



The Strength to Carry On

Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking and Other Abuses among
People Travelling along Migration Routes to Europe

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Background

Around one and a half million people have travelled along the ‘Eastern Mediterranean route,’ the ‘Balkan route’ and the ‘Central Mediterranean route’ since 2015, in order to enter an EU country and apply for asylum or remain without regular immigration status. Migration routes lead through and from Turkey, where a number of routes converge from countries of origin in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq), West and South Asia (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia). From Turkey, people either travel by boat from the Western coast to nearby Greek islands in the North Aegean Sea, such as Lesbos, Chios and Samos, or cross the Evros River into Greece or Bulgaria.

The Balkan route then continues by sea or overland to Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, either directly or via Athens, and from there to the Greek border with North Macedonia at Idomeni/ Gevgelija, and through North Macedonia to the Serbian border at Tabanovce/Preševo. Those who crossed from Turkey to Bulgaria travel onwards from there to Serbia. From Serbia, the route crosses into Hungary at Subotica/Szeged, or leads through Croatia and Slovenia. The route then takes people from Hungary or Slovenia to Austria, then Germany (initially Bavaria), Sweden and other countries in Western Europe.

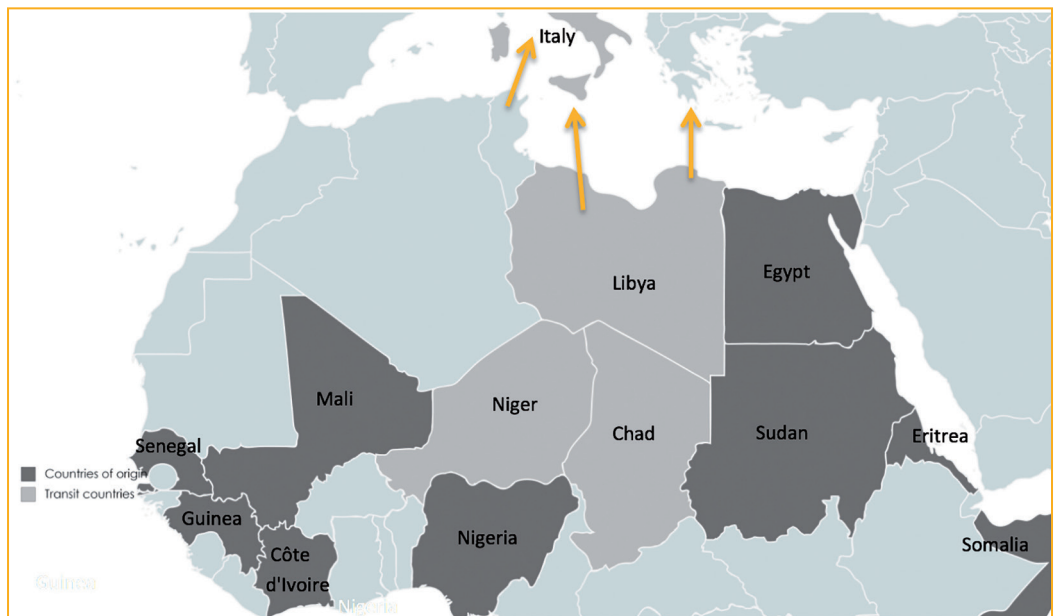
Map 1: Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes



Map produced by ICMPD

For the approximately half a million people who have arrived in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route since 2015, various migration routes through: West Africa from countries of origin such as Nigeria, Senegal, The Gambia, Mali and Ghana; Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, DRC); Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia); and more recently from North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) and South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan), converge on Libya as the main transit country. People travel by boat from Libya to arrive at Italian ports on the islands of Lampedusa and Sicily (Pozzallo, Trapani, Messina) and Taranto on the Southern coast of mainland Italy. They either apply for asylum in Italy or travel to the Northern borders to cross into France at Ventimiglia/Menton, Switzerland, or through Austria to Germany.

Map 2: Central Mediterranean Routes



Map produced by ICMPD

This study analyses the incidence of human trafficking among people travelling along these routes; factors of resilience to human trafficking and other abuses; and factors of vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses. Throughout the research findings, the significance of the context of these migration routes is evident. The geography of the routes, as well as the policies and practices applied during different periods in different places, all determine the experiences of the people using these routes. Experiences are also impacted by the length of the journey in terms of time, and the different obstacles encountered along the way, particularly obstacles that people had not prepared for in planning their journeys. A further determinant is the groups that people travel with for the different sections of the routes.

The research was designed as a multi-country research project, divided according to the countries under study, with a team of seven country researchers assigned to each country. **However, in the course of conducting and analysing the field research, it became clear that**

this national perspective fits uneasily with the lived experiences and perspectives of people on the move. They usually perceive their experiences in terms of a route and a journey, and are less focused on which particular country they happen to be in, and more on the final intended destination.

This study therefore also conceives of people's experiences, and the factors of resilience and vulnerability that affect them, in terms of a journey from a country of origin or previous residence, through numerous transit countries, to the intended final destination country, or, for an increasing proportion of people since 2016, to a *de facto* destination country from which they have been unable to travel onwards.

Above all, because during most of the period 2015-2018, in most locations, these people were not allowed to travel regularly, **interactions with providers of migrant smuggling services play a key role in determining people's resilience or vulnerability.** Many of the potential trafficking cases that were identified in the course of the research were nested to smuggling situations, either because people needed to pay for smuggling, or because people providing migrant smuggling services directly exploited their clients. Risks of exploitation due to the need to pay for smuggling and due to interactions with migrant smugglers were often exacerbated by difficulties in onward travel, lack of regular status and lack of access to the regular labour market. Simply put, when regular travel by plane, train or road is not permitted, the circumstances of travel are the determining factor of people's experiences.

2. About the Study

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has been conducting empirical research on the phenomenon of **human trafficking in dynamic mixed migration contexts and humanitarian crises** since 2014, in order to increase, and enhance the accuracy of, the knowledge base on how trafficking affects people who migrate or seek refuge. The research focus was initially on the effects of the Syrian conflict and displacement on human trafficking in Syria and its neighbouring countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. This research resulted in a comprehensive study entitled *Targeting Vulnerabilities*,¹ the first empirical, multi-country research study to assess the links between conflict, displacement and trafficking.

In mid-2018, ICMPD published *Trafficking Along Migration Routes*,² a research assessment of gaps, needs and challenges in the identification, referral, protection and rehabilitation of trafficked people who used migration routes to Europe, covering Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Sweden and Finland. The assessment also assessed risks of trafficking in the context of the Balkan route and in destination countries (Forin & Healy, 2018).

ICMPD then adapted the research methodology used for *Targeting Vulnerabilities* to carry out this **Study on Trafficking Resilience and Vulnerability *en route* to Europe (STRIVE)**, a research

1 ICMPD (2015). *Targeting Vulnerabilities: The Impact of the Syrian War and Refugee Situation on Trafficking in Persons- A Study of Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq*. Vienna: ICMPD.

2 Forin, R. & Healy, C. (2018). *Trafficking along Migration Routes to Europe: Bridging the Gap between Migration, Asylum and Anti-Trafficking*. Vienna: ICMPD.

project that began in October 2017. The countries under study are situated along the main Balkan migration route: Greece (which is also the first country of arrival along the Eastern Mediterranean route), Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. In addition, the research covered Germany, the main destination country for people travelling along these routes, and Italy, the first country of arrival along the Central Mediterranean route.

This study is a descriptive assessment of the phenomenon of trafficking, and not an evaluation or assessment of the anti-trafficking response of any country, programme or organisation. It thereby supports relevant stakeholders in their responses, including national authorities and civil society in the countries under study, and EU and other regional policymakers, by providing this knowledge base. The research does not seek to identify confirmed trafficking cases, as this can only be carried out by the responsible authorities in the country in question, but rather seeks to offer evidence-based information on indications of potential human trafficking to inform actions and follow-up measures by these authorities.

The overall goal of the research project is to establish a robust, empirical knowledge base on human trafficking along migration routes to Europe since the beginning of 2015, in order to inform actions to prevent and respond to trafficking in this context. The research addresses the critical knowledge gap on trafficking and factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and related abuses among children and adults taking the migratory journey to Europe, providing the necessary research findings and evidence-based recommendations for relevant actors **to significantly improve identification of people on the move who are trafficked, protect trafficked people, prosecute perpetrators and implement programmes to prevent trafficking by strengthening resilience to trafficking and related abuses and addressing vulnerabilities.** It also provides a model for conducting similar research in other regions.

Chapter one of this study describes the research methodology that was applied in order to design, carry out and analyse the desk and field research, provides a brief literature review on the research topic and sets out the terms used in the study. **The second chapter** contextualises the main research findings by analysing the profiles of people who were travelling, the routes they took and the migration and asylum policies that were applied to their situation. **Chapter three** analyses factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses, dividing them into: personal factors that apply from the pre-departure phase through to arrival in an intended or *de facto* destination country; factors that arise during the journey from countries of origin through transit countries to destination countries; and factors that are linked to the national responses in countries under study, in a transit and/or destination context. **The fourth chapter** examines indications of potential trafficking cases in this context, distinguishing between different forms of trafficking and other abuses. The study concludes with **conclusions and policy-orientated recommendations.**

3. Methodology

a) Research Scope

The **research questions** of this study are:

- What is the incidence of human trafficking among people making the irregular migration journey to Europe?
- In what ways are some people making the migration journey to Europe more resilient to trafficking and other abuses?
- What are the vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses among people making the migration journey to Europe?

The geographical scope of the research covers **Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany and Italy**. Indications of trafficking, and of factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses, that relate to other countries of transit or countries of origin of people who travel through or are in the countries under study also fall within the research scope, provided that they are relevant to the migratory journey.

The research covers the years **2015-2018 inclusive**, the years of dramatic increase and then subsequent decline in the numbers of people arriving along these migration routes. Data and information from 2011-2014 is included where necessary in order to contextualise the main chronological scope.

The subjects of the research are all of the children and adults from non-EU countries who take the journey by sea and overland through the Eastern Mediterranean, Western Balkans or Central Mediterranean to a European country in order to apply for asylum and reside there, or in order to reside with some other form of immigration status.

b) Field research

The research for this study acknowledged *a priori* that **there is very little quantitative data on human trafficking in the context of the migration routes**, and that the data that does exist is difficult to access and sometimes of questionable reliability. To address this limitation, available quantitative data and existing literature were corroborated with primary qualitative field evidence, facilitating the generation of more complete, accurate and up-to-date knowledge on trafficking than would have been possible through official statistics or set questionnaires. This does not exclude existing quantitative data, but rather treats it as a source that needs to be complemented with primary qualitative field evidence.

Two distinct groups of informants were interviewed for the field research, with tailored guidelines, guiding questions and methods of analysis for each group: **people who were travelling or had travelled along the routes** (refugees and other migrants) and **key informants** (staff of international organisations, national and local state authorities, international, national and local NGOs and humanitarian organisations, journalists and other media sources, researchers and other interlocutors identified as having relevant information).

A total of 87 in-depth, narrative interviews with 91 people on the move were carried out.³ In some cases in Serbia, at the request of the interviewees, two people participated in an interview together. All interviews were subject to informed consent from the interviewees (see: Bhattacharjee, 2012; Allmark *et al.*, 2009), and were conducted on condition of strict anonymity and confidentiality, with procedures in place for referral of any cases requiring an immediate response. Ethical principles for involving vulnerable people in research were taken into account (see, for example: Allmark *et al.*, 2009; Van Liempt & Bilger, 2009; Israel & Hay, 2006). All those interviewed were travelling, or had travelled, along the Eastern Mediterranean and/or Balkan route, or the Central Mediterranean route - or, in one case, the Western Mediterranean route through Spain.

Three different approaches were applied in the countries under study in order to identify interviewees – **working with ‘gatekeepers’**, such as NGOs or accommodation centre management to provide access; **the snowball method** of asking interviewees to recommend further interviewees; and by frequenting sites where the subjects of the research meet, for example, places of worship, cafés or public places - **site selection strategy** (see: Dahinden & Efinayi-Mäder, 2009). Interviews were therefore conducted, where feasible, at accommodation centres, at the premises of or with the assistance of relevant NGOs, and in other locations where confidentiality and the safety of both interviewee and interviewer could be ensured.

46 of those interviewed were residing at some type of official accommodation centre at the time of the interview - and 29 of the interviews took place at these centres -, while 45 were residing independently. The interviews were conducted either in English, French, the language of the country under study, or in other languages spoken by people on the move, using interpreters (in Serbia, 11 interviews were conducted using Arabic interpretation and 5 using Farsi interpretation, while in Hungary, 3 interviews were conducted using Farsi interpretation and 1 using Dari interpretation).

It was not intended that the informants be fully representative of a large and diverse group of people on the move, as the method of analysis was that of **case studies** of “*a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context*” (Yin, 1984: 23). Due to the diversity of origins and profiles of the people interviewed, the research team may not have always possessed the contextual knowledge to fully understand the meaning of information shared in the interviews. Nevertheless, the case studies of these people’s journeys provide relevant indications of the reality of what is taking place along the route. Much of the information that these interviewees provided has not come to light in the context of any other publications, political statements, policies or media coverage.

Table 1 below shows the composition of the people interviewed in terms of gender and country. Further information and the interview codes can be found at the end of this study.

³ The group of people on the move who were interviewed are not representative of the population as a whole. Due to the high numbers of people using the routes to travel to Europe since 2015 – a total of over 1.5 million people -, it was not possible to interview a representative sample of the population in terms of age, gender, nationality and other aspects. In addition, in some countries under study, country researchers were not granted access to accommodation centres to interview people residing there, or NGOs preferred not allow the researchers to interview people using their services. Furthermore, the people on the move who were interviewed are to a certain extent a self-selected group, who were both able and willing to communicate, often in English or in the language of the country under study, rather than their own language.

Table 1: Interviews with People on the Move

Gender	Greece	North Macedonia	Bulgaria	Serbia	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Total
Women	1	-	2	7	2	5	1	18
Men	-	2	8	37	4	14	7	72
Unspecified	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	1	3	10	44	6	19	8	91
Nationalities	Greece	North Macedonia	Bulgaria	Serbia	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Total
Afghan	1	1	1	15	3	1	-	22
Iraqi	-	-	2	11	-	-	-	13
Syrian	-	-	5	3	-	3	-	11
Iranian	-	1	1	4	2	-	-	8
Pakistani	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	6
Senegalese	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	4
Cameroonian	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
Nigerian	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Ghanaian	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Malian	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Ivoirian	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Somalian	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Eritrean	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Algerian	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Bangladeshi	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Indian	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Palestinian	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Sudanese	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Kenyan	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Unspecified	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	4
Total	1	3	10	44	6	19	8	91

In addition to interviews with people on the move, **a total of 215 key informant interviews - including individual interviews and focus group interviews with 2-4 people with similar profiles - were conducted with a total of 245 key informants** in the seven countries under study. The interviews with key informants were conducted according to semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, and adapted during each interview to the specific expertise and experience of the informants in question. These interviews were also conducted according to the principle of informed consent. Interviewees were given the option of remaining completely anonymous; of being cited only with their organisation; or of being fully cited with their name, position and organisation.

The sampling strategy for key informants was to be as **comprehensive** as possible, mapping all relevant stakeholders and sources in the countries under study, though in isolated cases it was not possible to interview certain stakeholders. Table 2 below shows the composition of the key informants interviewed in terms of gender. Further information and the interview codes can be found at the end of this study.

Table 2: Interviews with Key Informants

	Greece	North Macedonia	Bulgaria	Serbia	Hungary	Germany	Italy	Total
No. of Interviews	37	32	20	38	37	19	32	215
Women	40	21	15	27	22	14	18	157
Men	11	16	5	20	15	5	16	88
Total key informants	51	37	20	47	37	19	34	245

The 302 interviews with 336 people on the move and key informants were conducted **in the seven capital cities of the countries under study and in 32 other key cities, towns and villages** along the route and in destination countries,⁴ the vast majority in person, but also by phone, Skype or email. Throughout this study, **the interviews are cited as follows:** (XX-Z-NN), where XX is the code of the country under study, Z indicates a person on the move (M) or a key informant (K) and NN is the number of the interview. For example, the first interview conducted with a person on the move in Bulgaria is cited as BG-M-01, while the second interview with a key informant in Hungary is cited as HU-K-02.

All direct quotes from interviews conducted in other languages have been translated into English in this study. For interviews conducted in English, where necessary the quotes have been edited to improve comprehension, while remaining as faithful as possible to the original content of the interview.

c) Analysis

The study applied **an interdisciplinary methodology, combining primary research in the field with desk-based research, as well as analysing qualitative and quantitative sources.** The methodology applied was inductive and flexible, relying heavily on observational research, and guided by the context of the research field, rather than following a rigid formula or theoretical framework. The intention was to *“start [...] with a question”* (Perri 6 & Bellamy, 2012: 76). For the analysis of the research, **some aspects of grounded theory** considered relevant and useful were adapted and applied, specifically the methodical gathering of data; coding; forming concepts and categories; and the development and testing of hypotheses (see, e.g.: Bryant & Charmaz, 2010).

4 In Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Mytilene, Moria, Kavala, Drama and Fylakio; North Macedonia: Skopje, Tabanovce, Kumanovo and Gevgelija; Bulgaria: Sofia; Serbia: Belgrade, Subotica, Kikinda, Sombor, Vranje, Bujanovac, Preševo, Adaševci, Principovac and Pirot; Hungary: Budapest, Tompa and Szeged; Germany: Berlin, Bamberg, Munich, Nuremberg and Bad Kreuznach; Italy: Rome, Venice, Mestre, Naples, Palermo, Agrigento, Catania, Bagheria and Ventimiglia.

The data and information obtained was triangulated, in order to cross-reference, compare and contrast findings from different sources, and findings obtained through different methods (Gilchrist & Williams, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Bryman, 2004). Attempts were also made to search for “*disconfirming evidence*” (Gilchrist & Williams, 1992: 81), rather than trying to obtain only additional information that confirms what has been gained from existing sources.

As the **interviewees’ perspectives are necessarily subjective**,⁵ every effort was made to cross-check and triangulate information, rather than relying on one source, and to take bias and limited knowledge into account. Also in relation to literature, the relative reliability of different sources was taken into account, according to whether they were based on empirical research, official data, or other methods or sources. In order to compensate for the limitations of a national perspective, the accounts of people who have themselves travelled along this route were prioritised, as they have first-hand experience of the issues that are analysed in this study.

In order to ensure the validity and robustness of the methodology and the analysis, a **peer review** system was applied. The research was subject to two rounds of external and internal peer review by two senior academics, as well as an internal peer reviewer from the ICMPD Research Department. As the research is policy-orientated, the peer reviewers assessed both effectiveness and impact. The indicators of effectiveness refer to the appropriateness of the methodology to the research question; the implementation of the methodology; whether the research question was answered and substantiated by the sources; and the rationale of the conclusions and recommendations. The impact indicators refer to the usefulness of the findings and the feasibility of the recommendations. Input and suggestions from the two rounds of peer review have been incorporated into this study.

d) Limitations and caveats

No children were interviewed for this research. Due to the significant additional risks attached to interviewing children (anyone aged under 18 years) and the need for longer periods of trust-building in order to conduct valid interviews with children, only adults were interviewed. Nevertheless, the study covers the experiences of children travelling with their parents and unaccompanied, based on data and information relating to children on the move provided by adults on the move, key informants and the literature consulted. In addition, a total of 12 people on the move who were interviewed were aged 18-20 years at the time of the interview and had started their migratory journey while they were still children. These interviewees therefore provided a particular insight into children’s experiences in the context of the migration routes.

No traffickers were interviewed for this research. The research methodology did not foresee interviews with people engaged in trafficking, or indeed, people providing migrant smuggling services (although one taxi driver in Serbia who had been involved in transporting people on the move was interviewed). This was because the focus of the research was on people on the

⁵ The accounts provided by the people on the move who were interviewed relate only to their own specific experience, what they witnessed first-hand happening to other people on the move, and stories they heard from others. Similarly, the key informants who were interviewed each have specific limitations to their knowledge and certain biases, depending on whether they are from the government or NGO sector, from academia, or from other sectors. Most key informants also tend to see things from a national perspective of the country that they are in, rather than having full information about the whole routes. This also applies to literature consulted, which may have its own flaws and biases.

move and their experiences, and a study of traffickers and/or migrant smugglers would have necessitated a significantly different overall approach. Despite this, however, interviewees from law enforcement authorities in the countries under study, including prosecutors and police officers, as well as statistics and publications that focus on perpetrators of trafficking and/or smuggling, provided relevant information.

It was not always possible to identify which exact time period was referred to by people on the move, key informants and literature. While it is clear from the research that the situation along the routes changed significantly as different policies and practices were applied throughout the four years that the research covers (see chapter 2 below), interviewees and the literature consulted often did not specify which period they were referring to. This represents a caveat in terms of tracing the exact causality between the policies and practices of the authorities and the experiences of people travelling the routes.

4. Research Gaps Identified in Existing Literature

Despite the ‘migration crisis’ in Europe being the focus of attention in the media, among politicians and in public policy, and some research on the situation in general, little research has been conducted specifically on vulnerabilities and resilience to exploitation in this context, at national, multi-country or regional level. Research studies, academic articles, reports and media articles on the general situation of people on the move along the migration routes are referred to throughout the study, where they provide relevant information related to resilience and vulnerability factors and indications of trafficking cases.

Notable exceptions include *Vulnerability and exploitation along the Balkans route: Identifying victims of human trafficking in Serbia* (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017), published by the FAFO Institute in Norway, which analyses the experiences of people who transited through Serbia during 2015 and 2016. A Policy Paper by the umbrella organisation of anti-trafficking NGOs in Germany, K.O.K., focuses more on the anti-trafficking response but also, to a certain extent, examines the phenomenon of trafficking in this context. The findings suggest indications of West African people using the routes who are trafficked, with less indications of the trafficking of Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis, although the authors highlight the challenges for identifying trafficking among these groups (K.O.K., 2017).

In mid-2018, ICMPD published an assessment of the anti-trafficking response in four countries along the Balkan route (Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria) and four destination countries in the EU (Austria, Germany, Sweden and Finland), which also provided indications of risks of exploitation and trafficking, with a particular focus on unaccompanied children – *Trafficking along Migration Routes to Europe: Bridging the Gap between Migration, Asylum and Anti-Trafficking*. The assessment found that there was a disconnect between authorities and civil society actors working on migration and asylum, and anti-trafficking actors, which means that trafficked people are not identified and provided with the protection services that they are entitled to (Forin & Healy, 2018).

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also published a report in 2018 on the anti-trafficking response in this context, entitled *From Reception to Recognition: Identifying and Protecting Human Trafficking Victims in Mixed Migration Flows - A Focus on First Identification and Reception Facilities for Refugees and Migrants in the OSCE Region* (OSCE, 2018). The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Trafficking (GRETA), in their fifth General Report, similarly pointed to widespread gaps in the identification and protection of victims of trafficking among asylum applicants, refugees and migrants (GRETA, 2016/1). In December 2018, the European Commission issued its *Second report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings*, calling for trafficking in human beings to be addressed in the context of migration, and focusing on sex trafficking of Nigerian women and girls to Italy and Spain. The report called for improved identification of victims of trafficking, particularly within asylum procedures (European Commission, 2018).

Among the few attempts to understand the phenomenon of trafficking along this route, in early 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published the findings of their *Human Trafficking and Exploitation Prevalence Indication Survey* on Croatia, Greece, Hungary, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. 10% of 1,042 people interviewed answered 'yes' to at least one of five questions related to trafficking and exploitation indicators, with a further 1.2% responding that one or more indicators applied to a family member travelling with them (IOM, 2016). While the methodology and sample size were limited, the survey is an initial indication of the urgent need for in-depth research and a comprehensive response.

In addition, the thematic focus of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016* was migrants' and refugees' vulnerabilities to trafficking *en route* and at destination, and the conditions of people escaping war, conflict and persecution worldwide. The *Global Report* notes that many trafficking cases "*start with people eager to migrate but with no other option than to rely on someone who they believe will facilitate their irregular migration*" and that regular migration and family reunification channels are insufficient, so refugees have no option but to use the services of smugglers, and may be forced to make "*dangerous migration decisions*" (UNODC, 2016).

The UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* was launched in early 2019 and includes a special booklet on *Trafficking in Persons in the Context of Armed Conflict* (UNODC, 2018b). UNODC stresses forced displacement as a result of conflict as a factor that renders people more vulnerable to trafficking due to "*limited access to education, financial resources or opportunities for income generation*" (UNODC, 2018b: 6).

In May 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, submitted a report to the Human Rights Council on the early identification, referral and protection of victims or potential victims of trafficking in persons in mixed migration movements. She concluded that: "*Current approaches to migration and the identification of victims and potential victims of trafficking are taking place in a context in which poisonous political discourse is leading many countries to adopt anti-migration and even racist positions. In these situations, the main concern of many Governments, including many European Governments, is to drastically limit or even block migration movements, with little attention paid to the human rights implications of*

such policies.

[...C]urrent international protection systems, screening procedures and national cooperation mechanisms have difficulties in adapting to the complex realities of today's large mixed movements of people" (Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, 2018: 16).

Another report, on Iraqis and Nigerians using the migration routes to reach Europe, issued by the IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre in 2016, provides indications of the general migration risks that Iraqis and Nigerians are exposed to, including some indications of trafficking, and of underlying vulnerabilities to trafficking. Among the key findings is that the "*journey is risky for all, regardless of their reasons for migration*" and that strengthening border control has made the journey more dangerous (GMDAC, 2016).

In 2016, REACH published a report entitled *Migration to Europe through the Western Balkans*, covering North Macedonia and Serbia, "*to understand the characteristics of migration through the Western Balkans from December 2015 to May 2016 and to determine the factors affecting people's decision to travel to Europe*" (REACH, 2016: 3). Data was collected for the report from over 5,600 people at key transit sites in North Macedonia and Serbia, the majority of whom were from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children highlighted the significant increase in children applying for asylum in Europe since 2015, pointing to the safety risks for children when travelling to and through Europe, because of the lack of legal opportunities to travel and seek asylum. Children's trips are facilitated by migrant smugglers, and separated children are especially vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation (European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, 2016).

The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of children stranded in Greece was examined in detail in a study by Harvard University (Digidiki & Bhabha, 2017). The study identified risk factors for this population, which include, among others, the insufficient number of specialised facilities for children, unsafe conditions inside camps, and the potentially hazardous and unsupervised accommodation of children together with adults. A Save the Children Italy study found that many unaccompanied children are trafficked for sexual exploitation (particularly West African girls), forced labour and exploitation through begging (North African and South Asian boys) and market- and street-based exploitation, some recruited by traffickers while *en route* to Europe (Save the Children, 2017).

Specifically in relation to migrant smuggling, research findings based on expert interviews and court proceedings in Germany, Austria and Italy, among other countries, were presented in a special issue of an academic journal in 2006 (Neske, 2006; Pastore, Monzini & Sciortino, 2006; Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl, 2006). These findings were reviewed in 2018, to assess whether similar dynamics still apply to the migrant smuggling industry, with an examination of the continuing validity of various smuggling 'types', and viewing smuggling as a service industry (Bilger, 2018).

Some literature does exist on vulnerabilities in general among people on the move, with a particular focus on women and children (Oxfam, 2016; HPN, 2016; MARRI, 2017). One key

reference in terms of vulnerability to trafficking, though not specifically on the population of concern for this study, is a study on high-risk groups for trafficking in the EU, conducted for the European Commission. The study examines risk and resilience factors for children (Cancedda *et al.*, 2015). However, resilience has generally not been focused on in relation to trafficking, and overall, there is a significant lacuna as regards the experiences of these people, and the context in the country of origin, *en route* and at their intended or *de facto* destination. This study seeks to contribute to filling that gap.

Concepts of resilience and vulnerability are a central aspect of this study. Resilience to human trafficking and other abuses can be categorised in various different ways. A key distinction is between the concept of resilience understood as the capacity to recover after a negative experience, and resilience as the capacity to resist having that negative experience in the first place. Resilience can also refer to a person's experience during adversity, in terms of withstanding it or at least minimising its negative effects, as well as to a person's experience after adversity, in relation to how they recover from it. At a community level, indeed, it has been argued that adversity can in fact lead to the creation of a bond among those who experienced it, building trust that would not otherwise have developed (Taleb, 2013; Gastelum Felix, 2017).

This means that the concept of resilience "*goes beyond the notion of "strength" or "protected," in so far as it refers not only to warding off stresses, breakdown, and harm, but actually recovering from and prospering despite harm*" (Olson, Shirk & Wood, 2014: 11). Expanding the concept of resilience to *before, during and after adversity*, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) defines resilience as: "*the ability of people, households, communities, countries and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth*" (USAID, 2017: 9).

The Strength to Carry On applies a narrower understanding of resilience as the capacity of a person who has not been trafficked or abused to prevent this from happening to them. However, resilience in terms of the capacity to recover after the fact will also be relevant in some cases, particularly if it prevents a trafficked person from being re-trafficked.

Sleijpen *et al.* (2016: 159-160) conducted a meta-ethnography of 26 empirical studies on young refugees' sources of resilience, framing resilience as "*protective factors that enhance a person's capacity to face and transcend adversity [...and] sources of support or ways of dealing with all kinds of adversity and stress*"⁶. These sources of support and ways of coping may also make it less likely that a person will be abused, exploited or trafficked. The meta-study found six major sources of resilience: social support, acculturation strategies, education, religion, avoidance and hope. The results highlighted the "*interplay between protective and risk processes in the mental health of young refugees*" who had resettled in Western countries (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016: 176).

Resilience is also related to the broader concept of human security, and the interface between human security, development and human rights. Human security encompasses: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security, all of which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Human security is defined by the UN's Commission on Human Security

6 The meta-ethnography covered studies carried out in North America, Australia and Europe (Belgium, Ireland and the UK).

(established in 2001) as “*freedom from fear and freedom from want*”, and, in more detail, as: “*protect[ing] the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security [...] means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity*” (cited in: UN Human Security Unit, 2009: 5).

Speaking about vulnerability in the context of human security, Chandler sees vulnerabilities as restrictions (“unfreedoms”) that disable resilience and action (Chandler, 2012).

It is also important to understand vulnerability in order to improve responses. Pharoah phrases it as follows: “*Understanding what makes some people susceptible and what differentiates those who do and do not become victims of trafficking, should be the first step in designing meaningful prevention activities*” (Pharoah, 2006: 34; see also: Ray, 2008).

However, according to research on the Balkan route: “*to date, there has been limited empirical evidence of when, why and how vulnerability to human trafficking arises in mass movements of migrants and refugees and how new patterns of vulnerability and exploitation challenge established procedures for identification and assistance to trafficking victims*” (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017: 5).

The concept of vulnerability is also relevant in the definition of the crime of trafficking in persons, as one of the means set out in the UN definition of the trafficking of an adult is the abuse of a position of vulnerability. In this sense, vulnerability is understood as susceptibility to trafficking and generally considered to include: “*human rights violations such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and gender-based violence – all of which contribute to creating economic deprivation and social conditions that limit individual choice and make it easier for traffickers and exploiters to operate. More specific factors that are commonly cited as relevant to individual vulnerability to trafficking (and occasionally extrapolated as potential indicators of trafficking), include gender, membership of a minority group, and lack of legal status*” (UNODC, 2013: 13).

The abuse of a position of vulnerability is not relevant to the definition of trafficking in the case of a child (a person under 18), as children are considered inherently vulnerable, and so it is not necessary to prove that any particular means have been used to traffic a child, “*with factors such as being unaccompanied when travelling or lacking birth registration being seen as additional factors of vulnerability*” (UNODC, 2013: 13-14).

In his research on trafficking for sexual exploitation, Lalić makes a distinction between: personal factors of vulnerability, such as low levels of education or lack of financial resources; structural factors, such as conflict, gender discrimination or restrictive immigration policies; and cultural factors (specific cultural practices) (Lalić, 2007). Each of these factors of vulnerability, or, in most cases, a combination of factors, can contribute to the incidence of trafficking.

