised crime adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 September 2001

² Taken from 6204/2/97 ENFOPOL 35 REV 2, a mechanism designed to assist EU Member States in describing organised crime. It is this definition that will be used in Europol's 2006 Organised Crime Threat Assessment.

6.2. Organised Crime Groups and Trafficking in Human Beings

Organised crime groups and professional criminals are motivated in the first instance, and in the majority of cases, by financial reward. To that end they will trade in any area and with any commodity that is likely to return a high profit. Although the question of the profits realised by criminals who are engaged in human trafficking is always open to debate, it is widely accepted that trafficking is a multi billion dollar a year business.

Some or a lot of consideration, depending on the criminals concerned, is given to the risks associated with their activities but only insofar as reducing those risks through the implementation of counter measures or identifying a commodity that has less or no associated risks. It is evident that trafficking women and children for sexual exploitation is a crime area that OCGs feel comfortable working in and this will have a lot to do with the fact that THB is still seen by criminals as a high reward/low risk business.

Having identified the criteria for a criminal group to be labelled as 'organised', the identification of such entities in the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation needs to be determined in order to establish the level at which the traffickers are operating. 'Trafficking network' is often used to describe the persons who work for and support the actual traffickers and could, for example, be involved solely in the identification of a potential victim(s), the recruitment of that person(s), transportation, supply of documents, corrupting officials, provision of accommodation etc.

In recognition of the level of involvement, the diverse methods employed, the wide range of routes and distances involved the different nationalities and ethnic origins of both victims and traffickers and how they are exploited, a certain level of categorisation has been possible.

It is generally accepted that the 'mafia style' trafficking network is not something that is seen on a regular basis. This does not ignore the fact that hierarchical organisations are involved in trafficking human beings but underlines the fact that more and more trafficking groups are being identified where the persons involved are more likely to have close family ties or a previous criminal relationship and operate as equals with a specific role to play. Increasingly, it is being reported that females are becoming more and more involved within trafficking groups and, in some cases, are undertaking substantive roles and the role of women as recruiters, traffickers, enforcers etc. cannot be ignored. In simple terms, however, the following is evident:

Amateur or low level traffickers – locally based individuals who provide a single service or act as occasional traffickers. They may act on behalf of or work for larger networks. It is likely that individuals working at this level who are proficient and can identify the potential for increased earnings or profitability will graduate to more regular and structured operations. Most are likely to be involved in the recruitment and trafficking of their own nationals and will be based in their country

of origin. They are likely to be paid for the service provided as opposed to receiving profit directly through victim exploitation.

Small groups or medium level traffickers – more permanent and operating across borders with established links to similar groups or criminals involved in other crime areas. They will be involved in all stages of the trafficking process including the exploitation phase and the re-trafficking of victims. Traffickers operating at this level will profit directly from their victims and are likely to control a number of women. They will have access to or own premises where the victims will be forced to work and consequently will have links or ties in the destination country. For example, the UK sex industry, particularly the Eastern/Central European sector, is dominated by a network of smaller groups who co-operate in moving victims around the country in response to market forces.

International or high level networks – able to conduct the whole process from recruitment to forced prostitution including transport, provision of documents, high level corruption and money laundering. These networks will have the capacity to deal with large numbers of trafficked victims and will have bases and connections in the source, transit and destination countries. Such organised crime groups have started to reinvest profits from trafficking in persons in arms sales and drugs, as well as legitimate business ventures. This strengthens their capacity to create and maintain criminal connections with corrupt officials in local authorities and embassies.

Reporting from the National Rapporteur on THB in the Netherlands identifies that of the suspects for trafficking arrested during 2003, 69% formed part of a network, 19% of an isolated group and 12% were solo operators. Virtually all criminal networks (97%) were engaged in cross border THB.

It is quite conceivable that the criminals working at any of the above three levels would not class themselves as organised and part of an OCG or network. This is a label given to them by law enforcement depending on an interpretation or assessment of their activity. The very nature of trafficking, especially where a border crossing is required, demands that the criminals involved will require contacts in other countries and other crime areas as mentioned above. The very existence of these contacts and associations goes a long way in defining these individuals as international criminals, although it is unlikely that many would ever describe themselves as such.

6.3. Nationalities of OCGs involved in THB

The most frequently reported nationalities of organised criminals involved in trafficking human beings in the EU are:

- Albanians
- Bulgarians
- Lithuanians.

The Dutch National Rapporteur reported in 2005 that the five most common nationalities of foreign suspects detected in the Netherlands for THB offences were:

- Bulgarian
- Albanian
- Romanian
- Nigerian
- Yugoslavian (sic).

Data provided by the Spanish authorities identifies that the 10% of offences reported in Spain connected to THB are committed by Bosnians and Albanians.

6.4. The Trafficking Process

6.4.1. Source countries

'Source countries' or countries of origin are so designated because females from these countries are more frequently identified as being victims of trafficking than others. The main source countries of victims trafficked to the EU for sexual exploitation are:

- Albania
- Bulgaria
- Moldova
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Ukraine.

They are countries where diverse conditions prevail which lead individuals to contemplate migration or see migration as an answer to their needs. To those who have the possibility of legal migration and the means to undertake the process, the way forward is clear and relatively risk free. It is those individuals or families who cannot migrate legally or do not have the means to do so who are targeted by the traffickers or seek to engage with others who offer the possibility of illegal migration without real consideration of the risks involved.

As previously stated, the reasons that encourage people to leave one area for another are known as 'push factors'. The reasons which attract migrants to a particular area or encourage them to leave are known as 'pull factors'. In relation to Trafficking in Human Beings and the reasons, events or features that lead persons to engage with traffickers, the following is evident:

PUSH FACTORS

- Unemployment or lack of employment opportunities
- Labour market not open to women
- Poor salary and poor working conditions
- Poverty
- Inadequate or poor education
- Gender, sexual or other discrimination
- Escaping persecution, domestic violence or abuse
- Natural disasters and environmental conditions
- Perception of increased opportunity elsewhere

PULL FACTORS

- Promise of employment or better employment opportunities
- Regular pay, higher salary and improved working conditions
- Better quality and/or standard of life
- Better education prospects including higher education
- No discrimination or abuse
- The opportunity to work abroad
- Demand for sex workers in more lucrative markets and higher earnings
- The opportunity to support family/relatives at home through 'foreign remittance'.

Interpol and the Dutch National Rapporteur provide more information on the subject in relation to the most commonly reported countries of origin of victims trafficked to the EU.

The countries coming to notice are:

- Romania
- Bulgaria
- Belarus
- Russian Federation
- Moldova
- Ukraine
- Albania
- Armenia
- Serbia & Montenegro
- Croatia.

Reporting from the UK identifies that 'Most trafficked prostitutes come from the Balkans and former Soviet Union, or from the Far East, especially China or Thailand. The latter appear to be much more costly to procure, and this may explain the relatively rapid growth in the former.'

