

# Foreign Unaccompanied Minors in Europe: current prevention and protection strategies



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# Preliminary Remarks

- Unaccompanied children: a category vaguely defined (unaccompanied and separated children)
- UAMs are more vulnerable than their accompanied peers?
- Services are based on specific status and interventions dependent on them (THB victim, UAM, asylum seeking or not, unaccompanied or separated etc)

# Unaccompanied Children in the European Union

- **23'075** applications filed by UAMs coming from third countries in one of the 28 EU Member States in 2014 (as opposed to **12'730** in 2013)
- Latest figures suggest considerable increase (**4'838** unaccompanied children filed an application in May 2015 only; double from April; 7% of all applications)
- No reliable statistics available on children migrating within the European Union
  - Except in THB statistics where there are over represented

# Vulnerabilities of UAMs to Trafficking in Human Beings

- Over representation of European children in figures of victims in Europe
- Perceived over-representation of Roma children among child victims
- Over-representation of migrant children, unaccompanied or not, EU citizens or not, in the juvenile justice figures of EU Member States
- Types of exploitation:
  - Labour exploitation, including forced begging
  - Forced criminality
  - Sexual exploitation

# Vulnerability to Trafficking: Focus on EU migrant children

**Findings of a transnational research process carried out in 2014 in 5 countries:**

- Scale
  - Relatively important number of children from the three target countries identified in the course of the 5-day street work sessions (268)
  - Scale of the phenomenon is assumed significant throughout Europe (figures on juvenile justice and/or from street work organisation confirm high incidence)
  - Overall identification of child victims among the migrant populations is low
- Migration Patterns:
  - Varied but two main patterns emerged:
    - Long term migration with episodical return to countries of origin
    - Short term and rather seasonal migration , on regular intervals, with strong ties kept with country of origin
  - Migration experiences and language confirm high mobility throughout Europe

# Vulnerability to Trafficking: Focus on EU migrant children

- Vulnerabilities:
  - Vast majority of children approached carried out street work placing them under hazardous conditions. Direct influence on their health could be observed in few instances.
  - Extremely low level of schooling and educational opportunities (exception for second generation migrant children from Albania).
  - Poor housing conditions (no access to water and sanitation for an important number of children and families approached).
  - Generalised lack of access to any protection service
    - Health
    - Education
    - Social services
- Resiliencies:
  - High independence and resourcefulness
  - Protective role of families and communities

# Vulnerability to Trafficking: focus on EU migrant children

## Services

Absence of proactive statutory response

Absence of adequate services mostly designed for national children

Absence of transnational approach in protection response and decision making

## Legal framework

EU children fall in between the cracks of the child protection system, between national and third country national child focussed services

Children from Western Balkan states are subject to expeditious procedures

## Counter productive policies

Evictions

Discriminations

Too often limited to law enforcement approach



# Measures aiming at preventing UAMs to becoming victims

- Absence of prevention models for unaccompanied and separated children, including monitoring and evaluation systems
  - [e.g. difficult to assess the impact of awareness raising initiatives and information campaigns]
- Outreach work (Street work, family visits...)
- Social Inclusion actions
  - Education and vocational training for children and families
  - Reinforcement of administrative capacity [especially civil registration]
- Effectiveness of transnational collaboration between governments and networks



# Recommendations

- Move away from dichotomies: ending categorizations (victims or not, unaccompanied or separated, geographic origins)
- Invest in children and listen to their views [including in the design of prevention measures at both individual and systems level]
- Ensure that prevention actions take into account the local forms of trafficking in human beings and the methods used by traffickers to coerce children
- Invest in outreach services in both countries of origin and destination [daily centres, street work initiatives, etc.]
- Reinforce transnational collaboration to link protection professionals from countries of origin and destination (do not limit it to collaboration in criminal matters)
- Implementation of the non-punishment principle has become a must



Thank you for your attention!

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