Finally, it is important to note that vulnerabilities and resilience to trafficking do not constitute the entire range of causal factors influencing the incidence or prevention of trafficking, as they neither account for **the influence of perpetrators**, nor for the **demand side of trafficking**. Therefore crime

opportunity theory should also be taken into account, to acknowledge the necessity not only for the presence of a vulnerable victim or victims, but also for (a) the presence of a motivated trafficker or traffickers ready and willing to commit the crime, and (b) conditions that provide the opportunities to commit the crime.⁷

In addition, a recent study on risks and resilience in the context of child trafficking in the EU highlighted the need to expand the analysis beyond risk and resilience factors to also include, among other aspects: *“the demand for sex services, the profitability of the sex industry (and the lack of monitoring thereof) and of transnational trafficking, the demand for cheap labour [and] the restrictions of migration policies”* (Cancedda et al., 2015: 60).

Similarly, a multi-annual research programme led by ICMPD, aiming to understand the role of demand in trafficking of human beings and to assess the impact and potential of demand-side measures to reduce trafficking,⁸ indicated that focusing on demand has *“the potential to shift the focus of anti-trafficking policies towards those who profit from trafficking and therefore might have some responsibility for the occurrence of trafficking”* (Rogoz & Kraler, 2017: 5). The research concluded, however, that while *“demand-side measures are in principle useful, they have to be implemented in combination with other preventive and protection measures”* in order to effectively combat human trafficking (Rogoz & Kraler, 2017: 25).

While acknowledging the additional relevance of other factors, this study applies the concepts of resilience and vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses to the specific context of migration routes to Europe during 2015-2018, using empirical data and an analysis of the lived realities of people travelling the routes, in order to shed light on a complex phenomenon. As such, it seeks to make an important contribution to the general literature on human trafficking, and on resilience and vulnerability factors to human trafficking, as well as to the literature on migration routes to Europe.

5. Terms used in the study

As this study is principally qualitative research, in order for the findings to be valid, replicable and falsifiable (Bhattacharjee, 2012), it is essential to be precise about the **concepts** that are developed and applied. This includes working definitions of concepts such as “refugees”, “human trafficking” and different forms of trafficking, e.g. “trafficking for forced marriage”, “trafficking for sexual exploitation” and “trafficking for labour exploitation”.

The terms used in this study are based on relevant bibliography and legislation on the topics of trafficking, migration and asylum in Europe and at the international level. The terms are set out here in four sections: 1. General; 2. Migration; 3. Human Trafficking; and 4. International Protection.

Section 1: General

A **child** is any person younger than 18 years, according to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights

7 See, for example, Vogel & Kraler (2017) and Gök, Ö. (2011). “The Role of Opportunity in Crime Prevention and Possible Threats of Crime Control Benefits”. Turkish Journal of Police Studies. Vol: 13 (1).

8 See: Demand-Side Measures Against Trafficking (DemandAT) project: <http://demandat.eu>.

of the Child (CRC) and the 2000 UN Trafficking Protocol.

Female/male sex is the category defined in the civil registry (birth certificate) or identity document, while **gender identity** is the gender with which a person identifies.

A person's **sexual orientation** indicates which gender or genders they feel attracted to, whether physically, romantically or emotionally.

Unaccompanied children in the EU context are citizens of non-EU countries and stateless people under the age of 18, who arrive on the territory of an EU Member State unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them by law or custom, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person. This also includes children who are left unaccompanied after they have entered an EU Member State.⁹ **Separated children** are people under 18 years of age, outside their country of origin and separated from both parents or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver,¹⁰ but not necessarily unaccompanied by an adult.

Section 2: Migration

An international **migrant** is someone who moves their place of residence from one locality to another, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status¹¹ (from the Latin *migrāre* to change one's abode).

The **country of origin** is the country from which an international migrant departs in order to take up residence in another country, the **country of destination**. A **country of transit** is a country that a migrant passes through on their way from a country of origin to a country of destination. However, if a migrant experiences difficulties in travelling onwards to their intended country of destination, the country of transit may become their *de facto* country of destination.

A **stranded migrant** is someone who is residing in a country that they intended to transit through, but they are unable to continue the journey towards their intended country of destination.

Irregular border crossing or **irregular entry** is when a person enters a country other than that of their citizenship or regular residence without the necessary legal permission or visa.

Irregular migration includes irregular entry, but also covers a person residing in a destination country without authorisation, because their permit or visa has expired.¹²

Sea/ land (or 'green')/ river/ air borders are different types of borders at which formal or informal border crossing points can be located.

Official **border crossing points** are locations where national authorities check documentation to

9 Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004L0083:en:HTML>

10 Separated Children in Europe Programme (2009). Statement of Good Practice, 4th Revised Edition. This definition – largely adopted by UN CRC General Comment No. 5, recognises that some children may appear 'accompanied' but in practice the accompanying adult may be either unable or unsuitable to assume responsibility for their care.

11 United Nations (1998). Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1. Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 58.

12 See: www.picum.org.

determine whether a person has authorisation to enter a country, and may be either permanent or temporary. People may also cross borders at **informal border crossing points**.

Migrant smuggling is “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”.¹³ It should be noted that the definition of someone who engages in migrant smuggling as per the EU Directive on the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence is:

“1(a) any person who intentionally assists a person who is not a national of a Member State to enter, or transit across, the territory of a Member State in breach of the laws of the State concerned on the entry or transit of aliens;

(b) any person who, for financial gain, intentionally assists a person who is not a national of a Member State to reside within the territory of a Member State in breach of the laws of the State concerned on the residence of aliens.

2. Any Member State may decide not to impose sanctions with regard to the behaviour defined in paragraph 1(a) by applying its national law and practice for cases where the aim of the behaviour is to provide humanitarian assistance to the person concerned.”¹⁴

A **mixed migration flow** can be defined as composed of migrants with a variety of protection needs and motivations. It could therefore include refugees, asylum applicants, migrants, trafficked people, smuggled migrants and unaccompanied children. These people’s protection needs, status and motivations may change according to the stage in the migration journey in a country of origin, transit or destination, and may not necessarily align with the legal status they have in a country.

Finally, the intended destination of people in mixed migration flows may change based on the opportunities available to them or the dangers in certain geographic areas. Therefore, all of the people travelling in mixed migration flows are referred to throughout this study as **people on the move**.¹⁵

Forced return is synonymous with **deportation**, and describes a person being returned to their country of origin or transferred to another country against their will.

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) is the return of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in a country of destination and receive assistance to return to their countries of origin. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines assisted voluntary return as: “*administrative, logistical, financial and reintegration support to rejected asylum seekers, victims of trafficking in human beings, stranded migrants, qualified nationals and other migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country who volunteer to return to their countries of origin.*”¹⁶

13 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), adopted in New York on 15 November 2000.

14 Council Directive 2002/90/EC of 28 November 2002 defining the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence, Art. 1.

15 On the difficulties and perils of assigning rigid categories such as “refugee” and “migrant”, see: Crawley & Skleparis (2017) and Crawley et al. (2017).

16 IOM (2011). IOM Glossary on Migration 2nd Edition. Perruchoud, R. & Redpath-Cross, J. (eds.). International Migration Law No. 25. Geneva: IOM: 11.

Family reunification is: “the establishment of a family relationship which is either:

(a) the entry into and residence in a Member State, in accordance with Council Directive 2003/86/EC [on the right to family reunification], by family members of a third-country national residing lawfully in that Member State (‘sponsor’) in order to preserve the family unit, whether the family relationship arose before or after the entry of the sponsor; or

(b) between an EU national and third-country national established outside the EU who then subsequently enters the EU” (EMN, 2014: 127).

Section 3: Human Trafficking

Human trafficking (synonymous with trafficking in human beings/THB and trafficking in persons/TIP), according to the UN Trafficking Protocol, which all countries under study have ratified, is: “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons [acts], by **means** of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the **purpose** of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”¹⁷

Any consent on the part of a trafficked person can be considered invalidated consent due to the use of the means, or to the fact that the trafficked person is a child. Trafficking of children is defined as committing a specific act for the purpose of exploitation, as the **means are irrelevant in child trafficking**.

The United States Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), as reauthorised through the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Acts (TVPRA) of 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013, defines “**severe forms of trafficking in persons**” as “(A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery” (Section 103).

Trafficking of adults is composed of three elements – act, means and purpose (exploitation). **Trafficking of children** is composed of two elements – act and purpose (exploitation). The forms of exploitation that can constitute the element of the exploitative purpose in human trafficking are:

Commercial sexual exploitation: obtaining financial or material benefits from the prostitution of another person or through sexual violence carried out against another person. The TVPA defines “sex trafficking” as the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (Section 103).

17 Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UNTOC, 2000.

Forced labour or services/ labour exploitation: “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily,”¹⁸ or, according to the TVPA, “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”

Domestic servitude: a form of labour exploitation in a private household, using force or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability.

Trafficking for removal of organs: removing a trafficked person’s organs, without their valid consent or that of their relatives.

As the UN Protocol provides a **non-exhaustive definition of the forms of exploitation** that may be the purpose of a trafficking act - “*exploitation shall include, at a minimum*” -, working definitions for other forms of exploitation that may constitute the exploitative purpose in a trafficking case are provided here. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the guardian of the Protocol, refers to trafficking for forced marriage, forced criminality, exploitation in begging and sale of children/illegal adoption (UNODC, 2018a).¹⁹

Forced marriage: when a party does not validly consent to a marriage and financial and/or material benefits are obtained as a result of the marriage, using force or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability. As a form of exploitation in the context of trafficking, financial or material benefits can be obtained by the trafficker from: (a) brokering the forced marriage itself; or (b) sexual or labour exploitation carried out in the context of a forced marriage.

Forced criminality: exploiting a person practicing criminal activities, as form of forced labour, such as transporting or selling drugs, petty theft or migrant smuggling, using force or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability.

Exploitation of begging: a form of forced labour, whereby ‘begging’ indicates various activities through which a person asks a stranger for money (Healy & Rogoz, 2012).

Sale of a child/illegal adoption is obtaining a financial or material benefit from a child being transferred to another person without observing the legal formalities for an adoption process.²⁰

Human trafficking is also an offence that may be committed by an **organised criminal group**, defined in accordance with the 2000 UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), as: “*a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit*”.

18 Article 2.1 of ILO Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour, no. 29, 1930.

19 The US Government does not consider forced marriage a form of trafficking in persons, unless it involves commercial sexual exploitation or labour exploitation, and does not consider trafficking for removal of organs, sale of a child or illegal adoption as forms of trafficking in persons.

20 Sale of a Child is defined by the Optional Protocol to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of a Child, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, as “any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration” (Art. 2).

Section 4: International Protection

International protection is defined as: “actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. In the EU context, protection encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status” (EMN, 2014: 168).

A **refugee** is a person who: “owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”²¹ In the EU context, a refugee must also be someone to whom Article 12 (Exclusion) of the recast Qualifications Directive does not apply.²²

Alternative forms of protection may include temporary protection status, humanitarian leave to remain and subsidiary protection, all of which grant a status similar, but not equivalent to refugee status (whether *prima facie* or convention refugee status).

Subsidiary protection is: “the protection given to a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Art. 15 of 2011/95/EU [recast Qualifications Directive], and to whom Art. 17(1) and (2) of Directive 2011/95/EU do not apply, and is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country” (EMN, 2014: 211).

Asylum applicant is someone who is outside of their country of origin, or at an international border, has applied for international protection, and whose application is still under consideration. It is synonymous with ‘asylum seeker’.

Asylum is a form of protection given by a state on its territory, based on the principle of non-*refoulement* and internationally or nationally recognised refugee rights. It is granted to someone (a refugee) who is unable to seek protection in her/his country of citizenship or residence, due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Non-refoulement is a principle of international customary law (*jus cogens*) that prohibits the expulsion or return (*refoulement*) of a person “in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”²³

21 1951 UN Convention and 1967 UN Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1.

22 Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted.

23 Article 33 of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; Art. 3 of the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Art. 7 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Relocation refers to the temporary emergency relocation scheme established by two EU Council Decisions in September 2015, in which EU Member States committed to relocating people in need of international protection from Italy and Greece to other EU countries. This Emergency Relocation Scheme ran until 26 September 2017. However, some people were still relocated after that date.²⁴

Resettlement means the transfer of people in clear need of international protection to a country where they will be admitted and granted the right to stay and any other rights comparable to those granted to a beneficiary of international protection, on submission of the UNHCR and in agreement with the country of resettlement.²⁵

The **Hotspot Approach** was proposed by the European Commission in the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), EU Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the EU Police Cooperation Agency (Europol) and the EU Judicial Cooperation Agency (Eurojust) assist the Greek and Italian authorities at designated hotspots to “*swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants*”. The Hotspot Approach was also intended to contribute to the implementation of Relocation.²⁶

The “**first country of asylum**” concept means that: “*a person has already, in a previous state, found international protection, that is once again accessible and effective for the individual concerned. Application of the concept requires an individual assessment of whether the refugee will be readmitted to that country and granted a right of legal stay and be accorded standards of treatment commensurate with the 1951 Convention related to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 Protocol, and international human rights standards, including protection from refoulement, as well as timely access to a durable solution.*”²⁷

A **Dublin procedure** is: “*the process of determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national under Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Dublin III Regulation)*” (EMN, 2014: 88). A **Dublin transfer** is:

“(a) The transfer of responsibility for the examination of the merits of an application for international protection from one Member State to another Member State.

“(b) The (physical) transfer of an applicant to the Member State who is considered to be responsible for examining the merits of an application following a Dublin procedure” (EMN, 2014: 90).

Accommodation centre is the term used throughout the study to refer to all forms of official, collective accommodation for people on the move in the seven countries under study. This includes: first reception centres; reception and identification centres; asylum centres; transit centres; transit zones; refugee registration and reception centres; reception, decision and return

²⁴ The proposals for a reform of the Dublin system – “Dublin IV” – foresee a slightly different relocation scheme. See: www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Brief_Relocation-20062017_FINAL.pdf.

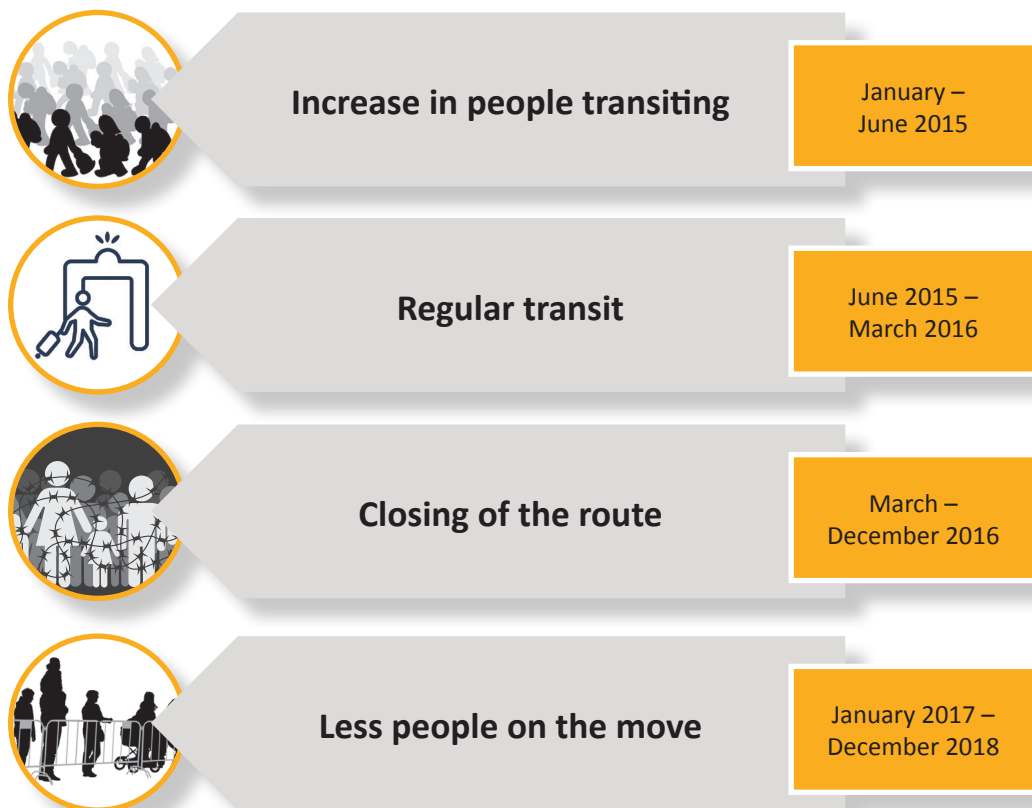
²⁵ In July 2015, EU Member States agreed to resettle 22,504 people from North Africa, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Since March 2016, Syrians have also been resettled to Europe under the “EU-Turkey Statement”. According to the EU Agenda on Migration, “the cooperation of the [UNHCR] and other relevant organisations will be called upon to assist in the implementation, in line with current practice (identification, submission, transfer, etc.). Practical involvement of the European Asylum Support Office in the scheme can also be envisaged. Each Member State will remain responsible for individual admission decisions.” See: EU Agenda on Migration: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.

²⁶ See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf.

²⁷ See: “Legal considerations on the return of asylum-seekers and refugees from Greece to Turkey as part of the EU-Turkey Cooperation in Tackling the Migration Crisis under the safe third country and first country of asylum concept.” www.unhcr.org/56f3ec5a9.pdf.

centres; first aid and reception centres; protection centres for asylum applicants and refugees; temporary reception centres; special facilities for unaccompanied children; pre-removal detention centres and immigration detention centres.

Chapter 2: Migration Routes: People and Policies



Phases in Migration along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes

The factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses that affect people travelling along the migration routes, and the indications of potential trafficking cases among these people, are to a large extent determined by their experience of the journey. The policies and practices applied, both those in line with official policy and otherwise, influenced the routes that people took and the conditions under which they travelled. The policies and practices also had an impact on the profiles of people who were travelling during these phases - and on their respective vulnerabilities and resilience. Therefore, in order to contextualise the main research findings, which are presented in chapters 3 and 4, this chapter describes the migration routes, the people who travelled them and the policies and practices applied at regional level and in the countries under study.

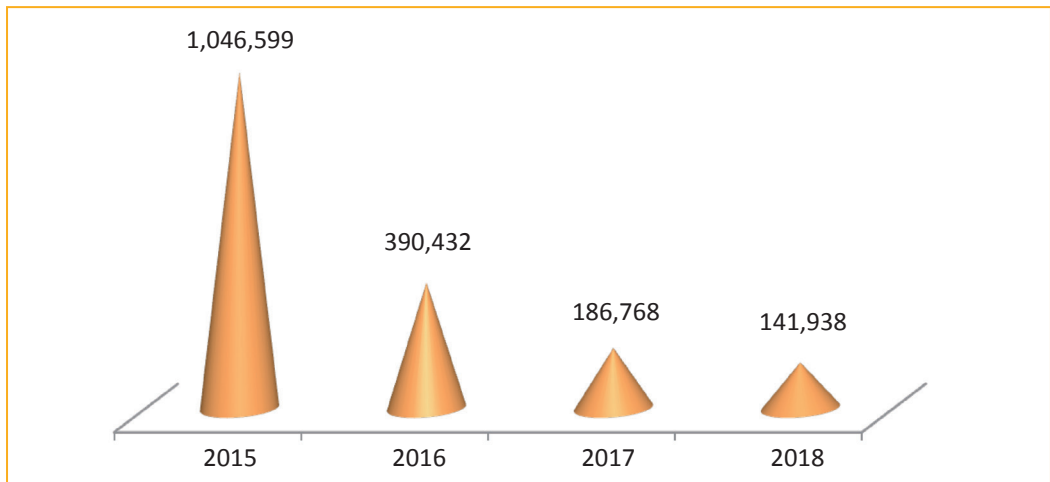
1. Policy Developments, People on the Move and Migration Routes

General trends along the **Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes** in terms of policies and practices can be clustered in four distinct phases, marked by moments of significant change:

- the increase in the numbers of people arriving from the beginning of 2015;
- the *de facto* regularisation of transit through the Balkans and suspension of ‘Dublin returns’ from Germany in summer 2015;
- the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016 and the resulting ‘closing’ of the route; and
- more recent developments during 2017-2018.

The **Central Mediterranean route**, though affected by some of the same EU-level policies as the other routes, is to a large extent conditioned by developments at a national level in Italy. Therefore the relevant routes, policies, practices and profiles of people are presented here year-by-year. The Central Mediterranean route is characterised by steady numbers of people arriving throughout 2015-2016, followed by significant decreases in 2017 and 2018. One of the main factors influencing this decrease was the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Italy and Libya in early 2017.

Graph 1: Total number of people registered as arriving along the migration routes in first countries of arrival in the EU



Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: <https://migration.iom.int/europe> (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015>.

During the period January 2015 to the end of September 2018, a total of **3,719,895 people made first-time asylum applications** in the 28 EU Member states.²⁸ 1,569,855 of these applications were lodged in Germany, with many of those who arrived in Germany in 2015 only having their applications registered in 2016. As is evident from Table 3 below, the number of applications has decreased steadily since 2015. On the other hand, due to being ‘stranded’ in Greece and not being able to travel onwards, increasing numbers of people have applied for asylum there since 2016, from 13,205 in 2015 to almost 60,000 in 2017, and over 61,000 people in 2018.²⁹ In Italy there was also an increasing trend in first-time asylum applications until 2018. However, during the first three quarters of 2018, just over 40,000 people applied for asylum in Italy.³⁰

Table 3: First-Time Asylum Applications in the EU, 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (until end September)	Total 01.01.2015 – 30.09.2018
EU 28	1,322,825	1,260,910	705,705	430,455	3,719,895
Bulgaria	20,365	19,420	3,695	1,355	44,835
Germany	476,510	745,155	222,560	125,630	1,569,855
Greece	13,205	51,110	58,650	45,975	168,940
Hungary	177,135	29,430	3,390	530	210,485
Italy	83,540	122,960	128,850	40,465	375,815

Source: Data from Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics.

28 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics.

29 Greek Asylum Service: http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf (as of 30.11.2018).

30 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics.

2. Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes

Overview

Media coverage and political statements in relation to people travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan migration routes to the EU since 2015 abound with references to ‘unprecedented flows’ and a ‘migration crisis’. However, many of the countries covered by the study have a long history as countries of destination and transit - and origin - for migratory movements.

In one of the largest population movements after the end of the second world war, in November 1956, around 200,000 people fled Hungary in the wake of a Soviet military intervention.³¹ With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1980s, new borders were drawn in the region, and there were “*multiple refugee crises*” during the 1990s as a result of various armed conflicts in the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Sardelić, 2017: 99). As one NGO interviewee for this research in North Macedonia commented: “*there have been illegal border crossings and a well-organised network of smugglers operating for more than twenty years*” (MK-K-01). In recent years, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Hungary have been transit countries for people from countries in the Middle East, South Asia, West Africa and Horn of Africa travelling onwards to Western European countries (Oikonomou *et al.*, 2017).

The number of people transiting through Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia, and arriving irregularly in the EU, started to increase during 2008-2012 (Bernáth & Messing, 2015; MK-K-26; MK-K-27). While many of those travelling during this period were Afghans and Pakistanis, “*in 2011-2012, with the start of the Syrian crisis, different groups from other countries began to appear, such as Syria, Iran, Bangladesh and, to a lesser extent, from African countries*” (MK-K-26), according to an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia. The number of Syrians, Afghans, Iranians and others applying for asylum in Hungary increased significantly during 2013-2015. However, applicants usually left the country after a few days and their applications were suspended (Nagy, 2016; Kovács, 2016).

The Eastern Mediterranean route leads through and from Turkey, where a number of routes converge from countries of origin in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq), West and South Asia (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia). From Turkey, people either travel by boat from the Western coast to nearby Greek islands in the North Aegean Sea, such as Lesbos, Chios and Samos, or cross the Evros River into Greece or Bulgaria.

The migration route continues from there along the Balkan route overland to countries in Western Europe. Although during 2015-2017, Greece was numerically the most important first EU country of arrival, until March 2016, few people intended to remain there to seek asylum, but rather travelled onwards through non-EU countries to Western Europe. From the North Aegean islands, people travelled by sea or overland to Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, either directly or *via* Athens, and from there to the Greek border with North Macedonia at Idomeni/Gevgelija. North Macedonia is a transit country *par excellence*, and most people make the relatively short transit

³¹ See, for example: Zieck (2013).

through the country, with only brief stops, to the Serbian border at Tabanovce/Preševo.

Bulgaria is part of an alternative, overland route for people to enter the EU from Turkey, and for people in Greece who are not able to enter North Macedonia. According to research carried out in late 2015 and early 2016, this route: *“was more expensive and generally considered more dangerous as a result of long passages across difficult terrain by foot and a risk of detention by authorities. [...]the ‘land route’ was much less common and used primarily by small groups of Afghans, Pakistanis or Iranians”* (REACH, 2016: 22).

As is evident from Table 4 below, decreasing numbers of people used the route through Bulgaria after 2016. Those who did, travelled from there through Serbia or Romania to Hungary.

Serbia was another important transit hub for onward movement and for contracting migrant smuggling services, particularly after March 2016 when people became ‘stranded’ there (see Phase 3 below). According to Bilger: *“Travelling via hubs, which offer a broad range of providers and specialized services, puts migrants in a position to be able to obtain reliable information and choose from among a variety of different options”* (Bilger, 2018: 58).

From Serbia, most people re-enter the EU by crossing into Hungary at Subotica/Szeged, or transiting through Croatia and Slovenia. These EU countries were also considered transit countries by the majority of people on the move, so the route then took people from Hungary or Slovenia to Austria (where some people remain to apply for asylum), then, for the majority, Germany, Sweden or other countries in Western Europe.

People crossing the border into Germany from Austria, having travelled the Balkan route - or the Central Mediterranean route through Italy - first arrive in the South of Germany, in the Federal States (*Bundesländer*) of Bavaria and, to a lesser extent, Baden-Württemberg. Many people remain in these states to apply for asylum or exit the asylum system and remain there (DE-K-06).

The policies and practices applied during the different phases have an impact on the numbers of people using the routes, and which routes they used. It is not possible to disaggregate the numbers precisely according to the phases specified below, but the year-on-year figures still provide a clear picture of a steady decrease since 2015 on the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan route.

Table 4: Total number of people registered as travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes, 2015-2018

Registered as arriving in:	Greece	Bulgaria	North Macedonia	Serbia	Hungary
2015	857,363	31,174	388,233	579,518	411,515
2016	176,906	17,187	89,771	98,975	19,221
2017	35,052	2,562	547	5,435	1,626
2018	49,158	2,503	3,126	8,022	382
Total 2015-2018	1,118,479	53,426	481,677	691,950	432,744

Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: <https://migration.iom.int/europe> (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015>.

During this period, a total of over 677,000 people also arrived in Croatia, and around 497,000 in Slovenia,³² using this route as an alternative to travelling through Hungary, in order to transit from Serbia to Austria and Germany. Fewer people used the longer, more expensive and more dangerous route through Bulgaria. Also, due to the transit situation, some people may not have been registered as entering a country.

In general, the number of people registered as arriving in Greece decreases gradually as they transit through the countries under study, for a number of reasons:

- Some people remain in Greece and apply for asylum there or stay there with an irregular status;
- Some people may remain in Greece for a year or more, in order to earn some money and/or organise smuggling services for their onward journey along the Balkan route;
- Some people use alternative routes through Bulgaria and Romania, or Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia;
- Some people are returned to Turkey or to their country of origin or previous residence.

For example, according to a key informant in Hungary, an Afghan Pashto boy who arrived in Hungary at the age of 16 had been travelling for 20 months. Smugglers had taken him through Pakistan and Iran within ten days, and he stayed in Turkey for 20 days. He then spent almost a year in Bulgaria, before arriving in Serbia, where he spent another seven months at an accommodation centre. After a further two weeks at the Subotica centre close to the Hungarian border, he entered Hungary (HU-K-19).

32 www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/IOM-Mixed-Migration-Flows-Mediterranean-and-Beyond-14-January-2016.pdf; http://migration.iom.int/docs/q1_2017_statistical_overview.pdf.

Map 3 – Balkan route



Map produced by ICMPD

Phase 1: Increase in people transiting

January – June 2015



The first phase of the four years covered by this study was characterised by an increase in the number of people travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes, starting in late 2014, and generally ‘open borders,’ facilitating swift transit.

Policy Developments

North Macedonia and Serbia, as candidate countries for accession to the EU, were adopting laws according to the EU Acquis in the field of migration during this period, and implementing policies accordingly. The two countries harmonised their national asylum legislation with EU law (Asylum Procedures Directive and Reception Conditions Directive),³³ which came into effect in July 2015.

These Directives, however, “are less explicit with recommendations regarding the treatment of people who are transiting through the territory” (Sardelić, 2017: 101). As described by an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia, in 2015, people were arriving in the country who: “did not meet the conditions for entry, and did not request protection from the state, they wanted to transit. Such a category did not exist. We could not allow them to transit if they did not meet the entry requirements” (MK-K-30).

In March 2015, the Hungarian Government issued Decree 269 (IX. 15, no longer in force) declaring a ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration’.³⁴ In June, Hungary issued Government Resolution 1401 (VI. 17.) ‘on certain measures necessitated by the exceptional immigration pressure,’ providing for the construction of a border fence.

People on the Move

During the first half of 2015, transit was largely uncoordinated by state authorities along the Balkan route and many borders were generally ‘open’. Although migrant smuggling services were often needed to make the short sea crossing from Turkey to the nearby Greek islands, in general people were able to transit relatively swiftly through the countries under study (MK-K-01). Travel along the route was generally not highly organised and different people providing migrant smuggling services were not necessarily connected (Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2015). By the end of May 2015, just 5,115 people had applied for asylum in Greece (UNHCR, 2015), and the majority of people arriving across the Eastern Mediterranean continued on to the Balkan route.

Throughout 2015, Syrians comprised the majority of people arriving across the Eastern Mediterranean (REACH, 2016) and around 50% of all those arriving by sea and overland to first countries of arrival in the EU. The other people arriving during 2015 were Afghan (20%), Iraqi (7%), Eritrean (4%), Pakistani, Nigerian, Iranian, Somali and others (19%) (IOM DTM, 2015). Many young men travelled alone during this period, particularly Syrians, as well as Afghans and Iraqis. Key informants in North Macedonia described how many of them were sent in the context of a family strategy: “in order to examine the terrain, to explore the route, whether it is safe” (MK-K-03); or because of the cost of travel: “the fees for smugglers were high and many families had funds to finance only one young man” (MK-K-01).

33 Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast) and Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast).

34 A ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration’ can be declared by the Hungarian Government when the number of asylum applicants reaches a monthly average of 500 people, a two-week average of 750 people per day, or a weekly average of 800 people per day. It can also be declared when the number of people staying in the Transit Zone reaches a monthly average of 1,000 people, a two-week average of 700 people, or a weekly average of 800 people per day. During such a ‘crisis situation’, state property can be used and the rules of public procurement do not apply.

The ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration’ has been extended seven times, on: 8 September 2015; 9 March 2016; 5 September 2016; 8 March 2017; 30 August 2017; 16 February 2018; and most recently in August 2018.

Once in Greece, people walked or took various forms of public or private transportation to the land borders with North Macedonia. They often travelled without using smuggling services, unless they were apprehended and returned to Greece, in which case they usually tried to cross again with the assistance of migrant smugglers.

Phase 2: Regular Transit

June 2015 – March 2016



In the second phase, from June 2015 until March 2016, the Balkan route was more regulated and controlled, and policies and practices generally allowed for legal transit along the route, as far as Germany, the destination country where most people travelling intended to apply for asylum.³⁵ Researchers have noted that the situation during this period “seemed like a textbook example” of when the 2002 EU Temporary Protection Directive should be invoked (Sardelić, 2017: 100; Crawley *et al.*, 2017), but the EU Council did not make a decision to activate it.

Policy Developments

In terms of policy developments, the second phase was among the most dynamic. The EU Agenda on Migration was adopted in May 2015. It defined immediate measures and adopted a new strategic framework aiming to better manage migration, covering the common asylum policy, a new policy on legal migration and “reducing incentives for irregular migration.” Another of the priorities identified was the “the fight against migrant smuggling, to prevent the exploitation of migrants by criminal networks and reduce incentives to irregular migration.”³⁶

That same month, the EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling (2015 – 2020) was adopted, setting out the specific actions necessary to implement the two Agendas on Migration and Security:

1. “Enhanced police and judicial response;
2. Improved gathering and sharing of information;
3. Enhanced prevention of smuggling and assistance to vulnerable migrants, such as children and women;
4. Stronger cooperation with third countries to address the root causes of irregular migration.”