6.4.2. *Transit Countries*

Countries through which victims of trafficking are routinely transported en route to the final destination or temporarily accommodated in prior to further movement are known as 'transit countries'. Depending on the place of origin, the final destination and route or method of transport used, a victim could be transported through many different countries. It is often the case that in addition to travelling through a transit country as part of a route to the final destination, victims are often subjected to abuse and exploitation before arriving in the country where it is intended that they will 'work'. Indeed in many cases a victim will be 'broken in', i.e. subjected to rape and violence, whilst in the transit country so that on arrival in the destination country she fully understands the role that is expected of her. This leads to the victim becoming fully compliant and acknowledging the risks and consequences of not cooperating or obeying her abuser(s).

Interpol reports that 'the most mentioned countries of transit are':

- Hungary
- Poland
- Romania
- Austria
- Germany
- Serbia & Montenegro

It is also logical to accept that if a victim is trafficked from Central or Eastern Europe, the further west the final destination is, the more countries there are to be transited. Consequently, amongst the 25 Member States of the European Union, there are very few, if any, MS that are not affected by THB in some form or another.

6.4.3. *Destination Countries*

The countries of destination are where victims of trafficking are finally located and forced into prostitution. The destinations are normally where there is demand for purchased sex and/or where the profits to be gained by the traffickers are greatest. Effectively, traffickers will chase the market, including reacting to temporary events or situations where a demand may exist. That also includes targeting the tourism market which leads to 'seasonal' destinations, with the traffickers placing victims in or near holiday resorts for the duration of a holiday season. Additionally, as it is seen as business, new locations will be explored with a view to creating a demand where previously there may not have been one. Consequently, the destination countries can and will change but in general the following is a 'snap shot' of the current situation concerning main countries of destination in the EU:

- Austria
- Belgium
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Spain
- United Kingdom

As examples, in London, 85% of all 'working prostitutes' that were checked by the Metropolitan Police Clubs and Vice Unit were non UK citizens and 60% of these were from Central and Eastern Europe. Between 2001 and 2003, almost 50% of all possible victims of THB identified each year in the Netherlands were from Central and Eastern Europe.

6.4.4. Trafficking Routes into the EU

It would be a very useful tool for law enforcement to be able to refer to a guide that identified where you could reasonably expect a trafficker and/or a trafficked victim to depart from and where that person would arrive in a specific country. Unfortunately, it is not as straightforward as that. It would be simpler and far more accurate to identify that traffickers will seek to use whatever routes offer the best chances of a risk free passage and this will obviously change according to many circumstances, not least of which is the response from law enforcement with regards counter trafficking tactics and action.

Given that traffickers are not restricted to the use of a particular route or channel, it is no longer possible to draw some arrows on a map of Europe and present a definitive picture of where traffickers and their victims enter the EU. With the increase in the freedom of movement possible within an expanded European Union and the growth in more affordable air travel with new routes opening up on a regular basis, traffickers have the option of using numerous points of country departure and entry.

Whilst it is appropriate to use, in general terms, phrases such as 'The Balkans Route', 'The North African Route' 'The Eastern Mediterranean Route' etc. when seeking to describe migration or smuggling routes and provide an understanding of what countries might be involved, the identification of these 'channels' as potential trafficking routes should not be seen as absolute.

However, as mentioned above, and in recognition of the fact that knowledge of where traffickers may be operating can assist in the planning of a counter trafficking action, the following EU entry points are evident:

- The Balkans Route – victims are moved from the Balkans into Slovenia, Hungary and Greece
- The Eastern Route – Russia and Belarus into Poland
- The Central European Route – victims trafficked from the Far and Middle East into Ukraine and then moved via Slovakia and the Czech Republic
- Eastern Mediterranean Route – Turkey into Bulgaria and Romania
- North African or Southern Route – Africa into Spain, Italy and Malta

6.5. Recruitment of victims

Traffickers and trafficking networks have developed the methods by which they recruit women and children for the purpose of forced prostitution. In recent years, it can be seen that they have reacted to law enforcement action, taken advantage of more freedom of movement, identified new and emerging ‘markets’ and exploited the sometimes fragmented approach that governments have in tackling this aspect of organised crime activity. Although operating methods change, what remains a constant where recruitment is concerned are the push factors, the reasons why individuals are so vulnerable to the false promises of the trafficker.

These factors remain linked to poverty, poor education, lack of employment or career opportunities, gender, racial and ethnic discrimination, domestic or institutional violence and abuse. The targets of the traffickers are not limited to the poorly educated or desperately impoverished. It is quite clear from recent reporting that females of all ages, including minors, are recruited and that they come from a wide range of different backgrounds. It is no longer correct or safe to assume that victims who are trafficked into the EU have the same profile.

An example of this is the situation in the Ukraine. Awareness of the dangers of trafficking was not an issue in Ukraine with 99% of the population understanding the problem and the risks attached to THB but only 20% believing that they are at risk. Of particular note is the fact that well-educated persons from urban areas are more likely to be trafficked. It is believed that this is the case because this group is more likely to speak a foreign language and therefore more willing to take a job opportunity abroad. People from rural areas are thought to be more accustomed to poverty and so are less likely to be seduced by a job offer promising great rewards. It does not tend to be unemployment that is a push factor, as 90% of victims assisted by the IOM were employed prior to leaving Ukraine.

As a complementary factor, trafficking in human beings can be connected, in part, to the declining possibilities for regular migration coinciding with the emergence of a market for irregular migration services. As such, for those individuals seeking something better beyond their borders, there is a willingness to engage with the traffickers as they offer something which is otherwise beyond their means. A consequence of this is that the deceit or misrepresentation practised by the recruiter or trafficker does not always have to be the pivotal aspect of the recruitment phase. The mere offer of a means to leave the country can be enough to secure the individual’s cooperation and willing.

The actual methods used are varied but in the majority, the common theme is deceit and appears in the following forms:

- False offer of employment opportunities
- False representation of declared sex work
- Approach by 'Lover boy' or false promises of marriage
- False allegation of crime or fictitious debt - The 'Hungary Process'. A victim is offered work overseas and provided with a job and accommodation 'package' exactly as described. After an initial 'settling in' period, her employer then makes a false accusation of a crime against her, usually the theft of a large amount of money. This allegation and the threat of reporting her to the police with all the potential consequences for the victim is used by the owner to force the victim to prostitute herself, in another establishment owned or controlled by him, so that she can 'pay back' her employer.

In addition to these more subtle methods the following are still evident in many countries of origin:

- Family or relatives act as agents for the traffickers
- Kidnap/abduction
- Use of force, coercion and intimidation e.g. actual violence, threat of violence, confiscation of passport/identification documents, threat of disclosing sex work
- Drug and alcohol addiction.

