

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

GRETA(2023)11\_ROM

# **G R E T A**

Group of Experts on Action  
against Trafficking in Human Beings

## **Questionnaire**

**for the evaluation of the implementation  
of the Council of Europe Convention on Action  
against Trafficking in Human Beings  
by Romania**

Fourth evaluation round

**Thematic focus: Addressing vulnerabilities to  
trafficking in human beings**

Adopted by the Group of Experts on Action against  
Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) on 30 June 2023

### **Introduction**

In accordance with Article 38, paragraph 1, of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ("the Convention"), GRETA evaluates the implementation of the Convention following a procedure divided into rounds. At the beginning of each round, GRETA selects the specific provisions on which the evaluation procedure is based.

The first round of monitoring of the Convention provided an overview of its implementation by States Parties. The second evaluation round of the Convention examined the impact of legislative, policy and practical measures on the prevention of trafficking in human beings (THB), the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking, and the prosecution of traffickers, paying particular attention to measures taken to address new trends in human trafficking, in particular trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, and the vulnerability of children to trafficking. The third evaluation round focused on trafficking victims' access to justice and effective remedies.

GRETA has decided that the fourth evaluation round of the Convention will focus on **vulnerabilities to human trafficking** and measures taken by States Parties to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders. This includes a focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT), which brings structural changes to the way offenders operate and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities.<sup>1</sup>

A number of provisions of the Convention establishing substantive and procedural obligations are relevant to this topic. The concept of "vulnerability" appears in Articles 4 (definitions), 5 (prevention of trafficking in human beings) and 12 (assistance to victims) of the Convention. According to paragraph 83 of the Explanatory report to the Convention, "by abuse of a position of vulnerability is meant abuse of any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative to submitting to the abuse. The vulnerability may be of any kind, whether physical, psychological, emotional, family-related, social or economic. The situation might, for example, involve insecurity or illegality of the victim's administrative status, economic dependence or fragile health. In short, the situation can be any state of hardship in which a human being is impelled to accept being exploited. Persons abusing such a situation flagrantly infringe human rights and violate human dignity and integrity, which no one can validly renounce."

GRETA refers to the ICAT Issue Brief No. 12/2022 on Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons which refers to vulnerability as "those inherent, environmental or contextual factors that increase the susceptibility of an individual or group to being trafficked". It classifies vulnerability factors in three categories: personal (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, disability), situational (e.g. destitution, unemployment, legal status) and contextual (e.g. discriminatory laws, policies and social norms, armed conflicts, crises) factors, which interact and may increase the risk of human trafficking for certain individuals, groups and/or communities.<sup>2</sup> Vulnerability to human trafficking is also subject to intersectional factors, such as gender, belonging to a minority group and socio-economic status.

Applying a socio-ecological approach to the analysis of vulnerability to human trafficking demonstrates how different risk factors influence vulnerability, and how protective factors may reduce the risk of victimisation by increasing resilience.<sup>3</sup> The socio-ecological model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors. It helps to understand how anti-trafficking strategies should: (a) reduce the vulnerability of individuals, (b) work with the communities (which may also include relationships) concerned to ensure that their practices or current dynamics do not exacerbate or contribute to vulnerabilities to human trafficking and, (c) change a number of system-driven or structural elements (such as policies) so that they do not facilitate but discourage an environment conducive to human trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> [Paolo Campana, Online and Technology-Facilitated Trafficking in Human Beings, Council of Europe, April 2022.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [ICAT Issue Brief No. 12 on Addressing vulnerability to trafficking in persons - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.avoiceforcentraloregon.com/uploads/1/3/9/9/139904528/socio\\_ecological\\_model\\_and\\_trafficking.pdf](https://www.avoiceforcentraloregon.com/uploads/1/3/9/9/139904528/socio_ecological_model_and_trafficking.pdf)

In addition to the thematic focus on vulnerabilities to human trafficking, GRETA has decided that each State Party will receive **country-specific follow-up questions** related to recommendations not implemented or partially implemented after the third evaluation round.

States Parties are requested to transmit to GRETA a reply to this questionnaire **within four months** from the date it was sent. The reply to the questionnaire should be submitted in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe (English and French), and preferably also in the original language. Where appropriate, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the reply may refer to information contained in the report submitted by the national authorities on measures taken to comply with the Committee of the Parties' recommendation concerning the implementation of the proposals made in GRETA's third evaluation report. States Parties should provide links, copies or extracts of relevant legislation, regulations, national action plans and case law mentioned in the reply to the questionnaire, in the original language and, wherever possible, also in one of the official languages of the Council of Europe.

A variety of stakeholders and civil society representatives should be effectively consulted in the preparation of the reply to the questionnaire, to ensure that the information provided is as comprehensive as possible.

## Information on the data collection by the ProTECT Platform

*ProTECT<sup>4</sup> is a coalition of specialized organizations that fights human trafficking and protects the rights of victims and survivors, currently bringing together twenty-five of the most active non-governmental organizations in the field. ProTECT's mission is to act as a catalyst and resource center for its members and other public and private entities with similar goals, so that they can collaborate effectively in prevention, protection and assistance to victims, public policy development and advocacy, on projects and initiatives with an increasing impact in the fight against human trafficking.*

The data collection process for responding to this questionnaire involved conducting interviews with several member organisations of the ProTECT Platform, along with receiving written answers to the questions. These responses were compiled and synthesised to create the final submission. In certain instances, we reference specific cases managed by these organisations, adopting an anecdotal approach, while in other cases we refer to studies published by some of the member organisations.

The following organisations contributed specifically with input, while the rest of the organisations provided their approval of the final responses:

1. ADPARE Association
2. Alternative Sociale
3. Dignity Restored Association
4. Dorcas Foundation
5. eLiberare Association
6. FREE Association
7. International Justice Mission Romania
8. Missio Link International Foundation
9. Open Door Foundation (Fundăția Ușă Deschisă)

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<sup>4</sup> <https://traficdepersoane.ro>

## Part 1 – Addressing vulnerabilities to trafficking in human beings

### I. PREVENTION (Articles 5, 6 and 7)

1. Do you have specific data/research/analysis of what makes people vulnerable to trafficking in human beings (THB) in your country? Please provide information on the categories/groups of people identified as being at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, and how they are addressed in the national anti-trafficking strategy and/or action plan. Have you identified geographical regions or economic sectors in your country as particularly vulnerable to THB, and how do you address them in your strategy or policy?

Do you have specific data/research/analysis of what makes people vulnerable to trafficking in human beings (THB) in your country?

As most everywhere else in the anti-trafficking community, there is a major gap in evidence. In social sciences, there is a distinction between research, evidence and data, while in the anti-trafficking field these terms are used interchangeably most of the time. Qualitative research methods seem to be considered secondary in importance to empirical investigation. Testing fundamental assumptions is time-consuming and costly. Quantification and, ideally, actionable "hard data" and scalable solutions" are preferred.

However, even that is difficult to produce with a comfortable degree of certainty, because of the hidden and morphing nature of the phenomenon (i.e. capturing the picture of a reality that is perpetually moving). Also, because of faulty (manipulation, misuse and neglect) gathering and interpreting of the little data which is available.

The data available is little, incomplete and not very reliable. In lack of better options, NGOs rely on official data and/or on punctual, empirical evidence observed during their activity, neither being necessarily comprehensive or relevant across the board. Most of it looks at the symptoms, rather than the (systemic) causes and does not challenge fundamental assumptions about the phenomenon. We need investment in all aspects of research, data gathering and data analysis in order to generate ethical and methodologically rigorous evidence.

Nevertheless, there are recent relevant studies we can mention initiated by civil society organisations. One of them is **published in collaboration with Alternative Sociale**, member of the ProTECT Platform, namely Gulei, A., Niță, M. Pîrvu D., Vieru, A., Ursache, O., Roșca A.R. 2023. „Assistance and protection of children victims of human trafficking in Romania”, București.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gulei, A., Niță, M. Pîrvu D., Vieru, A., Ursache, O., Roșca A.R. 2023. „Assistance and protection of children victims of human trafficking in Romania”, Center for Advocacy and Human Rights, București. [hereinafter, Gulei et al., 2023.] Twenty-six interviews were conducted with specialists from the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, the General Inspectorate of the Border Police, the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, general directorates of social assistance and child protection, from regional centres of the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, non-governmental organisations. The interviews aimed to collect views as well as experiences related to the identification of juvenile victims of trafficking in human beings, the services available and the inter-institutional collaboration in the field of their assistance.

Representatives of 9 institutions and non-governmental organisations that participated in the interviews deepened a number of aspects related to the assistance of minor victims of trafficking within a focus group.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism, the Labour Inspection within the National Agency for Employment provided statistical data.

The report aims to contribute, through the study of relevant documents and the consultation of the opinions of specialists in the field of assistance of child victims of trafficking in human beings, to the identification of practical solutions for optimising the identification of child victims, improving inter-institutional collaboration and providing quality support services.

The study focuses on the state of affairs, at the time of the research (from the point of view of the legislative, of the policies and of the institutional framework, of the dimension of the phenomenon of trafficking in minors, of the institutional path in the provision of services). It is at the same time future-oriented – by offering points of view and recommendations coming from specialists from relevant institutions and organisations in Romania, both public and private, from central and local level.

The analysis of the legislative framework concerns the relevant legal framework at international and national level and addresses, concentrically, the rights of minors covered by this study as passive subjects of one of the crimes falling within the definition of the notion of trafficking, as victims of a crime in general, and as children.

Another **study conducted in 2023 by eLiberare** with the support of IZI DATA company - "Identifying young people's perceptions about the main advantages, but also the potential risks that occur online"<sup>6</sup> - presents the following findings:

- Half of the respondents think the internet is unsafe for girls, while statistics show that 9 out of 10 victims of human trafficking are girls and women.
- 59% of the respondents have heard and know what the loverboy method is about. However, most respondents think that it is not something that could happen to them.
- The time spent on the Internet by teenagers and young people is consistent (4.4 hours on average daily), with access from their personal phones, without an adult being able to supervise the interactions. The preferred apps are also those used by traffickers. Instagram is on top.
- People with low self-esteem, who are insecure about themselves or how they look, or have a history of trauma in the family are more likely to fall into the trap of traffickers.
- Most young people consider face-to-face (46%) or online (37%) conversations with strangers to be acceptable. At the opposite end, only 6% consider the exchange of personal sexy photos between classmates acceptable.
- More Than half of respondents say they have heard about people asking for sex on the internet(59%),orthe Loverboy method (52%)
- The main reason they would agree to move abroad with their love interest is a rational one, if the love interest found a job opportunity for them in that country (64%), followed by an emotional one, namely if they were in love (57%). At the same time, half of this group mentions a third reason, if the love interest would already have a job in that country .

Please provide information on the categories/groups of people identified as being at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking, and how they are addressed in the national anti-trafficking strategy and/or action plan.

Both public institutions and private organisations agree that official statistics may not include all cases of child victims of trafficking in minors and that some of these children may remain unidentified. The main causes are the existence of **closed communities** (where information about the trafficking of minors does not arrive and from where the authorities cannot be notified), the overburdening of

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.eliberare.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/EN\\_Loverboy\\_DPB\\_20mar\\_EN-Proofread1\\_IZI-data-check\\_29.03.2023.pdf](https://www.eliberare.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/EN_Loverboy_DPB_20mar_EN-Proofread1_IZI-data-check_29.03.2023.pdf)

professionals, of whom many do not know the forms of trafficking and/or consider certain trafficking situations as normal (including as a result of prejudice towards certain groups).<sup>7</sup>

Regarding children, underreporting is mainly due to „the attitude of society, of the families where the victims come from or of the institutions that prefer not to get involved and/or not to ask for support. In certain communities (called "closed communities" by respondents), information about the trafficking of minors does not circulate. Also relevant are the stereotypes about certain ethnic groups; exploitation is regarded as "normal" by professionals when associated with certain traditional practices. As a result, suspicions of trafficking in minors are not brought to the attention of persons who could identify them."<sup>8</sup>

The lack of knowledge of the constituent elements of the crime of trafficking in minors is also an issue; in some cases the child victim of the trafficking of minors is improperly classified. Certain categories of children victims are more difficult to identify, specifically „those from closed, marginalised communities (e.g. from the Roma community), children exploited by the family, especially those exploited abroad, children recruited through the 'loverboy' method, children who do not know the signs and indicators of trafficking and do not realise that they are being trafficked, children who do not have significant support relationships with parents or other adults, children from low-educated backgrounds, missing children, children in protection institutions, those forced to commit crimes or forced to beg and who fear interaction with the authorities, children exploited online."<sup>9</sup>

One of the member organisations of ProTECT working with Roma children mentioned that: "Due to the lack of education, schooling, and a stable income, the parents facilitated the exploitation of the children and collected/shared the 'income' obtained from the exploitation of the minors."