The setting up of Reception and Identification Centres in important areas of first arrival in the EU (the ‘hotspot approach’) was proposed by the European Council as part of the Agenda on Migration, to provide operational support to Member States who were receiving disproportionately high

35 Among over 5,000 people on the move interviewed by REACH during the period December 2015 to May 2016, Germany was the preferred destination of 70% (REACH, 2016).

36 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en.

numbers of people – Greece and Italy.³⁷ At these ‘hotspots’, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) assists with the registration of asylum applications, preparation of files and relocation of applicants, while the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) supports with identification, registration and removal or return of those not considered to qualify for asylum. The European Police Office (Europol) and the EU Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust) assist with investigations into migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

In Greece, Law 4375/2016 made provisions for the establishment of six **Reception and Identification Centres (RICs)** at Greece’s land and sea borders with Turkey.³⁸ As of the end of 2018, five RICs, which are also EU hotspots, are operating on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos, and one RIC is operating in Fylakio – Evros, at the land border with Turkey. The objective of the RICs are to swiftly identify, register and fingerprint people arriving, as well as provide medical and psychological support, information on rights and obligations, support for those considered vulnerable and referrals to the competent authorities based on each specific case (asylum application, relocation, return, etc.).

Linked to the hotspot approach, the temporary intra-EU emergency **relocation scheme** was approved in September 2015 (Council Decisions 2015/1523 and 2015/1601 on 14 and 22 September 2015) with EU Member States committing to relocate a total of 160,000 people ‘in clear need of international protection’ from Greece and Italy by September 2017.³⁹ As of October 2018, 21,999 people have been relocated from Greece, including 5,391 people relocated to Germany and 50 to Bulgaria. No one had been relocated to Hungary.⁴⁰ The Hungarian Government voted against the Relocation Decision and asked the European Court of Justice to annul it, adopting a national law against the decision.⁴¹

In September 2015, the European Commission issued a proposal for a Regulation establishing a common EU list of **safe countries of origin**, which was endorsed by the European Parliament in July 2017.⁴² The ‘safe country of origin’ concept was to allow for faster processing of asylum applications submitted by people from countries considered safe. Among the countries under study, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary have national lists of safe countries of origin. Hungary adopted Decree 191/2015 (VII.21) in July 2015 on the national designation of safe countries of origin and safe third countries.

37 www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/hotspots; www.statewatch.org/news/2015/jul/eu-com-hotspots.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf.

38 Greek Law 4375/2016, amended in 2017, on the Organisation and Functioning of the Asylum Service, Appeals Authority, Reception and Identification Service, establishment of General Secretariat for Reception, transposition of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions.

39 EU Council Decision 2015/1601 on establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece. See: www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/asylum-procedure/relocation.

40 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/com_2018_250_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v10_p1_969116.pdf; http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Relocation-procedures-up-to-25-3-2018_en.pdf.

41 Hungarian Act CLXXV of 2015 on acting against the compulsory settlement quota system in defense of Hungary and Europe. In December 2017, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against Hungary, as well as Poland and Czechia, for not complying with the decision: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5002_en.htm.

42 The countries were Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

When the German government issued a statement in late August 2015 that it would **suspend application of the Dublin Regulation to Syrians**, allowing Syrian people to apply for asylum in the Germany even if they had already transited through another EU Member State, the countries along the Balkan route responded *“by positioning themselves as transit countries”* (Sardelić, 2017: 100). North Macedonia and Serbia cooperated with each other, and with Croatia and Slovenia, to facilitate transit (Sardelić, 2017).

North Macedonia and Serbia put in place legal amendments whereby people were allowed to regularly transit through the country, provided that they registered their ‘intention to seek asylum’ and left the country again within 72 hours. The response of each country along the route depended to a large extent on the responses of other countries, including unilateral actions (such as erecting fences) and EU-level policies (RS-K-03; RS-K-33; AIDA, 2017b; Sardelić, 2017; Lilyanova, 2016).

Legal amendments were introduced to the North Macedonia Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection⁴³ to allow for this regular transit, coming into effect as of 18 June 2015 (Sardelić, 2017). The amendments provided for people to express an ‘intention to seek asylum’ and to remain in and move through North Macedonia for up to 72 hours, including by public transport. This led to a decrease in the number of asylum applications lodged in North Macedonia (MK-K-30). Transit centres were set up at the Greek border in Gevgelija and at the Serbian border in Tabanovce in August 2015.

Similarly, in September 2015, the Serbian Government adopted the Decision on Issuing a Certificate of Having Entered the Territory of Serbia for Migrants Coming from Countries Where Their Lives are in Danger (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 81/2015). People who presented themselves to authorised police officers were issued with with a certificate of ‘intention to seek asylum’, with the obligation to report to the Serbian Asylum Office or to one of the asylum centres within 72 hours, without yet applying for asylum. By March 2016, the Serbian authorities had issued 94,756 certificates (Group 484, 2016; BCHR, 2016).

Serbia provided humanitarian support to people in transit, without assessing each case whether people were in need of international protection and without determining their legal status. The certificates of intention granted access to certain legal rights (AIDA, 2016a). For those who wished to apply for asylum in Serbia, after being issued with a certificate, they reported to the Asylum Office to be registered as an asylum applicant, and were issued with an identity card. According to briefing paper by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS): *“Serbia’s role has mainly been that of transit country; nevertheless, the migration flows have placed a humanitarian and financial strain on its asylum system”* (Lilyanova, 2016: 1).

Having transited from Greece through North Macedonia and Serbia, people then crossed the Serbian borders into either Hungary, or Croatia and Slovenia, in order to reach Austria and then Germany. On 1 August 2015, the new asylum regulation in Hungary entered into force. **A barbed wire fence, almost 200km in length, was constructed along Hungary’s borders with Serbia and Croatia**, and completed in September 2015. Those who tried to enter Hungary through the

43 North Macedonia Law amending the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (Official Gazette, no. 101/2015).

border fence were to be charged with committing a crime (Voynov *et al.*, 2017). Act CXL of 2015 on the amendment of certain acts related to the management of mass migration, adopted on 4 September 2015, introduced new crimes into the Criminal Code in relation to the ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration’, including “*prohibited crossing of the border fence*”; “*vandalisation of the border fence*”; and “*disruption of the construction works related to the border fence*.”⁴⁴

Starting in mid-September 2015, four **Transit Zones** were constructed in Hungary - in Röszke and Tompa at the Serbian border in September 2015, and at Letenye and Beremend at the Croatian border in October 2015, consisting of metal containers for accommodation (Igoe, 26.04.2018). The Transit Zones were designated as the only locations where people could submit asylum applications. In response, the Serbian state authorities started applying a ‘waiting list’ for people who wished to enter Hungary from Serbia, on a first-come, first-served basis, but with priority for certain groups (see Box below). At this time, around 20-30 people were allowed to enter Hungary per day (Igoe, 26.04.2018).

The ‘Waiting List’

“I lived for nine months in Adaševci [accommodation centre in Serbia, close to the Croatian border]. There was a list of names and according to this list, people could get into [Hungary]. Not only from this camp, but from other camps as well, they put five names on this list and this place [on the list] is for sale. If you pay €10,000, you get to the top of the list.

[People from] our camp got onto the list twice a year. One morning they came and I thought that they were asking me if I had lice. But no, they told me that it was my turn on the list. ‘You have two days to get to the camp in Subotica’ [accommodation centre in Serbia close to the Hungarian border]. But I didn’t have any money. Somehow my brother sent me money and I went there by taxi. I waited 2-3 weeks in Subotica and then I managed to get into Hungary.”

18-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-05)

Since September 2015, entry from Serbia into Hungary has been managed on the basis of a ‘waiting list’, referred to in Serbia as the ‘Hungarian list’.⁴⁵

44 Articles 352/A, 352/B and 352/C of the Hungarian Criminal Code.

45 It is interesting to draw a parallel between the ‘Hungarian List’ and recent developments at the US-Mexican border, where a woman in Tijuana, Mexico, who was an asylum applicant herself, was reported as managing a waiting list for asylum applicants to the US from Central American countries. See, for example: Brayman, L. & Langellier, R. (30.11.2018). “The Notebook: Asylum Seekers Impromise a New Border Bureaucracy.” The Nation. www.thenation.com/article/notebook-border-tijuana.

The list is managed by a ‘community leader’ – a man who is also an asylum applicant, speaks good English, and can add people to (or delete them from) a list, on a first-come, first-served basis, with priorities for families, ‘vulnerable groups’ and those who have been in Serbia for a longer time (HU-M-01; HU-M-05; HU-K-09; HU-K-10; HU-K-15; HU-K-16; HU-K-17; HU-K-28; HU-K-31; RS-K-19; RS-K-25; FRA, 2018; Bakonyi *et al.*, 2017; Kalman *et al.*, 18.03.2018; Voynov *et al.*, 2017). The ‘community leader’ manages the list in coordination with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants (HU-K-15; HU-K-16; HU-K-28; FRA, 2018).

When people arrive in North Macedonia, they are instructed to call the list manager (HU-K-16), also referred to as the ‘Translator’, to organise for their name to be put on the list in Serbia. The ‘Translator’ then passes these names on to the manager of the Subotica accommodation centre (HU-K-28). When someone’s name is close to the top of the list, they are sent to a centre closer to the Serbian border with Hungary (HU-K-34).

As a key informant from an international organisation describes, the list: *“was started by migrants. The Serbian authorities supported it and the Hungarian authorities take care of the list. They only allow families through – on a first-come, first-served basis. The rules regarding the waiting list are unwritten between Serbia and Hungary. The same man who started the list, he is still in Subotica. He was an Afghan man. Until last December [2017], it was the same guy, he was there for more than a year”* (HU-K-27). After he got protection status in Hungary, someone else took his place (HU-K-16).

As the list is a *“semi-official”* practice (HU-K-34; see also: Amnesty International, 2016: 18; Kalman *et al.*, 18.03.2018), there is no official agreement between the two countries regarding the list, the authorities of the two countries cannot officially directly communicate about it, and its operation is not transparent (HU-K-16). The existence of possible abuses and drivers of vulnerability in relation to the Waiting List are analysed in chapter 3 of this study.

At the beginning of 2016, countries along the route restricted entry to everyone other than Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans. Afghans were subsequently also excluded (Lilyanova, 2016). On 18 February 2016, North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria signed the Joint Declaration of the Chiefs of Police in Zagreb, to facilitate border police cooperation and *“effectively manage migration flows”* (Group 484, 2016). Unique registration forms were issued to people arriving in North Macedonia, and stamped after transit by the other signatory countries. Newly instituted uniform entry criteria led to increased refusals of entry from Serbia into Croatia and consequently an increased number of people remaining without regular status in Serbia (RS-K-32).

Syrians who arrived in Germany during this period were not subject to being returned to the country of first arrival in the EU. In October 2015, the new German Law on Acceleration of Asylum

Procedures (BGBl. I: 1722) came into force, allowing for initial reception and distribution of asylum applicants among the *Bundesländer* (Federal States) according to the 'Königstein Key', a distribution quota that aims to ensure appropriate, equitable and fair distribution.⁴⁶ Officially, the entire asylum procedure should take place at a reception centre: medical analysis, registration of personal data and identity check, the asylum application, the asylum interview and the decision about the application (BAMF, 2016).

People on the Move

By 20 December 2015, one million people had been recorded as arriving by sea or overland in EU countries of first arrival since the beginning of 2015 (IOM DTM, 2016). Most people on the move were from countries in the Middle East, predominantly Syria and Iraq, and in West Asia, mainly Afghanistan (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; REACH, 2016).

According to data from the Greek Asylum Service, 13,187 people applied for asylum in **Greece**, 53% of whom were from Syria (3,490), Pakistan (1,822) and Afghanistan (1,720); while a further 1,003 were Albanian, 738 Bangladeshi and 661 Iraqi. Men and boys outnumbered women and girls by 3:1 and over 58% were aged 18-34 years. 2,487 children applied for asylum in Greece in 2015 (1,527 boys and 960 girls). Syrians, Yemenis and Palestinians had the highest refugee recognition rates, at 96-99%, followed by Eritreans and Somalians at 82-89% and Afghans, Iraqis, Sudanese and Iranians at 59-70%.⁴⁷

According to data received directly from the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees (SAR), in 2015, 20,391 people applied for asylum in **Bulgaria**. 22.6% of applicants were granted refugee status, 4.3% humanitarian status and 3% were refused, while 70.1% were suspended. SAR does not provide further information on why applications were rejected or suspended. By August 2015, 7,697 (60.5%) of asylum applicants were men, while 12.9% were women, 17.9% accompanied children and 8.7% unaccompanied children. 36.2% were from Syria, 20.8% from Iraq, 19.8% from Afghanistan and 3% from Pakistan. Syrians received refugee status or subsidiary protection in 99% of the cases and Afghans in 94% of cases. Only 43% of Iraqis were granted protection and no Pakistanis.⁴⁸

A key informant in **North Macedonia** referred to almost 800,000 people transiting during this period (MK-K-30), the equivalent of more than a third of the population of the country (see also: Avdi & Zdravkova, 2018). According to UNHCR estimates, by 1 July 2015, 697,228 people had entered at Gevgelija and transited through the country (UNHCR, 2016; MK-K-30). Although there was a prevalence of men, there was also a significant number of women, boys and girls (MK-K-02; MK-K-04; MK-K-19). According to UN Women, almost half of those travelling in late 2015 and early

46 According to Section 45 of the German Asylum Act, the Königstein Key (Königsteiner Schlüssel) determines reception capacities for Germany's 16 Bundesländer. See: www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/access-and-forms-reception-conditions/freedom-movement#footnote7_m7glarc. The EASY (Initial Distribution of Asylum-Seekers in Reception Centres) quota system functions according to the Königstein Key, determining the share of asylum applicants received by each Bundesland. The quota is calculated annually by the Federation-Länder Commission on the basis of the total population (1/3) and state tax revenues (2/3). On the basis of the German principle of federalism, responsibility for designing, financing and providing services for refugees is allocated among the three levels of governance: cities, Bundesländer and the national government, as well as Bundesland sub-regions. This results in a large share of responsibility being allocated to the Bundesländer and the municipalities. Due to their status, the city-states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen fulfil responsibilities as a Bundesland and as a municipality.

47 http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf.

48 www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_bg_update.iv_.pdf.

2016 were women and children (UN Women, 2016). Around 90% of the families travelling were Syrian, according to an interviewee from an NGO (MK-K-05), and there were also families from Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, according to an interviewee from the Red Cross in North Macedonia, “migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria and Senegal were predominantly single men” (MK-K-04).

A total of 384,481 people were issued with certificates of intention to seek asylum by the Government of North Macedonia from June to December 2015. Of those people, 207,398 were men, 65,076 were women, 93,892 were accompanied children and 18,115 were unaccompanied children. The majority were Syrian (214,266), followed by Afghans (94,912), Iraqis (53,862), Iranians (6,231), Pakistanis (5,416), Palestinians (2,158), Somalians (1,276), Bangladeshis (1,253), Moroccans (1,317), Congolese (514), Algerians (453), Lebanese (434), Nigerians (279) and others (data provided by a government representative at MARRI Regional Centre in October 2017, as cited in: Mircheva & Rajkovchevski, 2017). According to data received directly from the Management of the Vizbegovo Asylum Seekers Centre, in 2015 there were 1,900 asylum applications in North Macedonia, of which more than 65% were from men, around 13% women, 17% accompanied children, and just under 5% unaccompanied children.

There was a significant increase in the numbers of people transiting through **Serbia** from spring 2015, totalling approximately 815,000 people by the end of 2015. During October and November 2015, an average of 6,500 people entered the country per day (UNHCR, 2017). Among the 577,995 people issued with certificates of intention to seek asylum during 2015, Syrians were the largest group, at 52.8%, followed by Afghans at 28.2%, Iraqis at 13.3% and Iranians at 2%. Similarly to the other countries under study, in Serbia most people arriving were men (71.6%), while 26.6% were women and 1.8% were unaccompanied boys and girls (AIDA, 2016a). Just 124 people initiated the procedure to seek asylum in Serbia. 30 of these people were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

The Hungarian Central Statistical Office reported that in 2015 there were 177,135 registered asylum applicants in **Hungary**: 36% Syrians, 26% Afghans, 9% Pakistanis and 5% Iraqis. 146 people were granted refugee status, 356 were granted subsidiary protection, and six received tolerated status. The majority of the cases, 152,260 (86%), were terminated, probably because the applicants were no longer in Hungary.⁴⁹ 2,393 asylum applicants were detained in Hungary in 2015, mostly people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria and Syria.⁵⁰

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) registered 441,899 asylum applicants arriving in **Germany** in 2015. Regionally, Bavaria received the most applicants, 67,639 people, followed closely by North-Rhine Westphalia with 66,758, then Baden-Württemberg with 57,578, and Berlin with 33,281 people (BAMF, 2016a). There were 158,657 Syrians (35.9%), 53,805 Albanians (12.2%), 33,427 Kosovars (7.6%), 31,382 Afghans (7.1%) and 29,784 Iraqis (6.7%), as well as Eritreans (10,876), Nigerians (5,207), and Somalians (5,126). 69% were men and boys and 31% were women and girls, while 40% were aged 18-30 years. 47.8% of asylum applicants

49 www.ksh.hu/?lang=en. On issues with asylum procedures and identification of trafficking in Hungary, see: GRETA, 2018/13.

50 www.bmbah.hu/jomla/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu.

were recognised as refugees in 2015, 2% were granted other forms of protection and 32.4% of applications were refused (BAMF, 2016a).

The Eastern Mediterranean route by sea from Turkey to Greece, followed by the overland route through the Western Balkans, were considered safer and easier routes to travel than the Central and Western Mediterranean during 2015 (REACH, 2016). Many people were able to use public transport - trains, buses and taxis - , during this period to travel through Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia, or they travelled by foot, by bicycle or by car (MK-K-04; MK-K-13; MK-K-19; MK-K-27; RS-K-26; RS-K-35; Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2015).

There was generally no need for smuggling services for this section of the journey (MK-K-04; MK-K-27) and people who travelled through North Macedonia, from the Greek border to the Serbian border, often used the railway line as the main point of orientation (MK-K-13; MK-K-27). However, some people in Serbia saw this as an opportunity to make profits by organising people's trips as unregistered taxi drivers. Around 200 Serbian taxi drivers were accused of migrant smuggling in 2015 and 2016, because they were transporting passengers from Syria, Iraq and other countries within Serbia and charging high prices (RS-K-26; RS-K-35), even though they were not directly facilitating irregular entry.

Many people travelling were from Syria and had sufficient resources and the opportunity to travel all the way to their intended destination (usually Germany or Sweden) relatively swiftly. Organising the entire journey and paying for it in advance seems to have been more common in 2015 and early 2016 (MK-K-08; MK-K-15; MK-K-25). Based on the recognition rates in Germany and other destination countries, Syrians and others also had, overall, a higher chance of being granted full refugee status, or at least subsidiary protection, during this period.

Gradually, as entry criteria started to become more restrictive in late 2015, sub-routes along the main Balkan route changed. People started to also travel from Turkey and Greece to Bulgaria, and enter Serbia from there, as of October 2015. According to an NGO worker interviewed in Serbia: *"We were confused as to why some people chose to cross Bulgaria, when the straighter route went through [North] Macedonia"* (RS-K-09).

The journey was organised and paid for in different ways depending on when and where it was planned and initiated, and on the availability of funds. What is significant is that in some cases the entire journey was arranged in the country of origin and in others, different smugglers were used at different stages along the route⁵¹ (MK-K-07; MK-K-27). Syrians and Iraqis were reported to usually organise smuggling services from Turkey and not from their country of origin (MK-K-04; MK-K-27).

51 Prices for smuggling during mid-2015 were around €8,000 per person to get from Turkey to the Greek North Aegean islands (IOM, 2017a; REACH, 2016). During this period, generally the cost for transit through North Macedonia was about €10 for a train or bus ticket (MK-K-08; MK-K-15; MK-K-25). However, according to key informants in Serbia, due to border restrictions and because legal punishment for migrant smuggling increased in Serbia, prices significantly increased again in 2017 (RS-K-07; RS-K-16).

Phase 3: 'Closing of the route'

March 2016 – December 2017



The beginning of the third phase (March 2016 to December 2016) was marked by the EU-Turkey Statement and characterised by closures, restrictions and fortifications of borders in the five countries under study along the Balkan route. The number of people making the sea crossing from Turkey to Greece significantly decreased throughout the rest of 2016.

Policy Developments

The statement by the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States in relation to agreements reached with Turkey was issued as a press release on 18 March 2016.⁵² What became known as the EU-Turkey Statement was prefaced with: *“In order to break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk, the EU and Turkey today decided to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU.”*

The Statement included the following measures:

- All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands are to be returned to Turkey.
- For every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU ('1:1').
- Turkey is to take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration opening from Turkey to the EU.
- Once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated.⁵³

On foot of the EU-Turkey Statement, as of 20 March 2016, hotspot facilities in Greece were operated as closed centres for new arrivals to be returned to Turkey if they did not apply for asylum or if their asylum application was refused,⁵⁴ although the actual numbers of people returned to Turkey were limited (1,690 people as of 31 August 2018). People were not allowed to leave whichever Greek island they were accommodated on. The possibility to legally transit from Greece through North Macedonia and Serbia was effectively removed, and the Balkan countries cooperated to seal off the route (Sardelić, 2017). By the end of March, the Balkan route was 'officially closed' (Lilyanova, 2016).

In July 2016, the amendment of the Hungarian Asylum Law came to force, allowing police to

52 See: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-02/cp170019en.pdf>.

53 www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/pdf.

54 See: [www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-
registration/reception-and-](http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-)

apprehend people arriving irregularly who are found within 8km of the Hungarian border, and escort them to the Serbian border, without considering vulnerabilities or allowing them to apply for asylum.⁵⁵ This was later changed to cover the whole territory of Hungary (HU-K-08; Voynov *et al.*, 2017; FRA, 2018a; OHCHR, 05.07.2016). The Law does not consider victims of trafficking as vulnerable asylum seekers (art. 2 (k)) (see also: GRETA, 2018/13). In addition, Hungary issued Decree 41/2016, declaring a ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration’ for the entire territory of Hungary. According to the 2016 Hungarian Child Protection Act, due to the state of emergency, among non-EU children transiting or applying for asylum, only children under 14 are considered children (GRETA, 2018/13).

In Germany, policies started to move in a more restrictive direction from 2016 onwards, among other measures limiting labour market access for certain groups of asylum applicants, speeding up asylum, return and deportation procedures, limiting the freedom of choice of location of residence for refugees and increasingly accommodating asylum applicants in camp-like structures rather than in normal housing structures.

In May 2016 and July 2016, the European Commission presented a set of legislative proposals **to reform the instruments of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)**,⁵⁶ including the Dublin IV Regulation, the recast EURODAC Regulation, and the Regulation for establishing a European Agency for Asylum (replacing EASO), as well as the Asylum Procedures Regulation, the recast Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Regulation. These legislative proposals include the obligation for Member States to apply the ‘safe third country’, ‘first country of asylum’ and ‘safe country of origin’ concepts, and to use accelerated procedures for such cases.⁵⁷ Additional grounds for restrictions on freedom of movement and detention for asylum applicants were also introduced.

People on the Move

From March 2016, many people who had intended to transit along the routes to Western Europe became ‘stranded’ along the way. IOM recorded an overall total of 384,527 people irregularly arriving by sea and land in the EU during 2016, as compared to 1,046,599 during 2015.⁵⁸ The exact number of people stranded in Greece when North Macedonia stopped allowing people to enter was estimated at around 57,000. The majority were on the mainland, while around 8,450 people

55 Article 80/J (3) of the Hungarian *Asylum Law* and Article 5 (1a) of *Act LXXXIX of 2007 on the State Border*.

56 The CEAS consists of:

the Asylum Procedures Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)); the Reception Conditions Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast)); the Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast)); the Dublin Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person); and the EURODAC Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the establishment of ‘EURODAC’ for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States’ law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes (recast)).

57 EU Member States should declare inadmissible applications submitted by people who arrive from a first country of asylum or a safe third country within 10 days, and refuse applications by people from a safe country of origin within 2 months.

58 See: migration.iom.int/Europe.

were on the islands.⁵⁹ A large scale pre-registration operation was conducted during June-July 2016 by the Greek Asylum Service, with the support of EASO and UNHCR, to record the intentions of around 27,600 people who arrived during January 2015 – March 2016 to apply for asylum, family reunification or relocation (OECD, 2017a).

During the first three months of 2016, 5,595 people applied for asylum in **Greece**, a number that had increased to 51,053 by the end of the year. The proportion of men and boys decreased to 62.7%, and the proportion of Syrians almost doubled from 26.5% in 2015 to 52.3% in 2016. The proportion of Iraqis applying for asylum in Greece increased from 5% in 2015 to 9.4% in 2016. Pakistanis represented 9.2%, Afghans 8.5%, Albanians 2.8%, Bangladeshis 2.4% and Iranians 2.1% of the total. Men aged 18-34 made up 29.9% of asylum applicants and women aged 18-34 made up 12.9%. Children comprised 38.6%, as compared to 18.9% in 2015, with 1,978 unaccompanied children applying for asylum in 2016.⁶⁰

Bulgaria, on the other hand, received a lower number of asylum applications in 2016: 19,418, of whom 754 were granted refugee status, 587 humanitarian status, 1,732 applications were refused, and 8,932 were suspended. A far lower proportion of people were recognised as refugees in 2016 (6.4%), compared to 2015 (22.6%). Men continued to be the most numerous group at 40%, followed by accompanied children at 34%, unaccompanied children at 14%, and women at 12%. In terms of nationality, 44.5% were Afghans, 27.5% were Iraqis, 13.6% were Syrians and 9.1% were Pakistanis. Syrians had the highest refugee recognition rate at 94.7%, while the recognition rate declined significantly for all other nationalities: 97.5% of Afghans were refused, 96.8% of Pakistanis and 79% of Iraqis.⁶¹

Around 2,000 people were stranded at the Tabanovce accommodation centre close to the border of **North Macedonia** with Serbia, and 130 at the Vinojug accommodation centre in Gevgelija close to the border with Greece (Golubovska & Smailovikj, 2017; Oikonomou *et al.*, 2017). This caused challenges in terms of capacity: *“The Tabanovce Transit Centre had no capacity to accommodate all 1,500 people, and 500 were outside of the centre, in the border area between [North] Macedonia and Serbia”* (MK-K-05). Data received directly from Vizbegovo Asylum Centre indicates that there were 746 asylum applicants in North Macedonia in 2016, compared to 1,900 registered the previous year. 61% were men, 13.4% were women, 21% were accompanied children and 4.6% were unaccompanied children. They came mostly from Syria (184), Pakistan (118), Afghanistan (116), Iran (104), and Iraq (64).

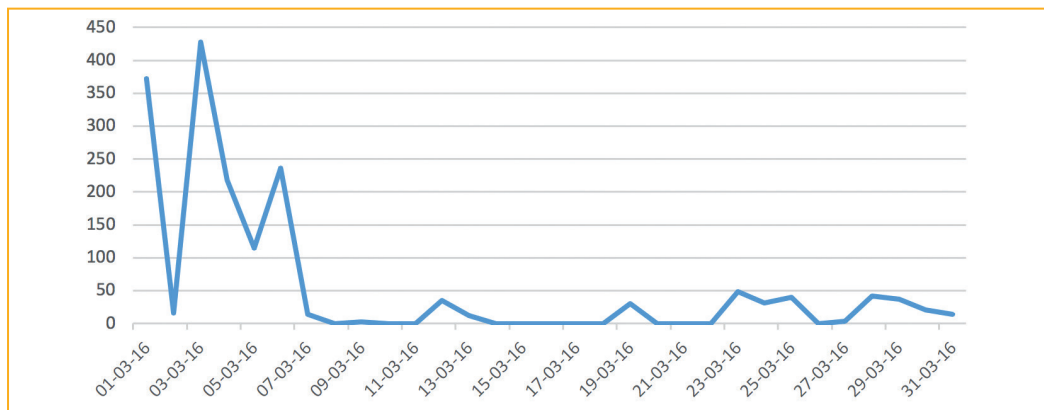
The numbers of people ‘stranded’ in Greece, North Macedonia and other countries while *en route* to Serbia, as an immediate effect of the negotiations for the EU-Turkey Statement, can also be deduced from the rates of people arriving in **Serbia** during March 2016, as set out in Graph 2 below.

59 European Commission (15.6.2016). Fourth report on relocation and resettlement. COM(2016) 416 final. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160615/4th_report_on_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf.

60 asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf; appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctzm&lang=en.

61 AIDA Country Report: Bulgaria, 2016 Update. www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_bg_2016update.pdf.

Graph 2: People arriving in Serbia during March 2016

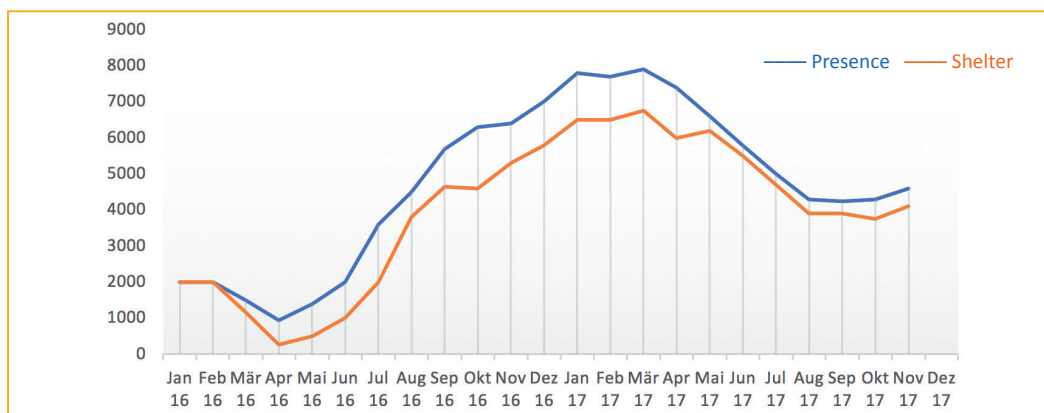


Source: Data from: data2.unhcr.org.

Compared to 2015, the number of ‘intentions to seek asylum’ in Serbia decreased from 577,995 to 12,821 in 2016 (Serbian Ministry of the Interior, 2017). Despite facing closed borders and the lack of the opportunities to continue their journey, the number of people who applied for asylum in Serbia did not increase. 574 (4.5% of those who registered intentions) applied for asylum and 42 were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection (AIDA, 2017b), the highest number since the Serbian Law on Asylum entered into force in 2008.

People also continued to arrive in Serbia throughout 2016, with around 2,000 people present in the country at the end of March, 10,000 people during summer and 7,000 in December 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). At this time, around 150 people were arriving in Serbia per day and most were not able to leave. It was estimated that around one-fifth of them were staying outside of official accommodation centres (BCHR, 2016; see also: GRETA, 2017/37). 43.6% of people with the ‘intention to seek asylum’ were from Afghanistan, 21.1% from Iraq, 18% from Syria and 7.8% from Pakistan. 71.2% were men and boys and 28.8% were women and girls.

Graph 3: People on the move in Serbia in 2016 and 2017



Source: Data from: data2.unhcr.org.

By the end of 2016, **Hungary** had reduced the number of asylum seekers admitted per week from Serbia from 210 to 100 (Székely, 05.10.2018). According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Hungary had 29,432 registered asylum applicants in 2016, a decrease of 83.4% compared to 2015. 154 applicants received refugee status, 271 subsidiary protection and 7 tolerated status. Hungary refused 4,675 applications and terminated 49,479 in 2016. There were more Afghan applicants (38%) than Syrians (17%) in 2016, and Pakistanis comprised 13%, Iraqis 12% and Iranians 4%. Most asylum applicants detained were, in descending order, Afghan, Pakistani, Moroccan, Algerian and Syrian.⁶²

Germany had a total of 745,155 first-time asylum applicants in 2016, almost a 70% increase in comparison to 2015.⁶³ This includes people who arrived in 2015 but were only registered as asylum applicants in 2016. North-Rhine Westphalia remained the federal state receiving the most asylum seekers (27.2%), followed by Baden-Württemberg (11.7%), Bavaria (11.4%) and Berlin (3.8%). 36.9% of asylum applicants in Germany in 2016 were from Syria, 17.6% from Afghanistan, 13.3% from Iraq, 3.7% from Iran, and 2.6% from Eritrea, as well as 12,709 people from Nigeria, and 9,851 from Somalia. 34% were women and girls and 37.6% were men and women aged 18-30 years. The total recognition rate increased to 62.4% in 2016 (BAMF, 2016b). Recognition rates for people from Syria and Eritrea were over 90%, while for people from other African countries it was 19.7% in 2016 (BAMF, 2016b).