The emergence of more females being used in the recruitment process is a trend that is being reported in many source countries which has not been evident before. The Dutch National Rapporteur reports that a quarter of suspects arrested in 2002 and 2003 were women and that 96% of the female suspects were mostly engaged in cross border trafficking.

6.6. Transport of victims

The traffickers transport their victims in two ways. Victims may be moved directly to their ultimate destination, beginning their work as prostitutes only when they arrive, or they may be moved in stages, in which case they can be exploited at each stage. The former usually travel in small groups accompanied by a minder who hands them to their eventual employers, while those trafficked in stages are sold, with their debts, from one criminal group to another.

All methods of transportation are used and the most suitable form by which victims of trafficking, or those females recruited but not yet exploited, are moved from one location to another will vary accordingly, namely:

- the method of recruitment
- the place of recruitment
- nationality of recruiter/trafficker
- nationality of victim
- level of cooperation of victim
- distances involved
- internal trafficking only or border crossing required
- availability of legal/forged/counterfeit travel documentation
- the level of sophistication of the trafficking network or individuals involved
- the nature of, or the intended exploitation.

6.7. Border Crossing or Internal Trafficking

It is often the more sophisticated or structured trafficking networks that will be engaged in cross border trafficking. Victims can be transported by air, sea, road and rail, both clandestinely and through the use of legitimate channels of migration. Insofar as THB is concerned, the purpose of crossing a border would normally be related to placing the victim in another country where she can be exploited for the most profit and, in the case of a pimp or trafficker who 'chases' a market, may involve crossing a border on a regular basis.

The trafficker may also move the victim to a country where the law enforcement or judicial response is less effective or to a location where he or she already has an operation or business. It is often the case that, in the event of law enforcement action in the country of destination, the criminals involved in the trafficking process that remain beyond the borders/jurisdiction of the investigating authorities are never prosecuted.

The border crossing also provides the trafficker or pimp with an additional measure of control in the destination country. The removal of any travel documents, genuine or false, from the victim increases her vulnerability and exposes her to a wide range of systems (and language) that she may not be familiar with. All are factors that favour the abuser.

A clandestine border crossing will amount to the individual or groups of individuals being smuggled across a land, sea or river border. It is during this phase that a trafficked person effectively becomes an illegal migrant and may even be under the control of people smugglers whose business it is to circumvent border management and control. Overt crossings made at or via controlled border check points (BCP) will involve the production of genuine or false travel and identity documents. A border crossing at a BCP is probably the most obvious stage of the trafficking process where corruption could be a regular feature, with border personnel being bribed or compromised to take or not take action in keeping with their duty.

It is not necessarily the fact that a victim being taken across a border will be subjected to coercion, intimidation or use of force. Many individuals, denied the possibility of legal migration, will cooperate with their traffickers/smugglers in the

knowledge that the illegal crossing service provided may be the only means available to them. Consequently, there is a real incentive for the individual to go along with any demands made of them. It is often the case that those persons, provided with false travel documents and a story, will endorse, support or even take the initiative in providing the right answers in the event they are questioned.

It is this aspect of the trafficked victim's journey, e.g. the false declaration to a border official, that can be a frustrating fact of life for the law enforcement officer as it will be one of the few opportunities where the trafficked victim can be identified and rescued before they are forced into prostitution or continue to be exploited.

Internal trafficking occurs within the borders of a sovereign state and normally occurs when a vulnerable person is moved from a poor to a more affluent region of a country. It will also be evident in the movement of a victim from one 'place of work' to another within the same country. Internal traffickers are more likely to be made up of smaller groups than those operating cross border operations or they are individual perpetrators. They may be less organised or as sophisticated as cross border traffickers. In general, internal trafficking appears to be on the increase. There is less expense involved in the transportation of the person and no need to provide potentially expensive false documents to victims if potential victims can be recruited locally with the obvious benefits of a common language to work with.

6.8. Provision of documentation

The provision of documentation is normally associated with trafficking that requires a border crossing and consequently it may be assumed that it is not an issue in the investigation of internal trafficking cases. This is not always the case, although it is obvious that more supporting documents will be needed if a trafficker intends to transport a victim overtly via a border crossing and deal with any official enquiry as to the nature of the travel and the persons involved. In these cases, the use of the following types of documents, genuine or false, are common: national identification document, passport, visa application, letter supporting visa application (position of employment, business trip, study etc.), confirmation of address or other accommodation in country of destination.

Crossings undertaken with the support of documentation also assist the trafficker in prolonging the deception phase of the journey if the victim is being transported as a result of a false promise. It allows the victim to believe that she is part of a legitimate process as well as making it more difficult for law enforcement to identify a victim of trafficking.

Victims who are placed in an environment where they are exposed to law enforcement enquiries, e.g. bar or nightclub, may require some supporting documents to indemnify their owner. The most obvious is a contract of employment which would legitimize their presence on the premises and would probably identify them as a dancer, waitress or hostess. These contracts are

merely a means for the owner to counter any claims that the women may be working as prostitutes and will have no legal substance.

The use of a contract has also been reported in Lithuania where young women and girls are being provided with contracts of employment prior to traveling to the UK for work in the service industry only to find, on arrival in the UK, that these contracts are worthless and merely part of the recruitment and deception process.

Since the expansion of the European Union, nationals of the new EU States have more opportunities to travel and work within Europe. Traffickers have quickly identified this and the trend is currently for a VoT to be trafficked using their own valid travel documents, meaning there is no longer the offence of facilitation of an illegal immigrant. The benefits to the trafficker are that there is less expense involved as no false documents have to be obtained and the offence of trafficking can be more difficult to prove. The Netherlands has identified this trend and in 2003, 90% of identified foreign VoT in the Netherlands had used their own valid passport, the figure having been only 56% in 2001. In Greece, a downward trend is being reported in the number of trafficked women lacking travel documents or holding forged or falsified documents or forged residence and work permits.

The legislation in some countries in Europe facilitates to some extent the arrival and residence of victims who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Cyprus issues temporary residence visas to females as “cabaret artists”. Many VoT have been identified as individuals who had been granted visas to work in cabarets and night clubs.

The US TIP Report 2001 reported on evidence that had surfaced implicating the French embassy in Sofia in selling an estimated 20.000 to 25.000 visas to Bulgarian prostitutes, with charges being brought against a former vice counsel. Evidence also emerged that the Belgian embassy in Bulgaria was accepting bribes, and a senior diplomat had developed a network of front companies at home for making fictitious work visas, each worth up to €4.230 in fees.