Another category of persons particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons are **persons in prostitution**. Two organisations in ProTECT Platform (FREE Association and Dignity Restored) work specifically with women in prostitution, mainly street prostitution, and the majority of them are either from the **Roma community** or from poor socio-economic backgrounds. For women who have been practising street prostitution for a certain amount of time, it is very hard to get integrated or to obtain a normal job, because they have a huge amount of debt in fines and even for those who wish to quit prostitution and get a normal job, the majority of employers transfer the salary to a credit card, which means that the state places a wage garnishment. The organisation mentioned a case where from the minimum wage salary of RON 2,590 (approx. 518 EUR), an amount of 900 RON( approx. 180 EUR) was automatically withdrawn from the monthly salary. If the person also has children to care for and are single mothers, live in a rented house, their only alternative is prostitution, which many times leads them to being exploited. Another issue is that many of the Roma women do not have an ID card, which can only be issued if they have a residence. In this situation, it is very difficult for such vulnerable persons to become independent. One organisation mentioned the case of a woman who has been in prostitution and was exploited since she was 15 years old, she came from the state care system. For the last 4 years she has stopped prostitution, he has 3 children to care for, and gets the minimum wage salary. They would not survive without the organisation's help. Also, a single mother with little children cannot get a full-time job, especially if she has no one to help her with taking the children to and from school.

Another category vulnerable to THB are **individuals with mental disabilities**. They are especially at risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking, and there are currently no programs to

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<sup>7</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

support them. Due to their cognitive limitations, they are highly susceptible to trafficking.

Other types of vulnerability noticed from direct observation and from the expertise/clinical psychological evaluation reports were emotional (often, attachment disorder) in the case of online sexual exploitation of children and adults. For people with citizenships other than the Romanian one, the vulnerability is mainly due to the debts these people have with recruitment and labour placement companies.

Overall, factors that make people vulnerable to THB in Romania are unmet emotional needs, dysfunctional families, history of sexual abuse, psychiatric diagnosis/personality disorders, orphanhood, debts, adverse childhood experiences, race, gender.

The ProTECT Platform advocates for prioritising investment in tailored solutions in prevention rather than focusing solely on awareness-raising campaigns.

Have you identified geographical regions or economic sectors in your country as particularly vulnerable to THB, and how do you address them in your strategy or policy?

**The main counties where victims of trafficking are exploited in are** Dolj, Bacău, Galați, Bucharest, Timiș (counties that consistently appear in the first places in the ANITP statistics, every year of the period analyzed – 2019-2022). To be mentioned that the ANITP reports do not provide the disaggregated numbers according to standardised indicators from year to year. The counties where most of the victims were identified per year during the period analysed are:

- **In 2019:** There is no difference in year 2019 between the proportion of urban and rural victims, victims come equally from both. Most victims came from the counties of Dolj (67 victims including 38 minors), Iași (48 victims including 18 minors), Bacău (47 victims including 30 minors), Galați (37 victims including 16 minors), Mureș (29 victims including 20 minors), Bucharest (27 victims including 21 minors), Botoșani (27 victims including 13 minors), Constanța (25 victims of which 12 minors), Brașov (25 victims including 6 minors), Brăila (22 victims including 3 minors), Bihor (21 victims including 13 minors) and Argeș (21 victims including 15 minors)<sup>10</sup>.
- **in 2020:** In 2020, as in the previous year, the geographical area of eastern and southern Romania (the counties of Galați – 45 victims, Iași- 34, Bacău-33, Dolj - 30) represent a pool for the recruitment of victims of trafficking in human beings. At the same time, we note a doubling of the number of identified victims coming from Timiș County (29 victims) compared to compared to 2019<sup>11</sup>.
- **in 2021:** The main counties of origin for identified victims of human trafficking in 2021 were Dolj, Brașov, Galați, București, Iași and Bacău, counties that we can already say are traditionally the source of source of human trafficking<sup>12</sup>.
- **in 2022:** The main counties of origin for trafficking victims identified in 2022, were Dolj, Bacău, Galați, Constanța, Iași, Timiș, Ilfov, Brașov and Bucharest, which accounting for almost half (49%) of all victims identified in 2022<sup>13</sup>.

Due to the lack of correlated data (heat maps), the geographical regions where trafficking happens is hard to determine. Many times in the counties with more victims identified there is an increased cooperation at local level which determines a better identification process. This is not correlated with

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<sup>10</sup> ANITP 2019 Report, <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/subiectele/cercetare/rapoarte-anuale/>

<sup>11</sup> ANITP 2020 Report, <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/subiectele/cercetare/rapoarte-anuale/>

<sup>12</sup> ANITP 2021 Report, <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/subiectele/cercetare/rapoarte-anuale/>

<sup>13</sup> ANITP 2022 Report, <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/subiectele/cercetare/rapoarte-anuale/>



the number of victims identified from those counties, but with the efficiency of the local officers/multidisciplinary teams.

2. What specific measures are taken to reduce children's vulnerability to THB by creating a protective environment for children? Please provide information in the following areas:

- a. protecting children's rights from attitudes, customs, behaviour and practices that can have an adverse effect (including child, early and forced marriage, and illegal adoption);

In Romania, over 40% of children are currently at risk of poverty and social exclusion, double the European average (UNICEF report). The ANDPDCA<sup>14</sup> states that 9,039 children in Romania have both parents gone abroad to work while they remained in the care of the extended family, while 44,655 have one parent gone abroad to work. Therefore, an important element of reducing children's vulnerability to THB is addressing the effects of childhood traumatic events including abandonment, lack of safety, social exclusion and poverty.

For this purpose, various member organisations of the ProTECT Platform in Romania have implemented specific programs. We will mention a few of them:

Asociatia FREE provides educational programs aimed at adolescents, such as:

- *DigiRights*: Educates youth on online safety, cyber risks, and healthy online behaviors.
- *Human Trafficking and Dangers of the Internet and Pornography*: Aims to raise awareness about human trafficking risks and the negative impact of pornography on young minds.

MLI Foundation offers:

- Information sessions about online risks for minors and young people.
- Weekly psychotherapy sessions for trafficking survivors to prevent re-trafficking.
- Legal representation for victims, securing compensation for some victims.

Dorcas Aid Romania, in collaboration with local partners, has focused on creating a protective environment for vulnerable children, particularly within the Roma community. Since 2012, the organization has implemented programs designed to prevent trafficking through:

- **After-School Programs**: These programs keep children in school, reduce their risk of early marriage, and educate them about their rights and self-worth. Regular THB awareness sessions are also held.
- **Parent Awareness Sessions**: These sessions address harmful cultural practices such as early marriage, emphasizing children's rights to education and protection.
- **Adult Education and Economic Empowerment**: Programs designed for adults, especially Roma women, raise awareness about child protection and encourage the community to value education and health over harmful traditions like early marriage.
- **Material and Psychosocial Support**: Dorcas Aid provides vulnerable families with material aid (food, clothing, school supplies) and psychosocial support, thus reducing the children's vulnerability to trafficking.

Alternative Sociale highlights the importance of information campaigns and schooling in preventing trafficking. In vulnerable communities, where harmful customs like child marriage and forced begging are normalized, these campaigns help children recognize and reject exploitation. The organisation also conducts awareness campaigns in technical high schools, focusing on career guidance and critical thinking development to reduce trafficking risks.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Situatie-copii-cu-parinti-plecati-la-munca-in-strainatate-31-03-2024.doc>

Since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis, numerous interventions have been organised by member organisations of the ProTECT Platform.

ADPARE is conducting a prevention campaign in an educational HUB with 200 Ukrainian students. The organisation also does prevention by assisting vulnerabilities (e.g. single mothers with many children, Roma families, elderly, parents and children with disabilities).

Another example is the Kompass Model<sup>15</sup> implemented by eLiberare Association in partnership with national and local authorities. The model was made open source and is now replicated by other foreign NGOs in areas with many refugees or migrants. The Kompass model initially targeted Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women with children, who were particularly vulnerable to exploitation. The program focused on screening the vulnerabilities and linking them with the risks of human trafficking and providing guidance on how to access critical support services. Various projects were implemented to ensure these at-risk populations were informed and referred to appropriate protection and assistance programs. The main vulnerabilities identified through KOMPASS were<sup>16</sup>:

- **NO SAFE CONTACTS OUTSIDE UKRAINE.** The most encountered risk that was identified is the lack of relatives or acquaintances in Romania or in the countries of destination. 54% of the beneficiaries do not know anyone at their final destinations. Not having a safe contact or a circle of support while travelling or trying to flee to another country makes people prone to accepting help from strangers, which can pose a high risk. Experience in the field has shown that Ukrainians have a tendency to trust more Ukrainian/Russian speaking people because they speak a language they know. In one particular case, eLiberare identified a Russian-speaking man who was walking around a refugee centre posing questions to refugees, until the Police came and interrogated him, after which he was never to be seen again in that area. This situation revealed to us that Ukrainian communities in Romania can be easily accessed by people who can be dangerous, but who might know the language.
- **LOW LEVEL OF ENGLISH/LOCAL LANGUAGE.** 63% of the respondents have an extremely low level of English/local language (Romanian) or do not know it at all. The main languages spoken are Russian and Ukrainian. Trying to survive in a country where they do not understand the language is very challenging. Moreover, Ukrainians have been several times in a position where they needed to sign documents in a language they did not understand (e.g. accommodation contracts, labour contracts and other types of documents). eLiberare has identified, through its work, many cases of abusive or unclear clauses in contracts, such as abusive termination of contract, interdiction to take paid medical leave in the first 6 months of the contract, and so on. The language barrier is also important when it comes to requesting help in case of dangerous situations. Unfortunately, not many Romanian institutions have professionals who are fluent in Ukrainian or Russian. One situation in particular is the National Agency Against Human Trafficking's Tolverde, which does not have an option for Ukrainian refugees to ask questions or raise concerns. In addition to that, a low level of education has been identified among people dependent on social services. People accommodated in public centres have another level of risk which leads to a higher level of vulnerability.
- **CHILDREN/SENIORS IN CARE.** Other existing characteristics that influence the situation faced by refugees are the children or seniors in care. 55% of the adult women carry the weight of taking care of their young children and/or of their elderly relatives. In some cases, mothers have in their care children that are not their own but children of close relatives, friends or even of people they met along the way. Elders are also extremely vulnerable and in need of care, especially as a result of having faced rough conditions while travelling. This poses many

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<sup>15</sup> <https://kompass.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport-Kompass-A4-web-3.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://kompass.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport-Kompass-A4-web-3.pdf>

challenges for women who are travelling or for those who are trying to enter the Romanian labour market. Without proper support for children and for the elderly while they are at work, the alternative is to leave them alone at home. In addition, we discovered that 3% of the female beneficiaries are pregnant and/or nursing moms who have limited resources and options when it comes to providing basic needs for themselves and for those who are in their care.