Onward routes taken from Germany can also be understood to a certain extent from the transfers and requests for transfers of asylum applicants from other EU countries to Germany. In 2016, the most requests for ‘Dublin returns’ to Germany came from France (5,904 in 2016), as well as from the Netherlands and Sweden, followed by Switzerland, Denmark and Belgium (BAMF, 2016c). The high numbers of requests from Greece are for family reunification or humanitarian reasons.⁶⁴

Table 5: Transfers and requests for transfers of asylum applicants from other EU countries to Germany, 2016

Country requesting transfer to Germany	Requests for transfers, total	Agreement with transfers, total	Implemented transfers
France	5,904	4,233	695
Netherlands	5,828	4,948	1,686
Sweden	4,523	3,764	3,684
Greece	3,179	2,483	739
Switzerland	2,506	1,929	1,277
Denmark	2,451	1,833	1,109
Belgium	2,011	1,615	763
UK	1,163	713	85
Austria	1,138	872	382
Finland	663	588	644

Source: Data from: BAMF, 2016c.

62 www.ksh.hu/?lang=en.

63 www.europarl.europa.eu/external/html/welcomingeurope/default_en.htm.

64 http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dublin-stats_December18EN.pdf.

People's journey to their intended destination countries in Western Europe became more difficult and dangerous due to restrictive immigration policies and actions (Voynov *et al.*, 2017). According to the Frontex *Annual Risk Analysis for 2017*: "Although the total volume of migrants considerably decreased in 2016, it was also more difficult for border authorities in the region to stay abreast of the development of the migratory flows. The majority of people crossing the EU's external border illegally remain stranded in Greece. However, law enforcement authorities cannot always trace the whereabouts of groups that decided to bypass the border barriers to reach their destinations in Western and Northern Europe. Consequently, the migrant routes running through Europe, and in particular through the Western Balkans, are getting more diversified, dynamic and dangerous. Also, more migrants are now more likely to cross undetected" (Frontex, 2017: 20).

Border closures resulted in thousands of people being **stranded** along the way, especially in Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia (AIDA, 2017b; Group 484, 2016). People's status in North Macedonia and Serbia changed and a legal limbo was created. In the experience of an interviewee from the Red Cross, people affected by these changes experienced a "migratory calvary" (MK-K-04). People often used improvised vehicles to transit through North Macedonia (MK-K-04; MK-K-19). During 2016 particularly, there were more Syrian and Iraqi smugglers operating along the route, as well as Iranians, collaborating with nationals of transit countries (HU-M-05).⁶⁵

Phase 4: Less people on the move

January 2017 – December 2018



During 2017-2018, significantly lower numbers of people entered the Balkan countries, Germany and Italy compared to previous years. Overall, with the exception of Greece, there was a reduction in applications for asylum in the countries under study, as well as a reduction in the proportion of those people applying who were granted full refugee protection. Also during these two years, some people began to travel in the 'reverse' direction, not only towards Western Europe, and people attempted to take new – and often more dangerous – routes.

Policy Developments

During March 2017, the European Commission presented its renewed Action Plan on **Return**, based on the first action plan issued in September 2015, aiming to better enforce the Return Directive,⁶⁶ through increased operational cooperation with Frontex and increased use of detention. As of end 2018, the EU has 17 EU readmission agreements in force with countries of origin for the purposes of return, in addition to bilateral readmission agreements involving

⁶⁵ From early April 2016 onwards, the costs for smuggling services ranged from €1,500-2,000 per person from Greece to Serbia. Organising the entire journey and paying for it in advance seems to have been more common in 2015 and early 2016 (MK-K-08; MK-K-15; MK-K-25). Interestingly, the prices for the Eastern Mediterranean route decreased significantly after March 2016, because demand for smuggling services declined after the EU-Turkey Statement, compared to 2015. Prices for smuggling during mid-2015 were around €8,000 per person to get from Turkey to the Greek North Aegean islands, and one year later they were around €1,000-2,000 (IOM, June 2017; REACH, 2016). However, according to key informants in Serbia, due to border restrictions and because legal punishment for migrant smuggling increased in Serbia, prices significantly increased again in 2017 (RS-K-07; RS-K-16).

⁶⁶ Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.

individual EU Member States. Specifically with regard to the EU-Turkey readmission agreement, additional provisions entered into force in June 2016, allowing EU Member States to request Turkey to readmit people who entered the EU irregularly directly from Turkey, as well as Turkish people. The EU also agreed on a “Joint Way Forward on Migration Issues” with Afghanistan in October 2016, to develop cooperation in the area of return and readmission.

Humanitarian Visas

Recognising the need to increase the availability of legal channels for migration to the EU, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on 11 December 2018 with recommendations to the Commission on Humanitarian Visas (2018/2271(INL)). The Resolution pointed out that: *“despite numerous announcements and requests for safe and legal pathways offering access to European territory for persons seeking international protection, there is currently no harmonisation at Union level of protected entry procedures (PEPs) and no legal framework at Union level for humanitarian visas.”*

The Parliament requested the European Commission to submit a proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Humanitarian Visa by the end of March 2019. The Resolution should allow EU Member States to have the possibility to: *“issue European Humanitarian Visas to persons seeking international protection to allow those persons to enter the territory of the Member State issuing the visa for the sole purpose of making an application for international protection in that Member State”* (see also: Ballagooij & Navarra, 2018).

The European Humanitarian Visa is intended as a complementary measure to existing provisions for asylum applications and refugee resettlement. The Resolution further: *“Emphasises the pressing need for safe and legal pathways to the Union, of which the European Humanitarian Visa should be one, which is also especially important from a gender perspective since women are particularly vulnerable and therefore more exposed to sexual and gender-based violence along routes and in reception centres; emphasises that vulnerable economic and other types of dependencies often put women and girls in third countries in a situation where it is even more difficult for them than for men to safely seek asylum.”*

The 2018 **Greek** Law on International and Temporary Protection (Law 4540/2018) fully transposed the EU Directives governing the field of migration and the rights of refugees and migrants, including the recast 2013 Reception Conditions Directive. The Law also gave the Government the authority to return people to all neighbouring countries. In its recommendation to the Member States of 8 December 2016 on the resumption of transfers to Greece under the Dublin Regulation,⁶⁹ the European Commission recommended that transfers to Greece should be partially resumed as of

67 www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0494&format=XML&language=EN.

68 www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0494&format=XML&language=EN.

69 See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016H2256>.

15 March 2017, in order to return to the normal implementation of the CEAS.⁷⁰ However, only people who entered Greece after March 2016 were to be returned to Greece. During 2017-2018, fewer than 30 people were subject to Dublin returns to Greece.⁷¹

In July 2018, the **Bulgarian** Government adopted the Regulation on the Integration of Refugees, and in September, issued an order restricting freedom of movement for asylum applicants residing in accommodation centres (Amnesty International, 2018). In mid-2018, both North Macedonia and Serbia also adopted new asylum laws and further changed their policies. **North Macedonia's** Law on International and Temporary Protection was adopted in May 2018, and provides for the possibility of deprivation of liberty of asylum applicants, instead of running only open transit centres. **Serbia** adopted a new Asylum and Temporary Protection Law in March 2018, as well as new Law on Foreigners.

On 1 July 2018, the 'Stop Soros laws' (Act VI of 2018 on amending certain laws related to the fight against illegal immigration) came into force in **Hungary**, a series of changes in police, asylum and criminal laws, aiming to combat illegal migration in order to stop Hungary from becoming a "migrant state."⁷² According to these laws and a new paragraph in the Criminal Code,⁷³ organisations and individuals can be subject to prison sentences if they help an "illegal migrant" seek asylum. The legal measures are ostensibly based on the EU 2002 Facilitation [migrant smuggling] Directive, although they do not take into account the criteria of "for financial gain" (Art. 1.1(b) of the Directive; see also Art. 3 of UN Smuggling of Migrants Protocol) and "where the aim of the behaviour is to provide humanitarian assistance to the person concerned" (Art. 1.2). The dissemination of information materials to people on the move and asylum applicants is also criminalised.⁷⁴ The laws also allow the authorities to deport people whose asylum application has been considered inadmissible, even if they have appealed the decision.

Hungary also introduced a new immigration surtax law for organisations assisting people on the move. These organisations have to pay a 25% "special immigration tax" for any activities that put migration in a positive light or any activity related to non-EU migration. The revenue from this tax is to be used by the Government for border control.⁷⁵ Because of "the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded," including, among other issues, in relation to the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, the European Parliament initiated Article 7 proceedings against the Hungarian government.⁷⁶

70 Following two judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the EU in 2011, these transfers had been suspended because of systematic deficiencies in the asylum procedure and reception conditions: *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*, App. No. 30696/09 (Eur. Ct. H.R. Jan. 21, 2011): www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/ecthr-mss-v-belgium-and-greece-gc-application-no-3069609; Joined Cases C411/10 & C493/10 (Ct. J. EU – Grand Chamber, Dec. 21, 2011): <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?num=C-411/10>.

71 See: http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dublin-stats_December18EN.pdf.

72 Government of Hungary *Bill No. 7/333* amending certain laws relating to measures to combat illegal immigration

73 Article 353/A of the Hungarian Criminal Code.

74 Article 51 (f) of the Hungarian *Asylum Law*.

75 Hungarian Act XLI of 2018 on Amending Certain Tax Laws and Other Related Laws as well as on Immigration Surtax.

76 European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2018 on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2017/2131(INL)). www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0340&language=EN&ring=A8-2018-0250. See also: GRETA, 2018/13.

The **German** Government, having initiated border controls at the EU internal border between Bavaria and Austria in autumn 2015,⁷⁷ also initiated controls for people arriving by plane from Greece in November 2017.⁷⁸ The coalition agreement for the new German Government, which began its mandate in March 2018, provided for the setting up of new “AnKER” Centres (Reception, Decision and Return (*Ankunft, Entscheidung, Rückführung*) Centres). These first-line reception centres provide for the reception of newly arrived asylum applicants, decisions about asylum applications, local distribution of accepted applicants, and the detention of people whose application has been refused (CDU, CSU & SPD, 12.03.2018). People can stay at AnKER Centres for up to 18 months, and up to 1,500 people can live in each centre. Six AnKER Centres were opened in Bavaria in August 2018.

The new German Government also introduced accelerated procedures for people applying for asylum in Germany who had already travelled through other EU Member States, referred to as ‘secondary migrants’ in the German political debate. People found to have applied for asylum in a different EU country are to be returned to that country within 48 hours, while people who have been fingerprinted in another EU country but have not applied for asylum there are to be subject to an accelerated asylum procedure. Asylum applicants are temporarily accommodated at police stations near the borders. During this two-day period, it is determined whether the person already has family in Germany, whether they are a child and whether they are traumatised (Stalinski, 06.07.2018). Agreements with Greece, Italy⁷⁹ and Spain have been reached in order to implement these provisions (Hanewinkel, 2018). At the same time, the Government has promised to work on policies that allow for more legal opportunities to immigrate to Germany, guided by needs of the German labour market.

Since July 2018, Bavaria has its own regional authority for asylum issues in Manching, the Bavarian State Office for Asylum and Returns (Bayerisches Landesamt für Asyl und Rückführungen). One of the main responsibilities of the new authority is to accelerate deportations of people who are refused asylum and applicants who have committed crimes, including passport procurement, collective deportations and promotion of voluntary return. The asylum process is still managed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Also since July 2018, the Federal Police has been supported by the new Bavarian Border Police.

People on the Move

In **2017**, a total of 186,768 people arrived irregularly in the EU.⁸⁰ The number of people submitting asylum applications in **Greece** increased slightly, to 58,642. Syrians continued to be the largest group (28%), followed by Pakistanis (15.2%), Afghans (12.9%), and Iraqis (13.5%). Men and boys were more numerous than women and girls, submitting 68.4% of asylum applications. 28,635 people (48.8%) were aged 18-34 years, 19,777 (33.7%) were children and 10,230 (17.5%) were older adults, aged 35 and over. 2,460 of the children were unaccompanied, comprising 2,318 boys

77 See: www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-10/schengen-raum-grenzkontrollen-oesterreich-horst-seehofer-eu-aussengrenzen; www.tagesschau.de/inland/grenzkontrollen-123.html.

78 <https://griechenland.diplo.de/gr-de/aktuelles/-/1008006>. Detections of document fraud within the EU/Schengen area increased by almost 9% in 2017, mainly involving departures from Greece of Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Turkish and Iranians (Frontex, 2018).

79 www.tagesschau.de/ausland/ruecknahmeabkommen-103.html; www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-greece/germany-reaches-deal-on-sending-back-migrants-to-greece-idUSKBN1L21GV.

80 migration.iom.int/europe.

and 142 girls. Also, the number of applications for family reunification increased in 2017, reaching a peak of 7,455.⁸¹

As is evident from Table 4 above, in 2017 more people entered **Bulgaria** than North Macedonia, transiting from there to Serbia. In the first six months of 2017, two-thirds of the total number of people arriving along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes crossed from Greece or Turkey to Bulgaria (UNHCR, 2017b), because of restrictions on transit through North Macedonia to Serbia (RS-K-09). However, the number of asylum applications in Bulgaria in 2017 continued to decrease, with 3,700 first-time applicants, though due to the backlog, 14,414 decisions were issued that year. 804 people were granted refugee status, 900 humanitarian status, 3,048 applications were refused, and 9,662 were suspended. The refusal rate for Syrians 5.9%, but it was 98.5% for Afghans, 98.6% for Pakistanis and 88.7% for Iraqis. For other nationalities, such as Iranians, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis, Algerians and Turkish, the refusal rate was 100%. 51% of asylum applicants were men, 17% were women and 32% were children, including 9% who were unaccompanied children. Most unaccompanied children were from Afghanistan (64.1%), Syria (20.7%), Iraq (7.3%) and Pakistan (5.5%).⁸²

Case 2.1 – Migrant smugglers in Sofia, Bulgaria

A 28-year-old Syrian man interviewed in Bulgaria for this research had decided to reconnect with a man of a similar age, who he remembered had resided with him at a Bulgarian Refugee Registration and Reception Centre, and whom he had known for the duration of his stay in Sofia, Bulgaria. The man agreed to host him at his home, while he searched for housing. During this time, the man who was interviewed learned that his host was involved with a migrant smuggling network, providing accommodation in apartments in Sofia for people who had just arrived using smuggling services.

The smuggling network involved men, most of whom spoke Arabic and were from Syria and Iraq, and operated throughout the country, including facilitating departure from Bulgaria. Many of them operated in the Lion's Bridge neighbourhood of the city, often meeting at a local café. Many people smuggled to Sofia are accommodated in this neighbourhood to make it easier to arrange for their quick departure from the country. The interviewee spoke of an extensive smuggling network in the centre of Sofia, involving men from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. He claimed that this network of actors was connected with Bulgarian prostitution rings and with actors in Turkey, who coordinated with their counterparts in Bulgaria about the departure of migrants from Turkey to Bulgaria (BG-M-09).

According to the 2017 *CSOs' Report on Irregular Migration for South-Eastern Europe*, around 17,000 people entered **North Macedonia** during 2017, with the majority being Pakistanis (49%)

81 Greek Asylum Service: asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Greek_Asylum_Service_Statistical_Data_EN.pdf.

82 AIDA Country Report: Bulgaria, 2017 update: www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_bg_2017update.pdf.

and Afghans (24%) (Avdi & Zdravkova, 2018). Vizbegovo Asylum Centre had 156 registered asylum applicants in 2017, less than a tenth of the number for 2015. 120 were men, 10 were women, 13 were accompanied children and 13 were unaccompanied children. Pakistanis comprised 42.3%, Syrians 15.4%, Afghans 9%, Iraqis 8.3%, and Iranians 7.1%. An interviewee from IOM in North Macedonia assessed that in 2017: *“the numbers of Syrians are decreasing, and the numbers of migrants from Algeria and Afghanistan, together with Pakistanis and Libyans, are increasing. But also it is very important to mention that the initial wave had many families, many children with families, many women, but now, in 2017, 2018, about 80% are ‘single men’, meaning a man aged 18-30 travelling alone”* (MK-K-12).

At the beginning of 2017, around 6,500 people were accommodated in 13 accommodation centres in **Serbia**. In addition, an estimated 1,500 people were residing independently in Belgrade city centre and approximately 150 people were camping at two sites near the Hungarian border (UNHCR, 2017b). The total number of people in Serbia decreased to 5,417 in July, according to official UNHCR data, and to 4,688 by December 2017. The Serbian Asylum Office granted refugee status to three people and subsidiary protection to ten people.

During 2017, around 1,600 people entered **Hungary** (Székely, 05.10.2018). In early 2017, the daily quota for admission into Hungary from Serbia on the basis of the ‘Waiting List’ was reduced to ten people per working day (five each at Horgoš 1 and Kelebija border crossings) (HU-K-09; Voynov *et al.*, 2017). The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) met with the list coordinators for the Tompa and Rösztke Transit Zones in February 2017, who informed them that they were in touch with both the Serbian and the Hungarian authorities. They also informed the HHC that according to the number of daily places to enter Hungary, both lists were already full until the end of 2019 (Bakonyi *et al.*, 2017: 24).

By September 2017, 2,903 mostly Syrian people had been resettled from Turkey to Germany, and 1,152 people were resettled from Lebanon and Turkey to Italy, including Syrian and Sudanese people. No one had been resettled to Greece, Bulgaria or Hungary.⁸³ Furthermore, under the scope of the EU-Turkey Statement, 1,690 people were returned from Greece to Turkey (as of 31 August 2018). The majority of those returned were from Pakistan (39%), while nine out of ten (91%) of those returned were men.⁸⁴

In **2018**, the year during which the field research was conducted for this study, 141,938 people entered EU first countries of arrival.⁸⁵ A **higher proportion of people used the land borders between Turkey and Greece** in 2018 than in previous years. Of the 49,158 people who arrived in Greece during 2018, 16,657 arrived across the land border, as compared to 2015, when just 3,713 of the 857,363 people who arrived in Greece used the land border.⁸⁶ The increase in the proportion of people entering Greece by land reflects the fact that more people are crossing the Evros River in order to enter Greece from Turkey, a crossing that is significantly more dangerous than the sea crossing to the Greek islands. Also, the provisions of the EU-Turkey Statement do not

83 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0465>.

84 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/65485>.

85 <https://migration.iom.int/europe>.

86 <https://migration.iom.int/europe>.

apply to Evros, and people remain at the Fylakio accommodation centre there for shorter periods of time.

As of September 2018, 258 people were staying at the Fylakio centre, while 7,500 people were residing at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) on Lesbos, 2,676 people at the RIC on Samos, 2,018 on Chios, 1,400 on Kos and 595 on Leros. A further 17,742 people were accommodated at open reception facilities on the islands (1,284) and on the mainland (15,458), mostly in the Greek regions of Attica and Central Macedonia.⁸⁷

During the first half of 2018, **key informants in North Macedonia reported increased numbers of people using the route**, as compared to 2017 (MK-K-01; MK-K-04; MK-K-21; MK-K-23; MK-K-24). According to interviewees from the national authorities, it seemed like the beginning of a new wave, with significant numbers of people arriving in the country in July 2018 (MK-K-23; MK-K-24). There was a significant decrease in the proportion of people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. By the end of 2017, the most frequent groups comprised Pakistani and Iraqi men, and people from North African countries (MK-K-04). People also used alternative routes to enter North Macedonia, including through the Bitola region, at Lake Dojran/Doirani and at the Belasica/Bélles mountain range at the triple border between North Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria, and then through the Strumica region (MK-K-19; MK-K-23; MK-K-27; MK-K-30; MK-K-31).

As of 2018, the **daily quota for admission into Hungary from Serbia** (unofficially on the basis of the 'waiting list') was reduced to just one person per day. If a family of four was allowed to enter, then the border was closed for four days (HU-K-09). Indeed, according to the current situation and the procedure being applied, the last person who is on the list would have to wait ten years to get into the Transit Zones in Hungary (HU-K-16; HU-K-28; Kalman *et al.*, 18.03.2018).

Some people were also reported as having **arrived along the Balkan route to the Italian-French border at Ventimiglia** during the second quarter of 2018, particularly Pakistanis. According to an interviewee from Oxfam-Waldesians in the region: *"In recent months we have had many Pakistanis, though the Balkan routes. Normally they are fingerprinted in Slovenia, they enter at Gorizia [at the Italian-Slovenian border] and they arrive directly to Ventimiglia. They know that the Red Cross camp, in fact, has no specific legal position, so everyone can enter [even those who have not necessarily declared Italy as the first country of arrival]"* (IT-K-29). For this reason, Pakistanis are among the few people in Ventimiglia who want to formalise their residence in Italy. Bangladeshis and Iraqis also arrived and settled in Ventimiglia in previous years, having travelled along the Balkan route (IT-K-29; IT-K-30).

During late 2017 and 2018, people started to also travel in the opposite direction, from Hungary or Croatia through Serbia and North Macedonia, back to Greece (MK-K-01; MK-K-04; MK-K-06; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-11; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-16; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-21; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; MK-K-26; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-30; RS-K-08; RS-K-16; Avdi & Zdravkova, 2018). As described by an interviewee from an NGO in North Macedonia: *"now both directions are in use, from Greece to Serbia and the opposite, from [North] Macedonia towards Greece"* (MK-K-01). This may be for one of a number of reasons:

87 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66038>.

- for seasonal work in the harvests in summer and autumn;
- because they became separated from family members along the way who could not carry on and want to return to them;
- because they wished to return irregularly to their country of origin; or
- because they have not been able to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border to re-enter the EU, and therefore wish to return to Greece as the only accessible EU Member State.

This reverse movement was also noted in the 2017 reporting of CSOs for irregular migration in South Eastern Europe, describing it as a “*new trend of irregular backward movement of significant number of refugees and migrants departing Serbia for [North] Macedonia and subsequently to Greece*” (Avdi & Zdravkova, 2018: 19). Some people failed to transit Serbia, gave up trying and returned to Greece, “*to try again to find another way to reach Europe*” (MK-K-26). According to interviewees in Serbia, some were repatriated under the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return programme, while others chose to return to Greece (RS-K-08; RS-K-16). According to interviewees from IOM, they are often people: “*who have been stranded for a long period and who tried multiple times to enter either Croatia or Hungary*” (MK-K-12).

Another new development during 2017-2018 applied specifically to Iranians. From August 2017 to early October 2018, based on reciprocal measures on visa liberalisation for Serbians travelling to Iran, Iranians were allowed to fly to Serbia without the requirement of a visa. For some Iranians, this was a method of travelling regularly and safely as far as that country in order either to: take a trip as a tourist; remain in Serbia and apply for asylum; enter the EU *via* Hungary, Croatia or Romania from Serbia; or travel to Greece in order to purchase forged or fraudulent ID documents and then fly to Western Europe by plane (MK-K-04; MK-K-06; MK-K-08; MK-K-09; MK-K-11; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-16; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-21; MK-K-26; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-30).

According to a key informant in North Macedonia: “*From December 2017 until now we have had a 100% increase in migrants from Iran, coming from Serbia. [...] They travel from Tehran to Belgrade by plane. Then they legally transit through the Republic of Serbia, because Iranians do not need visas for Serbia, going down to Preševo, illegally entering [North] Macedonia, and they come to Kumanovo. [...] The purpose is to enter Greece, where they buy counterfeit Bulgarian passports; from there with fake Bulgarian passports, they go to EU countries*” (MK-K-04). With fraudulent or forged documents these people were able to travel directly by plane from Greece to Germany or another intended destination country in the EU to apply for asylum (MK-K-13). However, on 11 October 2018, a visa requirement for Iranian citizens travelling to Serbia was reintroduced.

3. Central Mediterranean route

Overview – Italy and the Central Mediterranean route

For decades, Italy has been the most important destination and transit country for the Central Mediterranean route, leading from African countries to the EU. Indeed, until 2015, Italy received the highest numbers of people arriving along all the migration routes to the EU. In 2014, just over 170,000 people arrived in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route, and around 63,000 people applied for asylum in Italy. The number of people dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean was 3,093.⁸⁸ All Eritreans, almost all Nigerians and 75% of all Somalians arriving in the EU by sea disembarked in Italy. The proportion was as follows: Eritreans 25.5%, Nigerians 14.5%, Somalians 8.1%, Sudanese 5.8%, Gambians 5.5%, Syrians 4.8%, Senegalese 3.9%, Malians 3.8%, Bangladeshis 3.3%, Moroccans 3% and Pakistanis 1.3%.⁸⁹

In 2014, the majority of people applying for asylum in Italy were from West Africa (Mali, Nigeria, The Gambia, Senegal, Ghana), with a smaller proportion from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Most were men and boys (58,703), with a far smaller number of women and girls (4,753). Unlike in the countries along the Balkan route, there were more unaccompanied children (2,505) than children accompanied by their families (1,745).⁹⁰ Of the total examinations of asylum applications by the Territorial Commissions (63,270), 10% were granted refugee status, 23% (8,338) subsidiary protection, 28% (10,034) humanitarian protection and 39% (14,217) were refused.

For the **almost half a million people who have arrived in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route since 2015**, various migration routes through West Africa from countries of origin such as Nigeria, Senegal, The Gambia, Mali and Ghana, Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, DRC), from Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia) and more recently from North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) and South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan), converge on Libya as the main transit country. **Libya** has been experiencing political crises, instability, conflict and lack of rule of law since 2011. Prior to that, many people from Sub-Saharan African countries had migrated to Libya as a destination country for labour migration. Some of those who have arrived in Italy since 2011 are people who had been working in the country, but decided to, or were forced to, leave due to instability and violence (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; IT-M-04; Morone, 2015; Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017; ICMPD, 2017; Healy & Forin, 2017).

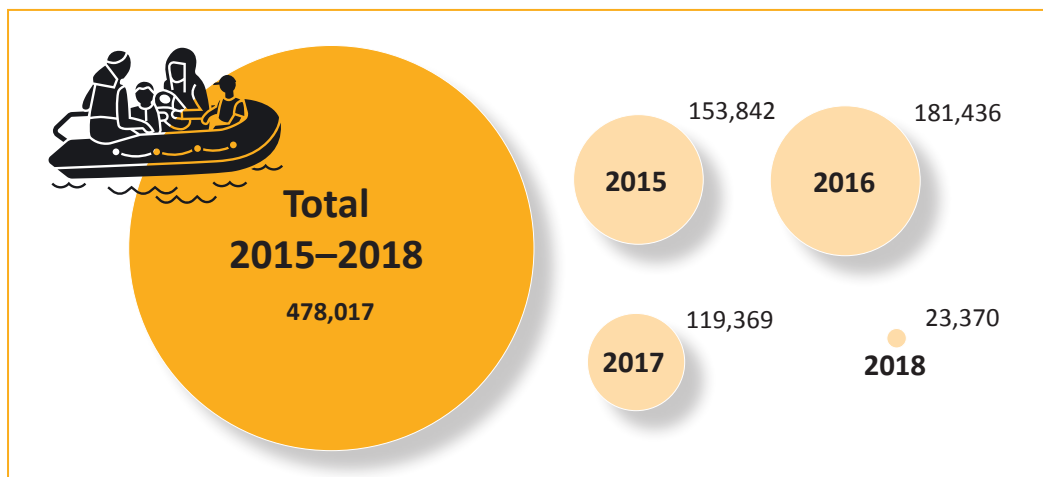
People travel by boat from the Western coast of Libya to arrive at Italian ports on the islands of Lampedusa and Sicily (Pozzallo, Trapani, Messina) and Taranto on the Southern coast of mainland Italy. They either apply for asylum in Italy, remain in the country without regular status or travel to the Northern borders to cross into France at Ventimiglia/Menton, Switzerland or through Austria to Germany.

88 www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/t31ede-rapp_prot_int_2015_-_rapporto.pdf.

89 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MonthlyTrendsofNationalities-ArrivalstoGreeceItalyandSpain-31December2015.pdf>.

90 www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/t31ede-rapp_prot_int_2015_-_rapporto.pdf.

Graph 4: People registered as arriving in Italy by sea, 2015-2018



Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: <https://migration.iom.int/europe> (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015>.

Italy had consistent arrivals of **West Africans** throughout this period, of **Somali**ans in 2014 and 2015, and of **Eritreans** in 2016 and 2017. Lower numbers of people from Ukraine, Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan also arrived in Italy and some applied for asylum there.⁹¹ The numbers of people arriving to Italy by sea peaked in 2016, before decreasing gradually in 2017, and dramatically in 2018, as a result of the policies and practices that are described below.

It is interesting to note that during the same period, a total of 123,982 people arrived in **Spain**, mostly by sea across the Western Mediterranean from Morocco. While there has been a steady decrease in the numbers of people arriving in Italy since 2016, the number of people arriving in Spain has steadily increased since 2015, from just 3,845 in that year, to 14,558 in 2016, 28,707 in 2017 and 65,325 in 2018.⁹² People arriving in Spain along the Western Mediterranean route in 2018 were mostly from Guinea (11.4%), Morocco (11.2%), Mali (9.1%), Syria (8.9%), Afghanistan (7.9%) and Iraq (6.7%), as well as Algeria, Côte d’Ivoire and Tunisia.⁹³

Policy Developments, 2015-2018 – Cooperation with Libya

The EU policy developments during 2015 described above in the section on the Balkan route also apply to Italy, particularly the EU Agenda on Migration, the Action Plan on Migrant Smuggling, the hotspot approach and the relocation system. In 2016, the Italian Government declared that the existing First Assistance and Reception Centres (Centri di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza, CPSA) would also serve as ‘hotspots’. Hotspots were set up in Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Trapani, Taranto and Messina (the Lampedusa and Taranto centres were temporarily closed in March 2018 and the

91 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MonthlyTrendsofNationalities-ArrivalstoGreeceItalyandSpain-31December2015.pdf>.

92 <https://migration.iom.int/europe>.

93 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

Lampedusa centres has since re-opened).⁹⁴

On 2 February 2017, Italy and Libya (Government of National Accord) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on cooperation in the fields of development, the fight against illegal immigration, human trafficking and fuel smuggling and on reinforcing the security of borders. The MOU was building upon the 2008 Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and the Libyan Government (under Ghaddafi), is valid for three years and can be renewed. In the MOU, the two parties committed to, among other measures:

- cooperation initiatives to support Libyan security and military institutions to stop people from crossing;
- Italian funding for development programmes in Libyan regions affected by migration, human trafficking and fuel smuggling, as “*income replacement*”;
- technical support to the Libyan border guards and coast guards and other relevant bodies from the Libyan Ministry of Home Affairs;
- completing a border control system in Southern Libya;
- upgrading and funding Libyan Government-run reception centres for voluntary or forced return, and training the staff of the centres;
- developing programmes to “*eliminate the causes of irregular immigration*”;
- supporting international organisations in Libya to carry out returns;
- development programmes in Libyan regions.⁹⁵

There has been widespread reporting of human rights abuses by the Libyan coastguard, militias and other actors in the context of the implementation of the MOU.⁹⁶

94 According to the European Parliament: “there are also several ports that function like hotspots in Brindisi, Cagliari, Catania, Catanzaro, Cosenza, Crotone, Lecce, Napoli, Palermo, Reggio Calabria, Salerno, Siracusa, Sassari, and Vibo Valentia”:
www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/

95 https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/MEMORANDUM_translation_finalversion.doc.pdf.