6.9. Exploitation phase

The exploitation phase, the stage where a girl is earning money for her pimp or trafficker, is normally immediately preceded by a ‘grooming process’. The aim of this part of the process is to foster obedience and subservience. This control can start with the seizure or removal of their travel documents, thereby creating a dependency on the trafficker by the victim which can and often will result in her full compliance and cooperation; exactly what the trafficker or pimp requires. In many countries, prostitution is illegal, and this, coupled in some instances with the victims’ illegal status, can result in a fear of authority. In most cases, VoT are not aware of the true nature of their employment until it is explained by traffickers what is expected of them, sometimes accompanied by physical and sexual assault. It is reported, however, that in general there is a movement away from

the use of a high level of violence in this process, towards more subtle forms of coercion, principally financial.

Traffickers will typically seek to make the exploitation phase last as long as possible, thereby maximizing their profits. The purpose of all the activity prior to the exploitation is to realise this objective. It is clear that some women knowingly enter into arrangements where they will be expected to provide sexual services. In these cases, where there is an expectation that some of their earnings will be provided to the pimp or the 'house', the exploitation concerns the amount of money the girl is allowed to keep. Only once their pay and conditions becomes known do they realise that they are being exploited. This often comes in the form of a level of debt bondage, coupled with various 'add-ons', that means they will be working as unpaid prostitutes for a lengthy period of time. While more victims in 2004 were trafficked for less than one year, a disturbing number of VoT were trafficked for five to ten years.

It is not uncommon for a VoT to be sold on to successive pimps or criminals based in different towns and cities. The Lithuanian networks have established strong links to ethnic Albanian crime groups (EACG) resident in the UK who 'buy' the woman or girl when they arrive in the UK and then force them into prostitution.

It is unusual for a VoT to stay in one place for very long. It remains unclear as to whether this is purely because of a need to provide new prostitutes in a particular locality to keep regular clients happy or to try to keep ahead of law enforcement. Equally so, it may be that the trafficker or pimp may not be happy with his 'investment'. A 16 year old Lithuanian VoT, sold a number of times in the UK within a few weeks by successive Albanian pimps, was thought to have been traded so many times because of her attitude and behaviour. Notably, the value of a VoT to the trafficker may decline as time passes and this is reflected in the amount of money that exchanges hands. A premium tends to be paid for virgins or those girls who can be presented as virgins.

7. Organised Crime, THB and the Western Balkans

7.1. Former Yugoslav Republic - background

The region is now unrecognisable from the communist era with the Former Republic of Yugoslavia now split into five sovereign states. The initial move to independent states by Slovenia and Croatia was soon followed by a decade of war and armed conflict driven by age old rivalries and hatred that had been suppressed during the years 1945 -1991.

Of the many consequences of the wars in the FYR was the breakdown of civil law and order across the region resulting in porous and weak borders, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of displaced persons and fractured communities once held together by rigid moral codes and poverty. This has created a climate where illicit trading, illegal activity and corruption have become more acceptable, if not a way of life for some.

The chaos of war allowed many criminal elements, active before the war, to continue operating under the auspices of being part of a military unit and their activities during the hostilities allowed for the development and reinforcement of their structure and refinement of operating methods which remain in place today.

For example, the notorious paramilitary commander Zeljko Raznjatovic aka 'Arkan' was an active international criminal before the war, linked to 60 murders in Western Europe. The groups he became commander of during the Balkan wars were in the main made up of football hooligans who supported Red Star Belgrade and criminals from Belgrade.

An obvious example of the nexus between organised crime, the security services and paramilitary forces which evolved during the war and continued after was the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, in 2003. Although to some extent efforts made by the Serbian government since then have been successful, notably the dismantling of the Zemun Clan who were suspected of organising and carrying out the murder.

The Zemun Clan, a 200 strong Serbian criminal network named after Belgrade's twin town of Zemun, is probably the best known Serbian OCG. It was led by Milorad Ulemek/Lukovic aka 'Legija' who had previously 'served' in the notorious 'Arkan's Tigers' at the beginning of the Yugoslav wars. He also commanded the 'Super Tigers' until 1996 and in 1999, the 'Red Berets', the notorious Special Operations Unit of Serbia's secret police. The Zemun Clan are widely believed to have been behind the assassination of Djindjic whose new government began to inquire too deeply into their lives, their pasts and their criminal activities. Although 'Legija' was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment in June 2005 for murder and is being tried for the murder of Zoran Djindjic and the Zemun Clan has broken up, OC is still very active in Serbia.

In addition to Serb paramilitary/crime groups operating during the wars, there were approximately 13 Croatian groups operating in western Herzegovina and central Bosnia and around 14 Muslim paramilitary groups supporting the Bosnian army, the Army of Bosnia Herzegovina (ABiH). The first of these groups was made up entirely of criminals because only the criminals had weapons due to the embargo on the supply of weapons to the ABiH. Many individuals if not significant elements of all of these groups would have survived the conflict and it is highly likely that, given their origins, they are still active as members of criminal groups engaged in many forms of serious crime in the region.

An important aspect of the operations of these groups and individuals is that they are organised, some more organised than the law enforcement agencies themselves, and they are comfortable with cross border criminality. They operate

in a relatively risk free environment because they have not been targeted by law enforcement and corruption has been used as a tool to ensure that this remains the status quo.

As an indicator of the problem in the region, the following statistics taken from the Corruptions Perceptions Index (CPI) 2005 are deemed to be relevant. With 10 (highly clean) as the highest score and 0 (highly corrupt) the lowest, the countries of the Western Balkans are tabled as follows;

Country Rank	South and Eastern Europe Regional Rank	Country	2005 CPI Score
126	14	Albania	2.4
88	5	Bosnia Herzegovina	2.9
70	3	Croatia	3.4
103	9	FYROM	2.7
97	8	Serbia Montenegro	2.8

This state of affairs has contributed to the creation of developed networks of Western Balkans based OCGs with international contacts who are engaged in many different OC activities. Trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation was not known in the FYR before the war but it is now on a par with drug and gun running. If not a root cause for this crime becoming established in the region, particularly in Bosnia and Kosovo, it is a fair assumption that the presence of international peace keepers who have been deployed there since the mid nineties has been a significant factor. Certainly, in the wake of several investigations during 2002 into allegations of UN personnel visiting brothels and sexually abusing women and children in Bosnia, it was said that the trade in 'sex slaves' was "fuelled by the arrival of tens of thousands of predominantly male UN personnel". According to many, trafficking first appeared in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1995 and as of October 2002, the United Nations suspected that 227 of the nightclubs and bars situated throughout Bosnia were involved in THB.

Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord in December 1995, the United Nations, NATO, international organisations, NGOs and more have all sent people to the region to assist with the peace keeping process. Whilst there have been clear benefits from having the armed forces, police, support services etc there, OC quickly identified that the large numbers of men with a high level of disposable income would create a demand for paid sexual services. Recognising this, organised criminals began to traffic women from Eastern Europe, in particular from Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine, to work as prostitutes in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The arrival of the international community in the region has also led to significant opportunities for OC in general and not only with regard to THB. Criminal groups would have reacted to the prospect of and the potential for exploiting the significant investments being made in the region and this is likely to have exacerbated the scale and level of criminality with proceeds of crime being invested in other concerns, legal and illegal. Night clubs and bars began

appearing everywhere as these were the venues where the girls were made available. However, awareness campaigns within the international community have led to a significant drop in the demand. But as the result of the thriving sex industry in the early years, the demand has continued, mainly fuelled by local men.

There has now been a move away from bars and clubs and overt solicitation to more 'behind closed doors' operations, with girls operating from secure apartments or being driven from appointment to appointment. Additionally, the Internet is now being used as a means to advertise the girls and conduct the general business in a more secure environment.

As well as being a region of destination, the Balkans has become a hub for trafficking and irregular migration within Europe; there are indications that trafficked victims from Asia, the Middle East and Africa are being moved via the Balkans underlining its strategic importance.

7.2. Albania - background

Whilst Albania has not itself been directly affected by the other Balkan wars, ethnic Albanian tension and territorial dispute sparked the 1999 Kosovo War. The uprising in bordering Kosovo was supported by the Albanian government and illegal arms dealing across the north-eastern border was a regular feature during the late 1990s. Since the collapse of the communist system, it has suffered socio-economic crisis and riots and has a history of smuggling and illicit cross border trading. The region is geographically at the crossroads between Europe and Asia and it has been identified that a significant proportion of the heroin that arrives in the EU has transited the Western Balkans. Law enforcement has identified in particular, that Turkish OCG involved in this crime will work with Albanian OC who then facilitate the movement of heroin through Albania and onto the EU. These channels for the movement of commodities such as drugs and guns are also valid for the trafficking of human beings.

There have, in recent years, been exhaustive efforts made by international law enforcement to combat trafficking of all kinds and the problems of a few years ago have largely disappeared. However, the framework put in place by OC to facilitate this movement of illicit commodities remains and it would seem likely that OC will merely have changed the routes taken. Indeed, with regard to Trafficking in Human Beings and People Smuggling, there are indications that land routes are now more commonly used. Following greater vigilance at border crossings and more proactive policing methods in identifying foreign victims of trafficking, internal trafficking is reported to have increased markedly.

Poverty is much more widespread in the country's remote and rural areas, with nearly four out of five poor people living in the countryside. Poverty indicators are nearly twice as high in rural areas as urban

ones and the rural population declined by 12.6% between 1989 and 2002. In the same period, the urban population increased by 14.3%.³

Albania has had the highest birth rate of any European country since 1945⁴ and there are also migratory pressures to leave Albania. There are already an estimated 700.000 Albanian nationals living in the EU.⁵

7.3. The Western Balkans - Source, Transit or Destination countries?

	Source	Transit	Destination	Information provided by
ALBANIA	✓	✓	✓	IOM
BiH	✓	✓	✓	BiH
CROATIA	✓	✓	✓	CROATIA
FYROM		✓	✓	IOM
KOSOVO	✓	✓	✓	IOM, UNMIK UNICEF
SERBIA	✓	✓	✓	OSCE IOM

Until recently, all of these countries would have recognised that they featured somewhere in the trafficking process. It has now become clear that the elements that define a country as a source, transit and destination are all present in each of the five states.

The Dutch National Rapporteur reports that in 2003, most of the victims of trafficking identified in the Netherlands were from Central and Eastern Europe and that this has been the case since 2001.

7.4. Nationality and structure of OCG s in Western Balkans

Whilst many of the characteristics of a generic OCG will be found in the way FYR and Albanian OC operates with regard to THB, there are still significant differences. With regard to Albanian OCGs, a 'clustered hierarchy' is the best description due to their characteristic flexibility due to their family/clan ties. With regard to the control of prostitution, it is normally composed of 2 to 8 pimps who each control two or more prostitutes working for them on the streets or in other establishments such as massage parlours and sex clubs. If a pimp is unable to take care of activities, the control of his "girls" is taken over by another member of the OCG.

³ UK Department for International Development Health Profile Albania June 2003

⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005

⁵ Miranda Vickers Senior Albania Analyst - International Crisis Group 2004

Albanian OC is very active domestically and internationally, whilst the presence of petty crimes is limited. Prostitution is illegal and restricted to covert activity in hotels and clubs. Furthermore, Albanian OC is very active in trafficking drugs through the country but the domestic consumption is minimal.

An investigation carried out by Human Rights Watch in Bosnia between 1999 and 2001 revealed that 'traffickers operating in BiH are mostly local people who harbour little fear of criminal prosecution or punishment, as the trafficking laws are not enforced and there is no protection for the victims. Corruption within the Bosnian Police force has allowed THB to flourish with local Police facilitating trafficking directly and indirectly – as part owners of nightclubs and bars holding trafficked women, as guards and employees in these establishments, as clients of the brothels and as informants to brothel owners. Some local Police participated in the creation and validation of false documents from trafficking victims'.

Traffickers, as with all organised or professional criminals, can become very influential when their operations bring them into contact with individuals holding senior positions in diverse local, regional or national agencies or government. Given the nature of the service the trafficker provides, the possibility to compromise an influential person is always present. Bosnian and Serbian OC have used trafficked victims to compromise such people and benefit through a form of protection that this activity has given them. Not necessarily linked but as an example of the degree to which traffickers can influence the right people and therefore ensure protection, is the fact that as a result of the investigation into the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister in 2003 and the subsequent government crackdown on organised crime known as the *Sabre* law enforcement action, the Serbian Parliament 'pensioned off' 35 judges, including 8 Supreme Court judges, and suspended 80 judges.

This is particularly relevant when the general consensus of opinion of international law enforcement, the international organisations and the NGOs working in Bosnia is that all of the major traffickers are known to the local police.

Reporting from Croatia identifies that 'perpetrators connected to THB are mostly from the Republic of Croatia, BiH and Serbia and Montenegro and are made up of individuals or smaller groups of 3 to 4 persons. The owners of 'night bars' dominate regarding the exploitation through prostitution. They are connected with organised crime groups of criminals from other countries from which the victims of trafficking originate. Persons from all social classes in BiH are participating in criminal groups'.

7.5. Recruitment of victims

The following table is an extract from the IOM's Counter Trafficking database highlighting the relationship between the recruiter and the victim based upon data collected within South East Europe (SEE) between November 1999 and December 2005.

Relationship with Recruiter	Number of victims
Business contact	52
Family	19
Friend	829
N/A	1048
Other	416
Partner	100
Pimp	20
Relative	83
Stranger	1866
TOTAL	4433

A new development is the increasing number of female traffickers and recruiters who are being identified. The reasons as to why this appears to be on the increase are open for speculation but it would be reasonable to assume that one of the reasons is that the profits to be made are as attractive to women as they are men. Another may be connected to a VoT being instructed to act as a recruiter or being offered the opportunity to work in better circumstances. Whatever the reasons, it is likely that an approach from a female is likely to be viewed in less suspicious circumstances or with no real consideration as to the possible risks associated with the offer.