- **LACK OF SAVINGS.** Economic vulnerabilities also affect a large number of refugees who did not have resources prior to war. 16% of the respondents admit they don't have savings and find themselves dependent exclusively on international or national aid and support. This is a vulnerability that is often linked with many risks including sexual exploitation and labour exploitation. In lack of options, people tend to accept offers that are too good to be true and enter potentially dangerous situations.
- **HEALTHCARE ISSUES.** In eLiberare's field work, 14% of people who have been screened for vulnerabilities also experience healthcare problems. In some of the cases, they requested assistance to obtain paid medical leave from their job, which in Romania cannot happen in the first 6 months of the job. However, pre-existing diseases and other medical preconditions must be taken into account when addressing protection. Traffickers will profit from each vulnerability a person has and use it to blackmail the victim.
- **PRIOR EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.** Among those most vulnerable, eLiberare found women who had previously been victims of violence and abuse, and who were followed by their abusers here in Romania. Correlating this with a faulty vetting-system for people who offer accommodation, transportation and even employment, we assess this vulnerability to be high and to expose victims to further re-traumatization or even violence. One particular case in this respect was a woman who called eLiberare's helpline because she was being harassed by her ex-husband and followed throughout the city by the man and his friends. She was referred to specialised GBV services in the particular city where she was located.
- **TRAVELLING ALONE AT A YOUNG AGE.** Unaccompanied children, including the separated and those from Ukrainian institutions, are not always referred to the national child protection authorities for follow-up and protection, in eLiberare's experience; sometimes children are not registered anywhere until they sign up for temporary protection. Children might travel unaccompanied, or accompanied by relatives, neighbours, friends of their parents and so on. The eLiberare team identified 155 young adults who travelled to Romania by themselves, without relatives and without other safe contacts in our country. Among these young adults, tentative cases of trafficking were identified, where traffickers who had been convicted in Romania offered housing and accommodation to refugees. Another vulnerable category identified by eLiberare were young adults without family support. The team met with young adults who were travelling alone: young women whose husbands or fathers stayed behind in Ukraine. With ages between 18 and 21, we encountered young people with no experience of living independently, forced to figure out things by themselves.

b. developing children's life skills (including media literacy and online safety skills), knowledge and participation;

Member organisations of the ProTECT Platform have implemented a variety of targeted programs in the last four years, targeting educational and life skills development, as well as media literacy and online safety:

1. **Asociatia FREE - "Martisor" Day Center:** This day centre caters to children at risk of sexual exploitation, providing ongoing educational support for around 50 minors. The centre helps with school supplies, tutoring, and language lessons (English/French), while also running weekly prevention programs focused on human trafficking and exploitation. These programs teach children how to stay safe online and physically, how to identify abusive relationships, and how to seek help if needed. Additionally, the centre organises an annual camp for children and a retreat for mothers and their children, which strengthens their resilience and awareness.
2. **Salvation Army SMART Project:** Over the past three and a half years, the Salvation Army has reached over 350 children through its SMART Project, which provides socio-educational activities. These activities include workshops on online safety, labour exploitation prevention, and the broader risks of trafficking. The organisation has further supported an additional 100 children annually in cities like Bucharest, Craiova, Buzău, and Bacău through similar preventive programs aimed at improving their quality of life and educating them about potential threats.
3. **Dorcas Aid Romania and Dignity Restored Association - "Next Steps" Project:** Since 2021, this project has focused on developing children's life skills, media literacy, and online safety awareness, targeting both school environments and vulnerable communities. Through interactive workshops, children learn how to identify dangerous situations, especially online, and are trained in digital safety, critical thinking, and the potential risks of online relationships. A core part of this initiative is the short film *"I am Alexandra"*, which depicts a scenario of exploitation through the "lover-boy" method—a tactic often used by traffickers. This film is followed by guided discussions that encourage children to reflect on the risks they face and the steps they can take to protect themselves.
4. **Alternative Sociale's Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Initiatives:** Between 2021 and 2024, Alternative Sociale has trained 216 teachers and over 2,000 students in critical media literacy skills. Their projects encourage children to express their opinions and participate in addressing their vulnerabilities, helping them to critically evaluate online content and recognize exploitation risks.
5. **eLiberare's Educational Program:** Since 2016, eLiberare has offered a comprehensive anti-trafficking educational tool for schools. In a formal partnership with Romania's Ministry of Education, this program is disseminated across schools, reaching over 621,000 students, 25,800 teachers, and 5000 schools. It focuses on educating children about the dangers of trafficking and online sexual exploitation. This program includes: in-depth explanation of the loverboy method, which is the most commonly used tactic by traffickers in Romania to recruit victims for sexual exploitation; ten case studies analysing different exploiting situations; a safety plan composed of good habits that can minimise vulnerabilities and prevent risky situations and five practical applications to create an individualised safety plan. Teachers can request the Educational Program for free on eLiberare's website<sup>17</sup>.
6. **Dorcas Aid Romania - After-School Programs and Aflatoun Initiative:** Dorcas Aid also implements after-school programs targeting vulnerable Roma children, such as those in Tărian and Cheresig. These programs, alongside the *Aflatoun* life skills curriculum, teach children practical skills like financial literacy, personal responsibility, and critical decision-making. These skills empower children to navigate life challenges and resist manipulation, ultimately decreasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

Together, these programs create a multi-faceted approach to educating children about the risks they face and equipping them with the life skills needed to stay safe in both the physical and online worlds.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.eliberare.com/pachet-educational-de-prevenire-a-traficului-de-persoane/>

By focusing on prevention, education, and the development of critical thinking, these organisations are creating a safer and more informed environment for children in Romania.

c. putting in place a system for monitoring and reporting cases of abuse;

ProTECT Platform highlights that the simple existence of the protocol mentioned in the Governmental response in the child protection system does not guarantee its implementation in practice. In reality, there is no practical and user-friendly mechanism to report cases of abuse and exploitation in general (in correlation to vulnerabilities to trafficking). We also mention that there is a general lack of trust in authorities in Romania.

The one exception is that children that are victims of crimes have a dedicated emergency phone number that they can call, with operators trained to discuss abuse with children (119, the equivalent for children of 112). ANITP operates a hotline for reporting potential cases of human trafficking active only during working hours (8AM to 4 PM) and with an automatic response after the working hours. ANES operates a hotline for reporting cases of gender based violence.

d. providing training to child care professionals, legal guardians, education professionals;

Several member organisations of the ProTECT Platform have implemented training programs targeting professionals who work with children. These programs focus on equipping child care professionals, legal guardians, and education professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to identify, prevent, and respond to trafficking risks. We mention some of the activities implemented by ProTECT members, who were done in partnership with local or national authorities:

1. **Dorcas Aid Romania and Partners (Salvation Army Romania, Dignity Restored, International Justice Mission):**

- Through the *Next Steps Project* (2021–2023), Dorcas Aid provided targeted training to professionals working with vulnerable groups. This included capacity-building conferences for local staff and professionals such as childcare workers, legal guardians, and education professionals.
- The project reached over **900 professionals** in cities like Oradea through universities, libraries, and cinemas, promoting awareness and skills in preventing trafficking.

2. **Alternative Sociale:**

- Between 2022 and 2024, Alternative Sociale trained over **186 teachers and child protection staff** from Iasi and Vaslui on working with children exhibiting risky behaviours. A specialised *anger management program* for teenagers was also implemented.
- Additionally, **120 teachers, child protection staff, police officers, and medical personnel** received training on *gender-based violence* and violence against children.
- The organisation also trained **240 staff** from the General Departments for Social Assistance and Child Protection on handling calls to the *119 Child Hotline*.
- Furthermore, **100 professionals from the judiciary**—including judges, prosecutors, police officers, psychologists, and social workers—participated in inter-institutional collaboration training on conducting hearings with children, following the *NiCHD protocol*.

3. **eLiberare:**

- eLiberare has been doing capacity building on early detection and notification of cases with various professional categories in the last 5 years: between 2019–2023, a total of **264 training sessions** for **7690 participants** from different professional categories such as emergency line operators, social workers, DGASPC child care professionals,



police officers, healthcare professionals, school counsellors and teachers, and professionals or volunteers working with refugees. These trainings focus on raising awareness about trafficking and improving the professionals' ability to protect at-risk children and were done in partnership with ANITP, ANPDCA, The Romanian Police, the Special Telecommunication System etc.

- Based on the National Mechanism for the Identification and Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Persons (NIRM) adopted in January 2023, eLiberare developed, in partnership with ANITP, ANPDCA and UNICEF a user-friendly guide for childcare practitioners explaining the NIRM in a simplified way. The guide<sup>18</sup> has been disseminated in training sessions and was also made open-source on eLiberare's website.
- eLiberare has also contributed with input on the *Procedure on the management of cases of violence against pre-schoolers/students and school staff, as well as other related situations in the school environment and suspected violence against children outside the school environment* (approved by Ministerial Order no. 6.235/2023). The procedure regulates the working modalities, the applicable rules and the responsibilities of the persons involved in the inter-institutional and multidisciplinary management of various types of violence against students, including child trafficking and sexual abuse.

#### 4. MLI Foundation:

- The MLI Foundation works with the West University of Timisoara by providing opportunities for students from **social sciences, law, and public administration** to gain practical experience in preventing trafficking and supporting vulnerable children. These students are trained during their internships to better understand the complexities of trafficking and exploitation.

In summary, the organisations have collectively trained thousands of professionals, ensuring that educators, caregivers, legal guardians, and law enforcement are better equipped to protect children from the risks of trafficking. **These efforts were done in partnership with the local or national authorities, but were rarely reflected in the national reports done by authorities which sometimes caused doubling efforts in the same geographical areas.**

- e. [access to education and health care for vulnerable children, including from minority groups, unaccompanied migrant children, and children of migrant workers;](#)

Members of the ProTECT Platform have implemented several measures to ensure access to education and healthcare for vulnerable children, including those from minority groups, unaccompanied migrant children, and children of migrant workers, thereby reducing their vulnerability to trafficking in human beings (THB). Here are some of the initiatives within ProTECT:

1. **MLI Foundation** runs the *Merg la școală* (I Am Going to School) program, supporting around 150 children and 60 families. The program provides food and hygiene products every two months to low-income families, helping to alleviate financial barriers that prevent children from attending school. This material support encourages families to prioritize education, reducing the risk of trafficking by ensuring consistent school attendance.
2. **Asociația FREE** addresses the vulnerabilities faced by children of human trafficking victims and individuals involved in prostitution. These children often face difficulties enrolling in school due to issues like frequent relocation, lack of birth certificates, or complications with legal

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<sup>18</sup> eLiberare Association, [A practical guide for professionals to identify and refer cases of child trafficking](#).

guardianship. FREE works to overcome these barriers, ensuring access to education for these at-risk children.

3. **Dorcas Aid Romania**, in partnership with local organisations, has implemented several initiatives targeting vulnerable Roma children and families:
  - The *After-School Program* in two villages in Bihor county provides Roma children with school supplies, meals, clothing, and food packages, ensuring they have the essentials needed to stay in school. The program also includes life skills education, which enhances their ability to make informed decisions and builds resilience against exploitation.
  - The *Sukhar Community Center* focuses on vulnerable Roma women in a village in Bihor, supporting community development and improving access to education and healthcare. By creating a stable environment for families, the program reduces children's exposure to trafficking risks.
4. **Alternative Sociale** has facilitated access to education for over 250 vulnerable Ukrainian citizens (both adults and children) since 2022, providing them with the necessary support to integrate into the education system amidst the challenges of displacement.
5. Between September 2022 and June 2024, **ADPARE** facilitated access to education and medical services for 1174 people from Ukraine, both adults and children, an activity that continues today.
6. **eLiberare** served more than 4000 Ukrainians with tailored support and access to services.

These combined efforts focus on improving access to essential services and education for marginalised and at-risk children, thereby creating a protective environment that reduces their vulnerability to trafficking.

f. birth registration for all children born in the country.

There is a process behind registering all children born in the country and we rarely have encountered cases where children were undocumented.

3. What measures are taken in your country to address vulnerabilities related to the gender dimension of human trafficking?

From a gender perspective, there is a greater focus on women and girls<sup>19</sup> both in preventing trafficking and assisting victims. Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention<sup>20</sup> on preventing and combating violence against women (including trafficking in human beings), which defines the term "woman"<sup>21</sup> as including "girls up to the age of 18", references to female victims in the normative acts must be interpreted as applicable to both adults and minors.

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<sup>19</sup> Articles 3, 6, para. (1) and 26 para. (5) of the Law no. 678/2001 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

<sup>20</sup> Law no.30/2016 for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, adopted in Istanbul on May 11, 2011

<sup>21</sup> Art. 3, letter f) of the Council of Europe Convention of 11 May 2011 on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

National and international legislation highlights the increased vulnerability of girls and women. Some specialists participating in the study made by Alternative Sociale consider that gender vulnerability analysis should take into account the type of exploitation (it is known that in the case of sexual exploitation, according to statistics, women/girls are more vulnerable, but in the case of labour or begging, 70% of the victims are men)."

In addressing gender vulnerabilities related to human trafficking, organisations within the ProTECT Platform implement target measures that focus on the specific needs and risks faced by women, girls, and, to a lesser extent, men. These measures recognize the gendered nature of trafficking and provide a tailored approach to prevention and victim support. Organisations from ProTECT Platform have noticed a few trends by working with human trafficking victims:

- many victims of trafficking are also victims of domestic violence and sometimes they are hidden under the guise of this crime;
- the majority of the Romanian women exploited sexually are recruited through the Loverboy method, which means that exploitation starts from a couple relationship where the man deceives her with the promise of a better life, marriage and a family.
- Many women and girls, victims of trafficking, are also single mothers, which makes reintegration even more challenging.
- Without exception, for all children assisted by ADPARE - an organisation within the ProTECT Platform - in the last 4 years, victims of child pornography and child trafficking, the father figure is one that makes them vulnerable: absence of the father, overprotective father, father-aggressor, father-trafficker, mother's partner-aggressor, mother's partner-trafficker, etc.
- eLiberare's "Dragoste pe bune Campaign - Love for Real"<sup>22</sup> addressing young girls looking for the perfect partner revealed that many girls and young women are prone to exploitation due to their emotional vulnerabilities and lack of self-esteem. eLiberare also launched a conversation guide for parents<sup>23</sup> in order to support them to communicate better with their girls about the risks of abuse and exploitation.