96 See, inter alia: Healy & Forin, 2017; Amnesty International, 2017; ICMPD (2017). Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) - Libya Case Study, op. cit.; UN Security Council (01.06.2017). Letter dated 1 June 2017 from the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1711623.pdf>; UNHCR, Altai & IMPACT (2017); GMDAC (2016); UNHCR (2017). “Joint UNHCR and IOM statement on addressing migration and refugee movements along the Central Mediterranean route.” www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2017/2/58931ffb4/joint-unhcr-iom-statement-addressing-migration-refugee-; OHCHR (08.09.2017). “Returned migrants are being robbed, raped and murdered in Libya. Opinion by Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights”. www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22039&LangID=E; ICC (09.05.2017). “Statement of ICC Prosecutor to the UNSC on the Situation in Libya”. www.iccpi.int/legalAidConsultations?name=170509-otp-stat-lib; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE (2016). A study on smuggling of migrants: Characteristics, responses and cooperation with third countries. Case Study 2: Ethiopia – Libya – Malta/ Italy. Brussels: European Commission; UNSMIL & OHCHR (2017). ‘Detained and Dehumanised’: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya; Amnesty International (2015). ‘Libya Is Full of Cruelty’: Stories of Abduction, Sexual Violence and Abuse from Migrants and Refugees. London: Amnesty International; Altai Consulting (2017). Leaving Libya: Rapid Assessment of Municipalities of Departure of Migrants in Libya. www.altaiconsulting.com/insights/leaving-libya-rapidassessment-municipalities-departure-migrants-libya; UNICEF Child Alert (2017). A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route. www.unicef.org/publications/files/EN_UNICEF_Central_Mediterranean_Migration.pdf; IOM & UNICEF (2017). Harrowing Journeys: Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation. www.unicef.org/publications/files/Harrowing_Journeys_Children_and_youth_on_the_move_across_the_Mediterranean.pdf; Heller, C. & Pezzani, L. (2018). Forensic Oceanography - Mare Clausum: Italy and the EU’s undeclared operation to stem migration across the Mediterranean: A report by Forensic Oceanography. Goldsmiths, University of London. www.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-05-07-FO-Mare-Clausum-full-EN.pdf

In 2017, the Orlando-Minniti Law (L. 46/2017) set up the Centres of Residence for Repatriation (Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio, CPR), to be distributed on a regional basis, based on the previous model of the Centres for Identification and Expulsion (Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione, CIE).

In January 2018, the Flows Decree (Decreto Flussi, DPCM 15, December 2017) was published, with the aim of allowing for the entry onto Italian territory of 30,850 non-EU seasonal and non-seasonal workers for 2018. The Security Law adopted in late 2018 provides for measures to combat “*illegal immigration*”, guaranteeing the effective implementation of deportation orders, and regulates the special cases of temporary residence permit for humanitarian purposes. It also defines rules regarding the revocation of international protection status in case of conviction for serious crimes and the revocation of citizenship acquired by people convicted of terrorism.

During 2018, Italy and other EU member states increasingly restricted the operations of search and rescue ships in the Mediterranean,⁹⁷ significantly reducing search and rescue capacity in the region. The deaths of 1,314 people were recorded along the Central Mediterranean route in 2018, comprising almost 6% of the number of people who arrived in Italy that year. In 2017, the percentage of deaths vs. arrivals was 2.4%.⁹⁸

On the Move from Libya, 2015-2018

153,842 people arrived across the Mediterranean to Italy in **2015**. The majority of Syrians and Eritreans who arrived by sea did not remain in Italy and often tried to avoid being fingerprinted for the EURODAC database, so that they could move on to other EU countries, often to join family or community members in those countries. 83,970 people applied for asylum in Italy in 2015, an increase of 32% on the previous year. The top ten nationalities of people applying for asylum were Nigeria (18,174), Pakistan (10,403), The Gambia (8,022), Senegal (6,386), Bangladesh (6,056), Mali (5,455), Ukraine (4,653), Afghanistan (3,975) and Côte d’Ivoire (3,115). 74,250 were men and boys, while 9,720 were women and girls. This included 3,959 unaccompanied children and 7,168 children travelling with their families. The Territorial Commissions examined 71,117 people’s asylum applications, with 5% (3,555) being granted refugee status, 14% (10,225) subsidiary protection, 22% (15,768) humanitarian protection, and 58% refusals (41,503).

During **2016**, a larger proportion of those who arrived in Italy also applied for asylum in the country, particularly West Africans and Eritreans, and more women and unaccompanied children. There was a total of 123,600 asylum applicants, an increase of 47% compared to 2015. The top ten nationalities were Nigeria (27,289), Pakistan (13,660), The Gambia (9,040), Senegal (7,723), Eritrea (7,472), Côte d’Ivoire (7,459), Bangladesh (6,818), Mali (6,483) and Guinea (6,057). Asylum applicants comprised 105,006 men and boys and 18,594 women and girls. There were more unaccompanied children (5,984) than accompanied children (5,639). The Territorial Commissions examined 91,102 asylum applications, of which just 5% (4,808) were granted refugee status, 14% (12,873) subsidiary protection, 21% (18,979) humanitarian protection and 60% (54,254) were refused.

97 See, for example: ECRE (30.11.2018). “The Struggle Continues for Civilian Search and Rescue in the Med.” www.ecre.org/the-struggle-continues-for-civilian-search-and-rescue-in-the-med/.

98 <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.

An indication of the number of people who transited through Italy to travel to Germany in 2016 is also provided by Germany's 13,010 requests for returns to Italy under the Dublin Regulation. Just 916 of these requests were implemented (BAMF, 2016c).

Table 6: Transfers and requests for transfers of asylum applicants from Germany to other European countries, 2016

Country requested for transfer	Requests for transfers, total	Agreement with transfers, total	Implemented transfers
Italy	13,010	7,572	916
Hungary	11,998	3,756	294
Poland	6,728	5,584	884
Bulgaria	4,899	2,643	95
Sweden	2,416	1,232	280
Switzerland	1,997	545	121
Spain	1,910	1,180	351
Austria	1,896	546	140
Norway	1,747	1,172	158
France	1,706	1,030	205

Source: Data from BAMF, 2016c

“In 2017, the profiles changed: for example, much fewer Eritreans and Somalians arrived, and almost no Syrians. Syrians do not arrive through the Mediterranean Sea anymore, they prefer the other route through the Balkans. Eritreans on the other hand are probably blocked in Libya: we know that they are still leaving their country and some of them arrive in Italy, but the majority are apparently stuck during transit. They are probably victims of trafficking there.”

- Interviewee from the Italian Red Cross in Sicily (IT-K-24)

An increased number of Nigerians and Bangladeshis arrived in Italy in **2017**, and an increased proportion of unaccompanied children. Increased numbers of Eritreans, Nigerians and Somalians also used the Central Mediterranean route to travel onwards and apply for asylum in Germany. There were 130,119 asylum applicants in Italy in 2017, almost the same as the previous year. The top ten nationalities were Nigeria (25,954), Bangladesh (12,731), Pakistan (9,728), The Gambia (9,085), Senegal (8,680), Côte d’Ivoire (8,374), Guinea (7,777), Mali (7,757), Ghana (5,575) and Eritrea (4,979). 109,066 of asylum applicants were men, 21,053 were women, 9,782 were unaccompanied children and 6,527 children arrived with their families.

The Territorial Commissions examined 81,527 asylum applications, of which 8% (6,827) were granted refugee status, 8% (6,880) subsidiary protection and 25% (20,166) humanitarian protection, while 58% (46,992) of the asylum applications were rejected. There was an increase

in the number of requests for returns to Italy under the Dublin Regulation of people applying for asylum in Germany, to 22,706, of which 2,110 were implemented.

Table 7: Transfers and requests for transfers of asylum applicants from Germany to other EU countries, 2017

Country requested for transfer	Requests for transfers, total	Agreement with transfers, total	Implemented transfers
Italy	22,706	21,264	2,110
France	4,417	3,156	530
Hungary	3,304	1,195	31
Sweden	3,264	2,326	498
Poland	3,248	2,887	939
Bulgaria	3,101	1,018	102
Switzerland	2,854	1,208	369
Spain	2,312	1,555	217
Greece	2,312	81	0*
Austria	2,132	1,029	323

Source: Data from BAMF, 2017; *Greek Asylum Service http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dublin-stats_December18EN.pdf.

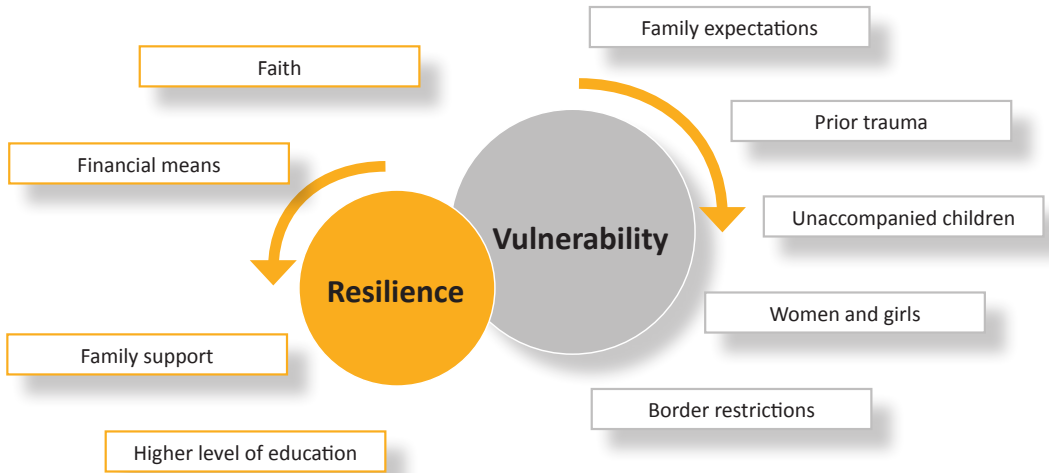
Since July 2017, there has been a very significant decrease, with just 23,370 people arriving in Italy throughout **2018**,⁹⁹ and a slight increase in the proportion of unaccompanied children and women arriving from Libya. The largest group of people arriving in Italy by sea in 2018 were Tunisians, followed by Eritreans, Iraqis, Sudanese, Pakistanis, Nigerians, Algerians, Ivoirians, Malians and Guineans. A total of 12,706 people have been relocated from Italy to other EU countries, under the relocation scheme, mostly Eritreans and smaller numbers of Syrians, including 5,446 people relocated to Germany and 10 people to Bulgaria.¹⁰⁰

As is evident in the following two chapters of this study, **the policies and practices applied by national governments and the EU during 2015-2018 in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes not only influenced the numbers and profiles of people travelling, and the geography of the journeys they took, but also had an impact on their resilience or vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses.** Particularly in relation to the circumstances of people's journeys and national responses to their arrival and residence, policies and practices determined to a significant extent whether they remained resilient to trafficking and other abuses, or whether they were affected by factors of vulnerability, rendering them more likely to be trafficked or subject to other abuses.

99 <https://migration.iom.int/europe>.

100 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/com_2018_250_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v10_p1_969116.pdf; http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Relocation-procedures-up-to-25-3-2018_en.pdf.

Chapter 3: Resilience and Vulnerabilities to Trafficking



1. Conceptual Framework

Conceptualising Resilience

A young Afghan man interviewed in Hungary for this study identified as a key element of resilience his mental strength and determination, as well as his hope for an improvement in his situation (HU-M-04). He mentioned a line from a song, which he listened to in order to remain hopeful:

“Your dreams will bring you forwards, your memories drive you backwards, what will you have left?”

Song: “Lams” (Touch) by Iranian rapper Bahram Nouraei, from the 2015 album *Eshtebahe Khoob* (Good Mistake).

Resilience is understood in this research as the factors that contribute to preventing human trafficking and other abuses from occurring. Throughout the study, a distinction is made between general resilience, which refers to protective factors that keep people safe from various types of risk and abuse, including trafficking, and specific resilience to trafficking. Many of the resilience factors that are identified refer to general abuses, such as sexual or physical violence, child protection issues, separation of families, poor working conditions and lack of access to basic needs and essential services.

The concept of general resilience refers to the more positive aspects of the experience of the migratory journey and focuses on those people who were not abused or exploited – and why that was so. It facilitates an examination of the overall experiences of people using these routes, and determines which factors help to protect people and prevent abuses, in order to build upon this resilience in policy responses. In some respects, resilience may be simply the opposite of vulnerabilities: if certain vulnerabilities are not present, then a person is more resilient.

General Resilience/Specific Resilience



However, many factors of resilience were also identified that are not directly linked to vulnerabilities.

General and specific resilience are conceptualised here as a starting point that can be enhanced, maintained, - or compromised by factors of general or specific vulnerability. The conceptualisation of resilience as the default condition is based on the fact that the majority of people travelling along the routes are not trafficked, and therefore the research identifies what factors cause certain people in certain situations to be trafficked. Trafficking is considered an aberration and a departure from the norm. The fact that the research is conceptualised in this way, however, should not detract from the fact, as is clear from the findings set out in this chapter and in chapter 4 below, that a large number of people have experienced severe human rights abuses in this context.

What is clear is that resilience to trafficking as it is understood for the purposes of this research is a concept that key informants from various sectors were generally not familiar with. Most stakeholders had not previously considered preventing trafficking by understanding resilience to trafficking as an aspect their work in anti-trafficking, child protection, asylum, immigration, law enforcement or protection of migrants' and refugees' rights.

Resilience can come from within, based on personal characteristics, or be determined by personal circumstances prior to taking the migration journey. This resilience is then either maintained or enhanced by external resilience factors during the journey, or compromised by external vulnerability factors, depending on the legal status assigned to people on the move, policy changes along the route, their interaction with migrant smugglers, the groups they are travelling with and their financial situation. In addition, the policies, responses and services provided to them in the countries under study can determine whether people's resilience is enhanced, whether they maintain their resilience, or whether they become vulnerable.

In terms of contextual resilience, the key factor is **the possibility of avoiding these migration routes altogether** and travelling regularly and/or by plane in order to avoid all of the vulnerabilities of the sea and overland journeys.

Resilience factors may relate to the individual level, the group level, the socio-economic context or the structural context. Individual and group factors are analysed in this chapter as personal characteristics and circumstances prior to embarking on the journey, and as group factors that are relevant during the journey, particularly in relation to the groups with whom people are travelling. Socio-economic factors are relevant throughout the experience of people on the move, from their situation prior to departure, throughout the journey and in the country of intended or *de facto* destination. Structural factors related to policies and practices are particularly relevant in the context of the journey and the destination country.

Resilience to Trafficking and Other Abuses in the Context of Migration Routes		
Level	Category	Description
Individual	<i>Strength</i>	A person has characteristics that enable them to exert force, or resist external forces.
	<i>Self-Sufficiency</i>	A person has substantial autonomy, making them better protected against external disruption.
	<i>Perceptivity</i>	Some means of intuition, communication, education or intelligence that enables a person to detect harm and opportunities.
	<i>Flexibility</i>	A person has the capacity to adjust and adapt while remaining largely intact.
Group	<i>Interdependence</i>	People within a group (family/community/informal cooperation) are interconnected and mutually supportive.
	<i>Diffusivity</i>	The ability to transmit or disseminate warnings, reliable information, or resources within the group.
	<i>Diversity</i>	Group members have diverse characteristics and capacities that can prove adaptable to different circumstances, needs and opportunities.
Socio-Economic	<i>Economic Security</i>	A person or a group possesses sufficient resources for their immediate and medium-term needs.
	<i>Personal and Health Security</i>	A person or a group is protected from physical violence and crime, and has access to basic healthcare.
Structural	<i>Support Systems</i>	The rule of law, crime prevention and support systems that are in place protect the person and allow them to meet their needs.
	<i>Appropriate Legal and Policy Framework</i>	A person can meet their basic needs for safety and survival without having recourse to criminal actors or engaging in criminalised activities.
	<i>Equal Treatment</i>	A person is not discriminated against or prevented from fulfilling their needs due to their age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, physical or mental disability, etc.
	<i>Abuse Not Tolerated</i>	The abuse of a particular person (e.g. child, asylum applicant, member of a particular ethnic group), including human trafficking, is not tolerated by the society in which they find themselves.

Adapted from: Godschalk, 2003; Norris et al., 2008; Ingram, 2014; Cancedda et al., 2015; ICMPD, 2015; Anđelković & Kovač, 2016.

Resilience therefore arises from **personal and group factors in countries of origin**, but may also be hampered by personal and group factors. The **circumstances and conditions of the journey** then determine whether a person remains resilient or becomes vulnerable, and whether that vulnerability is taken advantage of by abusers, exploiters and traffickers. The **circumstances and conditions of a country of transit, in the context of arrival and pre-departure**, are also relevant, as are **circumstances and conditions in an intended or *de facto* country of destination**.

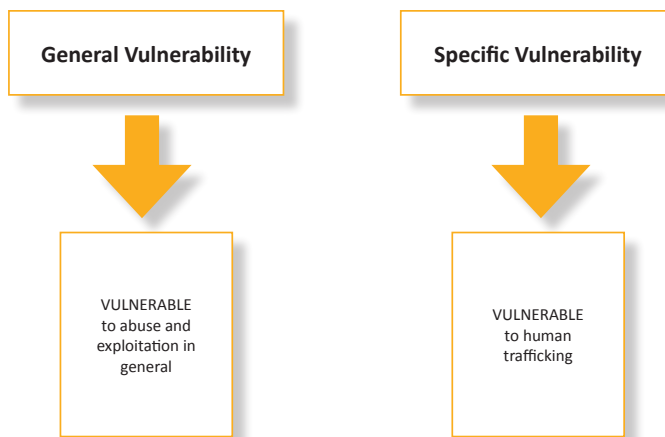
According to a human security paradigm, resilience must be built up on two interrelated fronts: protecting people from threats, usually the responsibility of the state, the international community and NGOs ('top-down'); and empowering people so that they have the capacities, ability and

information to ensure their own security ('bottom-up') (UN Human Security Unit, 2009). **Both the top-down and the bottom-up approach are relevant here**, as this chapter analyses factors of resilience determined by people's own capacities and resources and from their own perspective, through interviews with people who travelled the route, and resilience determined by the response of government and civil society actors to these people transiting through or arriving in different European countries, also from the perspective of these actors, through key informant interviews.

Conceptualising Vulnerability

The relationship between contexts of general vulnerability, specific vulnerability to trafficking, and indications of actual trafficking cases is understood as overlapping in the context of the study, where large numbers of people are experiencing general vulnerabilities. This is not to suggest that all of those affected by these factors of general and specific vulnerability are being or will be trafficked. Rather, in certain specific cases, situations of vulnerability to trafficking can present indications of actual trafficking cases, which, in turn, on further investigation by officials, may be determined to constitute the crime of human trafficking (ICMPD, 2015).

General Vulnerability/Specific Vulnerability



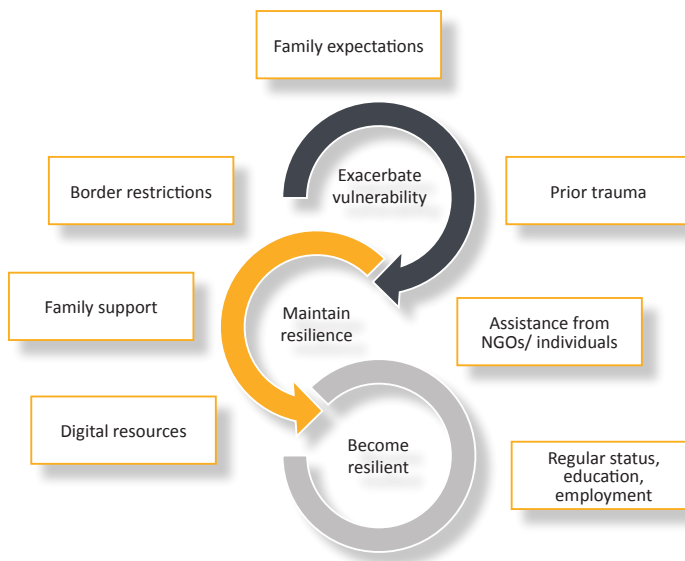
Like factors of resilience, vulnerabilities can be subdivided into different categories, at individual, group, socio-economic and structural levels. These categories may include personal, contextual and situational vulnerabilities (Innes & Innes, 2013), which are relevant in terms of the capacity of an individual or a policymaker to alleviate these vulnerabilities.

Personal vulnerabilities are the most difficult to assuage, as they may relate to age, gender or having a disability, and therefore it is not generally possible and/or desirable to change that characteristic. However, personal vulnerabilities *per se* rarely constitute definitive vulnerability to trafficking. What drives vulnerability is how certain situations and contexts specifically affect certain people, such as women and girls, or unaccompanied children. Indeed, **in certain contexts**,

those people considered vulnerable by state and non-governmental service-providers may actually become less vulnerable because they are granted access to essential services, while those not considered vulnerable, particularly adult men and sometimes also teenage boys, may actually become more vulnerable as they are often denied access to these services (see section 3.2 below).

Contextual vulnerabilities, on the other hand, may be the intended or unintended result of a policy, such as not granting the right to work to people with certain types of immigration status, and therefore a change in policy can significantly reduce vulnerability. Finally, **situational vulnerabilities** are those that a person finds themselves subject to due to a particular life event, such as an illness, pregnancy, or the outbreak of a war. Though situational vulnerabilities cannot always be avoided, building people’s general resilience can render people less likely to be negatively affected by such incidents. This allows for **an important distinction to made between vulnerability as an internal attribute and vulnerability as a result of objective circumstances** (Chandler, 2012).

Vulnerability in the Context of the Migration Journey



In reality, all these categories overlap and interact, and people tend to be affected by a number of different factors and categories of vulnerability at the same time, exacerbating their situation and their susceptibility to becoming victims of trafficking and other human rights or child rights violations. On the other hand, factors of resilience also interact and overlap, increasing the likelihood that a person will not be trafficked or abused in this context.

Specific vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses is conceptualised as the factors that contribute to trafficking taking place. However, vulnerability is not simply as the opposite of resilience. While in some cases, the absence of a vulnerability factor, or its opposite, can be a

factor of resilience, and *vice versa*, this is not always the case. Interactions between resilience and vulnerability factors are more complex, as examined in the next section.

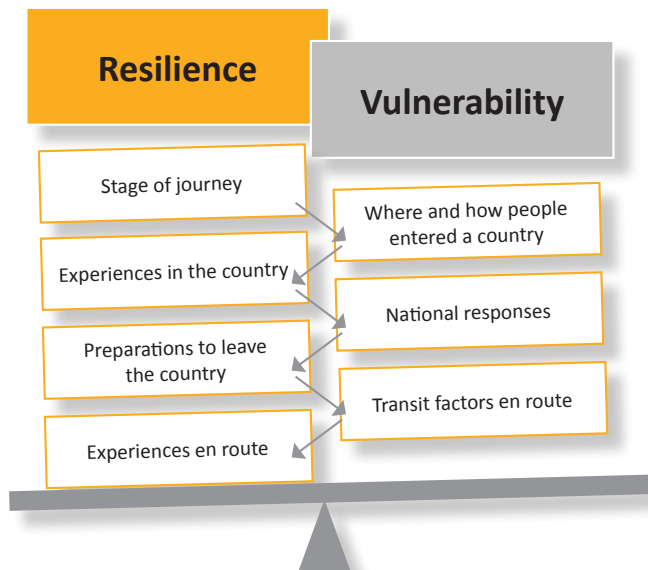
How Resilience and Vulnerability Interact

Factors of vulnerability and resilience vary depending on where and how people entered a country; what range of experiences they have while they are in a country; and how they prepare to leave that country to transit to another country. Vulnerability and resilience are inextricably connected, so in order to prevent trafficking and other abuses, vulnerabilities and exposure to different dangers should be reduced, on the one hand, and capacities to resist and recover should be built up, on the other (Anđelković & Kovač, 2016). Trafficking and other abuses take place because people are vulnerable, and exposed to dangers, and do not have the internal or external capacity to resist these dangers (Chakraborti & Garland, 2012).

The findings of this research show that factors of resilience and vulnerability:

- are dynamic over time – they do not remain static throughout the journey;
- affect different people in different ways - what is resilience for some is vulnerability for others; and
- are cumulative – they are determined by a combination of interacting factors.

Resilience and Vulnerability in Different Contexts



Factors of resilience and vulnerability are a process, rather than a condition (Frankenberger *et al.*, 2013). They may be static and constant over time (characteristics and overall conditions), or

dynamic, changing continuously (personal circumstances, policies) (Norris *et al.*, 2008; Ingram, 2013). For people travelling, events and contexts prior to departure, during the journey, in transit countries and in destination countries all have effects on resilience and vulnerability. Resilience and vulnerability may increase, decrease or transform. Resilience and vulnerability factors are negotiated, defined and re-defined throughout the journey. For example, how a person is treated as a child may constitute vulnerability during some stages of the journey, but resilience at other stages of the journey or at destination.

Resilience and vulnerability affect different people in different ways

“Not good not bad not true not false not black not white. It’s gray, this means the colour of truth.”

*(“Lams” from the album *Eshtebehe Khoob*)*

What is also evident from the research findings is that **factors of resilience for some people may constitute factors of vulnerability for others**. Indeed, most of the sources of support identified in a meta-study on young refugees’ resilience *“seemed to have a flip side”* (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016: 167). Furthermore, within a specifically vulnerable group, some members are usually more resilient than others. It is also important to note that resilience to one type of adversity may not necessarily always mean resilience to other types of adversity (Frankenberger *et al.*, 2013). So some people identified in the research as more resilient to human trafficking for certain reasons may still be vulnerable to other abuses and threats.

The transformation and dynamic emergence of factors of resilience and/or vulnerability through processes of migration is also embedded within the **social and cultural constructs** specific to people on the move. On the other hand, **stereotyped images** of refugees and other migrants among actors in destination and transit countries, together with ‘processes of othering’ may also contribute to resilience or vulnerability.

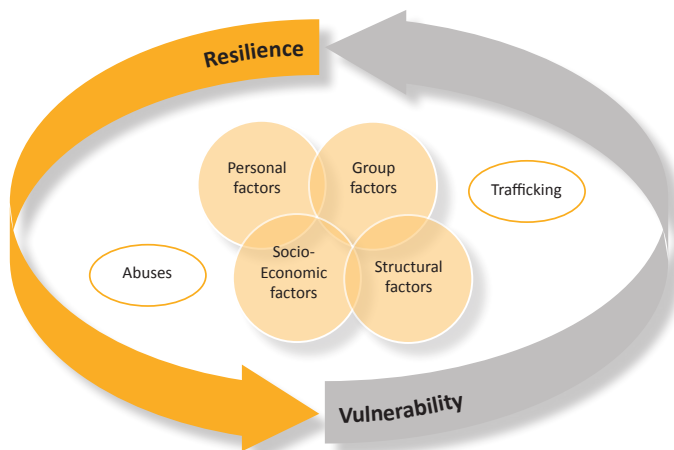
Resilience and vulnerability are cumulative, and determined by a combination of interacting factors

No one person is affected by only one factor of resilience or vulnerability, but rather by the particular **constellation of personal, group, socio-economic and structural factors** that are relevant to them (see: Cancedda *et al.*, 2015). Each person is simultaneously affected by a number of overlapping and interacting factors of resilience and vulnerability. These sub-categories are interdependent. The authors of the meta-study referred to above concluded that: *“we cannot consider refugee youth as either ‘vulnerable’ or ‘resilient.’ These findings revealed a dynamic process that fosters resilience in refugee youth and supported the ecological model, a context-driven approach that focuses on the dynamic interactions among various personal and environmental factors, to understand risk, stress and protective factors”* (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016: 172). Vulnerability in particular may increase with the length of the journey, as multiple abusive or exploitative experiences are layered upon one another.

For example, according to an interviewee from the German NGO Solwodi, a 13-year-old girl was living in an orphanage in an unspecified African country. She was approached by a man who said he loved her and promised her a better future in Europe. After a long and dangerous journey, she was sexually exploited in prostitution in Germany and subsequently sought help from the NGO (DE-K-08). She was affected by a combination of the vulnerabilities of being a child and female (personal characteristics) and having a deprived social and family background (situational vulnerabilities), as well as the lack of protective factors in Germany that would have prevented the exploitation (contextual vulnerabilities).

According to the research findings, **crime opportunities** in the context of the migration routes are in many cases intertwined with the need for migrant smuggling services among people on the move, and with the range of illicit activities of people engaged in migrant smuggling, the increasingly restrictive policy context and the fluidity between the categories of smuggled migrant, smuggler, trafficked person and trafficker.

Factors of Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking and Other Abuses



2. Resilience and Vulnerability: the pre-departure phase, the journey and the situation at destination

This section is organised according to the pre-departure phase, the journey and the situation in destination contexts. It first describes and analyses factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses related to the **personal characteristics** of people travelling, such as age, gender and health status, and their **personal circumstances**, such as levels of education, economic situation and experiences of prior trauma. The next section analyses factors related to the **migration journey**, particularly related to issues of legal status and border restrictions, and specific factors of resilience and vulnerability at different stages along the route, as well as experiences of migrant smuggling, the groups people travel with, and access to financial resources and information *en route*. Finally, the **situation in countries of destination** is analysed, in order to identify factors of resilience and vulnerability related to national responses in the countries under

study, in terms of legal status and the asylum system, and basic needs such as accommodation, child protection, education, employment, healthcare and integration.

Factors of Resilience and Vulnerability during Different Stages of the Journey

More likely to constitute Vulnerability	Factors of vulnerability and resilience Overlap	More likely to constitute Resilience
	Personal characteristics and circumstances	
	Prior to departure Throughout the journey	
Young age Women and girls LGBT Ill health/ Disability Country of origin context		Men and boys Religious faith Psychological strength Family support Family expectations Higher level of education Better economic context
	En route	
Young age Women and girls LGBT Ill health/ Disability Family expectations Country of origin context Prior trauma	Men and boys	Religious faith Psychological strength Family support Higher level of education Better economic context
	National responses	
Men and boys LGBT Family expectations Prior trauma	Young age Women and girls Ill health/ Disability Country of origin context	Religious faith Psychological strength Higher level of education Better economic context
	Contextual factors en route	
	Prior to departure	
Border restrictions Migrant smuggling	Border restrictions Migrant smuggling	Travel groups
	Throughout the journey	
Border restrictions	Migrant smuggling Travel groups	Regular travel Financial means en route Digital resources Assistance from NGOs /individuals

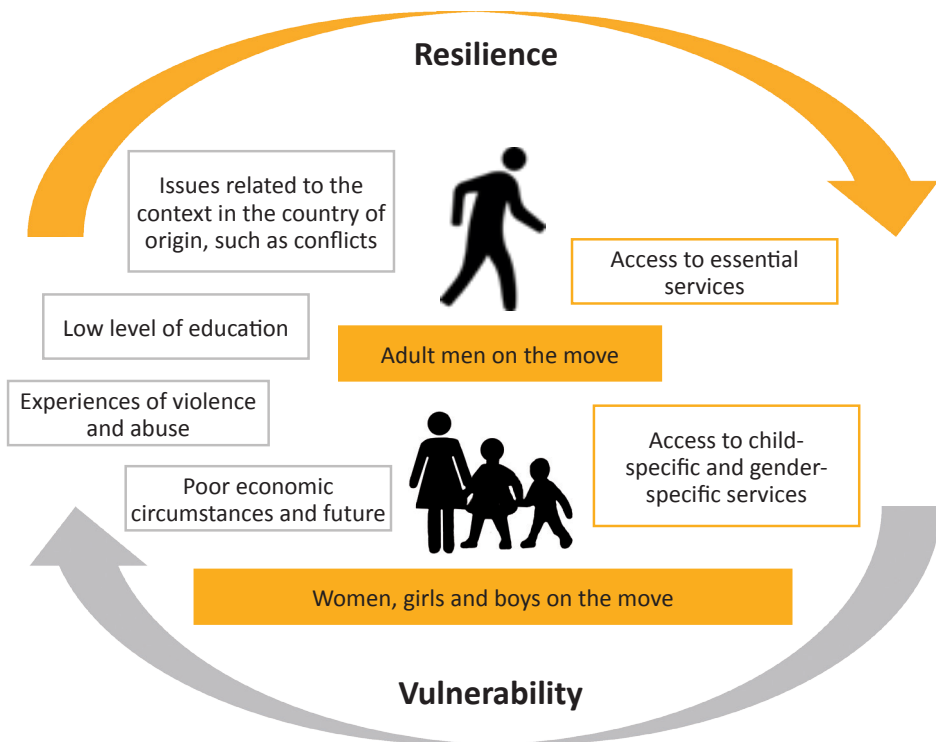
	En route	
Border restrictions Location-specific	Migrant smuggling Travel groups	Regular travel Financial means en route Digital resources Assistance from NGOs/ individuals
	National responses	
		Regular travel Digital resources Assistance from NGOs/ individuals
	Situational factors en route and national responses	
	Prior to departure Throughout the journey En route	
Unaccompanied children		Regular Status
	National responses	
	Accommodation Unaccompanied children Employment	Regular Status Education Healthcare Integration Access to information

2.1 Personal Characteristics and Circumstances

Personal factors are not in themselves sources of resilience or vulnerability to human trafficking. Rather, they interact with contextual factors of resilience or vulnerability in specific ways to increase resilience or exacerbate vulnerability. As the meta-study referred to above concluded: *“there are sufficient resilience factors beyond individual characteristics that can be modified by outside intervention or by policy”* (Sleijpen et al., 2016: 175). **Therefore, not all girls and women, or boys, are vulnerable in this context, and not all adult men are resilient to trafficking. Age and gender, including in the case of adult men, interact with other situational or contextual factors to cause someone to be more vulnerable, or more resilient, to abuse and exploitation.** Personal resilience may also be compromised by the obstacles and factors of vulnerability presented by the context of the migration journey. Nevertheless, issues related to age and gender are the vulnerabilities most frequently cited by key informants for the research, specifically, that children (particularly unaccompanied children), and women and girls are more vulnerable.