A highly relevant report from Bosnia Herzegovina underlines the difficulty for law enforcement in preventing recruitment, especially in circumstances where there is a relationship between the recruiter and the victim. Having escaped from her abusers, an assisted victim of trafficking was returned home but soon located again by her trafficker. The returned victim and her baby were threatened by the trafficker who gave her the option of returning with him or recruiting a girl to replace her. The victim was so desperate and in abject fear of her trafficker that she recruited her twin sister and her best friend.

Another aspect concerning recruitment and one that is perhaps specific to Albania and Albanians is the prevailing attitude towards women in certain parts of the country. This also has a special influence in Kosovo. The 'Kanuni i Leke Dukagjinit', a code of conduct which came into existence in the Middle Ages, speaks of the right that men have to trade in women as 'chattel'. Clearly there is a link between this and current practices of Albanian traffickers.

With regard to ethnic Albanian crime groups (EACG), there is a propensity to use extreme violence and rape as part of the grooming process. Ongoing investigations in the UK reveal what amounts to be a thriving market in women. These victims are sold between Albanian men resident in the UK, and coerced into prostitution.

Statistics of assisted victims in Kosovo indicate that 50% of all victims in 2004 were ethnic Albanian and of these 17% were minors. This represents a rise in the

figures provided in previous years and may suggest an increase in internal trafficking. It can only be speculated whether this is as a result of a culture that finds such violence against women acceptable, or whether this is what EACG find most successful in breaking the resistance of VoT to working as prostitutes.

A summary of some emerging recruitment trends identified in the region in 2003/2004 is as follows:

- Albania – A majority of victims were living with their families at the time of recruitment and were recruited by men. The involvement of female recruiters is not significant.
- Bosnia Herzegovina – In 2004, 57.2 % of the recruiters identified were women. All were of Bosnian nationality and, significantly, were described by the victims as ‘friends’. This is a major shift in modus operandi for the traffickers and can be linked to an emerging internal trafficking market.
- Croatia – The majority of the recruiters were known to the victims.
- Kosovo – The majority of recruiters were male and the most common method used was the ‘Lover boy’ method with offers of marriage and assistance to leave Kosovo from men who had formed relationships with the victims.
- FYROM – Majority of all recruiters were friends and acquaintances.
- Serbia and Montenegro – For the first time it is noticed that male-female couples are being used in the recruitment process.

It is also reported that ‘holding’ or ‘collection centres’ where trafficked females are accommodated before being moved to a final destination are in existence in Pristina and Belgrade.

7.6. Transport of victims

The methods are varied and will be driven by different factors, one of which would be the sophistication or ability of the traffickers concerned. An example from the Balkans was provided by an NGO who had been contacted by a victim of trafficking who had managed to get to a telephone and call the NGO on a hotline number. Having initially phoned from the Holiday Inn in Sarajevo explaining her circumstances and the fact that she needed help, the next contact she had with the offices of the NGO were 3 days later when she rang from Cyprus stating that she had been moved there by the traffickers. This journey would have involved a minimum of three land border crossings or one long sea journey (unlikely) or air travel with at least one connection involved. Whatever the methods used, the

ability to transport this victim so quickly and so far indicates that her traffickers were well organised and had international connections.

Given the nature of the region, movement by land is the most common form of transport and in many illegal border crossings the victims will be smuggled on foot. The use of a vehicle to cross a border will only be undertaken if there is sufficient documentation available to deal successfully with any control at the BCP.

Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Croatia all have sea borders but there is no intelligence to suggest that the sea route is used by the traffickers to any great extent. As local governments have demonstrated that they are unable to combat trafficking and serious crime effectively, the international community at large intervened to help. Although the well documented use of fast boats by Albanian smugglers and traffickers crossing the Adriatic may not have ceased entirely, the presence of Guardia di Finanza naval service officers in the region has largely eliminated this activity. The role of Italy in Albania is very significant with the deployment of a considerable number of police officers (Interforza, Guardia di Finanza, participation in the Anti-trafficking Centre in Vlōre, etc.).

The Counter Trafficking Unit based in Vlōre is a multi lateral body staffed with Albanian, Italian, Greek and German representatives, the purpose of which is information exchange with regard to narcotics, people smuggling, human trafficking, arms dealing and organised vehicle crime. Also, the Interforze Tirana, an Italian initiative with 4 different branches called "antenna", is covering a vital role for the entire region.

One waterway that is used by the traffickers is the Drina River which forms part of the border between Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina. At certain times of the year and in the right conditions this river can be crossed on foot. At other times it is a short small boat ride from one side to the other. This river border cannot be protected along its entire length and affords the traffickers an easy crossing into Bosnia.

Testimony from many women and girls trafficked from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine into the Balkans identifies that whilst en route they were subjected to rape and other physical abuse at the hands of the traffickers. This brutalization is part of the softening up or grooming process as well as their captors taking advantage of the victim's situation and vulnerability.

7.7. Border Crossing or Internal Trafficking

There has been a reported significant rise in internal trafficking in Albania and elsewhere. Albanian Roma females are particularly vulnerable to trafficking within their own country because of the community's cultural approach to marriage at an early age. Once married, young girls can be forced into prostitution by their

husbands and girls and women also tend to be sold by way of a 'dowry'. Roma in FYROM have also been identified as being particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to their general social and economic situation.

As a result of law enforcement activity in the Adriatic Sea between Italy and Albania and good cooperation between the two countries, the main route for victims leaving Albania is no longer by speedboat. The more usual method is through the misuse of Schengen visas issued by EU states in country or occasionally across the land border between Greece and Albania. This border is long, mountainous and extremely difficult to patrol. From there, false documents are provided that facilitate either residence in Greece or onward travel to the rest of the EU. However, it is generally reported across the Western Balkans and elsewhere in Europe, that the movement is away from the use of false documents and towards the use and misuse of regular methods of migration.

In Bosnia Herzegovina, the latest indications show that trafficking victims are increasingly citizens of BiH meaning that BiH is now also a country of origin. It is also noticeable that trafficking in local victims occurs within BiH borders. While BiH has a law on the protection of foreign victims of trafficking, there is no comparable legislation for domestic victims. OCGs identify and react to weaknesses in the system and there will be reasons why internal trafficking has increased and the lack of protection offered to Bosnian VoT may be significant.