**Recommendation proposed by ProTECT Platform:** There is a need for targeted measures to address the vulnerabilities of single-parent families, particularly those where fathers are working abroad, and to support families affected by domestic violence or dysfunctional adult-child relationships. Special attention should be given to assisting children who bear adult responsibilities and face constant pressure to excel academically and in other areas.

These measures should aim to provide comprehensive support systems for such at-risk families, including psychosocial support, educational assistance, and interventions designed to prevent further exploitation.

4. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to trafficking of persons from disadvantaged minorities? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:

a. research;

From ProTECT's perspective, while gathering data for the past years, we concluded that the data collected by the public institutions is not transparent or reliable.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://dragostepebune.ro/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.eliberare.com/resurse-pentru-parinti/>



From the study made by Alternative Sociale, it has been concluded that there are differences between the data collected by the various public institutions (ANITP, DIICOT<sup>24</sup>, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which is partly explained by the perspective from which data on victims of trafficking are recorded. For example, not all victims end up in DIICOT as an injured party in a case. For other differences, however, the explanation is not as obvious (for example, the number of repatriated minors reported by the MFA compared to the number of repatriated minors reported by ANITP in the reference period – 2020-2022).

**The ANPDCA collects information additional to that registered in the SIMEV system**, which it shares with other institutions, but which is not public. However, the data is collected manually and the people involved in this activity do not specialise in the topics on which they collect information, which makes it difficult to capitalise on and/or share.

**Other relevant sources of information are the DGASPC and the non-governmental organisations** involved in the assistance of minor victims of trafficking, which also collect data, which they share with ANITP or the criminal investigation bodies and/or use them for the production of statistics, analyses, provision of services, improvement of educational and training programs, design of prevention programs.

**Data collection on vulnerable groups has also been extended to refugee children in Ukraine through the Primero app.** Study participants could not indicate ways in which this data is used to identify child victims of trafficking in human beings. Moreover, they mention (a fact also supported by the ANITP statistics) that the identification of minors victims of trafficking in foreign citizens or stateless persons in Romania is exceptional.

**No data are recorded on the criminal acts associated with the trafficking of minors that led to the identification of child victims.** The participants in the research mention that in their practice they encountered situations in which child victims of human trafficking were identified during the investigation of other types of crimes (child pornography, drug trafficking, etc.)<sup>25</sup>.

Other conclusions that the ProTECT Platform has reached regarding measures taken to reduce the vulnerability to trafficking of persons from disadvantaged minorities are:

1. The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP), which does not collect ethnicity-specific data or assess vulnerabilities based on minority status. As a result, anti-trafficking reports do not include detailed insights into how ethnic minorities, such as the Roma community, may be particularly vulnerable. Awareness-raising campaigns are also general rather than targeted towards specific groups.
2. The National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027<sup>26</sup> designed by the National Roma Agency has only one mention of trafficking, regarding the inclusion of the Roma minority in information campaigns regarding trafficking. However, the strategy lacks specific measures or a comprehensive plan to reduce the vulnerability of Roma people to trafficking.
3. Best Practice example: MLI Foundation notes that many of the girls they work with in foster care come from minority backgrounds. After leaving the protection system, these girls benefit from the Aspirations Program, which provides them with free housing, financial support, and assistance in securing employment or continuing education. This serves as a transitional

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<sup>24</sup> Gulei et al., 2023. DIICOT reports 171 cases registered in cases investigated in 2020 (30 new cases identified), 142 cases in cases investigated in 2021 (7 new cases identified) and 136 cases of child victims of trafficking in files investigated in 2022 (no data on new cases identified are published).

<sup>25</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/legislatie/legislatie-aplicabila/strategie-de-incluziune-2022-2027>

program, helping these vulnerable individuals gain independence and reducing their susceptibility to trafficking.

The general consensus is that while some initiatives tangentially address minority vulnerabilities, there are no specific or targeted programs focused directly on reducing the risk of trafficking among minority groups. This gap underscores the need for more comprehensive data collection and minority-specific interventions.

**b. information, awareness-raising and education campaigns;**

To reduce the vulnerability to trafficking among individuals from disadvantaged minorities, several organisations within the ProTECT Platform have implemented various information, awareness-raising, and education campaigns:

**1. Prevention Activities for Vulnerable Minors:** The FREE Association is currently working with approximately 60 minors, children of mothers who are victims of human trafficking or women involved in prostitution; 35 of them are of Roma ethnicity. Weekly, within the day centre children are involved in prevention activities that teach them to keep themselves safe online especially. Children live in a vulnerable environment where access to education and after-school programs is quite limited, often involving a cumbersome process (such as lack of stable housing, absence of birth certificates, in some cases, etc.). They are exposed to the experiences of their mothers' exploitation and prostitution activities, which significantly increases their vulnerability and the risks of exploitation and trafficking.

**2. Community Awareness Campaigns:** Dorcas Aid collaborates with organisations like Dignity Restored to conduct awareness-raising and prevention campaigns within communities of disadvantaged minorities, as well as in primary and secondary schools. Specific initiatives include:

- **Parent Training on Child Education and Safety - Parental Involvement in Child Safety:** Parents play a key role in protecting their children from trafficking. By educating parents on raising their children with strong values and awareness of potential dangers, the program strengthens the family unit and creates a safer environment for children. Parents are also educated about online safety, helping them monitor their children's internet use and detect any suspicious activity.
- **Special Events are organised (e.g., Easter Festival, Roma Have Talent) - Participation and Community Engagement:** Through events such as "Roma Have Talent" and cultural festivals, children actively participate in the community, building self-esteem and social networks. Traffickers often target isolated children; these activities foster a strong sense of belonging and community support, reducing the likelihood of children falling into the hands of traffickers.
- **Career Guidance and Empowerment - for Roma Teenagers: "My Profession" Workshops:** By exploring career options and learning about different professions, teenagers gain a sense of purpose and empowerment. This reduces their likelihood of falling prey to traffickers who exploit individuals with limited employment opportunities or self-esteem. Learning about job options and how to approach the professional world empowers them to pursue legitimate, fulfilling careers, making them less susceptible to false job offers often used in trafficking schemes.
- **Adult Education and Literacy Programs:** Disadvantaged minority adults, particularly women, are provided with literacy and basic education programs. These programs empower them to better understand their rights and navigate employment contracts, making them less susceptible to traffickers' false promises of work.

**3. Educational campaigns in technical high schools:** Alternative Sociale developed small-scale campaigns targeting students from vulnerable backgrounds studying in technical highschools in Iasi

county. Every year 200 new students entering the target highschoools participate in dedicated activities on different topics, ranging from trafficking in persons to career guidance, conducted in the classrooms. Hundreds of other students are targeted by school-wide campaigns developed and run by groups of student volunteers organised by Alternative Sociale youth workers.

4. The Educational Program elaborated by eLiberare has been translated into Hungarian, Ukrainian, English and Romanian languages. The **Member of the Parliament representative of the minority political party has used the materials in the Hungarian community** and made presentations for teachers and parents to reduce the risks of exploitation among the Hungarian children. The materials in Ukrainian language were used in the centres where Ukrainian children were doing lessons.

**The ProTECT Platform also notes that there are currently no impact studies available regarding the awareness campaigns mentioned by the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP). This lack of data hinders the assessment of campaign effectiveness.**

#### c. socio-economic initiatives targeting underlying and structural causes;

To address the vulnerability to trafficking of individuals from disadvantaged minorities, several organisations within the ProTECT Platform have implemented specific socio-economic initiatives targeting underlying and structural causes:

1. **Social Enterprises for Skill Development and Employment: Dorcas Aid** and its partner, **Dignity Restored**, have established a social enterprise aimed at providing vocational training and employment opportunities for victims of human trafficking and vulnerable individuals. The social enterprise is a tailoring skills program and is a best practise model within the ProTECT Platform, as it provides beneficiaries with the option of working part-time until they can take on a full-time work program.
2. **Empowerment of Vulnerable Roma Communities:** In collaboration with **ASA Association**, Dorcas Aid has created the **Shukhar Center**, a social enterprise designed to empower vulnerable Roma women and teenage girls.

#### d. education, vocational training and job placement programmes.

Open Door Foundation has a one year and 6 months program for victims of trafficking, which secures funding for those victims who wish to finalise or continue their studies, including higher education. Those who do not wish to continue their studies, receive support for vocational training and job placement.

Like Open Door, several other NGOs in the ProTECT Platform offer integrated services that include vocational training and job mediation programs to victims and vulnerable individuals, reducing their risk of exploitation in the future.

Moreover, since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, several organisations in the ProTECT Platform have supported refugees for vocational training and job placement opportunities, while providing counselling on the risks of labour exploitation and labour rights in Romania.

eLiberare has worked intensively with Ukrainian refugees and released the website [robotainfo](https://robotainfo.com/)<sup>27</sup>, as well as videos in Ukrainian made in collaboration with Ukrainian employees<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://robotainfo.com/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@eliberareromania7870>

For two years – 2022-2024 – Dorcas Aid Romania has implemented several projects<sup>29</sup> targeting Ukrainian refugees and supporting them with – emergency support (in the beginning of the war and transitors), housing, training, job placement in different regions of the country. All these programs had a special attention to the risk of THB – as many of the women coming from Ukraine have been vulnerable to this. Information was shared about THB, emergency numbers have been provided, awareness creation and information sessions were held, and by educational and socio-economic initiatives the vulnerability of the Ukrainian refugees have been reduced.

5. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to THB of persons with disabilities? Please provide information in the following areas:

- a. deinstitutionalisation, including community and family-based services for children and support for independent living;

Some organisations within the ProTECT Platform have implemented specific measures focused on deinstitutionalization and support for independent living for persons with disabilities. Here are some conclusions:

1. **Missio Link International** has developed a therapy plan tailored for minors and young women with disabilities. This plan emphasises preparation for independent living, aiming to equip individuals with the skills necessary for a stable job and family life. The **Aspirations Program** specifically offers young women who have exited the child protection system housing support, covering all utilities as long as they are either working or studying. This transitional support is crucial in helping these young women feel ready for independent living.
2. **Open Door** has identified critical needs within disability centres to enhance the support provided to individuals with disabilities. Key recommendations include:
  - **Longer Validity for Disability Certificates:** Currently, annual renewal is required, which can be burdensome. A proposed extension to 5 to 10 years would reduce administrative pressures on individuals.
  - **Vocational Training Opportunities:** There is a significant lack of vocational courses available within disability centres. Engaging local businesses to create simple job opportunities could provide individuals with meaningful work experiences, enhancing their employability and reducing their risk of exploitation.
  - **Contraceptive Access:** Ensuring that individuals with disabilities have access to contraceptive methods is essential to prevent unplanned pregnancies, particularly for those unable to care for children.
  - **Tax Incentives for Employers:** Employers who hire individuals with disabilities are currently required to pay the standard 19% tax to the state. It is recommended that these employers be granted a tax exemption, similar to the benefits provided for hiring recent college graduates. This would encourage more businesses to hire individuals with disabilities, further promoting their inclusion in the workforce.

In Romania, there are over 80,000 children identified as having special educational needs (SEN). While they benefit from support-teachers and are integrated into mainstream education, these children remain highly vulnerable to bullying and other forms of abuse, including trafficking and exploitation in child pornography. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by their specific needs, which may not be fully addressed by current educational frameworks.

**The ProTECT Platform recommends the development of tailored prevention programs for children with disabilities. These programs should also extend support to caregivers,**

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<sup>29</sup> <https://youtu.be/BL7C9hBC5HI?si=7ZEYwi3Bo1nkOzNj>

**including family members, educators, teachers, and foster carers, ensuring that all those involved in the child's life are equipped to protect and support them against the risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation.**

**b. monitoring institutions and foster families accommodating persons with disabilities;**

There is a limited number of nonprofit organisations monitoring services for people with disabilities, most notably the Center for Legal Resources which identified several state sponsored institutions for elderly care and people with disabilities that were exploiting their “beneficiaries”. The capacity of independent monitoring remains very limited.

**c. procedure for the selection and appointment of legal guardians and monitoring of their work;**

One organisation in the ProTECT Platform working with children stated that their placement shelters are licensed by a public institution (ANPDCA) to receive minors in care. They are monitored annually by AJPIS to verify that they continue to meet the legal requirements for receiving minors.

Minors in care are referred by DGASPC, which, according to the law, remains their legal guardian for the entire duration of the placement measure.

The foundation is checked by AJPIS and DGASPC to ensure that the minors are properly cared for, among other things.

Unfortunately, in 2023, the Prime Minister sent a group of institutions—DSP, ANPC, ITM, ANSVSA, AJPIS, etc.—to conduct an inspection, requesting documents and requiring the organisation to implement certain measures that AJPIS tried to explain were not mandated by law for NGOs. For example, they requested that foster parents complete a cooking course, similar to that required for restaurant chefs.