While many of the other factors of resilience and vulnerability are specific to certain locations along the route, certain phases of the journey, or the national context of the countries under study, personal factors of resilience or vulnerability are relevant throughout the journey, from the pre-departure phase in the country of origin or former residence to settling in the intended final destination. Personal factors of vulnerability may also determine the form of exploitation. Some personal factors are also motivations for migration, such as poor economic circumstances and future prospects, issues related to the context in the country of origin, and experiences of violence, conflict and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Resilience and Vulnerability for Girls, Boys, Men and Women



Furthermore, certain personal factors tend to correlate, substantially influencing resilience or vulnerability. For example, people who are highly educated tend to have better access to information and be in a better economic situation, allowing families to travel together rather than separately.

Correlation of Different Factors of Resilience



a) Children

Children are vulnerable to trafficking because of their lack of development and of life experience. However, the circumstances of their migration journey may increase or reduce that vulnerability. In the context of human trafficking, children are generally considered vulnerable *per se*. The vulnerabilities of children are implicit in the UN Trafficking Protocol, as the ‘means’ are not relevant to the definition of child trafficking because children are considered vulnerable by definition, so it is not necessary to prove that any particular means have been used to traffic a child (UNODC, 2013).

When interviewed about vulnerabilities to trafficking, the vast majority of informants mentioned being a child as a key factor, prior to departure, *en route* and in countries of destination (EL-K-03; EL-K-10; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-29; EL-K-32; MK-K-02; MK-K-04; MK-K-06; MK-K-07; MK-K-08; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-17; MK-K-20; MK-K-21; MK-K-22; MK-K-28; MK-K-32; DE-K-01; DE-K-03). Children are vulnerable due to their lack of development, awareness and life experience, and decreased capacity to resist traffickers and other potential abusers, as well as limited capacity to understand and exit an exploitative situation (EL-K-10; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-29; EL-K-32; MK-K-12; IT-K-03; IT-K-23). These factors of vulnerability interact with the contextual vulnerabilities of the journey. According to Frontex: *“Upon arrival in Europe, these children become the perfect target for unscrupulous traffickers, as their young age, inexperience, naivety and desire to start work or studies, makes them more vulnerable and easily manipulated, exposing them to a severe risk of THB and subsequent exploitation”* (Frontex, 2018: 37).

If children are particularly vulnerable, then it follows that adults are generally more resilient, as emphasised by many people on the move and key informants interviewed for this research. Adults are generally better able to avoid trafficking due to their ability to understand the situation and their personal strength in opposing exploitation (IT-K-06; IT-K-12; IT-K-10; IT-K-4). Nevertheless, not

every single child who travels the routes is specifically vulnerable to trafficking, and many factors of vulnerability are not a result of the fact that they are children, but rather of the circumstances of the journey and of the policies affecting both accompanied and unaccompanied children in transit and destination countries.

When appropriate child protection responses are in place in transit and destination countries, children's resilience can be increased and, conversely, adults who do not benefit from protection measures may be more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Furthermore, each child's vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses also depends on other personal and contextual factors, such as their gender, who they are travelling with, what status is allocated to them and which services they are provided with in countries of transit and destination.

For children, travelling unaccompanied is a particular situational vulnerability. Children may be sent by their parents to travel alone as a family strategy, whereby a family selects the child whom they consider best equipped to travel to the intended destination country, usually a teenage boy (EL-K-06; MK-K-24; MK-K-25; MK-K-29; HU-K-06; DE-K-03; DE-K-05). The strategy is either for the entire family to migrate, by subsequently joining the child, travelling regularly through family reunification, or irregularly, using migration routes; or it is to supplement the family income, with the expectation that the child sends money earned in the destination country. While both scenarios may cause the child to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, because of the risks of the journey and pressure to earn money in the destination country, if the child's family subsequently travel and reunite with them, this boosts their resilience.

b) Women and girls

As in the case of children, almost all interviewees for this research mentioned women and girls as being particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Women and girls are at a higher risk of sexual exploitation in prostitution in particular, as well as related abuses such as 'survival sex' (the exchange of sex for a good or service that the woman or girl needs) and other forms of SGBV. Women and girls are vulnerable because they are *"exposed to multiple and complex stress factors before, during and after their journey"* (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017: 9).

According to an interviewee from the BAMF in Germany, women and girls who travelled the migration routes to Germany reported experiencing various forms of SGBV in their countries of origin in their asylum interviews, including forced marriage, sexual exploitation in prostitution and the threat of, or actual, female genital mutilation (DE-K-17). These prior experiences of SGBV exacerbate the vulnerabilities to trafficking of the women and girls who have suffered them.

Some women and girls are subject to **harmful patriarchal norms**. The implications of gendered roles and expectations are that women and girls may have more limited life experience and less access to information, assistance and justice. Key informant interviewees considered that women and girls may have internalised these patriarchal norms, making them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses (EL-K-19; EL-K-22; BG-K-12; BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; BG-K-17; MK-K-07; MK-K-13; MK-K-17; MK-K-22; MK-K-28; HU-K-11). In addition, gendered roles and patriarchal norms may discourage women and girls from sharing their experiences or reporting abuses committed by family members or acquaintances and cause them to be affected by notions

of personal shame at being a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation (BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; BG-K-17; BG-K-19; MK-K-28; HU-K-11; IT-K-32).

However, despite the high numbers of men and boys travelling along the routes, and clear indications of the specific vulnerabilities of teenage boys in particular, **key informants tended to focus on women and girls when discussing vulnerabilities**. The information obtained and analysed in this study from the field research and the literature is characterised by presumptions regarding the resilience and vulnerabilities of women and men, and of boys and girls. Women and girls are presumed to be rendered more vulnerable by their cultural context, with references to patriarchal or traditional societies, while men and boys are considered more resilient. Indeed, according to a study on vulnerability on the Balkan route published in 2017, *“there is a tendency to view risk and vulnerability as female traits and strength and resilience as male traits”* (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017: 24).

Patriarchal cultural norms in the destination context also influence the issue of demand in the context of sexual exploitation. An interviewee from the NGO Solwodi in Germany considered that high social acceptance of prostitution in countries like Germany and Italy, easily available information on where to find people in prostitution, and the low rates of prosecution of traffickers, make trafficking for sexual exploitation profitable and low-risk (DE-K-14). This plays a role in the vulnerabilities of girls in particular, as indicated by an Assistant Prosecutor in Catania, Sicily: *“another factor, very unpopular to say, is that probably the demand for girls is a demand of the current sexual exploitation market. Clients are mainly Italian [men]. This is a crime that has the goal of economic profit. Evidently, girls are ‘more profitable’ than adult women”* (IT-K-23; see also: Rogoz & Kraler, 2017).

c) Men and boys

Men and boys are generally considered more resilient, yet they are also exposed to specific vulnerabilities and gendered expectations. In some cases, the presumption of resilience may in fact exacerbate their vulnerabilities. Understanding the particular gender composition of the groups of people who arrived in Europe using these routes since 2015 is crucial. In the countries under study, throughout the period covered by the research, around two-thirds of all those travelling the routes were adult men, many aged 18-35 years.

The majority of interviewees for the research considered that men were more resilient to trafficking and other abuses. As one key informant commented, the journey *“affects men differently from women and children. It is much easier to protect yourself [...] when you’re a man”* (MK-K-17). Men were also described as less vulnerable in the context of the Central Mediterranean route, particularly in relation to their capacity to recognise the violence suffered, and their strength to report their exploitation (IT-K-32), which is also related to gendered norms.

However, one of the driving factors of teenage boys’ and young men’s vulnerabilities to exploitation and trafficking is constituted by gendered expectations and pressure exerted by members of their immediate and extended families. Expectations relate to paying back the money spent on their journey, earning additional money and sending money to family members. Many men and boys need to send money back home, and ensure that they qualify for family reunification so

that wives, children, and, for unaccompanied children, parents, can travel safely and regularly to Europe. Those teenage boys and men who are already in the company of their family members feel a strong obligation to make money and find a way to support their families in European countries. An interviewee in North Macedonia recalled a Pakistani man who said: *“I cannot go back, I have to continue and get there, my family expect my help. I need to find a job.’ [...] It’s shameful if they come back home without succeeding”* (MK-K-12).

Men and boys are also vulnerable if they perceive that they have to prove that they can make it, and avoid showing weakness. This may lead them to tolerate an exploitative situation just to prove that they can endure it and because they feel that as males they should not seek help from others (DE-K-09). In relation to vulnerability to labour exploitation, an interviewee in Venice, Italy, working on the Anti-Trafficking Hotline, considered that *“young men are normally more prone to accept a condition of exploitation”* (IT-K-08). In general, among interviewees for this research who had travelled the route, it was difficult for men to speak about experiences of exploitation.

d) Sexual Orientation

Little information was obtained about people on the move who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) in the countries along the Balkan route and in Italy. However, in most countries of origin of people travelling along the route, homosexuality is criminalised and LGBT people are exposed to discrimination, marginalisation, rejection by their families and communities, and risks of imprisonment and homophobic or transphobic violence.¹⁰¹ Being LGBT was mentioned as a factor of vulnerability by key informants in Greece and North Macedonia for people in their countries of origin, along the route and at destination. They are at risk from state actors as well as from other people on the move (EL-K-03; EL-K-04; EL-K-19; EL-K-21; MK-K-01).

An interviewee from an NGO in Bavaria, Germany, explained that they counsel lesbian Ugandan women who fled the country because their lives were in danger (DE-K-07). Homosexuality is rarely discussed among asylum applicants in European countries due to the stigma attached to it, despite the vulnerabilities affecting LGBT men and women, and teenage children. According to one key informant in Germany who has worked with LGBT people on the move, they generally do not reveal their sexual orientation to other asylum seekers, especially while they are residing at accommodation centres (DE-K-15).

¹⁰¹ In most of the main countries of origin of people travelling the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes, consensual sexual activity between people of the same sex is illegal and subject to imprisonment (Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Cameroon, Libya, Algeria, Morocco) or the death penalty (Afghanistan, Iran). It is decriminalised in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali. See: www.equaldex.com.

Case 3.1 – Experiences of a gay Ghanaian man

An interviewee from a German NGO was providing support to a gay Ghanaian man. The man had been sent to prison and tortured in Ghana because of his sexual orientation. During the journey, he was careful to make sure that no one found out about his sexuality. As the key informant put it: *“If this is revealed, he is dead”* (DE-K-15). At the accommodation centre where he is staying in Germany, he cannot tell anybody that he is gay because he is afraid of the consequences. The interviewee explained: *“If gays and lesbians are outed, their chances of survival are very low. This is the same at the [-] reception centre”* (DE-K-15).

e) Health Status and Disabilities

People with disabilities, as well as elderly people, have specific vulnerabilities in the context of migration journeys. Based on data collected in North Macedonia and Serbia during December 2015 to May 2016, REACH concluded that due to the difficulty of the journey and its length, few people with disabilities travel in this context. As the report states: *“Large proportions of assessed migrants reported leaving family members behind, among them some of the most vulnerable individuals who were reportedly unable to migrate at all, either because of a lack of resources to fund the journey, or inadequate physical condition to travel without assistance due to age or disability”* (REACH, 2016: 14). Just 4% of the groups surveyed included an adult with a physical disability (REACH, 2016).

As noted by Human Rights Watch in Greece, people with disabilities who do travel along the Balkan route are often invisible and overlooked: *“Refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants with disabilities are not properly identified and do not enjoy equal access to services in reception centers in Greece”* (HRW, 2017: 2). Even though disability as a specific vulnerability makes the journey more difficult, sometimes due to the visibility of physical disabilities, humanitarian and field workers tend to give priority to these people when it comes to assistance (see also Paradox of ‘Vulnerable Groups’ below).

As well as people with disabilities, people with physical or mental health conditions are also more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. People’s health risks depend both on health issues in their countries of origin and health issues experienced during their journey. Prior to departure, during the journey and in destination countries, people may experience nutrition disorders, dehydration and psychological trauma, as well as consequences of physical assaults (Ministry of Health of Serbia, WHO & IOM, 2015; UNICEF, 2017).

f) Faith

“The trip was very difficult. I arrived with the help of God, who gave me strength.”

- 35-year-old Iranian man interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-01)

Religious faith is perceived by many people on the move as a general factor of resilience against trafficking, providing people with the psychological strength to endure the difficulties of journey - and, in some cases, religious communities provide concrete assistance. The majority of the 91 women and men interviewed for this study who had travelled the route stressed their religion or faith as a crucial source of resilience - not specifically resilience to trafficking, but as a source of strength to endure all of the difficulties of the migration journey and their experiences in destination countries.

Faith was also mentioned as a source of resilience by many of the key informants in the seven countries under study. Christianity, Islam and traditional religions play a key role in the lives of many people travelling along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes, as a form of personal psychological support and strength, promoting a sense of community and, in some cases, as a form of concrete assistance. In their meta-study on resilience among refugee teenagers and young adults, Sleijpen *et al.* (2016) found that religion provides moral guidance, understanding and concrete support, and helps young refugees come to terms with adversity. Religious beliefs also represent a source of psychological strength, continuity, distraction and a sense of control (HU-M-01; HU-M-02; IT-M-04; HU-K-23; HU-K-37; IT-K-28; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017).

An Iranian man interviewed for the research specifically referred to help from God in speaking about travelling through North Macedonia, when the smuggler transported him in an overcrowded van: *“It was a small van with 30 people. We almost suffocated, but God saved us”* (HU-M-01). Asylum applicants interviewed in Germany stressed that they only had the courage to take the journey to Europe because they believed that God would protect them, and they believed that they had made it safely to Germany because of the guidance and protection of God (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-07; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-13; DE-M-14; DE-M-15; DE-M-16; DE-M-17).

A key informant for this research, a Syrian child protection expert living in Hungary, described how his family had taken the boat trip from Izmir, Turkey, to Kos, Greece, and then the Balkan route to Austria: *“My mother fasted and she said that like this maybe we won’t die [...]. My sisters were praying as well during the entire boat trip [from Izmir to Kos...]. They pray a lot, they fast a lot even outside of Ramadan, my mum wakes up early and reads the Quran, and it gives them peace”* (HU-K-31).

Similarly, a Nigerian woman who was interviewed for this research described how she departed Libya for Italy: *“I prayed and fasted for ten days before I got on the boat. I left to sea when I got a sign that it was a good time to go”* (DE-M-07). Others became believers during the journey, such as a 25-year-old Cameroonian woman: *“I was not a believer or a practitioner [of any religion], but I was going to learn how to become one during this trip. [...] Now I go to mass often enough to give*

thanks to God” (DE-M-16). A man from a Middle Eastern country who was granted refugee status in Hungary prior to 2015, and now works as refugee expert with an NGO, described people’s journeys during 2015-2018: “God helps you – you get to the road; you don’t know what will happen with you in the next five minutes. Hungary is only halfway. It will be very hard after that as well, but not as hard as it was before. We don’t know who helps and how, but I think it is God” (HU-K-28).

On the other hand, **certain religious beliefs and traditional norms may make people who have been exploited or trafficked less likely to report their trafficker.** While faith and religious beliefs are crucial sources of general resilience, key informants in Bulgaria referred to religious beliefs and adherence to particular religious norms as a factor of vulnerability, preventing people from reporting trafficking, based on religious and cultural norms (BG-K-16; BG-K-17; BG-K-18). As set out in chapter 4 below, religious beliefs can also be abused in order to coerce people into trafficking situations and prevent them from exiting the exploitation, as is the case for many Nigerian women and girls from Edo State and surrounding areas in Southern Nigeria, who are trafficked to Italy, Germany and other European countries for sexual exploitation, taking advantage of traditional belief systems (*juju*) (IT-K-03; IT-K-05; IT-K-09; IT-K-12; IT-K-13; IT-K-23; IT-K-25; EL-K-04; EL-K-08; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-28; DE-K-04; DE-K-06; DE-K-07; DE-K-08; DE-K-10; DE-K-14; BKA, 2017; Sindani, 2018).

g) Psychological strength, motivations, hopes and future plans

“You must be strong, mentally strong. You can even decide to rely on criminal networks, to commit crimes to support yourself. Or you can decide to take another road, it is your own decision, it is up to you. If you have a goal it is easier. And your goal must be bigger than the everyday difficulties that you might encounter.”

- Ivoirian man interviewed in Italy (IT-M-06)

Aside from religious beliefs as a form of support, **people travelling the routes also rely on their psychological strength, motivations, plans for the future, and a general sense of hope, in order to carry on** (HU-K-23; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; de Haas, 2011; Flahaux & de Haas, 2016). Again, this is a form of general resilience and psychological support, rather than a specific factor of resilience to trafficking and other abuses, such as some people’s ability to be flexible about their plans and adapt to changed circumstances. On the other hand, if people’s expectations of the journey and of their situation on arrival in the intended destination country are too far removed from reality, this can represent a specific source of vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

Case 3.2 – Sources of resilience of a young Afghan man in Hungary

A young Afghan man had arrived in Europe when he was still a child. He found it difficult to identify anything that helped him, apart from his own mental strength and determination, and a rap song:

“The trip lasted six months. I have a long story, but I can’t explain it point by point, I don’t remember it like that. [...] There is a reason for this - nobody can help me, just me. I can only help myself. I couldn’t focus on my lessons; my heart was full of worries. You feel that your heart is older than your body. But I have to move on and continue. I am tired of being sorry. When I was 14 or 15, I was a very energetic and a happy boy. Now I feel like a flower that has withered away [...].

How did I cope? I listened to one rap song during the trip. The singer rapped:

‘Your dreams will bring you forwards, your memories drive you backwards, what will you have left?’ You must fight your problems and memories. This is the song, you can listen to it: ‘Lams’ by Bahram. And I swore to myself: I have to go, I have to carry on. I am alone and I will continue this way. I came alone from Romania. You have to believe that you can go on” (HU-M-04).

As a general source of resilience, **hope** is perceived by refugee teenagers and young adults as having prospects and expectations for a better future, allowing people to move from hopelessness to positivity and optimism (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016). An Iranian woman staying at a Transit Zone in Hungary described how her hopes and wishes for the future strengthened her psychological resilience: *“I don’t know honestly what helped us to survive. I have hopes, wishes, family”* (HU-M-03). Similarly, a 25-year old Syrian man interviewed in Germany described how: *“we had to adjust and move forward. You don’t give up because life is difficult, but try to move forward, because we have the inner strength that pushes us onwards. We have hope that we will be successful”* (DE-M-12). According to another Syrian man: *“When we lose hope in life, we are dead. It is hope that allows us to live”* (DE-M-13).

People’s **will and determination** to reach Germany and Italy in particular, and to build a life there, gives them the strength to deal with traumatic experiences and enables them to focus on the future (DE-M-14; DE-K-11; DE-K-15; DE-K-16; IT-K-23; IT-K-24; Sindani, 2018). As an Eritrean man put it: *“There is no choice, we have to fight, to continue to fight if we want to stay alive”* (DE-M-14). Among refugee women interviewed for Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer’s (2017) research about their plans for the next five years, ‘to study and work’ was the most commonly mentioned goal (38%), followed by ‘integration’ (25%). 35% hoped for ‘stability in life’ - an approved asylum application, living in their own apartment, financial and psychological stability and work and studies.

Having a clear idea of future plans and a structured migration project is important for general resilience (IT-M-06; IT-K-14; IT-K-19; IT-K-24), even if there are unforeseen obstacles. According to an interviewee from the Italian Red Cross, having clear objectives contributes to general resilience:

“the main resilience in my opinion is represented by the objectives that a person sets. This is not necessarily related to the level of education, but mainly to the personal motivation that motivates the person to arrive in Italy and to search for a future here” (IT-K-24).

This requires a person to have a **certain level of certainty about their situation and their future prospects**. According to an interviewee working on asylum issues in Hungary: *“people are more resilient when they get long-term assistance and when they understand what is happening with them, than those who survive from one day to another” (HU-K-36).*

Motivations and plans for the future as factors of resilience are further strengthened if people on the move also have the capacity to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and obstacles to their migration projects. General resilience has been defined in the literature on young refugees *“as a dynamic developmental process reflecting evidence of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity” (Sleijpen et al., 2016: 159).* Afghans tend to be more realistic regarding their expectations, and so if they find themselves stranded in Greece, for example, they adapt to the situation and stay in the country (EL-K-03). Many of the people who had travelled the routes and were interviewed for this research had exercised patience and flexibility when they were stranded, adapted their plans, or reduced their expectations in order to remain resilient (IT-M-03; IT-M-04; IT-M-06; IT-M-08).

One Ivoirian man had planned to travel to France, where a friend of his sister’s was living. On arrival in Italy, he changed his plans, according to the circumstances, thus avoiding any further contact with smugglers who he would have needed to facilitate his onward journey to France: *“I decided not to go to France to my sister’s friend, I don’t want to be a burden for anyone. I don’t want to depend on someone related to my family. I want to find my own way here in Italy. I have found many friends, good people, a great football team. I’ve learned good Italian. I am fine” (IT-M-06).*

Dealing with clashes between expectations and reality also a source of resilience – as one Sudanese man described: *“many of my friends from Sudan went back after a while, when they discovered that there was no job and no place to sleep, when they saw so many people like them sleeping on the streets” (IT-M-03).* This can prevent people from experiencing poor living conditions and situations of desperation that could increase vulnerability to trafficking. The decision to give up and return to a country of origin can be supported, such as by IOM Assisted Voluntary Return programmes (IT-K-10; IT-K-19), or be carried out independently.

“I think I was also contaminated by this fever of leaving for the European Eldorado.”

- 27-year-old Ivoirian woman interviewed in Germany (DE-M-09)

On the other hand, **personal expectations before departure can represent a vulnerability, especially when expectations are too high, or too detached from reality** (DE-M-09; IT-M-03; IT-M-05; IT-M-06; EL-K-10; IT-K-25). Role models of people from similar backgrounds who have ‘made it’ in Europe function as pull factors that encourage young people to embark on the journey

to Europe (EL-K-10; EL-K-14; EL-K-19; DE-K-06; DE-K-14).

Expectations that are not met can be detrimental to a person's mental health, particularly in a context where the migration journey may be a lot more dangerous than expected (IT-K-05). A key informant in Hungary referred to the effect of this discrepancy between expectations and reality on people's mental health: *"A lot of people talk about wanting to commit suicide, because they blame themselves: they wanted to come here, but they have realised what the reality is and they are very tired mentally"* (HU-K-20). As a Sudanese man put it: *"I think that all of us thought that in Europe there is freedom to live and respect for human rights, but then we discovered that is not like this"* (IT-M-03).

When these expectations are unrealistically high, this can be a specific factor of vulnerability. A Nigerian woman spoke about her expectations, and how they made her vulnerable to sex trafficking. When approached by a recruiter, she described how she was happy to accept the offer: *"I would pay back my debt once abroad, with a well-paid job. So I was happy. I was also scared, but I was happy to have a different future, to help my family, and one day to come back like a big woman, wealthy and powerful"* (IT-M-05).

2.2 Personal Circumstances

a) Family support and family expectations

An additional factor of general resilience and hope for people on the move is support from their families, providing a source of social and economic capital. On the other hand, however, in many cases people on the move are motivated to make the journey by the prospect of being able to improve their family's future, and are under pressure because of the expectations of family members who are still in the country of origin. While these family expectations may be a source of hope and endurance, they can also make people more vulnerable and more likely to endure suffering themselves, including abuse and exploitation, in order to ensure their family's wellbeing.

Social support from family, as well as from people from the same cultural background, peers and professionals, is a crucial source of resilience (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, some of the people who travelled along the migration routes and were interviewed for this research spoke of resilience as coming from family support, both in concrete terms (information, financial support) and psychologically (HU-M-03; HU-M-06; DE-M-19; IT-M-06; EL-K-10; EL-K-14; IT-K-03). Most of the West and Central African interviewees in Germany explained that they can only achieve their full potential in an interdependent relationship with family members (see: Mveng, 1985; Bimwenyi-Kweshi, 1981; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017) and interaction with family and community members is a source of resilience.

Case 3.3 – Sources of general resilience for a young East African woman

A young East African woman described her family of origin as a source of motivation and hope: *“My mum didn’t have an easy life when she was young. And that’s how she raised us. She went through a lot to raise us. And I always thought that I want to do something for her. If I give up now, then everything she suffered for is nothing. And looking at my siblings and her and the situation they are in and realising that they have nothing, they are women and all those kinds of things made me feel I had to do this. If I don’t die, then I can do it. [...] Even today people ask me: how did you do that? We see you and you are a happy person, you look okay, how did you do that? I say I know. [...] If it wasn’t for them, it was just for myself, I wouldn’t be doing anything. [...] My mother] always taught me to be strong. I think that is one thing I really learned from her”* (HU-M-06).

People who have family members and friends in their countries of origin who can send them money along the journey are more resilient (RS-M-20; RS-M-27; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-17; DE-K-17). This enables them to pay ransom money or other ‘charges’ they are requested to pay to militias or at border crossing points, allowing them to avoid being abused (DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-17). This is particularly important in the context where people are often robbed of all their belongings along the journey. As a young Ivorian man described: *“one day I spoke with my mother and I told her that my dream was to travel to Europe and become a football player, or to find a job there and help them out. So she told me that if this was my dream, then I had to go, she trusted me and she allowed me to go. I helped my brother who is selling cement and I earned some money, like €1,600. Also my sister gave me some money to travel”* (IT-M-06).

Family expectations and pressure exerted by the family of origin

“In fact, we are the sacrificed of the system. We do not come to Europe to get rich, but to help our families get out of poverty, and to educate the youngest so they can attend better schools than we did. [...] It hurts to see our parents or those we love suffer. [...] I know that this is the reason why thousands of young Africans like me come to try their luck here in Europe.”

- 35-year-old Senegalese man (DE-M-08)

Yet support from family can have a negative flipside. Particularly for people arriving along the Central Mediterranean route, but also for unaccompanied children arriving along the Balkan route, there are indications of intense family pressure exerted on people on the move, to arrive at the intended destination and send money home (HU-M-06; DE-M-01; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-18; IT-M-06; EL-K-06; EL-K-36; HU-K-30; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-11; IT-K-23). Providing for a better future for their family is a key motivation for people who travelled the routes, particularly

for people from Western and Central African countries, such as Senegal, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali (DE-M-01; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-18).

Many people do not make the journey to Europe primarily to better their own lives, but to support their families and communities in their countries of origin. When family members who send teenage children to Europe cannot afford the full cost of migrant smuggling services, then the children have to pay back part of it. When they arrive in European countries, these teenage children have to either find a regular job or be exploited (DE-M-09; EL-K-06; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-11).¹⁰² According to the director of the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Fylakio, Evros, at the Greek border with Turkey: *“We talk to the children daily, both us [Reception and Identification Service staff] and the other service providers here. There are regular psycho-social sessions, where we try to empower them, to provide them with the means to [psychologically] protect themselves, to not be passive and victimised. And then, those children talk to their families back home who say ‘I don’t care how you make that money’ and they fall into despair again”* (EL-K-36).

A child protection expert interviewed in Hungary described the encouragement provided by parents to unaccompanied children when they speak by phone or online, which is simultaneously a form of psychological support and a source of pressure. Parents tell their children: *“This is only a temporary state; you will have a good life again soon. You will be in a good place where we will all live together again. It is always hard at the beginning but you will get to Germany, which is a dream country. There you can invite us to be with you and we will be there together and we will cook for you. We will be together there like at home. You have to bear this situation, this man will pick you up soon, you will have a future, you don’t have to worry”* (HU-K-30).

Similarly, as a 35-year-old Senegalese man described: *“I never thought of leaving Africa. But in Senegal, almost every family has someone in Europe. And those who are gone are respected by all in society. Many parents encourage their children to try their luck in Europe and then ‘take care’ of the family [send remittances]”* (DE-M-08).

Difficult financial circumstances may be exacerbated by coming from numerous families and needing to provide for family members, particularly for older siblings (DE-M-09; DE-M-11; DE-K-10; DE-K-14; IT-M-01; IT-M-04; IT-M-05; IT-K-01; IT-K-03; IT-M-04; IT-K-20). The sudden death or illness of a family member may mean that a younger family member has to take over the responsibility for the family, including earning money. This was the case for a 30-year-old Malian man who became responsible for the family after his father passed away. In the context of the deteriorating economy in Mali, he saw no other opportunity to provide for his family than to go to Europe: *“Nobody chooses one day to cheerfully leave his country. Sometimes we are forced to, even pushed”* (DE-M-11). An interviewee from Catania court in Sicily, Italy, noted: *“it is very difficult to break that barrier of distrust toward the Italian authorities that is also corroborated by the obligation they know they have with their own families of origin concerning the debt and the promise to send money back home”* (IT-K-23).

102. On young Afghans specifically, see also: Monsutti, A. (2018). *Homo itinerans: La planète des Afghans*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

This phenomenon of sacrificing oneself and enduring suffering seems to particularly affect people from West and Central African countries, and described by Owono: *“This is the trap for many people living abroad [in the West] who, once here, think they can do everything for their family. Therefore, we will not recoil at any sacrifice. Every month, we transfer all of our income, we deprive ourselves of everything, because at that moment, we are aware that the real life is lived in our home country, and it is only there that people should feel good and be happy. The West remains in our subconscious a chimerical and transitory world, a nightmare that sometimes comes with extreme deprivations”* (Owono, 2017: 60, own translation).

b) Country of Origin Context

Various aspects of the political and social context in countries of origin also influence the vulnerabilities of people on the move, including the motivations for migration (fleeing conflict, seeking better economic opportunities abroad), interactions with public authorities in the country of origin and the treatment of marginalised groups. Kuschminder *et al.* (2015) define conditions in countries of origin as one of the principal factors influencing irregular migration. This includes economic deprivation, marginalisation and difficult family conditions, which are also decisive factors of vulnerability to trafficking.

People who migrate to Europe mainly to provide for their families, as set out above, and due to socio-economic disadvantage and deprivation, or come from a difficult family background, are more vulnerable to trafficking, particularly for labour exploitation, than those who have fled conflict and intend to return at some point to their countries of origin, according to key informants in Greece and Germany (EL-K-04; EL-K-10; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-21; DE-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-10; DE-K-11; DE-K-13; DE-K-14).

Lack of future prospects in the country of origin constitutes a vulnerability that makes it more likely that potential traffickers are trusted (DE-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-11; DE-K-17). For example, a 27-year-old Ivoirian woman spoke of how she had had a small business in a town in Côte d’Ivoire. The police tore down the market where she was selling her goods. Many young people were suddenly deprived of their sources of income, and were approached by smugglers who offered to take them to Europe: *“Many young people were careless, not knowing what to do, and the State didn’t offer them anything, so the ‘dream-sellers’ arrived and began convincing the young people. Most still had some small savings from their businesses and were looking for [opportunities for] reinvestment”* (DE-M-09).

In addition, many people on the move to Europe have had negative experiences with government authorities in their countries of origin, including the police and military, according to an interviewee from the umbrella organisation of anti-trafficking NGOs in Germany, K.O.K. (DE-K-10), or may come from countries where basic infrastructure is not in place, according to an interviewee from IOM in Hungary (HU-K-11). Lawlessness in the country of origin leads to feelings of hopelessness (EL-K-14). A 42-year-old Eritrean man who fled his country to escape compulsory military service¹⁰³

103 A peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia was signed in July 2018. However, as of the end of December 2018, all Eritrean women and men were still subject to compulsory military service for an indefinite period. This is the principal reason why Eritreans seek asylum. Although military service is supposed to be limited to 18 months, many people are conscripted for up to 20 years, and are assigned to civilian roles, in some cases constituting forced labour. See: Amnesty International, 2015. *Just Deserters: Why Indefinite National Service in Eritrea has Created a Generation of Refugees*. London: Amnesty International Secretariat. www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR6429302015ENGLISH.PDF.

spoke about his country of origin: *“It is not possible to question what is wrong in society; you cannot try to ask something about your future, about the political situation, to claim your rights. You don’t have the right to ask about anything; if you try to ask, they will put you in prison”* (DE-M-14).