There has also been a recent development in the nationalities of VoT identified in the Western Balkans. Since 2001/02, there has been a drop in the numbers of Bulgarian and Romanian trafficked victims being identified in the region, coinciding with a large increase in the number of VoT from these countries being identified in the Schengen area. This is thought to be as a result of the lifting of visa requirements for nationals of these two countries for short term stays since this date. It may be that the incentive to traffic females within and then from the Balkans to the West has lessened because of the potentially easier option of trafficking nationals of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU.

7.8. Provision of documentation

Analysis of several individual cases in Kosovo shows that victims are often in possession of employment contracts issued by bars, motels and clubs. These have nothing to do with protecting the rights of the 'employee' but are designed to protect the owner. With the contracts registered by law firms and stamped by municipal authorities it all appears very legal but the truth is that most of the victims never receive the payments stated in their contracts of employment. A typical payment based on a performed sexual service would be €100 a client of which the girl keeps €25. The provision of a contract is no more than a cover in order to legitimize the presence of the foreign worker, especially amongst trafficked victims who are exposed to law enforcement activity such as bar checks.

7.9. Exploitation phase

The majority of identified trafficking cases involve women and girls who had no idea that they would be forced to work in the sex industry. Those females that are aware or have some suspicion that they will be prostituted also suffer in that the conditions they work in probably bear no relation to what was explained to them by the trafficker or pimp, with the amount of money they are allowed to keep being the main issue.

Most recent reporting from Kosovo suggests that victims tend to only keep 25% of whatever money they generate. As a result of the greater awareness and the policy implemented by NATO, it is likely that the numbers of military personnel using prostitutes will have dropped so the market now caters for local men. In many cases, this situation may actually have made things more difficult for the victims. Obviously, local men do not have as much money and so it can take longer for the victims to pay off any 'debt' that has been imposed upon them by the traffickers.

It has been reported that VoT in Mostar, BiH, are required to earn a specific sum of money each day or they would suffer some form of abuse from their pimp/trafficker. That amount could be anywhere between 200 and 800 KM. (1 hour = 100KM / €51). Victims will be moved from bar to bar on a regular basis and will also work from locked apartments or taken to and collected from apartment to apartment. VoT are also provided with drugs and alcohol which result in an addiction and a dependency on the pimp/trafficker.

Trafficked and exploited victims will be forced to perform sex acts which 'professional' prostitutes will not agree to because the trafficked girl does not have a choice. If a trafficked victim refuses to accommodate a client, she will be punished and will suffer more if she refuses to comply with the instructions of her pimp or client. Many victims will work to a 'menu'. This is particularly so when there may be a language barrier between the customer and the girl. In Bosnia, it is reported that trafficked victims who do not cooperate will work to a menu that will also include her murder.

Most Albanian VoT assisted by the IOM between 2003 and 2004 were trafficked for periods lasting from one month to 15 years. They were forced to provide sexual services in brothels, bars and nightclubs, on the street, through escort agencies and in private apartments; the location depending in the most part on the destination country. If trafficked to Italy or France, it was street prostitution, while in Germany or Austria it was in bars and brothels. VoT in the Western Balkans have increasingly tended to be kept in private homes or apartments, away from brothels and bars – more hidden from police - and either forced to perform sexual services at this location or transported to the client. The location is at times also determined by the victim's age. In Italy, older women work on the streets, and minors are kept at hotels and more private locations.

8. SWOT analysis on Western Balkans OC and Trafficking in Human Beings

Using the information already detailed in this report as a conceptual platform, Western Balkans OC and its role in THB in particular was subjected to a SWOT Analysis. This analysis examined the inherent *strengths* that Western Balkans OC possesses in the furtherance of its criminality as well as its intrinsic *weaknesses* in this field. The *opportunities* that exist and the *threats* posed by OC involvement were then determined. The results provided a platform for the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

The strengths and weaknesses that OC and OCGs exhibit are relatively well documented and referred to in Europol's Organised Crime Reports from 2003, 2004 and 2005.

The following is a summary of the analysis

8.1. Strengths

- the organisational structure and composition of OC and OCGs
- established communities from all Western Balkans states located throughout the EU
- easier movement of persons within the EU
- the ability to corrupt (e.g. state officials, law enforcement personnel)
- the lack of current sustainable and effective responses from law enforcement or the courts in the region
- the lack of data collection on the number of trafficked victims in the region
- the limited capacity the region has in supporting victims and providing witness protection
- cases where victims are dealt with as criminals
- the well established sex industry in the Western Balkans

8.2 Weaknesses

- operating unlawfully (including a readiness to use violence) within a predominantly lawful society, drawing law enforcement attention
- an increase in vigilance from a varying number of authorities and organizations
- implementation of legislation specifically aimed at targeting THB
- implementation of National Action Plans to combat THB in the respective countries will have consequences on OC and OCGs
- appropriate technical systems will be implemented to deal with data linked to OCG activities
- awareness campaigns and training programs have led to a significant drop in the demand for purchased sex by international communities
- raised awareness and a more positive approach and commitment to combating OC from a judicial perspective
- there is an increase of awareness in the EU that migration must be managed as to reduce the numbers of people who have to engage with OC or OCGs

8.2. Opportunities

- the expansion of the EU may create opportunities for OC to exploit weaknesses in the new borders and agencies tasked with border security
- a lack of coordination of Member State legislation and policy with regard to asylum seekers
- increased opportunities for OC to invest criminal proceeds in legitimate businesses or enterprises
- economic and social divide between rural and urban areas create the conditions and provide an environment where trafficking may flourish.

8.3. Threats

- the accession of new states into the EU will represent a new opportunity to Western Balkans OC providing new points of entry, new trafficking routes, new source countries and new markets
- candidate countries for accession could become bases for OC activity in pursuance of long term strategies linked to eventual EU membership
- more effective law enforcement responses linked to combating cross border trafficking will lead to a rise in the level of internal trafficking
- more effective international cooperation and coordination of investigations may lead to the displacement of trafficking operations to areas or regions previously un affected
- as the response from law enforcement and the courts becomes tougher corruption may rise

9. Conclusions

- I. Corruption in the Western Balkan states is the single most significant factor that will ensure that all and any initiatives to prevent or combat trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation will not succeed or will be undermined. If corruption is not tackled effectively at all levels then trafficking, along with other serious crime activities, will continue unabated. The organised crime groups that prevail in the Western Balkans have become almost invulnerable. Not only are some of these groups and individuals protected by their cultural and ethnic ties but also by the establishment. The consequence for law enforcement is that penetrating or prosecuting these groups within the countries they operate in is virtually impossible. Anti-corruption strategies and investigations are implemented in the region but the results of these efforts need to be evaluated and until that time, the impact upon organised crime cannot be determined. The investigation and prosecution of all instances of corruption is required in order to send a message and inform 'society' that there is a will to change what has become an endemic practice that undermines any and every attempt to provide an environment of freedom and justice.