This system where the head of DGASPC/centre where the minor is located is also the legal guardian has proved its limits when it comes to the tailored support that the children need.

**d. access to adequate accommodation, education and work;**

We were informed by one organisation in the ProTECT Platform working with children with disabilities about certain measures adopted by schools regarding them: for girls with mild intellectual disabilities, a special educational needs (SEN) file is created. This implies that if the minors do not have a sufficient level of special educational needs to qualify for special schools, teachers in regular schools are prohibited from failing them. For example, during final exams for the 8th or 12th grades, they are allowed an additional hour to complete the questions.

**e. access to information and reporting/complaints mechanisms which are accessible to persons with disabilities.**

**6. How do you ensure in practice that an assessment of the vulnerability and special needs of asylum seekers is carried out at an early stage? What procedures are followed when vulnerability to THB is detected? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:**

**a. provision of comprehensive and accessible information, in a range of relevant languages, on the rights of asylum seekers, indicators of THB, rights of victims of THB, and contacts of relevant organisations;**

From the study made by Alternative Sociale, we mention certain conclusions regarding the Primero App. This application has been specifically adapted to extend its capabilities to include data collection on refugee children from Ukraine, allowing for the systematic tracking of vulnerabilities within this demographic.

Despite the implementation of this technology, there remains a gap in understanding how the data collected is utilised for the identification of child victims of trafficking in human beings. Current practices have not established clear mechanisms to effectively leverage this data to identify and support minors who may be victims of trafficking. Furthermore, stakeholders note that, as highlighted by statistics from ANITP, the identification of child trafficking victims, particularly among foreign citizens or stateless individuals in Romania, is exceptionally rare. This indicates a need for improved protocols and more proactive strategies in recognizing and responding to these vulnerabilities<sup>30</sup>.

ADPARE, an organisation with significant experience working with third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking, reported that individuals holding citizenships other than Romanian can access information regarding the rights and obligations of asylum seekers in English on the General Inspectorate for Immigration's website. However, details concerning the asylum procedure are often disseminated informally within both physical and online migrant communities. **They recommend that such information be conveyed through community leaders to enhance its effectiveness. Considering the diversity in origins, languages and cultures of recent years, another recommendation would be related to the permanent training of the IGI officials who conduct the interviews with asylum seekers, so that they can detect, notify and refer potential cases of human trafficking.**

b. access to legal assistance and representation;

Considering that in recent years Romania has also become a country of destination for a small number of migrant victims, **an urgent recommendation would be the specialisation of lawyers in counselling and legal representation of vulnerable migrants<sup>31</sup>.**

c. access to decent accommodation, health (including psychological) care, work and education.

ADPARE and other PROTECT members further state that there are no shelters or specialised protective apartments for migrant trafficking victims, regardless of gender, culture, nationality, etc. **Another urgent recommendation is to develop an entire national system of protection and assistance for migrant victims, so that they can access their rights, including the right to legal residence, safe accommodation, medical care, education, work, etc.**

7. What specific measures are taken to reduce the vulnerability to THB of migrant workers (including seasonal workers, seconded/posted workers, domestic workers, diplomatic household employees)? Please provide information on policies and measures in the following areas:

Within the context of the war in Ukraine and the refugees coming into Romania, eLiberare has developed a model of intervention, called the Kompass Model<sup>32</sup>, that assessed the risks of exploitation and human trafficking, as well as addressed the need for mid-term and long-term strategic measures to decrease that risk. The problem was that a large number of Ukrainians were transiting Romania to find a better life in the Western part of Europe, without having any plans or contact points. This made them more vulnerable in accepting precarious jobs. There was also the risk of Ukrainians being exploited on Romanian territory (sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, trafficking of minors etc.)

<sup>30</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Recommendation by ADPARE.

<sup>32</sup> [https://kompass.world/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Kompass-Intervention-Model\\_c.pdf](https://kompass.world/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Kompass-Intervention-Model_c.pdf).



by networks of perpetrators and also by regular citizens who wanted to take advantage of the situation. The Kompas Model was implemented at local, national and regional levels and ensured an alternative traceability system that looks at personalised journeys of individuals, rather than migration trends. People needed a compass to navigate, on the one hand, the bureaucracy in order to access help in Romania, as well as the things needed to leave the country, how to make a personalised safety plan, establish emergency contact details and safety passwords. Interventions took place in refugee communities in Alba, Bucharest, Suceava, Dolj, Botosani, Brasov, Tulcea, Galati, Neamt, Timis, Oradea, Dâmbovița, Vâlcea, Iasi, Sibiu, Alba-Iulia. eLiberare included Ukrainian experts in the team who made a decisive contribution and implemented the model in collaboration with several Romanian NGOs: LOGS-Grup de Initiative Sociale in Timișoara, People to People Foundation in Oradea, IZA Association in Tulcea, ASSOC in Baia Mare. The Kompas Model was made open-source for authorities and other non-governmental organisations at home and abroad to use with war refugee communities and communities at risk.

LOGS<sup>33</sup>, one organisation in the ProTECT Platform, has been providing comprehensive support to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable groups at Casa LOGS in Timisoara since 2020. Key services include:

- Social registration, needs assessment, and intervention planning
- Social and psychological counselling, including psychotherapy and group support
- Financial assistance, particularly through the cash assistance program, for both Ukrainian and other international beneficiaries
- Medical support, including financial assistance for accessing healthcare and specialised treatments
- Educational activities, such as Romanian language courses, educational workshops, and trainings
- Cultural and recreational activities, like art workshops, yoga, mental health classes, and activities for children, teenagers, and adults
- Awareness-raising and information sessions, particularly on human trafficking and labour exploitation
- Implementation of the [Kompas Model](#), offering similar support activities in Timisoara and surrounding areas

Similar services have been provided to Ukrainian refugees by other organisations in ProTECT, such as [Bucovina Institute](#), [ASSOC](#), [AIDROM](#) and others. Through the UNHCR-supported project "Assistance Services for Refugees from the Timisoara Transit Centre and Ukrainian Refugees in the Western Region", AIDRom provides social services for Ukrainian refugees settled in Timisoara, Arad and Oradea. The project also has a special component whereby very vulnerable refugees from all over the country can be supported with financial help to get quick access to basic necessities and for various other urgent personal problems.

Regarding migrant workers other than Ukrainian refugees, an organisation working with both trafficking victims and women in prostitution reported a case involving a Nigerian migrant woman who arrived in Romania through a recruitment agency. Upon arrival, she faced poor working conditions, including inadequate housing and insufficient salary. Additionally, she was burdened with fees payable to the recruitment agency, which eventually led her to engage in sexual services for survival. This case highlights the precarious situation many migrant workers face, where inadequate employment conditions and exploitative recruitment practices increase their vulnerability to human

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<sup>33</sup> <https://grupullogs.ro/>

trafficking. We therefore highlight the need for stronger regulatory measures to ensure access to decent work, fair compensation, proper housing, and protection from exploitative practices.

- a. provision of comprehensive and accessible information, in a range of relevant languages, on migration and labour laws, worker protection and contacts of relevant organisations;

IOM Romania produced a guide called "Romania's Orientation Guide for Beneficiaries of International Protection and non-EU Nationals Legally Residing in Romania"<sup>34</sup>. This guide is for Third Country Nationals (TCNs)/non-EU nationals who received international protection in Romania (refugee status, subsidiary protection, temporary protection) and for those who are residing and came to Romania through regular migration channels: for studies, as family members of Romanian citizens, or for work. The guide includes general information about Romania and its people, interaction with Romanian society, fundamental rights and duties, as well as other useful information for the management of the expectations and integration in Romania<sup>35</sup>.

- b. provision of clear employment contracts;

eLiberare launched a Practical Guide<sup>36</sup> for employers to help them prevent human trafficking including information on how to have clear employment contracts.

- c. access to decent work and housing, health care, social services and education;

Also from ADPARE's direct experience, the accommodation conditions for migrant workers are most of the time extremely poor, the working hours in the contract are not respected nor the condition of granting three meals/day. Moreover, many migrants arrived in Romania with work visas through intermediaries, and the employers did not accept the workers, so they remained in a situation of illegality, being also extremely vulnerable to trafficking and/or exploitation.

Recommendation: creating alternatives/possibility of direct relationship between potential employees and employers and eliminating intermediaries as much as possible.

- d. possibility to change employers;

According to ADPARE, a concerning practice employed by some employers is the termination of employment contracts with migrant workers who assert their rights, often citing unfounded disciplinary reasons. This tactic effectively forces these workers to leave the country, as securing new employment becomes exceedingly difficult under such circumstances.

To eliminate such practices, we need an efficient system of complaints (petitions) and specialised legal assistance to discourage employers, but also to compensate workers.

- e. access to confidential complaints mechanisms;

ADPARE emphasises the need for an online complaints and petitions system that enables vulnerable workers to submit their concerns in English, in addition to Romanian. Currently, the petitions submitted to the Territorial Labor Inspectorate are exclusively in Romanian, limiting accessibility for

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<sup>34</sup> <https://romania.iom.int/news/orientation-guide>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.eliberare.com/prevenirea-exploatarii-prin-munca/>



non-Romanian speakers. While the complaint form is stated to be confidential, it requests personal data in the annex, which raises concerns about the actual confidentiality of the process. Establishing a more inclusive and truly confidential mechanism for complaints would enhance the protection and support for vulnerable workers.

f. right to join trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining;

Migrant workers have the right to join unions, but they are not informed and encouraged to join a union. ADPARE assisted a woman from Ethiopia who, being pregnant, was threatened with dismissal and with the support of a trade union (without the woman being registered) the rights of the woman in relation to the employer were negotiated.

g. legal avenues for regularising their stay in the country.

ADPARE's experience in relation to obtaining legal residence for victims of migrant trafficking and exploited migrant workers has revealed the following challenges:

- ADPARE highlights significant barriers faced by migrant victims regarding their access to the recovery and reflection period, which is limited to a maximum of 90 days. Currently, the granting of this period is contingent upon the victim's cooperation with criminal investigation authorities. Specifically, the prosecutor plays a crucial role by issuing an ordinance that allows the General Inspectorate for Immigration to grant a residence permit under "other causes" for a duration of six months, which may also be extended upon the prosecutor's request. This legal framework places undue pressure on migrant victims, potentially discouraging them from seeking assistance or reporting their experiences due to fear of legal repercussions and instability. To address these challenges, a re-evaluation of these conditions is necessary to ensure that migrant victims can access their rights and protections without the burden of conditionality on their cooperation with law enforcement.
- The limitations imposed by the "tolerated" status within Romanian legislation concerning foreigners, which is also applicable to victims of trafficking. While this status is intended to provide temporary relief, it results in significant restrictions for victims. Specifically, individuals with "tolerated" status lack the full rights guaranteed by special laws, experience limited freedom of movement, and are required to renew their "permission" to stay on a monthly basis. Although they have the legal right to work, the precarious nature of this status makes it exceedingly difficult for victims to secure employment, as most employers are unwilling to engage in month-to-month contracts. In conclusion, the victim is totally vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and other crimes.
- The request for asylum for potential/probable victims from certain countries (for example, the Republic of Moldova) is not a solution to stay legally on the territory of Romania, because the conditions for asylum seekers cannot be met.
- According to ADPARE's experience, a compromise solution for ensuring long-term residence in Romania for victims who have been granted a residence permit valid for six months is to secure employment with an employer willing to navigate the bureaucratic processes necessary for obtaining a longer-term work permit, typically for a duration of two years. However, this approach is a compromise, as it places additional pressure on victims who are still in the process of recovery from their trafficking experiences. The expectation to seek immediate employment can contribute to secondary victimisation, further complicating their healing journey. It is crucial to recognize that adequate support and recovery mechanisms should be prioritised over immediate employment demands for these individuals.

8. Do labour inspectorates and other authorities checking workplace conditions possess a comprehensive mandate, and adequate human, financial and technical resources, to conduct regular, proactive workplace inspections in all economic sectors, with a particular emphasis on high-risk sectors prone to exploitation? How do labour inspectors cooperate with other authorities and trade unions? Is there a separation between labour inspection and immigration control functions?

Regarding question 8, we provide relevant information from the study made by Alternative Sociale: „The point of view of the Labour Inspection is that, as it does not have investigative powers, it does not verify the possibility of trafficking in minors, any suspicion being notified to the Directorate for Combating Organized Crime – The Service for Combating Trafficking in Persons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs<sup>37</sup>. In 2020, 44 cases were communicated to the criminal investigation bodies regarding the non-compliance with the conditions of employment of minors, 31 cases in 2021 and 44 in 2022.”<sup>38</sup>

9. How are employment and recruitment agencies regulated and monitored? Are all stages of the recruitment process, including advertisements, selection, transport, and placement, subject to regulation? Are recruitment fees and related costs prohibited from being borne by workers or jobseekers?