This leads to general distrust of public institutions and may also prevent people from accessing help and support in countries of transit and destination, and reporting any cases of trafficking (DE-M-03; DE-K-10; BKA, 2018). Furthermore, justice systems in some countries of origin of people using the routes are undermined by corruption and lack of transparency. A 29-year-old Nigerian woman, when asked if she had reported her case of domestic violence to the police in Nigeria, replied: *“Oh no, I cannot go to the police, they will never help me. I went to ‘my people’ [her extended family] to ask them for help”* (DE-M-07).

Finally, vulnerability due to the marginalised position of certain ethnic groups in their countries of origin can be perpetuated during the migration journey and drive vulnerability (EL-K-03; EL-K-21; MK-K-01; MK-K-05; MK-K-06; HU-K-23). This is particularly the case for Hazara people from Afghanistan (EL-K-03; MK-K-05; HU-K-06; HU-K-23). A key informant in Hungary described the situation of Hazara people: *“They are a persecuted ethnic group [...]. After leaving Afghanistan, many of them went to Iran, in the background they always felt persecuted and that Afghanistan was never theirs”* (HU-K-23). However, the interviewee also considered this a source of resilience, making these people more open and better able to integrate in Hungary. Although no specific information was found in the research, such vulnerabilities based on ethnic belonging also apply to other ethnic groups, such as Iraqi Yazidis (Sindani, 2018).

c) Prior trauma

“The worst thing is that when you are a migrant, you face things that kill you from the inside and from the outside.”

– 18-year-old Afghan man (HU-M-05)

While many of the factors of vulnerability to trafficking affecting people on the move relate to the journey, as analysed later in this chapter, some people’s personal resilience is compromised by traumatic experiences prior to departure. This traumatisation renders people more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses, which may then be exacerbated by subsequent trauma experienced during the journey (EL-K-13; EL-K-24; HU-K-23; IT-K-05; Barna & Gyulai, 2016; ICMPD, 2015), leaving people with reduced psychological resources to resist exploitation and abuse and more likely to rely on criminal networks for travel, accommodation and finding employment.

The trauma that some people have experienced before leaving their countries of origin or former residence includes: armed conflict; physical violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors; domestic violence; psychological, physical and sexual abuse in childhood; and SGBV. As a social worker interviewed for this research in Hungary described: *“In our art therapy sessions children always draw windowless houses and flags on the house. Almost every child’s drawing included*

flowers, airplanes and guns" (HU-K-06). Such experiences may contribute to the decision to leave the country, as well as being factors of vulnerability during the journey and on arrival in countries of destination.

Many people who travel along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes to Europe have left their countries primarily or partly because of armed conflicts in their countries of origin (EL-K-04; EL-K-10; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-21; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; DE-M-11; DE-M-12; DE-M-13; DE-M-14; DE-M-15; DE-M-19; ICMPD, 2015). For many asylum applicants, the fact that their country of origin is experiencing conflict and insecurity is the grounds for their application, and this situation also makes them more vulnerable because of traumatic experiences as a result of these conflicts. In addition, people who come to Europe from areas other than their origin countries are particularly vulnerable, as they may have been in a protracted situation of displacement, with traumatic experiences related to that context, such as Afghans who had been living in Iran, Syrians in Lebanon or Turkey, and Eritreans in Ethiopia (REACH, 2016; ICMPD, 2015).

Most of the women interviewed in Germany by Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer (2017) had fled their countries due to danger to their lives, war and terrorism, particularly women from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Women also fled their countries due to fear of kidnapping and torture, honour killings, SGBV and political persecution, particularly women from Horn of Africa countries. Many Afghan children in particular have experienced the violent death of family members, physical abuse or the threat of violence, or exploitation in armed combat as child soldiers, sexual exploitation, or forced marriage. A key informant in Hungary described one boy's experiences: *"A young Afghan boy survived brutal things during his journey and even before that at home, in the time of the Taliban. Talib fighters appeared in his village and a male member of the family died: the uncle or the father or the brother. According to their culture, the eldest boy has to take revenge. Revenge is a dangerous thing because suddenly the avenger, or the person who is supposed to be the avenger, becomes a target. In this case the whole family puts their money together for him to prepare his escape"* (HU-K-20).

Domestic and sexual violence, both prior to departure from the country of origin and *en route*, were also reported (EL-K-03; EL-K-13; EL-K-24; HU-K-02; HU-K-06; HU-K-14; HU-K-27; HU-K-31; HU-K-35; DE-M-07; DE-K-04; DE-K-10; DE-K-13; DE-K-14; IT-K-04; Marković & Cvejić, 2017; Oxfam, 2016; UNHCR, 2017a). In research conducted by the Serbian NGO Atina, 65% of female participants of different nationalities had experienced some kind of physical violence in their countries of origin or in Serbia; 24% experienced sexual violence, and one of the participants was seven years old when she got married (Marković & Cvejić, 2017). The fact that some women and girls are at risk of forced marriage or genital mutilation or are affected by violence or sexual exploitation in their countries of origin may cause them to want to leave their countries at any cost (DE-M-07; DE-K-13).

One case described by an interviewee in Hungary was of a young East African woman who had been raped in her country of origin. Her father and other family members blamed the woman for the shame brought upon the family by the rape, and so she escaped with the help of her mother (HU-K-02). Experiences of rape and other forms of sexual abuse make women and girls particularly vulnerable to repeated sexual exploitation (DE-K-04; DE-K-10; DE-K-14).

Some people travelling the migration routes have already been exposed to exploitation and human trafficking prior to their journey (Forin & Healy, 2018), and in some cases this was their reason for leaving. These prior experiences make people more vulnerable to being trafficked again. Trafficked people who escape traffickers may fall victim to trafficking again, particularly Nigerian girls and young women (DE-K-04; DE-K-07; DE-K-14).

d) Education and Information

A person's general level of education, qualifications and literacy skills are also a determining factor for resilience, as well as risk awareness and general life experience. This also facilitates access to essential information – including through online sources –, reducing reliance on smugglers and other illicit actors. On the other hand, people with a lower level of access to education and who are less informed are generally more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.

UNHCR conducted a survey on Syrians who arrived in Greece between April and September 2015, who had a very high level of education (86% secondary or university education level) (UNHCR, 2015a). The educational level of people on the move was surveyed in North Macedonia and Serbia in 2015 and 2016 for the REACH report, which showed that most had completed primary or secondary school, while a quarter had no education (REACH, 2016).

Of over 5,200 people surveyed online by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), who had arrived in the last five years in Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Sweden, most had a high level of education: 25.4% had 17 years or more of education, 12.6% had 16 years and just 2.3% had no education at all (ENAR, 2018). Among over 600 women interviewed who applied for asylum in Germany, 83% had completed primary school or higher levels, while 12% of the women had started or completed vocational training, 5% were university students, 9% had completed their university studies, and 1% had obtained a doctorate (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017).

Those who arrived in Europe before the end of 2015 tended to have higher educational levels (RS-K-06; RS-K-28; RS-K-32; IOM, 2017a; REACH, 2016) and were therefore more resilient. REACH noted that levels of education were lower among people on the move in North Macedonia and Serbia after April 2016, positing that this was related to lower costs associated with the journey at that time: *“It is possible that this general decrease is related to an overall trend in increasing vulnerability, whereby poorer families, who were least able to access education in their countries of origin or displacement, were unable to travel to Europe earlier [before summer 2015], when the journey was more expensive”* (REACH, 2016: 15).

Education is a crucial factor of resilience to trafficking and abuse (DE-M-04; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-14; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-28; MK-K-04; MK-K-19; MK-K-25; MK-K-28; MK-K-31; DE-K-03; DE-K-07; DE-K-13; DE-K-17; IT-K-03; IT-K-18; IT-K-32). The importance of the education for general resilience was identified by a 22-year-old Ivoirian man in Italy: *“I also believe that I was able to find my way here because I studied in my country. For all my friends here who can't read and write it is much more difficult”* (IT-M-06). People with a higher level of education are better protected from traffickers, since they do not only rely on their smugglers as their only source of information (EL-K-04). This is because **education allows people to understand the context they are in and what**

their rights are, and access better opportunities for travel and employment.

The ability to speak English or other European languages also builds people's resilience in this sense (MK-K-19). Many people on the move who had some education and/or particular skills found it easier to organise their journey, make it through difficult situations during the journey and achieve financial stability in countries of destination, provided that their status allowed them to do so (DE-M-04; DE-M-13; DE-K-07). For example, a 26-year-old Syrian man had been a mathematics teacher in Syria and was an IT expert. Shortly after he arrived in Germany and before he started learning the German language, he got a part-time job as an IT administrator and later started vocational training in engineering (DE-M-13).

Nevertheless, education and a stable economic and family background are not always protective factors. An interviewee from Terres des Femmes in Germany cited the example of a young Nigerian woman who was a university student in Nigeria and came to Germany for an internship. When she reached Germany, she found out that she had been trafficked for sexual exploitation (DE-K-04).

Conversely then, lack of education, together with poor language knowledge, are barriers to accessing rights and services, which can increase vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses prior to departure, during the journey and in destination countries (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-14; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-28; MK-K-04; MK-K-06; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-16; MK-K-17; MK-K-19; MK-K-21; MK-K-28; MK-K-31; MK-K-32; DE-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-11; DE-K-14; DE-K-17; IT-K-13). People who are not literate are acutely vulnerable (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-22). Education is particularly important for children and women, as it mitigates their personal vulnerabilities (EL-K-06; EL-K-22; DE-K-03). Specifically, naivety and good faith were mentioned by key informants in Germany as traits among those with little education that make them vulnerable to traffickers (DE-K-01; DE-K-11; DE-K-14; DE-K-17).

People's general level of access to information and awareness of risks in relation to the migration journey and the situation in destination countries is an important factor of resilience, and often correlates strongly with a higher level of education (BG-K-03; MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-12; MK-K-15; MK-K-22; MK-K-25; MK-K-28; MK-K-32; DE-M-08; DE-M-13; DE-M-16). People who were able to plan their journey well encountered less problems and less abuse and exploitation than those who left without much information. A Senegalese man, for example, commented: *"Since we already had our network from Dakar, things were going pretty well"* (DE-M-08). Similarly, a 25-year-old Cameroonian woman explained that she spent the months before she left Cameroon collecting as much information as she could from other people about the journey, and this made the trip much easier for her (DE-M-16).

In addition, a higher level of life experience, which is correlated with older age and higher levels of education, may also increase resilience to trafficking (MK-K-17). According to key informants in Hungary, lack of information already limits opportunities for people before they even start the trip. In some cases, people cannot communicate directly with the people organising their journey, and they may not have sufficient information about the routes and modes of travel, the countries they will transit through, the attendant dangers and the asylum procedure and legal systems (HU-

M-05; HU-M-06; HU-K-03; HU-K-11; HU-K-15).

A 29-year-old Nigerian woman interviewed for the research gave money to a friend who promised to help her start her own business after escaping domestic violence by her husband. The ‘friend’ instead took her to Libya where she attempted to sexually exploit her in prostitution. Due to the woman’s lack of knowledge of the business environment and the geographical area, she only realised what was happening to her when she was in Libya (DE-M-07). A 35-year-old Senegalese man who travelled along the Central Mediterranean route explained: *“Many of the young people we met did not have much idea of the stages of the trip or the network to go through, which is why many were ripped off”* (DE-M-08).

Nevertheless, having information may not be enough to make sure someone is resilient, as they also need to have alternatives to the use of smuggling services in order to make their journey (RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; RS-K-16; RS-K-23). As set out in the section on migrant smuggling below, many people place a lot of trust in their smugglers, whom they may perceive as helping them. As a key informant in North Macedonia put it: *“I think their lack of information makes them vulnerable, so they blindly believe the story told by the smuggler”* (MK-K-27).

At a personal level for people of all ages and both genders, in every country along the route, **possession of a smartphone and access to the internet are essential aspects of resilience, and a prerequisite for making the journey.** This is related to access to information and the ability to acquire information as a source of resilience to trafficking and other abuses. Digital and computer literacy allow people to access information through social networks, mobile apps and other online sources, also representing an important alternative source of information other than information provided by migrant smugglers and potential exploiters (EL-K-03; EL-K-04; MK-M-02; MK-M-03; MK-K-05; MK-K-07; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; MK-K-32; MK-M-02; MK-M-03; HU-M-05; HU-M-06; HU-K-03; HU-K-09; HU-K-11; HU-K-30; HU-K-31; DE-M-09; DE-M-13; IT-K-17; IT-K-19).

e) Economic context

“If they have money, they can do it at one or two levels better. It is still very risky, but it is better than for others without sufficient financial means, who faced a million risks in advance.”

- Criminologist interviewed in North Macedonia (MK-K-19)

A person’s financial situation matters at all stages along the route, and defines the planning phase. **Resilience to trafficking and other abuses, as well as general safety, is determined to a significant extent by a person’s financial resources** (DE-M-16; DE-M-17; IT-M-06; EL-K-03; EL-K-06; EL-K-13; EL-K-27; BG-K-07; BG-K-08; BG-K-12; MK-K-15; MK-K-19; RS-M-13; RS-K-06; RS-K-16; RS-K-28; RS-K-32; HU-K-11; DE-K-03; DE-K-06; DE-K-07; DE-K-17; IT-K-03; Forin & Healy, 2018; IOM, 2017b; REACH, 2016). Specifically, the ability to avoid going into debt, or at least to quickly pay off debts incurred, is important for resilience. This interacts with the ability to afford a swifter

migration journey to the intended destination. Simply put: *“How you are treated depends on how much money you invest”* (RS-K-16).

Many people who travelled along the Balkan route were able to finance the journey because they owned businesses or properties, or had stable employment prior to their departure. People in this situation were generally **able to travel directly to Europe, opting for safer routes**, particularly during the first two phases described in chapter 2, reducing their vulnerability and exposure to abuse and exploitation, including trafficking (RS-M-13; EL-K-03; EL-K-13; RS-K-06; RS-K-28; RS-K-32; IOM, 2017a; REACH, 2016). Therefore, financial resources represent a strong resilience factor because those people who had enough money did not use extremely dangerous routes and they were not travelling for months.

People who come with resources, which was particularly the case for many Syrians, are more resilient to trafficking (EL-K-03; EL-K-13), especially trafficking for labour exploitation (DE-K-06). For example, in 2014 and 2015, most asylum applicants who arrived in Bulgaria were Syrian families with material and financial resources and full documentation (passports, birth certificates). They sought out smugglers to transport them to Germany and Austria, and had the means to ensure that it was a simple financial transaction (BG-K-03). This may be one of the reasons why few people from Syria are identified as trafficked.

Others had worked and collected money in preparation for their journey. As a 28-year-old Cameroonian woman described: *“We had a lot of money for the journey. When you have money, the trip is less difficult and not long, otherwise it’s really hell”* (DE-M-17). Similarly, a 25-year-old Cameroonian woman explained that she worked for five months in Cameroon in order to have enough money for the journey, and friends also gave her some money (DE-M-16). According to an interviewee from the BAMF in Germany, speaking on the basis of asylum interview minutes, economic independence and working in a qualified profession are major factors of resilience against trafficking (DE-K-17). Labour markets with good opportunities for employment, especially for young people, in countries of origin, transit and destination, also boost resilience, especially resilience to labour exploitation, according to an interviewee from ILO in Germany (DE-K-03).

Poor financial status is therefore an important factor of vulnerability to all forms of trafficking, making it easier for people to be manipulated, deceived and exploited (IT-M-01; IT-M-05; EL-K-10; EL-K-14; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-06; MK-K-07; MK-K-10; MK-K-11; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-16; MK-K-19; MK-K-22; MK-K-23; MK-K-25; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; RS-K-08; DE-K-10; IT-K-02; IT-K-03; IT-K-05; IT-K-06; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; IT-K-20; Kuschminder *et al.*, 2015; IOM, 2017b; Oxfam, 2016; REACH, 2016). A person’s financial situation at the moment of departure directly determines how the trip is organised, so if they are in an unstable financial situation, they will be subject to higher vulnerabilities throughout the journey (IOM, 2017b; Oxfam, 2016; REACH, 2016). Levels of financial resources also interact with other resilience and vulnerability factors, such as education and access to information (MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-07; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-24).

When people are in poor financial circumstances and need to go into debt in order to finance the journey, this significantly influences their vulnerability (EL-K-21). The need to repay debts places

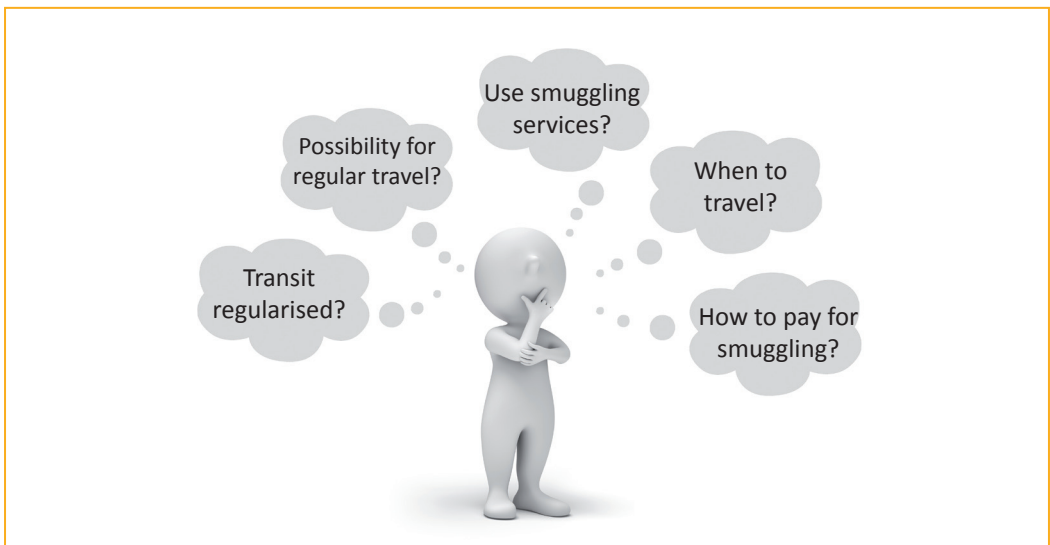
people under significant pressure to get to the destination and to obtain money in whatever way possible (RS-M-01; RS-M-02; RS-K-08). An even higher level of vulnerability affects people who are directly in debt to smugglers. In some cases, as described by an interviewee from the NGO Info Park in Serbia, the previously arranged price may be subsequently doubled or tripled (RS-K-08). According to an interviewee from UNHCR in Italy, Nigerian women “sometimes know the amount before travelling but they do not realise that it is in Euro and not in Naira, on other occasions they only find out about the debt in Libya or in Italy” (IT-K-03).

Financial means, debts and costs of travel also interact in different ways to determine the resilience or vulnerability of people using the routes at different stages along the journey. A stable financial situation may also correlate with higher levels of education, combining to promote the maintenance of resilience throughout the journey, which can be further enhanced by the presence of family support and psychological strength. On the other hand, a person in a poor financial situation with lower levels of education and experience of prior trauma and instability in their country of origin may find their vulnerabilities exacerbated by risk factors during the journey, as set out in the next sections.

2.3 Contextual Factors during the Journey

The circumstances of the journey determine many of the key factors of resilience and vulnerability, and are to a large extent determined by contextual policy factors such as the need to use this route due to the lack of alternatives for regular travel, and the consequent need to use migrant smuggling services. Overall, fewer resilience factors were identified in the context of the journey, apart from the alternative of regular travel. This clearly arises from the fact that **the journey itself is the key factor of vulnerability**, and that the subjects of this study are by definition people who took the journey.

Options Influencing Migration Decision-Making



a) Regular vs. Irregular Journeys: Policy Factors

Vulnerability and resilience are influenced by the way in which people try to get to their intended destination countries, regularly or irregularly, and whether they are on the move or stranded. The main driver of resilience to almost all forms of trafficking and other abuses is the possibility to travel regularly by plane, with an entry visa for an EU country.

Many key informant interviewees for this research stressed regular, legal and swift journeys as a key factor of resilience. However, this was based on a proposed future scenario, such as the situation if the proposed European Regulation on Humanitarian Visas (see chapter 2) is adopted and people are granted humanitarian visas, rather than on actual experiences, as very few asylum applicants were able to travel regularly - and those who were able to, did not transit through most of the countries under study. For those who did not perceive remaining in their country of origin or in a neighbouring country as a safe option with prospects for a stable future, the journey along the migration routes was the only viable alternative.

While the population covered by this research are those who travelled the sea and land routes, and not those who arrived by plane, it is essential to keep in mind that legal channels for making the journey are the single most important determinant of resilience, as they allow people to avoid this dangerous journey altogether (EL-K-10; EL-K-14; MK-K-19; Crawley *et al.*, 2017). Some people who travelled the Central Mediterranean route as far as Germany had previously tried to obtain a visa but their application was repeatedly rejected by the German embassy or the embassies of other EU countries (DE-M-16; DE-K-15; GMDAC, 2016). In the words of one researcher who was interviewed for this study: *“these are people in despair, [...] it should be accepted as an objective condition for the migrants who will accept everything, sacrificing their freedom, dignity, physical integrity”* (MK-K-19).

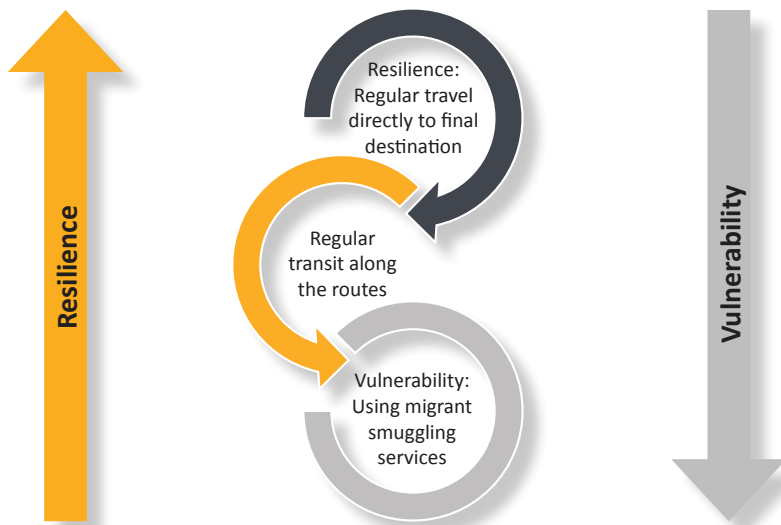
For the small proportion of people who managed to travel regularly, including those who travelled in the context of family reunification, the journey was cheaper and safer, and they were more resilient to trafficking and other abuses (HU-K-09; IT-K-03; IT-K-11). Many women in the study by Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer (2017) reported that they followed with the children after their husbands had already arrived at the destination; in some cases this was a regular journey under family reunification procedures.¹⁰⁴ The process of family reunification is very important for the resilience of unaccompanied children in particular, however, delays were reported with the procedure. In relation to the situation in Serbia, for example, MSF reported that: *“On paper this process can be much faster within Europe, but in Serbia, outside of EU borders, it is basically left to individual family initiatives. Due to the stringent family reunification criteria of each country, in 2016 UNHCR had very limited space for assistance and was only successful in reuniting one unaccompanied young person with their family”* (MSF, 2017: 5).

¹⁰⁴ Family reunification is regulated by EU Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, which is to be granted to non-EU citizens with “reasonable prospects of obtaining the right of permanent residence, if the members of his or her family are third country [non-EU] nationals of whatever status.” Asylum applicants and people with temporary or subsidiary protection status are excluded from these provisions. The family members who may be reunited are limited to spouses, minor children and minor children for whom the spouse has custody, as well as, in certain cases, first-degree relatives and adult children if it can be proven that they are dependent on the sponsor. Subject to certain limitations, unaccompanied children also have a right to be reunited with their parents and minor siblings in EU countries.

For people who cannot travel legally by plane, regular, organised travel overland is the next best source of resilience to trafficking and other abuses, as was the case for certain people along certain parts of the Balkan route during 2015 and early 2016 (EL-K-10; EL-K-14; MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-06; MK-K-25; MK-K-26; MK-K-27; MK-K-28). An important distinction relates to the different phases described in chapter 2 above – those who travelled during the first two phases, *i.e.*, before the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016, tended to be more resilient due to the fact that many people during this period were able to regularly and swiftly transit (and had the financial capital to do so), at least for the section of their trip from Greece to Serbia. This meant that they had a more positive experience of the journey and less need to use smuggling services, especially those who had high chances of being granted international protection in an EU country, like Syrians and many Iraqis. This contrasts with the vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses of people who travelled since March 2016, and people from countries considered ‘safe countries of origin.’

Conversely, the restrictions on movement and mobility that have been progressively imposed by European countries since 2016 have significantly increased the vulnerabilities of people using the routes. Even if, logically, people wish to travel as cheaply and safely as possible, changing policies and restrictive laws and measures leave them with few options but to make a costly, long, dangerous and irregular journey (REACH, 2016), or remain in their country of origin or a neighbouring country. In this sense, already in 2014, Andrijasevic referred to: *“the way in which a criminal justice perspective places responsibility for trafficking and exploitation on organized criminal networks and in doing so hides the extent to which states’ restrictive immigration, border and visa policies have criminalized the mobility of certain groups of people and created conditions that foster vulnerability and exploitation of migrants”* (2014: 362).

Resilience in the context of the migration journey



The main detrimental factor to the resilience that arises from transiting legally across borders are the restrictions imposed by the EU-Turkey Statement. While the aim of the EU-Turkey Statement was to discourage future arrivals, it also contributed to increased vulnerability for people on the move, because they had to use more risky ways to travel to their intended destination countries and their status was irregular along the route. For example, of around 7,000 people, who according to Save the Children and its partners left Serbia during the first six months of 2017, around 20% of them used some kind of legal channel (accessing the Hungarian Transit Zones, resettlement or assisted voluntary return programmes) (Save the Children, 2017a). This means that 80% of them used irregular means and probably migrant smuggling services. As a 27-year-old Iranian man put it: *“We are just trying to go ourselves, because we cannot legally go to countries like Croatia”* (MK-M-03).

This left people stranded for longer periods in countries they had intended to swiftly transit through: *“the biggest problem was staying in camps waiting for a legal possibility to continue the journey,”* according to a 26-year-old Afghan man in North Macedonia (MK-M-02). **Delays impact people’s resources and strength to cope.** According to REACH, the *“length of travel, journey time and increased restrictions have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities”* (REACH, 2016: 4). Longer journeys or becoming stranded also lead to unclear legal status, delays in family reunification, delays in the appointment of a guardian for unaccompanied children and other significant risks for trafficking and other abuses (MK-K-01; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-06; Forin & Healy, 2018; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017).

Border restrictions after the EU-Turkey agreement led to apathy among people who were stranded and did not see any prospects of moving on, which was exacerbated by the fact that they had no right to work and were dependent on others for their basic needs (MK-K-18). In some cases, this situation of irregularity leads to a severe condition of insecurity: *“you do not know who is going to rob you, who is going to attack you [...], because they were illegal in the system and they expected no protection from the system”* (MK-K-05).

“What we have witnessed after the closing of the route is that every second migrant is a victim of either trafficking or smuggling, every second, and maybe any woman travelling alone or travelling at all is a potential victim of trafficking.”

- Interviewee from the Red Cross in North Macedonia (MK-K-04)

The ‘closing’ of the route and the situation of irregularity that it created for people in transit means that people cannot access assistance and protection (EL-K-10; EL-K-14; MK-K-01; MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-06; MK-K-07; MK-K-08; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-11; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-20; MK-K-28; Oxfam, 2016; MSF, 2017; REACH, 2016; Save the Children, 24.01.2017). Since March 2016, *“refugees are again invisible to the system, the system that would offer protection if needed, and again we have these black spots, but their vulnerability is no longer allowed to be visible”* (MK-K-05).

When people use irregular channels to reach destination countries, personal risks significantly

increase, including risks of detention, physical violence and lack of access to assistance (MSF, 2017; REACH, 2016; Oxfam, 2016). Restrictive policies caused a proliferation of alternative – more dangerous - routes affecting people’s ability to meet their needs. Risky journeys to the EU “*can cost thousands of euros, but the true price is much higher, with people of all ages putting their lives in danger to cross mountains, rivers and seas*” (MSF, 2017: 4).

b) Location-Specific Vulnerabilities along the Routes

“From Turkey to Italy these irregular border crossings are known as “Games”. Those who are pushed to play them must survive a series of violent events and endure abuse. [...] They] are pushed back, robbed, beaten, humiliated and attacked by dogs.”

- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 2017: 4

While transit countries outside Europe were not the main focus of this research, there were indications of factors of vulnerability, including abuses suffered by people on the move, in these countries. The arduousness and trauma of experiences transiting through these countries, during the sea crossings to Greece and Italy and at land border crossings in Europe, compromise people’s resilience. This section examines the situation in these transit countries, especially Turkey and Libya, and at significant locations at the sea and land borders in Europe along the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes.

Experiences in Transit Countries outside Europe

Factors of vulnerability in transit countries outside Europe include long, exhausting and dangerous journeys and risks of violence and robbery. People from origin countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, as well as some people from Horn of Africa countries, travel through Turkey in order to reach Europe. In addition, people from Afghanistan and Pakistan transit through Iran in order to reach Turkey. As we will see in chapter 4 below, there were also indications of trafficking cases in these countries.

A 24-year-old Afghan man spoke of how he had lost several teeth and sustained multiple injuries while walking through difficult terrain in Iran and Pakistan, but was not able to access medical treatment. He had also witnessed militias in Pakistan stopping travellers, demanding money, searching people, and beating those who did not have money (DE-M-19). The arduousness of the journey through these transit countries is also a factor of general vulnerability, reducing people’s capacity to resist abuses (HU-M-06).

According to an 18-year-old Afghan man who described the different stages of his journey while still a child from Iran through Turkey to Hungary: “*From [Ankara] we went to Istanbul, we travelled 25 hours altogether from the first village [in Turkey] to Istanbul. [...] The worst was that we had to cross the mountains. We were walking for two or three days, there were forests as well that we had to cross. It was spring, it rained a lot, it was very bad. We reached the border from Istanbul to Bulgaria and we still had to walk for a day*” (HU-M-05).

Nevertheless, based on accounts of experiences in Turkey, people travelling along this route experience significantly less violence and exploitation in transit countries outside Europe than those who travel along the Central Mediterranean route.

“In the chaos of Libya, militias of all kinds reign and impose their law. Exploitation of migrants has become one of their specialities. Everyone is armed and powerful. Our life was worthless in the eyes of these people. For a yes or a no, they shoot at you.”

- Senegalese man interviewed in Germany (DE-M-08)

There were few indications of abuses experienced within transit countries in West Africa, possibly because this is a free movement area of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and so transit is regularised and there is less need for smuggling services (Horwood, Forin & Frouws, 2018). Abuses have been documented at the borders of this region with North African countries, particularly the Niger-Libyan and Niger-Algerian borders, as well as during transit through desert areas (see, for example: Tubiana, Warin & Saeneen, 2018).

The Libyan section of the trip presents many factors of vulnerability to trafficking. Crossing the Sahara and transiting through Libya are particularly dangerous parts of the migration journey (DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10). People who travelled along this route experienced the deaths of fellow travellers, and described drivers driving overcrowded vehicles very fast and not stopping if someone fell off (DE-M-04; DE-M-07; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-14). As a 35-year-old Senegalese man described: *“The crossing of the desert was terrible. [...] We were told that [Tuareg people] were partners with some drivers. When they stopped a car of migrants, they made them get out, to rob them of all their money. The women were raped. Those who resisted were beaten and sometimes even killed. Without hesitation”* (DE-M-08).

In December 2018, the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a joint report on the situation of migrants in Libya, based on around 1,300 first-hand accounts and information collected during 2017 and 2018: *“Migrants and refugees interviewed by UNSMIL repeatedly emphasize their vulnerability to killings, extreme violence, torture, rape, and forced labour by smugglers or traffickers”* (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018: 27; see also: IOM & Altai, 2015; IOM, 2017; Healy & Forin, 2017).