- II. Trafficking networks operating in the Western Balkans have had over a decade in which to develop their operating methods. They are well established and 'here to stay'. Equally so is the industry they have created. The sex industry in the Balkans is part of the fabric of society and it too is 'here to stay'. The only measure that will have any impact upon the current status quo is the implementation of a robust and comprehensive anti trafficking policy across the region.
- III. Although the structure and operating methods of trafficking networks active in the Western Balkans will always ensure that investigating such networks in a conventional manner will prove to be difficult, it is more than likely that unconventional methods or specialist investigative techniques will be successful. OCGs involved in THB are exposed to law enforcement action by the very nature of their business; the trafficked victim has to be made available to the customer and this creates the opportunity for action. Trafficking networks operating in the Western Balkans are vulnerable to police action but not without the cooperation of the victim.
- IV. Prosecutions against traffickers still rely upon victim testimony to prove the case and are low across the region. Consequently, the number of prosecutions against traffickers will only increase if more victims/witnesses come forward. Government support for victims is improving with anti trafficking legislation and policies, namely national action plans, detailing the measures to be taken with regards identified victims of trafficking but the reality is that 'best practice' measures are not standard. Awareness of what is required does not appear to be the main problem. Training projects and initiatives aimed at improving knowledge on how victims should be dealt with are being implemented and undertaken on a regular basis throughout the region. Law enforcement officers, the judiciary, key government personnel, IOs and NGOs are all involved in the process and it would appear that it is the actual implementation by the practitioners of the practices and policies that are presented that is the problem.
- V. There is also a role here for MS in that very few national THB investigations seek to take the case back to the trafficker who remains beyond the borders of the investigating country. More in depth investigation and exchange of case evidence and intelligence would provide more opportunities for Western Balkans based traffickers to be prosecuted, possibly in the absence of the victim. There is a significant benefit for Member States in pursuing the trafficker beyond their borders as it demonstrates a willingness to combat organised trafficking and not just deal with the problem from a purely local or national perspective. It is clear that MS with established communities of persons of Western Balkan origin will be more vulnerable to OC activity perpetrated by criminals from the region than others. Migrants will be more likely to travel to a country where others of the same nationality have already developed a base or where there are opportunities to do so.
- VI. A more effective response to combating THB in the MS would have a significant effect on trafficking from the Western Balkans. Traffickers

currently operate in environments where there is no risk or it is less than elsewhere or acceptable. Zero tolerance is perhaps a long way off but as soon as that type of or a similar approach is adopted, traffickers will start looking for a different area of operation or a different commodity. In the early stages, this may amount to displacement or disruption but as long as the response is sustainable, it will inevitably have an effect on the traffickers and force a change of tactics. This will provide opportunities for law enforcement action in the source and transit countries.

- VII. Quick win operations with no strategic value or action conducted against the more obvious trafficking groups run the risk of ignoring the organised and sophisticated groups who pose the real threat. Intelligence led operations against key individuals or groups are still not commonplace, either in the Western Balkans or the EU. The same special investigative methods that are employed against international drug traffickers, for example, are not used against criminals who are involved in international trafficking.

- VIII. The level and implementation of border security in the region is not in itself sufficient to prevent cross border trafficking. More vigilance is required in the MS transit and destination countries. In the absence of fundamental information on possible suspects and potential victims, identification and detection at the borders will remain difficult. Allied to profiling the actual individual is the need for extra vigilance in relation to the use by OC of false or counterfeit travel documents. Unfamiliar or new documents linked to new accession states or new travel regimes which allow greater movement will be targeted during any period of introduction and implementation. Any counter trafficking measures that seek to profile victims or offenders should take into account intelligence concerning frequently encountered or 'popular' false or counterfeit travel documents.

- IX. The central collection and analysis of any THB related data by law enforcement has to be improved. This is also true for most of the EU. This continued state of affairs will ensure that the scale of the problem and threat posed to the EU MS and other countries will not be properly understood. Whilst the actual scale and nature of trafficking into and within the EU remains an unknown, solutions or plans to combat the crime will remain based on 'best guess' scenarios and estimations. Allied to this, and perhaps of more relevance to individual countries, is the apparent lack of any national threat assessments on the impact of THB to the individual country. This approach to tackling the third most lucrative organised crime activity needs to be overhauled, with an initial focus on the central collection and coordination of THB related intelligence.

- X. Internal trafficking within the region and the individual countries is increasing and there will be several reasons for this. First and foremost, given the reason why OC is involved in THB, there is money to be made. Cross border trafficking and all that that entails requires a more significant initial investment by the trafficker than the recruitment and exploitation of a girl or woman in the same country with far less inherent risks. As long as the returns from the 'local' market provide the same profit margins that

can be realised in the more affluent western EU states, internal or local trafficking will continue. Other factors determining this shift will be associated with the risks involved and in the face of clear evidence that EU MS law enforcement and the judiciary are beginning to get tough with traffickers, the safer option of operating in a known environment may be more attractive.

- XI. The expansion of the EU has provided new markets for traffickers. Riga, Tallinn, Prague, Vilnius and Bratislava, for example, have become regular weekend destinations for large groups of males traveling by budget airlines to take advantage of the low cost of living and 'entertainment packages' that are advertised on the Internet. There is no reason to think that this will not be the case with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union and given the potential opportunities, Western Balkans based trafficking networks will look to Sofia, Bucharest and the Black Sea coast to expand and develop new trafficking markets.

- XII. As a final conclusion, but no less important, is the subversion or the potential for governments and authorities to be subverted through direct action or the intervention of organised crime. Allied to this is the threat posed by any possible collusion between politicians, government officials and organised criminals in the pursuit of personal profit or power. National Action Plans, policies and law enforcement strategies aiming to tackle trafficking at its roots, along with measures aimed at more effective investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators, will impact upon organised crime. Organised criminals will seek to protect themselves and their 'industry' against these measures and the ultimate protection comes from the 'top'. The lack of investigations against and the prosecution of, the traffickers that everyone seems to know would be an indicator of a lack of willingness from the authorities to do exactly that. If organised crime infiltrates the offices of those mandated to enforce the law, then there can be no expectation of anything other than a limited response.

- XIII. As a result of the high prioritisation by the EU and individual MS in preventing and combating trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, combined with the considerable efforts of the IOs and NGOs in raising awareness, knowledge as to how victims should be treated and how trafficking cases should be investigated has never been higher. This is not to say that more could not be done. It is likely though, based on available information and an assessment on the overall picture of THB in the region, there will be a move towards internal trafficking and exploitation of women and girls 'behind closed doors'. The threat, therefore, is within this region with significant consequences for vulnerable females who will continue to be targeted by the traffickers.

- XIV. It is the opinion of Europol that the current threat posed to the EU by trafficking networks operating in and from the Western Balkans will not increase but only if the current response remains the 'default response' and that every effort is made by Member States to improve upon the significant steps that have been taken over recent years.