10. How do you prevent and sanction abuses of legal constructions such as self-employment, letter-box companies, sub-contracting, and posting of workers, which may be used to commit THB?

11. How do your country's migration legislation and policies seek to prevent THB by enabling lawful migration and legal employment opportunities accompanied by decent work conditions?

The ProTECT Platform considers that current migration legislation and policies in the country do not adequately protect migrant workers from trafficking and exploitation. Specifically, migrant workers face significant challenges as they are often bound to their initial employers. This employment arrangement effectively restricts their ability to change jobs, even if they desire to do so. Such a lack of flexibility creates a power imbalance that can leave migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking, as they may feel compelled to tolerate poor working conditions or abusive practices to maintain their employment.

12. How do your country's law and policies to discourage demand that leads to THB address particular vulnerabilities and groups at risk of THB?

The ProTECT Platform considers that although the criminalization of the use of the services of exploited persons is considered by the Romanian authorities an effective approach, a particular challenge that is still present is the reduced capacity of the criminal investigation entities in obtaining the necessary evidence, aside from using testimonies of persons using the services of victims.

13. How do your country's legislation and practice ensure that there is an individual assessment of protection needs at the borders prior to any refusals of entry or expulsions?

To our knowledge there is no individual assessment for protection needs.

14. What measures are taken to prevent THB in sports? What sectors and categories/groups of people have been identified as being at risk?

ADPARE has assisted and is currently monitoring a single victim (a man from Cameroon) among the migrants who arrived in Romania with a work visa for a sports club (football club). From this

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<sup>37</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

experience we learned that it is very difficult to demonstrate the abuse of vulnerability in the country of origin, the man being very indebted to the recruiter from Cameroon. Although he was moved from one club to another and was never issued a work permit on Romanian territory, the traffic situation could not be proven, so the case was dismissed, and the man remained illegally on Romanian territory. He is currently in the asylum procedure, but with little chance of staying legally in Romania.

In relation to Romanian victims, trafficking and exploitation in sports were investigated, prosecuted and punished in several cases of trafficking of minors and child pornography. In most cases, traffickers are instructors and trainers. From ProTECT members' experience, the sports disciplines are the following: dance, football, martial arts and boxing.

15. Have you identified online practices that may increase the risk of becoming a victim of THB for different forms of exploitation? What mechanisms have been developed to prevent the misuse of information and communication technology for THB purposes? What is the practical effect of their implementation?

Several organisations, including Alternative Sociale, ADPARE, eLiberare and FREE, have noted alarming trends, especially concerning underage girls and their online activities. Specifically, there is a growing concern over the exploitation of children through the online distribution of explicit materials. Instances have been reported where young girls engage in sexual acts that are filmed and subsequently used for blackmail, often leading to toxic relationships. The unrestricted access to pornography and inadequate online protection in schools exacerbate this vulnerability.

Moreover, professionals working in the field express concern that online exploitation represents a significant challenge in identifying victims, particularly due to a lack of necessary IT tools for investigators. The prevailing environment, where children have unrestricted internet access and devices are not sufficiently secured, highlights the urgent need for stronger safeguards.

A study made by eLiberare Association in 2023 - *Study on young people's perception of online risks*<sup>39</sup> - aimed to explore and identify different types of attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of the youth in the online sphere and gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind them. The study was made on young people aged between 15 and 25, urban and rural dwellers, all regions of Romania, internet users. Some relevant conclusions from the study were:

- On average, respondents spend 4.4 hours online daily. In terms of age ranges, 15-17 year olds spend on average 4.3 hours, similar to 22-25 year olds, and 18-21 year olds are the most active online, with an average of 4.4 hours/day.
- Youtube is the most used app among young people (76%), followed immediately by Whatsapp (75%), Instagram (74%), Facebook (66%) and Tiktok (59%).
- Teenagers are more used to developing relationships online rather than in person (especially according to their parents).
- 41% of respondents have heard and know what the Loverboy method is all about, with no significant differences between genders or age groups, and a similar percentage (36%) have heard and know what is the intention behind people asking for nude pictures online to sell.
- 52% consider that many young people share nude personal photos with people they know.

16. What measures are taken to raise awareness of the risks of technology-facilitated THB, including among children, parents, teachers, child care professionals and social workers? What

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.eliberare.com/online-exploitation>

technology-based initiatives exist in your country to disseminate information to groups/communities at risk of THB?

Several organisations in ProTECT implement small scale awareness programs about online risks. Apart from the educational program implemented by eLiberare at national level (see answer to Question 2b), other measures implemented by other organisations are:

- not encouraging minors under 15 to have phones or social media accounts. Biological parents who maintain contact with the minors in the shelter only bring them phones when they turn 15. Minors over 15 monitor each other, informing one another about who is posting what and whether minors under 15 have accounts on social media (they tend to create accounts during computer classes). The girls somehow monitor each other. When adults become aware that there are accounts or inappropriate posts, the risks they face online are discussed in therapy sessions. The organisation periodically talks with the minors about the risks present in the online environment.
- other tailored educational programs aimed at adolescents: discussing rights and responsibilities online, online abuse, and other cyber risks, as well as safety and healthy online behaviours, human trafficking and the dangers of the internet and pornography.

In 2021, ADPARE cooperated with the research team of RAYUELA project which focused on cybercrime as a significant cross-border impact among the EU countries, addressed to cybercrime related to children, teenagers and young adults. RAYUELA proposed a series of solutions to help the EU in the prevention (including online game and fun), investigation and mitigation of cybercrime related to online grooming, cyberbullying and human trafficking, while incorporating the perspective of gender and cultural diversity<sup>40</sup>. ADPARE's team interviewed teens victims of child pornography and victims of trafficking in minors recruited online, but also convicted traffickers for the same crimes.

eLiberare also developed materials for educators, social workers and parents<sup>41</sup> who are being used in schools, in youth clubs and in community organisations. Their materials were designed together with the Ministry of Education.

17. How do you cooperate with ICT companies and Internet service providers, including content hosts and social media, in preventing THB?

18. How are policies and practices aimed at preventing THB informed by the experiences of victims and at-risk individuals?

Some of the ProTECT members, including eLiberare, ADPARE, Open Door are working with survivor leaders to inform their work, including the campaigns. That led to the proposals of establishing a National Advisory Council for People with Lived Experiences, which is now included in the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking and in the Action Plan for 2024-2025.

## **II. IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS AND PROTECTION OF THEIR RIGHTS (Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 16)**

19. Among the victims of THB identified, were any subjected to exploitation on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (LGBTI+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex), especially teenagers and young adults? If yes, did any of them report on police misconduct?

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.rayuela-h2020.eu/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.eliberare.com/resurse-pentru-parinti/>

From 2019 until now, ADPARE has coordinated in legal proceedings and assisted two transgender people, sexually exploited in the UK and Sweden, a gay person exploited in Denmark (sexually and through work) and a gay teen sexually exploited in Romania. From the discussions with these people, it emerged that there are many more cases of trafficking and exploitation among sexual minorities, but that the fear of marginalisation, stigmatisation and labelling stops them from asking the authorities for help and identifying themselves as victims.

20. What specific measures are taken to ensure that trafficked persons who are migrant workers, including in an irregular situation, are identified as victims of THB and have access to the rights provided for in the Convention? Is there cooperation with specialised NGOs, trade unions, and employers to enhance the identification and protection of potential victims within these at-risk groups?

In the period 2021-2023, ADPARE participated as a partner in the transnational project "Cross-Continent Collaborations to Protect Asian Victims in Europe", a project dedicated to understanding the obstacles in detecting and identifying Asian victims among migrants, identifying the challenges in protecting their rights through legal representation of cases of trafficking and exploitation. The report includes the findings in three European countries: Romania, Czech Republic and Poland and followed the recommendations of GRETA in those countries<sup>42</sup>.

From eLiberare's perspective while implementing the KOMPASS project, migrant workers presumed victims of trafficking are reluctant to file a formal complaint, which is why we need first to create the protection services and policies in order to keep safe those who are presumed victims. The main fear is that they are going to be deported.

**To detect cases of trafficking among migrants, there should be a better knowledge of the NIRM by all non-specialized police officers, immigration officers, public and private outreach workers and also there should be a coordination of proactive identification activities at the national level.**

21. What measures are in place to encourage victims of THB to report their situation to the authorities and/or civil society organisations?

There are a few relevant aspects we can mention regarding this question, aspects drawn from the study made by Alternative Sociale:

- „The representatives of the ANITP RC mention that the information with regards to new cases of child victims of trafficking comes in particular from BCCO/DIICOT and DGASPC; in some cases they are notified about trafficking cases by teachers and specialists from school safety structures, NGOs, the central structure of ANITP or other regional centres of the latter, IOM, consulates.”<sup>43</sup>
- The study also shows that a dedicated Tilverde anti-trafficking hotline is run by ANITP, however specialists state that this number is rarely used to report cases of child victims. Complaints are also sometimes received by phone through the hotline 119<sup>44</sup>.

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<https://adpare.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/3468-Report-Protecting-Asian-Trafficking-Victims-in-Europe-In-Focus-The-Czech-Republic-Poland-and-Romania-La-Strada-International-Oct-2022.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>44</sup> National hotline for reporting cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and any other form of violence against the child.

- „The DGASPC representatives receive the complaints regarding the situation of the child victims of human trafficking through ANITP, the criminal investigation bodies (DIICOT, BCCO, police), ANPDCA, non-governmental organisations or through complaints received directly from the community. The employees of the residential services or as a result of the participation of the DGASPC staff in the hearings of the victims were also specified as sources of identification.”<sup>45</sup>
- „Another institution that can facilitate the identification of cases of child victims of trafficking is the Labor Inspection.”<sup>46</sup>
- „Within the diplomatic missions of Romania abroad, in the field of police cooperation with the state of residence, at the level of the office of the attaché of internal affairs of the embassy, cases of citizens, victims of human trafficking are reported and managed who in certain states do not reach the attention of the consular sections. For example, taking into account the highly sensitive issue on the subject under discussion, in order to protect the personal data of victims of trafficking in human beings, the Italian authorities do not communicate this type of information to third institutions, transmitting it exclusively through channels of police cooperation.”<sup>47</sup>

ProTECT members indicate several channels through which victims of human trafficking are identified, including referrals from institutions such as ANITP, DGASPC, from other non-governmental organisations (People to People, eLiberare etc.) or international organisations (IOM), self-referrals (parents who address directly to the organisation) but also referrals from criminal investigation entities (DIICOT, BCCO).

Two organisations member of the ProTECT Platform mentioned a few important aspects regarding reporting:

- Victims who reported cases of trafficking to the police without organisational support often had their privacy compromised, as families were immediately informed, putting them at risk.
- Some trafficking cases were misclassified as domestic violence, leading to failures in fulfilling reporting obligations.
- When victims did not report crimes themselves, no action was taken, and those approaching the police without support often saw their situations worsen.
- Filing complaints independently is risky due to a lack of police protection. The organisation notes it is difficult to encourage victims to report, as traffickers often target their families, leaving them unprotected. In one case, a trafficker ran over a victim’s younger brother, forcing her to withdraw her complaint, highlighting the severity of threats faced by victims.

22. What specific measures are taken in your country to detect/identify and refer to assistance possible victims of THB at the borders? What measures are taken in your country to identify victims of THB during the examination of asylum applications and prior to the return of persons whose applications are rejected?

During the Ukraine Crisis Response, the Government of Romania in partnership with the ProTECT Platform developed a set of indicators for human trafficking which were included in the Border INTRANET platform. The platform was accessed by all border officers.

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<sup>45</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem.*



Regarding minors, „the identification of minors victims of trafficking in foreign citizens or stateless persons in Romania is rare (a single case in the last three years, given that in the last year more than 3.9 million refugees from Ukraine, a large part children, have transited the national territory), and migrant persons are considered to be among the categories most vulnerable to trafficking.”<sup>48</sup>

An example of good practice is the collaboration between ADPARE and IOM in cases of referrals for the repatriation of migrants: when signs or indicators of trafficking are highlighted from the interviews carried out by IOM pre-repatriation specialists, those migrants are referred to ADPARE to benefit from legal assistance and emotional support.

### 23. What measures are taken in your country to identify victims of THB in immigration detention centres and prisons?

According to UNHCR Romania<sup>49</sup>, there is a lack of an established identification mechanism of vulnerable persons in public custody centres unlike the mechanisms used for reception centres, including specially arranged closed areas.

According to the Otopeni Airport representatives there is no identification mechanism for vulnerable persons.<sup>50</sup>

### 24. What services are available in your country to provide specific assistance to particularly vulnerable victims, such as:

- a. persons with disabilities;
- b. LGBTI+ persons;
- c. victims with children;
- d. victims with severe mental and physical trauma;
- e. homeless persons;
- f. other.

The 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on Romania<sup>51</sup> by the US Department of State provides details on several cases that include these categories of vulnerable victims.

The ProTECT Platform organisations highlight several challenges in Romania related to the provision of specific assistance for particularly vulnerable victims of trafficking. Below are two key challenges mentioned by the various organisations:

- **Persons with disabilities:** Currently, there are no specially tailored services for victims of human trafficking with disabilities, especially when it comes to victims with mental disabilities.
- **Victims with children:** There are very few specialised services accessible to trafficking victims who are also caregivers. These individuals face high vulnerability to re-trafficking due to financial instability. Many are forced into prostitution to support their children, who also grow up in vulnerable environments with limited access to education.
- **Shelters for trafficked men:** Unfortunately, the current landscape reveals that many specialised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often step in to address gaps in public

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/romania/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/conditions-detention-facilities/>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267\\_ROMANIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267_ROMANIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf)

services, which are inadequately provided or entirely absent. For instance, shelters specifically for trafficked men are notably lacking; without the presence of a disability or other significant social issues, such individuals frequently find themselves without access to essential shelter and support.

**A good practice would involve ensuring that all specialised services for victims can provide individualised support to every category of trafficking victims, free from discrimination. Moreover, it is essential for services addressing various vulnerabilities—such as disabilities, substance addiction, HIV/AIDS, maternity issues, and homelessness—to work collaboratively and complement each other. Effective cooperation between public and private sectors is critical to bridging service gaps and guaranteeing that all trafficking victims receive the comprehensive assistance necessary for their recovery and reintegration.**

25. How do you support the (re)integration of victims of THB? What processes are in place in your country to provide assistance to victims of THB exploited abroad after their return?

**Holistic Support:** several organisations within ProTECT offer holistic support to victims of human trafficking including material support, medical assistance, psychological counselling and psychotherapy (individual and group), legal assistance, such as coordination of victims criminal proceedings, including obtaining financial compensation, vocational qualification courses, family counselling, development of home management and daily life activities, assistance to victim outside the residential program and others. However, not many organisations offer sheltered accommodation, due to lack of funds.

A particular focus is on assisting victims to obtain identification documents, which can be difficult without stable housing.

One organisation reported that many of their beneficiaries have been diagnosed with psychiatric conditions (e.g., schizophrenia, intellectual disability), which complicates their reintegration and increases their vulnerability to trafficking or re-trafficking. A particular concern they raised is the misdiagnosis of these individuals, where symptoms of PTSD are often mistaken for other psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. For instance, there was a case of a beneficiary who received a different medical diagnosis at each consultation, with doctors failing to consider the prior assessments. This inconsistency in diagnosis highlights the need for more trauma-informed care and accurate psychiatric evaluations to better address their vulnerabilities and reduce their risk of exploitation.

**Our recommendations:** As key elements that could further support victims' reintegration, we recommend:

- **Provision of Social Housing:** One of the pressing needs is to ensure that victims have access to social housing that is not situated in high-risk areas or vulnerable neighbourhoods (e.g., Ferentari in Bucharest). Such locations can exacerbate vulnerability to re-exploitation. It is critical to provide safe, dignified living environments that support recovery and reintegration.
- **Access to Free Social Kindergartens and Nurseries:** Social kindergartens and nurseries should be made available, free of charge, to support victims with children. These services previously existed in Bucharest but have since closed. Their reinstatement would alleviate a significant barrier for victims who are single mothers and aid in their reintegration into society.



- **Lower Admission Thresholds for Certain Vocational Schools:** Many vulnerable young victims may struggle to pursue higher education, pass the baccalaureate exam, or even obtain a Middle School Graduation Diploma. Currently, some vocational schools require a middle school diploma for admission, making it challenging for these individuals to secure even entry-level jobs. By re-establishing vocational schools, we can equip them with essential skills and create pathways to employment opportunities, thereby improving their chances for successful reintegration into society.
- **Financial Incentives for Reintegration Services:** Organisations that offer high-quality reintegration services should receive financial support from the state, such as tax exemptions for a few years or exemptions from utility payments. This would encourage NGOs and other service providers to continue offering critical reintegration support to victims of trafficking.

These measures would significantly strengthen the existing framework for the reintegration of THB victims and help ensure that they are supported in rebuilding their lives.

Regarding the repatriation of adult victims of human trafficking to Romania from destination countries, it is standardised and not adequately funded. Although the IOM has a clear assisted voluntary repatriation procedure, there are no repatriation funds, and in most cases, the victims manage to return on their own or are sent with unsafe means of transport, respectively "given to the care" of bus drivers. Good practice in cases of assistance upon repatriation and after, is that of NGOs that are part of international networks, or have direct partners in the countries of destination, so that assistance to the victim begins before returning to the country, and the services usually offered to the victim are: pre-repatriation counselling, mediation of the relationship with the family when there is a case, assessment of risks during and after repatriation, accompanying the victim during the trip according to needs (medical problems, limited intellect, etc.). Once they arrive in Romania, the victims are assisted upon arrival, their basic needs are provided, and they are accompanied to their final destination.

**Our recommendation:** We advocate for the establishment of a national fund dedicated to the repatriation of Romanian citizen victims wishing to return home, as well as for foreign citizen victims seeking to return to their countries of origin. This fund should also facilitate the safe relocation of individuals in high-risk situations to alternative countries, ensuring their protection and well-being during the repatriation process.

26. If there is a provision in your country's law that provides for the possibility of issuing a residence permit owing to the victim's personal situation, how is this interpreted in practice? Please provide examples.

No practice for the victims of human trafficking.

27. What measures are in place to ensure that the identity, or details allowing the identification, of a child victim of trafficking are not made publicly known?

Currently, there is no common practice to safeguard the identity of child victims of trafficking. To address this gap, we recommend that all stakeholders who possess information about trafficked children—including professionals, caregivers, and media personnel—adhere to unified safeguarding policies. This would include implementing strict confidentiality protocols and training for journalists and other individuals involved in reporting or documenting cases of trafficking. By establishing these

common practices, we can ensure that the identities of child victims remain protected and that their rights are upheld throughout the process.

28. What measures are in place aimed at encouraging the media to protect the private life and identity of victims?

There is no unified deontological code enforced on the Romanian written press. The profession is self-regulating and de-professionalisation of large parts of Romanian journalism has been a growing issue over the past two decades. Stricter enforcement exists for the audio-visual media, through The National Audiovisual Council, which is the official regulatory agency for the audio-visual market in Romania. However, many of the members are political appointees and their activity is piecemeal.

From ADPARE's experience, there were several cases in which they had to take additional measures and protect the victims from journalists, including moving the victims from one locality to another or from Romania to another country. It happens in highly publicised cases.

**Our recommendation:** training of journalists through media trusts in: trauma, detection, identification and referral of potential victims, victim protection measures. Strict measures to keep the victims' identity confidential within the justice system.

29. Have there been cases of diplomatic households (of your country's diplomats abroad and of foreign diplomats in your country) employing domestic staff in conditions which could be forced labour or human trafficking? If yes, how was the issue of diplomatic immunity addressed? How were the victims identified, assisted and protected?

30. What specific steps are taken in your country to identify victims of THB amongst persons recruited and exploited by terrorist/armed groups?

31. Are there requirements in your country's legal framework for the detection and removal of THB-related Internet content, and what are the sanctions for non-compliance? Is there a code of conduct for providers? If a person is detected as a presumed victim of THB in the process, how is this person referred to assistance?

There were some cases featured in the press, where certain ads in a job platform turned out to be human trafficking cases. There is no code of conduct, the victims are referred usually to the police.

### **III. INVESTIGATION, PROSECUTION, SANCTIONS AND MEASURES (Articles 4, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28 and 30)**

32. Is the abuse of a position of vulnerability part of the human trafficking offence in your country's law? How are the concepts of "vulnerability" and "abuse of a position of vulnerability" defined in law? Have they been subject to judicial interpretation? If yes, please provide relevant case-law.

Yes. More details were provided by the Government.

33. Is the special vulnerability of the victim considered as an aggravating factor for the offender's sentence?

34. According to national case-law, what forms of vulnerability are mostly abused by offenders in human trafficking cases? Please provide specific examples that show how the concept of "abuse of a position of vulnerability" is used in practice. What are the challenges in its application? Is it sufficient

to prove the existence of a position of vulnerability of the victim, or must it also be proven that the defendant knew or should have known of the victim's vulnerability, and intentionally manipulated the victim on this basis?

In addition to what has already been mentioned under the previous questions, Missio Link International Foundation mentioned two cases they dealt with:

- **Case 1.** minor victim, divorced parents, it was not clear in whose care the minor was, but she was actually living with her grandparents, she started practising prostitution.
- **Case 2.** single-parent family, the economic situation of the family was good, but in recent years circumstances were no longer so good, so in order to maintain her lifestyle, the mother encouraged the minor daughter to practise prostitution.
- There were several loverboy cases, as well.

Several ProTECT members state that the abuse of a position of vulnerability appears in all the public statements of the police and DIICOT in connection with cases of human trafficking, child pornography and child pornography, as defined by the Romanian legislation. Moreover, ADPARE states that in the last 4 years, the prosecutors or the victim lawyers, request expertise and clinical psychological evaluations for the victims, with the first objective: "establishing pre-trafficking vulnerabilities", the second being "establishing the consequences of trafficking". The evaluated vulnerabilities are emotional as well as all the others previously mentioned.

The evaluation of the position of vulnerability is also important for establishing the degree of social danger and deciding on preventive measures for traffickers, but also for the quantum of punishments and compensations that the victims receive.

- **Example of the Police press release:** "On October 1st, 2024, the policemen of the Bucharest Organized Crime Brigade - Human Trafficking Service, together with D.I.I.C.O.T. - Central Structure prosecutors, carried out an action to combat human trafficking, within a criminal case, a home search being carried out and an arrest warrant executed, in the city of Bucharest, regarding the commission of the crime of human trafficking. Based on the administered evidence, it was held that, in November 2022, the man in question, taking advantage of the obvious vulnerability of the injured person, 21 years old (caused by the lack of a home and material means of subsistence) and by misleading, in the sense of the promise of a home in exchange for rent, would have recruited her for the purpose of sexual exploitation and would have forced her, through repeated acts of physical and mental violence, to practise prostitution"
- **Example of DIICOT's press release:** "On 25.09.2024, the prosecutors of the Directorate for the Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism - Central Structure ordered the detention of 2 defendants (a woman and a man) aged 26 and 38, investigated for the commission of trafficking in minors, in continued form and the exploitation of begging. From the criminal investigation documents carried out, it emerged that, in the period 2022-2024, the 38-year-old defendant, taking advantage of the obvious state of vulnerability of his daughter and son (currently aged 13 and 11 respectively), forced them, through acts of physical and mental violence, to the practice of begging for his material benefit. The minors were transported to various areas in the city of Bucharest, the defendant accompanying them and permanently exercising control over them both personally and through the other defendant."

35. Is the concept of “abuse of a position of vulnerability” addressed in criminal justice training? Is there any specific guidance on applying this concept? Please provide copies of guidance and/or training materials that shed light on how this concept should be applied in practice.

Alternative Sociale includes the topic in its training sessions on GBV/THB/VAC (for judiciary/law enforcement, as well as for social services). A discussion is always carried out on the implementation of art. 210 of the Penal Code.

In training sessions with police officers and prosecutors, ADPARE has a module for developmental trauma as a vulnerability factor for the recruitment and exploitation of victims (description and case studies).

36. What procedures and measures exist in your country to take into account the specific needs of vulnerable victims at the different stages of criminal proceedings?

Regarding the government’s answer, and specifically point a) surveillance and security of the witness's home or provision of temporary accommodation; and b) accompanying and ensuring the protection of the witness or his family members during travel, there are two organisations that have stated that in the last four years none of the beneficiaries they had (victims of human trafficking) benefitted from these rights. The protection of the victim was covered by the organisations, but the protection of their families was left completely uncovered. Due to this reason, victims of trafficking are reluctant to cooperate with authorities in criminal proceedings, since they fear for their families, having received threats from their previous traffickers. The only cases when victims of trafficking decide to cooperate with authorities is when they are supported every single step by the NGOs, emotionally, financially, with legal counselling, accompanying and safe transportation.

There have been cases where requests for special protection were denied by the judicial authorities on the grounds that three years had passed since the trafficking situation. Additionally, there were instances where the request to hear the witness without the witness being present, through audio-video transmission, was refused on the basis that the victim already knew the trafficker.

Currently, a witness who is under threat must prove their vulnerability and the degree of threat, including that their family is at risk. This requirement places a heavy burden on the victim or their legal representatives to provide sufficient evidence.

To better meet the needs of vulnerable victims, we recommend proactive risk assessments conducted by a multidisciplinary team (in line with the National Referral Mechanism), which is not yet a standard procedure. At present, victims must submit their own evidence, often without comprehensive institutional support. Additionally, risk assessments should be revisited once temporary accommodation expires, ensuring ongoing protection for vulnerable victims throughout the legal process.

Another organisation noted that, while certain protection measures exist, they are often insufficient in practice. For instance, regarding the provisions for the surveillance and security of a witness's home or temporary accommodation, and for accompanying and protecting the witness or their family during travel, these measures are not consistently implemented. Victims may be housed in domestic violence shelters, but these do not always provide adequate security. Additionally, the state appoints public defenders, but they are not typically specialised in human trafficking cases, which limits the legal support available to victims. The organisation also reported a case where, after requesting police assistance, they were informed that no police escort could be provided due to a lack of available

resources. Furthermore, social workers involved in these cases do not receive protection, leaving another gap in the system.

Regarding the "non-publicity of the hearing during the hearing of the witness", several organisations said that the information is still made public on the portal and that anonymity is not respected. Concretely, when the victims are civil parties and ask for compensation in the criminal process, their names are public both on the portal of the courts and on the doors of the courts.

**We recommend that the position of "victim coordinator" in judicial proceedings be recognized as a profession itself and a budget to be allocated for the coordinators' salaries.**

37. If you have criminalised the use of services of a victim of THB, how is this provision applied in practice? Please provide any relevant case-law.

38. What technology-based tools and initiatives exist in your country to support investigations and enhance prosecution of THB cases? What training is provided to law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges on THB facilitated by information and communication technology?

Organisations note the lack of IT tools to prevent human trafficking in the online environment and to identify victims, in the context of the increasing phenomenon of child pornography<sup>52</sup>.

39. In what ways, if any, does your country utilise provisions from the Council of Europe Cybercrime Convention (Budapest Convention) to fight THB? If not, why is that the case?

## Part II – Country-specific follow-up questions

40. Please provide information on measures taken in your country in respect to the following recommendations made in GRETA's previous reports:

- guarantee effective access to compensation for victims of THB, including by facilitating access to state compensation and using the confiscated assets of perpetrators of human trafficking to fund compensation;

In response to the recommendation regarding guaranteeing effective access to compensation for victims of human trafficking, including through state compensation and the use of confiscated assets from traffickers, significant challenges remain in the current system.

One major issue is that, although victims often receive court rulings in their favour for compensation, there are significant delays in payment or, in the majority of cases, the actual payment is not made at all. We recommend that once a decision for compensation for moral damages is made, victims, as civil parties in the case, should ideally receive the funds within 48 hours of the ruling. The state should assume responsibility for ensuring that victims receive compensation promptly by making the payment directly to the victim, and then taking steps to recover the funds from the trafficker at a later stage. However, this is not how the process currently functions, as victims are often left waiting

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<sup>52</sup> Gulei et al., 2023.

for compensation while the burden of recovering the funds remains on them, leading to significant delays and difficulties in obtaining justice.

In practice, judicial officers tasked with recovering compensation often face significant difficulties. For instance, a judicial officer engaged by a civil society organisation to recover compensation for a trafficking victim has, after more than a year, still not managed to secure any funds.

Furthermore, although 98% of trafficking victims supported by a particular NGO in the ProTECT Platform have been granted compensation for moral damages over the past four years, none of these victims have received any funds, even with the organisation's support in filing execution orders. This is partly due to complications with the management of confiscated assets. The lawyer of this specific organisation was informed by state authorities that the funds seized are deposited into a general state account of ANAF (National Agency for Fiscal Administration), and in order to receive the amount, they need to specify to which specific "department" of the state budget the funds were transferred. This makes it difficult to trace and release them for victim compensation.

Additionally, court rulings do not always specify that confiscated funds are intended for victim compensation, which leads the state to prioritise recovering judicial costs instead of compensating the victim. This misallocation of funds undermines the victim's right to compensation.

Regarding state compensation, victims face further hurdles as they are required to provide proof of having owned personal items during their trafficking situation (e.g., a phone or tablet). This requirement is often impractical, given the circumstances of trafficking, further limiting victims' access to compensation.

Another organisation reported that in the past four years, all victims have sought compensation, both from the state and through civil claims against the traffickers. While courts have ruled in favour of victims' claims for compensation from traffickers for both material and moral damages, the victims face significant obstacles in actually receiving the funds.

**In summary, we conclude that while there is a legal framework in place for victim compensation, the practical implementation remains insufficient. We recommend a shift in responsibility, where the state directly compensates victims and recovers the funds from traffickers afterward, and improved clarity in court rulings to ensure confiscated assets are used specifically for victim compensation.**

**At present, such proposals exist in the form of a legislative proposal in Parliament and are pending a final vote.**

- make full use of the measures available in law to protect victims and witnesses of THB, including children, and to prevent their intimidation during the investigation, as well as during and after the court proceedings;
- increase efforts to provide assistance to victims of trafficking, including by providing a sufficient number of shelter places and ensuring adequate funding and staff;

Shelters for victims in Romania are insufficient and the few that do exist are not funded by the state. For example, the MLI foundation operates two residential centres for minors in care, with each centre accommodating a maximum of 10 to 12 girls. Funding comes from the placement allowances for the minors, as well as additional private donations from both Romania and abroad. The minors receive



weekly therapy and have access to educational counselling and support for developing independent living skills, among other services.

FREE Association provides emergency accommodation in a hotel setting for trafficking victims for up to 5 days, followed by assistance in securing housing for up to one year. The association fully covers maintenance costs, as well as access to specialised services, including medical care, psychological support, vocational training courses, and life skills development. The NGO mentions that some trafficking victims are often sheltered in a residential program with domestic violence victims, which is not the most effective or desirable approach. Trafficking victims need specialised services and a program tailored to their needs.

Open Door Foundation also has a protected shelter for victims of human trafficking, accommodating both victims and their children, and other NGOs cover emergency accommodation for victims, but one common denominator is that all NGOs struggle to find funds to sustain their activities. Most of the funding comes from international organisations and is project-specific, leaving key budget areas, such as staff salaries, uncovered. As a result, many organisations are understaffed, forcing their team members to take on multiple roles and responsibilities.

**We recommend tax exemptions from the state on those organisations that have shelters and/or especially state funding for services to help them continue their activity in a sustainable and durable way.**

□ **guaranteeing access to health care for all victims of THB.**

In response to GRETA's recommendation on guaranteeing access to healthcare for victims of trafficking in human beings (THB), one organisation reports inconsistencies in the process of registering THB victims in the national healthcare system, which varies significantly by region. In some cases, County Healthcare Houses are not fully informed on the registration process for victims.

For victims who are insured, access to medical services remains limited, as they usually only receive registration and consultation with a family doctor. The organisation reports that more often than not, they have to seek paid medical services for victims, as their medical issues are numerous and require specialised care. Expenses for psychological services (assessment and therapy) are not covered or reimbursed by insurance.

41. Please provide information on developments in your country since GRETA's third evaluation report concerning:

□ **emerging trends of trafficking in human beings;**

**A few aspect mentioned by the study made by Alternative Sociale mention that:**

- „The percentage of children forced into various forms of sexual exploitation (the main form of exploitation of this category of victims) is decreasing. So is the age of the victims. These trends do not necessarily indicate a decrease in the interest of traffickers in certain forms of exploitation, or age categories, but rather changes in their approaches that are more difficult to detect.”<sup>53</sup>
- „The number of child victims seeking anonymization of the data recorded in the SIMEV is increasing (from 12% and 7% in 2020 and 2021, to over 20% in 2022). In the opinion of

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

specialists this fact can affect the accuracy of statistics related to the number of child victims (in the case of re-trafficking the same child can be recorded several times). From an assistance perspective, this trend has no effect.”<sup>54</sup>

One organisation in ProTECT Platform mentioned that they have noticed a new recruitment trend: Bolt/taxi drivers and rideshare drivers targeted foreign clients, transporting them to locations for paid sexual services.

Forced marriages are not a new occurrence, but this form of exploitation is not addressed in Romanian legislation. However, following the new EU directive Against human trafficking, Romania will have to legally recognize this form of exploitation in the following years.

□ the legislation and regulations relevant to action against THB;

One organisation has reported that the Government's response is not complete; the answer should not only refer to the offence provided for in Article 272 of the Penal Code on influencing statements - also highlighted should be the procedural provisions governing the taking of protective measures in the cases provided for by law.

□ the institutional and policy framework for action against THB (co-ordinating bodies, specialised entities, national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism, involvement of civil society, public-private partnerships);

Regarding the ProTECT collaborative platform (Platforma ProTECT, the undersigned), it was established first in 2020 as an informal platform bringing together 20 of the most active specialised anti-trafficking NGOs in Romania. In 2023, the Platform acquired legal status as a federation. Protect's vision is to eradicate human trafficking and modern slavery both in Romania and abroad. Up until now, platform members have successfully assisted over 6300 victims, informed over 1 million people and provided training for over 56000 specialised workers.

□ the current national strategy and/or action plan for combating trafficking in human beings (objectives, main activities, budget, bodies responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results);

□ recent case-law concerning THB for different forms of exploitation.

On June 24, 2023, there was an action coordinated by DIICOT, the central structure, in a case in which a criminal group led by deaf-mutes exploited several people with hearing and speech impairments, through work, forced begging and criminal activities (defrauding the system of social benefits in Italy)

"In the case, it was noted that, in 2017, several suspects (persons with hearing and speech disabilities) constituted an organised criminal group, with the main purpose of committing the crime of human trafficking, by exploiting the work of persons with disabilities auditory and speech. The suspects rounded up the injured persons (deaf-mute) from the perimeter of the North Station and forced them to sell various items in the trains, later appropriating all the sums thus obtained. in the situation where the injured persons refused, were threatened, taken off the trains and made unable to carry out activities according to their own will. Also, the organised criminal group sheltered the

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem.*



victims in a studio apartment of several square metres, located near the North Railway Station, and through moral and/or physical coercion they determined them to carry out daily trade activities, on various railway routes, the sums thus obtained being almost entirely appropriated by the members of the group. Later, to exploit them through forced labour, the leaders of the organised criminal group determined some of the injured persons to remit the sum of 5000 euros, in exchange for the promise that they would support them in obtaining false documents, based on which to benefit from social assistance in Italy. In fact, the sums of money thus obtained from the Italian state were entirely appropriated by the organised criminal group."

### **Part III - Statistics on THB**

42. Please provide the following statistics, per year starting with 2019, where available disaggregated as indicated below:

- ☐ Number of presumed victims and identified victims of THB in the sense of having been recognised by a state institution or mandated NGO as bearers of rights to services provided for by the Convention (with breakdown by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, internal or transnational trafficking, and body which identified them).
- ☐ Number of victims of THB identified as part of the asylum procedure (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).
- ☐ Number of victims of THB who received assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, internal or transnational trafficking).
- ☐ Number of child victims of THB who were appointed legal guardians.
- ☐ Number of victims of THB granted a recovery and reflection period (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).
- ☐ Number of victims of THB granted a residence permit, with an indication of the type of the permit (for the purpose of co-operation in the investigation/proceedings, on personal grounds, other) and its duration (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).
- ☐ Number of persons given refugee status or subsidiary/complementary protection on the grounds of being victims of THB (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).
- ☐ Number of victims of THB who claimed compensation, who were granted compensation and who effectively received compensation (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation, with an indication of whether the compensation was provided by the perpetrator or the State, and the amount awarded).
- ☐ Number of victims of THB who received another form of financial support from the State, with the indication of the amount received.
- ☐ Number of victims of THB who received free legal aid.

- Number of victims of THB who were returned or repatriated to/from your country (disaggregated by sex, age, country of destination, form of exploitation).
- Number of investigations into THB cases (disaggregated by type of exploitation, with an indication of the number of victims concerned).
- Number of prosecutions in THB cases (disaggregated by type of exploitation, with an indication of the number of victims and defendants concerned).
- Number of convicted perpetrators of THB (disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, form of exploitation).
- Number of convictions for THB, with an indication of the form of exploitation, whether the victim was adult or child, the type and duration of the penalties, and whether they were effectively enforced or suspended.
- Number of judgments in THB cases resulting in the confiscation of assets.
- Number of convictions of legal entities for THB.