According to an interviewee from the Catania court in Sicily: *“They all come from Libya, which is a deadly route. Their stories are appalling and unbearable”* (IT-K-23). The vast majority of people en route to Italy transit through Libya, an experience that is a *“creator of vulnerabilities”*, according to an interviewee from Intersos in Palermo, Sicily. People are abused while imprisoned in Libyan jails; become victims of trafficking even if they had previously moved independently; and are asked for bribes by Libyan security officials, smugglers or traffickers, with the attendant risk of running out of money and being forced to work under exploitative conditions (IT-K-14). A young Ivorian man spoke of having to pay bribes to the police, and suddenly running out of money to travel (IT-M-06).

The various criminal networks operating in Libya force people into trafficking and exploitation, according to an interviewee from the Italian Red Cross in Catania, Sicily (IT-K-24). Indeed, the conditions people experience in Libya, lack of money to continue the trip, violence and imprisonment, can make it more likely that someone relies on a network of trafficking and exploitation, or that they are unable to defend themselves against exploitation (IT-K-02). People arriving in Italy from Libya, according to an interviewee from IOM, are all vulnerable: *“victims of trafficking are even more vulnerable, but the transit is critical for everyone”* (IT-K-10).

People who had travelled through Libya described horrific experiences. According to a 23-year-old Malian man: *“I was going crazy. I was living in small room with dead people. When someone died, the Libyans waited one week before taking out the corpse. Many people died there, it’s hot, not enough water, no food”* (IT-M-01). A 22-year-old Nigerian woman described how: *“I wanted to go away, I wanted to escape, it was impossible. Some of us were crying all the time. I don’t know how long I stayed. It was terrible, and I sometimes felt I was going to die”* (IT-M-05). An interviewee from Oxfam in Ventimiglia, Italy, spoke of vulnerabilities being exacerbated by the situation in Libya: *“I must say that in recent years we are also seeing many psychiatric problems, due to the conditions suffered in Libya, which have worsened recently”* (IT-K-29).

Pregnancy is also an important factor of vulnerability, especially if a woman or girl gets pregnant during transit, as a result of sexual violence (IT-K-18). According to an interviewee from an NGO in Naples: *“They cross the desert and arrive in Libya, where they start being exploited sexually. Many of them speak of having been pregnant in Libya and having had an abortion”* (IT-K-12).

People who travelled along the Central Mediterranean route describe how particularly people from Sub-Saharan African countries are mistreated and exploited in Libya. According to a 42-year-old Eritrean man: *“In Libya, people are heartless; for them black skin has no importance. They treated us like animals and sold us amongst themselves”* (DE-M-14). A 30-year-old Malian man had similar impressions: *“It must also be said that Libya, left on its own for four years, is a country fully armed, where to shoot a black person is similar to shooting a wild animal; among the Arabs, the black man is not considered as a man”* (DE-M-11).

On the other hand, a Nigerian man who was interviewed for this research described how, having been tortured by a Libyan militia group and left to die in the Sahara desert, a Libyan Bedouin man found him, took him to his home and helped him to recover (DE-M-04).

Vulnerabilities may also arise from the fact that some people who arrive in Italy had originally intended to remain in Libya to work, but deteriorating conditions prompted them to change their plans and take dangerous, irregular trip across the sea to Italy (IT-M-05). As one Sudanese man described: *“I never planned to come to Europe. I always wanted to go back and continue my studies, I want to become an engineer. But in Libya there was a mess”* (IT-M-03).

Sea and Land Crossing in Greece

Having transited through Turkey, people are also vulnerable to specific dangers in the context of the sea crossing to the Greek islands in the North Aegean Sea. The director of Migration Aid in Hungary described this boat trip as a critical point of vulnerability, usually taking place at night

(HU-K-09). A Syrian child protection expert in Hungary described his family members' experiences crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands in the North Aegean: *"They called me from Izmir [on the Western Turkish coast] that night. They said that they would not be leaving from there in the end, because the smuggler named another place and they would start the boat trip from there. It was around midnight. I felt like I'd have a nervous breakdown, I tried to calm myself down. They called me later and told me that they were in a boat, nine of them. [...]."*

Later they called me at nine in the morning to say that they had arrived in Greece. They were on a little island in Greece, Kos. They travelled in a dinghy. My sister can swim, but not the children. The children slept the whole way. They got calming pills and cough syrup [...]. I felt that they were traumatised for a while. They were disturbed, they didn't realise that they had arrived. They actually still haven't realised that they have arrived. My sister is still aggressive, my mum had chronic depression in Syria and the situation hasn't changed" (HU-K-31).

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) reported on several consistent and credible allegations of informal forcible removals (pushbacks) at the Evros river border with Turkey, carried out by Greek police and border guards or military commandos. A number of the people concerned alleged that they had been beaten with batons.¹⁰⁵ The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe also noted persistent and documented allegations of summary returns to Turkey, often accompanied by the use of violence, pointing to an *"established practice"* (Mijatovic, 2018), also confirmed by a report published by three Greek NGOs (GCR *et al.*, 2018).

Case 3.4 - Young East African woman's experience crossing overland from Turkey to Greece

"We started walking at night, walking and walking and we reached a small river [probably Evros river at the Turkish-Greek border] and they said that a woman had drowned in it. She fell down and died in the river. And they were telling us not to wear big clothes, because [we] wear skirts and hijabs. They forced us to wear pants and less clothes. They bought an inflatable boat and we reached the other side of the river. We waited there until a car came. It was cargo van. The back windows of the car were painted over. We couldn't see anything. There were, I think, thirty-something people. It was so packed.

[...] It felt like a prison. It was a really, really long ride; I don't even remember how long we were in there. We got into the car in the early morning, and after that I couldn't even tell if it was dark or still light outside. We didn't have any light inside. People started to fight just to look out through a little hole and because they couldn't get air. [...]

¹⁰⁵ CPT (June 2018). Preliminary observations made by the delegation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) which visited Greece from 10 to 19 April 2018. CPT/Inf (2018) 20. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/16808afaf6>.

And one guy was screaming that he would push open the door, because he couldn't take it. Some people said don't do it because they will see us. And then suddenly we had a crash. Our car had crashed. It was really a brutal crash, all of us were injured really badly. I wasn't hurt too badly. I had problems with my knees and I woke up in a hospital, the police came. We were in Greece already. But it was not the place he had wanted to take us to. Because he had wanted to take us to Athens. We were far from there" (HU-M-06).

A teenage girl at the time, she experienced fear, inhumane conditions and was injured in a car crash in the course of her journey from Turkey to Greece, arriving at a different location than intended, all of which was severely detrimental to her resilience.

Sea Crossing and Disembarkation in Italy

The sea crossing from the Libyan coast to Italian ports is considerably longer and more dangerous than the crossing from the Turkish coast to the Greek islands. This kind of transit experience can lead to serious psychological vulnerabilities. A number of interviewees for this research in Italy were reluctant to speak about their experience. The few who did described highly traumatic conditions: *"It was dark, the sea was bad, I was terrified. I had never travelled by boat before. The journey was long and the boat was broken, I don't know [...] at a certain point water was coming in, people were screaming. I cannot even describe what happened. Many of us died"* (IT-M-04).

As an interviewee from Save the Children described, when people arrive in Italy they often feel stranded, desperate and hopeless (IT-K-01), and, according to an interviewee from UNHCR, this *"has a great negative influence especially on the possibility of recovery, and it can lead to the risk of being re-trafficked"* (IT-K-03). Disembarkation ports and hotspots are reported as crowded and confused places, where people do not have the possibility to receive adequate assistance (IT-K-18; IT-K-22). Furthermore, conditions are inhumane. According to an interviewee from Borderline Sicily, *"violations are very frequent, for example migrants are kept sitting under the sun for hours waiting for identification procedures, or police force them to stay seated and calm using a baton"* (IT-K-22).

For people who have been smuggled from their country of origin, their sense of disorientation and lack of information is acute. As an interviewee from the Italian Red Cross in Catania, Sicily describes: *"their condition of disorientation at arrival is even higher. They often ask us where they are, they don't know where the boat from Libya was supposed to go. So we carry a map of the world to help them orientate themselves when we work as a reception point at Catania harbour during disembarkations"* (IT-K-24).

In Italy, one of the main concerns among key informants, especially in Sicily, is deferred refusals of entry (*respingimenti differiti*), as a human rights violation in itself and as a practice that

increases vulnerability to trafficking (IT-K-15; IT-K-18).¹⁰⁶ At disembarkation, key informants described how the Italian authorities issue a return decision without allowing those arriving, particularly Tunisians, to apply for international protection (IT-K-15; IT-K-18). On the island of Lampedusa, the rapid decision taken by the police about whether or not a person is allowed to apply for asylum, often simply on the basis of their country of origin, means that people end up with irregular status on Italian territory (Garelli & Tazzioli, 26.02.2016; Tazzioli, 2018).

Newly disembarked people are issued with the so-called ‘seven-day protocol’, a *de facto* situation of irregular status. This was described in detail by an interviewee from Caritas in Agrigento, Sicily: *“This practice is put in place by the questura [police station] at the hotspot [...] and if the country of origin is one without any proven danger for return, like Senegal or Tunisia, then they are declared ‘not asylum seekers but economic migrants’ and they receive the ‘seven-day’ deadline to return home. This practice has been used with hundreds and hundreds of people, and it is a ‘factory of clandestinity’: they do not go back within seven days. [...] These ‘nobody’ people, with no identity and no place to stay, receive a response only from criminal organisations, who are ready to exploit them, often in agriculture”* (IT-K-18).

Turkish-Bulgarian Border

Some people cross the border between Turkey and Bulgaria in order to transit through Bulgaria to Serbia. The reported abuses suffered by people on the move at this border, including children, are highly detrimental to their resilience, with the trauma experienced constituting a significant factor of general vulnerability, as well leading to distrust in state authorities.

People who resided at the Harmanli Refugee Registration and Reception Centre accommodation centre in Bulgaria, close to the Turkish border, during 2016-2018, described how smugglers facilitated their crossing at informal, unofficial border crossing points, referred to as the ‘green zone’, at the Bulgarian-Turkish border (BG-M-08; BG-M-10; BG-K-04; BG-K-17; BG-K-18). According to MSF, the Bulgarian authorities perpetrate physical abuse against people on the move, including deprivation of liberty and abuse at accommodation centres. The majority of child victims of abuse whom they cared for *“named state authorities as perpetrators (76%), of which the majority (92%) were EU border forces: Bulgaria 48% (30), Hungary 27% (17) and Croatia 13% (8)”* (MSF, 2017: 4). As a 19-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary described: *“There was a boy in Fót [children’s accommodation centre in Hungary], his nose was broken by Bulgarian police officers”* (HU-M-05).

In April 2017, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association and Oxfam issued a joint agency briefing paper based on the first-hand testimonies of 140 people, entitled *A Dangerous ‘Game’: The pushback of migrants, including refugees, at Europe’s borders*, which details violence and intimidation perpetrated by the authorities in Bulgaria, as well as in Croatia and Hungary (BCHR, MYLA & Oxfam, 2017). Amnesty International’s report for 2017/2018 referred to: *“reports of frequent pushbacks, excessive use of force and theft by border police [...], administrative detention of migrants and refugees, including unaccompanied children [...and] numerous allegations of ill treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers and substandard conditions in detention facilities”* (Amnesty International, 2018: 103).

¹⁰⁶ Refusals of entry are regulated by Art. 10 of the Consolidated Act of Measures Governing Immigration and Norms on the Condition of Foreign Citizens (‘Testo Unico’, Italian Legislative Decree n. 286/1998). On deferred refusals of entry, see, inter alia: <https://www.a-dif.org/2017/10/29/respingimenti-differiti-e-trattenimento-illegittimo-di-tunisini-a-lampedusa>; www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016_DEF_ESPULSIONI-E-RESPINGIMENTI_-I-PROFILI-SOSTANZIALI-stampabile.pdf.

Case 3.5 - Experiences of an Afghan boy crossing the Turkish-Bulgarian border

An 18-year-old Afghan man, interviewed in Hungary, had crossed the border from Turkey to Bulgaria as a child, and described in detail his experiences and the effect that they had on him: *“It doesn’t really matter if I put these things into words or not. They are already in my memory; I can’t delete them. [...] I became heavily depressed and I am still not fine. This is a thing that you can’t forget and every time when I remember back, there is this heart-breaking feeling. Because the things that they did to us, you can never forget. [...] I don’t say it gladly, but the world has to know about what happened to us.*

We tried to cross the [Turkish-Bulgarian] border six times and the [Bulgarian] police caught us five times. They didn’t just beat us, they also took everything, money and mobiles, everything. If the police officer had a good heart, he took everything from you, but at least he gave you back your bag, but that only happened once out of the six times. They beat me very badly all five times [...].

We arrived at the Bulgarian border, there is a fence that is four metres high. There were razors on the top of the fence. We were very surprised because the smugglers had brought a ladder with them. There were about 20 of us there, ten children under 18 and ten adults. I was the first victim who was told to climb up. I did and there were the razors. I had two options. Either I could climb up and cut myself, my clothes, shoes, everything, or I could try to jump half a metre and hurt myself because I would fall four metres. So I chose to climb. I did it. I was totally cut up. After me, the children came. Everybody made noise. And this was heard by the [Bulgarian] police officers. They shot the warning gun and set the dogs free. They found us. Everyone who was on the other side of the fence ran back. The police found us, they had masks on them. We had to sit on the ground with our hands up for a few minutes. I was so tired, so I let my arms fall down and then the dog jumped on me and bit my left hand. He didn’t just bite it, he also dragged it and I fell on the ground. You can still see this on my arm.

And there were bushes there, with thorns on them. They were not small thorns, some of them were thirty centimetres. So you escape, run for your life and you get to these bushes. Your skin is full of thorns and you are bleeding everywhere, but you have to escape because of the police officers. And if you are lucky and there is no police officer there, then you escape [...]. One of the worst borders is the Bulgarian one, the security is very high. Not only Bulgarian, but other police officers came to work there, from other countries” (HU-M-05).

Borders of North Macedonia and Serbia

Some key informants mentioned illegal returns (pushbacks) from North Macedonia to neighbouring countries, without formal readmission, as a factor of vulnerability (see also: Golubovska & Smailovikj, 2017; Brmbeska, 2018). As an interviewee from an international organisation in North Macedonia described: *“on the highway, they are intercepted and placed in vehicles. [...] If they are only men then they are immediately returned, [...] deported through illegal border crossing points”* (MK-K-11). Similarly, an interviewee from the Helsinki Committee in North Macedonia referred to the risk for people who are illegally returned or pushed back, stating that they are *“literally thrown into the abuses, [...] we leave them in an open field”* (MK-K-02). However, according to a criminologist interviewed for the research, the State in North Macedonia showed the capacity to listen, be open and acknowledge that *“a balance between security and humanity is necessary, which situates [North] Macedonia among the more sensitive countries, in comparison with the situation in other European countries”* (MK-K-19).

Pushbacks from Serbia to Bulgaria and North Macedonia,¹⁰⁷ returns from Serbia to Bulgaria under the EU Readmission Agreement without proper case-by-case examination and denial of access to asylum procedures to people pushed back from Hungary were also reported by key informants and other stakeholders in Serbia (RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; AIDA, 2018; AIDA, 2016a; AIDA, 2017b; MSF, 2017).

Serbian-Hungarian Border

After March 2016, a number of people were ‘stranded’ in Serbia, with few remaining financial resources and limited access to basic services at accommodation centres. During the rest of 2016, families with small children were less prepared for risky alternative routes, so they remained in Serbia, often staying in inadequate and unsanitary conditions and sites near the Hungarian and Croatian borders in the hope that the borders would re-open (REACH, 2016).

There are many indications of violence and abuses, including illegal returns, perpetrated against people on the move at the Serbian-Hungarian borders. Many of the interviewees for this research in Serbia reported having been beaten by the Hungarian police (and the Croatian police) (RS-M-01; RS-M-02; RS-M-03; RS-M-04; RS-M-09; RS-M-10; RS-M-20; RS-M-21; RS-M-22; RS-M-24). Reports by UNHCR (2016), Amnesty International (2016) and MSF (2017) also detail abuses

at the Serbian-Hungarian border. People on the move spoke of repeated unsuccessful attempts to cross the Serbian border to Hungary or Croatia (RS-M-01; RS-M-02; RS-M-03; RS-M-04; RS-M-05; RS-M-06; RS-M-08; RS-M-09; RS-M-10; RS-M-11; RS-M-12; RS-M-16; RS-M-17; RS-M-18; RS-M-19; RS-M-20; RS-M-21; RS-M-22; RS-M-23; RS-M-24; RS-M-25; RS-M-26; RS-M-27; RS-M-28; RS-M-29; RS-M-30; RS-M-31; RS-M-32; RS-M-33; RS-M-34; RS-M-35; RS-M-36; RS-M-37; RS-M-38; RS-M-39). While waiting to cross the border, they are *“repeatedly brutalised and neglected and ultimately made invisible by migration policies that push them onto more and more dangerous routes”* (MSF, 2017: 3).

¹⁰⁷ By July 2017, according to the Serbian Ministry of Defense, approximately 21,000 people had been prevented from entering Serbia from Bulgaria and North Macedonia (AIDA, 2018).

In Hungary, pushbacks are also considered a factor of vulnerability (Iván, 2016). According to an asylum expert from a Hungarian national authority: *“people are escorted to the border without any trace of official measures. This is a shadow measure; it cannot even appear in reports whether there was an analysis of these people’s procedures or what has happened. The whole system is not transparent and accountable because of these pushbacks. The real problem is that people are going through this [system] without a trace”* (HU-K-08).

During the last two months of 2016, Save the Children reported that there were around 1,300 alleged pushbacks from Hungary to Serbia, some of which were forced and violent (Save the Children, 24.01.2017).¹⁰⁸ People were exposed to degrading and brutal treatment by Hungarian and Croatian police while being returned to Serbia (MSF, 2017; RS-K-07). According to the asylum expert from a Hungarian national authority: *“Pushbacks are happening with the cooperation of the Serbian border control. Hungarians inform Serbia about the pushbacks”* (HU-K-08). Hungary introduced a new law in 2016, allowing the police to escort anyone intercepted within 8km of the border back to Serbia. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concerns about the law in 2016: *“We are worried that the wording of the law leaves too much room for interpretation and may result in law enforcement agencies not respecting the human rights of migrants and breaching international law, by forcibly expelling them without any form of legal procedure. With hundreds of people already waiting in the strip of land between the Serbian passport control and the Hungarian barbed wire fence, we also fear that this measure will only worsen the existing desperate and inhuman conditions at the border”* (OHCHR, 05.07.2016).

Since September 2015, official entry from Serbia into Hungary has been managed on the basis of a ‘waiting list’ (see chapter 2 above). **This means that people are left with few alternatives to using smuggling services to evade this system, and/or using alternative, riskier routes. The only other option is to pay to be moved up on this list, increasing financial vulnerability.** People are also placed on the list according to their country of origin - Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians and Syrians are put on the list, but not Pakistanis (HU-K-01; HU-K-16; HU-K-34).

People are also added to the list or moved up based on their perceived vulnerability (family status, gender, age), or by giving money or other services to the ‘community leader’ (HU-K-17; HU-K-34). The paradox of ‘vulnerable groups’ applies here, in that people considered vulnerable may get prioritised access to the Transit Zones in Hungary and therefore be less likely to use smuggling services (HU-K-01). People are also sometimes removed from the list, or moved up or down, while others might choose to cross irregularly with a smuggler instead (HU-K-15; HU-K-16; HU-K-28; HU-K-34; Kalman *et al.*, 18.03.2018). According to a key informant: *“Management of the list is not transparent. There are a lot of accusations around it, it is the matrix of corruption. A lot of people don’t have money, there [are rumours of] providing sexual services, debt bondage, labour”* (HU-K-16).

This system is open to abuse and can involve the need to make payments, increasing the financial vulnerability of people subject to this system. According to an NGO worker interviewed for this research: *“When [the community leader’s] day is approaching, the community selects another*

108 This figure was based on data from UNHCR in Serbia at a joint agency meeting: around 1,300 alleged pushbacks from Hungary to Serbia from 30 November 2016 to 24 January 2017.

leader. You would imagine that these people put themselves further up on the list, but in reality it is not like this. There is a reason why not. It seems like they accept benefits to put people's names on the list, move them further up the list, and so on" (HU-K-16).

An Iranian man also described the existence of payments: "I waited at the Serbian-Hungarian border for a year. I know about the list. I didn't pay to get a better status, but I know of others who did. It costs €400-500" (HU-M-01). A child psychologist interviewed for this research also mentioned 'survival sex' in this context: "I have heard that people can move up on the list by paying different amounts. Payment can be via sexual services; women can get moved up on the list this way" (HU-K-20).

In late 2018, the Serbian Commissariat (SCRM), UNHCR and other organisations started to take over the management of the list. According to an interviewee from an international organisation, the procedure is to become more transparent (HU-K-28).

Transit Context in Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary

The vast majority of people travelling along the Balkan route wish to carry on to the next country as soon as possible. These people never intended to spend any significant amount of time in these transit countries, and would not have entered them at all if they had an alternative, quicker, or safer route to their intended destination countries. In an ideal scenario, from their perspective, each of these transit countries is simply a brief stopover along the way.

However, this desire to swiftly move on, when combined with policies and practices that increasingly restricted transit since March 2016, significantly compromises people's resilience (EL-K-01; EL-K-03; EL-K-20; EL-K-21; EL-K-24; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-20; MK-K-21; MK-K-22; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; RS-K-02; RS-K-04; RS-K-33; HU-K-08; Forin & Healy, 2018; BCHR, 2016). The desire for onward travel is reflected in the smaller number of asylum applications lodged in North Macedonia and Serbia, as compared to the far larger numbers of certificates of 'intention to seek asylum' issued during the period of regular transit (RS-K-04; RS-K-33; BCHR, 2016; Group 484, 2016: 12).

Even when faced with significant obstacles to onward travel, most people wish to continue, as they have a specific plan for their destination city and country, are often aware of employment conditions there, and have a network of family and/or friends already in that city (EL-K-03). People involved in smuggling, and other potential abusers or traffickers, can take advantage of this desire to move on to offer deceptive or exploitative means of travel (EL-K-03; EL-K-21; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-20; MK-K-21; MK-K-22; MK-K-27; MK-K-28).

An informant from an NGO working with children in North Macedonia commented that "people had one mission, and that was to get to Germany, and they did everything they could and believed everyone, just to reach that point" (MK-K-28). One extreme case was described by an informant from the Border Police of North Macedonia: "we had a pregnant woman complaining to the doctor at the train station that she was in pain. She had already gone into labour, but she didn't want to go to hospital. She rushed to catch the train and get to Germany, [...] to travel onwards, to get there as soon as possible, to reach the final destination at any cost" (MK-K-27).

The transit context also means that people are far less likely to seek help from authorities or NGOs, as they do not want to delay their onward journey, and that the authorities and NGOs are less likely to offer help because they assume that people will not stay to receive it (MK-K-01; MK-K-08; MK-K-12; MK-K-27; RS-K-02; RS-K-09; RS-K-25; RS-K-32; HU-K-08; Forin & Healy, 2018).

Not having official ID documents, or not being registered in a country they are transiting through, also makes people vulnerable to exploitation and other abuses, as they are more likely to avoid the authorities and less likely to request assistance (EL-K-04; EL-K-10; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; BG-K-17; RS-K-06). Issues of registration of people on the move are considered a key vulnerability in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia (BG-K-15; BG-K-16; BG-K-17; MK-K-30; RS-K-04; RS-K-06; Golubovska & Smailovikj, 2017; Brmbeska, 2018).

In Bulgaria, key informants considered that people who are not intercepted by the Bulgarian border police are at risk because they do not have access to services, information, or assistance in the country (BG-K-15; BG-K-16; BG-K-17). An interviewee from the Border Police Directorate considered that these people remain ‘undercover’ and are unable to access any form of legal protection, making them more vulnerable to traffickers who promise to take them to another EU country (BG-K-17). Similarly, for an interviewee from the Asylum Protection Center, a Serbian NGO, people outside the accommodation centres and outside of the system in locations close to the border, but also in Belgrade and other cities where they may be hiding in smugglers’ apartments, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking (RS-K-06).

In order to mitigate the challenges of the transit context, systems were put in place to keep track of people. The registration process and the issuance of certificates of intention to seek asylum are some of the measures taken since 2015.¹⁰⁹ These measures have had both positive and negative consequences (AIDA, 2016a; AIDA, 2017b; Group 484, 2016), but they did enable people to exercise certain rights, especially the right to regular transit for 72 hours (RS-K-04). As an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia described: *“we tried to use the Greek document as a condition of entry into the country and also a condition for exit. The document contained data on the certificate-holders, but also on the people who accompanied them. And what we were looking for was that the person would have an original Greek document, but also to confirm that the actual factual situation matched the data in the document. By doing this, we wanted to make sure that no one on the territory of the country would be lost. So if it says on the list that someone is with two children aged 10 and 12 years old, and if he arrives alone, he will not be allowed to enter, and he will not even get to Tabanovce [at the Serbian border]. So if he entered Gevgelija [at the Greek border] with three children, he must leave with the same three, not with some other three children. [...It] was a kind of extra protection [...] during the transit period”* (MK-K-30).

¹⁰⁹ Also, because people on the move may not have personal documents, the practice of authorised police officers entering their personal and biometric data in the OKS and Afis databases was introduced, even though it was not foreseen by the Asylum Law (AIDA, 2016).

Map 4: Italy as a Transit Country



Map produced by ICMPD

Transiting through Italy to other European countries can make people vulnerable to trafficking, particularly when borders with countries such as France, Switzerland and Austria, are closed for transit, making irregular crossing the only option. Although only limited information was obtained in relation to this context, as the other countries were not covered by this research, the situation at the northern borders in Italy (Ventimiglia, Bardonecchia, Como and Brenner) is critical, as underlined by Save the Children (2018). A Malian man, a Palestinian man and a Sudanese man, and four key informants, were interviewed for this research in Ventimiglia (IT-M-01; IT-M-02; IT-M-03; IT-K-28; IT-K-29; IT-K-30; IT-K-31). This transit context is similar to the Balkan route in terms of the vulnerabilities it generates when people wish to travel onwards and border crossings are restricted.

Asylum applicants are prevented from crossing Italy's northern borders to reach family and community networks in other EU countries, or to find a better employment situation, based on the Dublin Regulation, which foresees that they must apply for asylum in Italy. This means that they are more likely to contact smugglers in order to travel onwards. As a 27-year-old Sudanese man described: *"I tried to cross twice [from Ventimiglia in Italy to France], but they always sent me back. They have my fingerprints here, there's not much I can do. The first time the police stopped me in Menton [in France, close to the Italian border], the second time in Nice. I crossed*

with eight other people. At that time in 2015, the border controls were not so strict [...]. The main vulnerability for migrants is the difficulty in crossing the border, especially the reaction of the French police” (IT-M-03).

As is the case in other transit areas, only a small proportion of the people on the move who are in Ventimiglia actually want to stay there. As an interviewee from Caritas in Ventimiglia explains: *“they are all men travelling alone, who do not want to stay in Italy at all. Only three Sudanese people decided to settle here in the last three years [...]. When it is your fifth time trying to cross the border, the possibility that you will rely on a trafficking [smuggling] network becomes higher” (IT-K-28).*

A young Ivoirian man described the level of uncertainty and precariousness of living at the border without possibilities to cross: *“I moved here to Ventimiglia to try to cross the border and get to France, but they [French police] refused me entry three times already. The problem is that I left my fingerprints here. So I decided to request asylum here in Italy. I am waiting for the [Territorial] Commission to come. It will take a lot of time, at least another six months, and I have been here for one year already. I don’t know what to do, there is no job, I cannot go to France” (IT-M-01).*

Policies and practices that affect people who wish to travel onwards from Italy to neighbouring EU countries (in particular France, Switzerland and Austria) have a significant impact on people’s migration plans and the conditions of their transit. The border police of these countries often refuse entry to people wishing to cross the border (IT-K-28; IT-K-29; IT-K-30; Save the Children, 2018). This happens both to those who are travelling irregularly, without any official registration, and to those who have already had their fingerprints recorded in the EURODAC database in Italy (IT-K-29). According to an interviewee from Oxfam in Ventimiglia, when internal European movements were less strictly controlled, people were more resilient while in transit through EU countries: *“The Dublin system is creating crazy situations, in which people who had a life project in France are returned to Italy, with no possibility to continue their journey regularly. This is threatening the great resilience that they used to have once they arrived in Europe” (IT-K-29).*

c) Migrant Smuggling – Resilience and Vulnerability

“I came here with a smuggler. Everyone comes with a smuggler. My father paid the smuggler, it was the same ‘company’ the whole way, I don’t know how much it was. Sometimes I don’t want to answer, because the trip was a bad experience and I am trying to forget it.”

- 19-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-04)

As a consequence of the lack of legal channels for migrating and seeking asylum, and the lack of possibilities to transit regularly along the routes, almost everyone who travels the route uses migrant smuggling services, at least at some point. As is evident throughout this entire chapter, many of the determining factors of resilience or vulnerability depend upon the smuggling experiences of people on the move. While migrant smuggling is not the main focus of this

research, the dynamics of migrant smuggling along the Balkan route in particular have remained relatively constant over the past decade and a half, with the exception of some newer *modus operandi*, such as “*new forms of social media and online communication technology [that can...] strengthen migrants’ negotiating positions*” (Bilger, 2018: 58; see also: UNODC, 2018; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE, 2015; Achilli, 2018; Mengiste, 2018; Majidi, 2018).

Using smuggling services is not always a factor of vulnerability. Depending on the experiences that people have with individual smugglers, it may be a factor of resilience, or, even if it is not, the user of smuggling services may see their interaction with the smuggler in a largely positive light, due to their lack of alternatives. Using smuggling services constitutes resilience if the smugglers carry out the task for which they have been paid, and constitutes vulnerability if people are directly abused and exploited by their smugglers, or are abused and exploited because they need to pay for smuggling services.

The ‘closing’ of the borders in March 2016 resulted in an increased demand for smuggling services, due to the increased difficulty of transiting to intended destination countries (MSF, 2017; MK-K-06). According to a key informant in North Macedonia, “*closing the borders [...] did not stop people from continuing to transit. It had a different effect. [...] I think that smuggling reached its highest point*” (MK-K-28).

In the absence of regular channels for travel, people who wish to make the journey to Europe use smuggling services, either once or multiple times until they reach their final destination or become stranded. As set out above, when transit is irregular, people are more dependent on smuggling services than people who could travel independently during May 2015-March 2016.

Most people travelling the routes therefore used smuggling services (BG-K-17; BG-K-18; MK-K-01; MK-K-05; MK-K-11; RS-K-07; HU-K-03; HU-K-11; HU-K-12; HU-K-13; HU-K-14; HU-K-30; HU-K-31; HU-K-34; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE, 2015; REACH, 2016; Campana & Varese, 2016; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; Crawley *et al.*, 2017; Bilger, 2018; Forin & Healy, 2018; Healy, 2018; Achilli, 2018; Horwood, Forin & Frouws, 2018; Campana, 2018).

Don't hate the player, hate the game.



Game of the Goose¹¹⁰

People using the services of smugglers perceive these people in various different ways, along a spectrum from 'saviour' to 'abuser'. The migration journey is referred to by people travelling along the Balkan route as the 'game' of crossing borders, with migrant smugglers providing 'game services.' To a certain extent, this is a 'game' of chance that depends on a person's experiences of smuggling. People on the move along the Balkan route also commonly refer to migrant smugglers simply as 'mafia.' Some people travelling the route speak about smugglers as people who help them, while others see them in a far more negative light, and the relationship between migrant and smuggler is characterised by fear.

In Francophone West Africa, smugglers are often referred to as *passeurs*, or, as one 27-year-old Ivoirian woman put it, "*vendeurs d'illusions* [dream sellers]" (DE-M-09). In Anglophone West Africa, the terms 'coaxer' or 'trolley' are often used, in some cases also by people from Francophone countries. The coaxer has been described as: "*An ambiguous figure - half-crook, half-savior - the coaxer provides services for obtaining visas and establishing contact with smugglers in return for a substantial cash payment*" (Palomares & Quiminal, 2012: 154).

110 The 'Royal Game of the Goose' has been played in Italy since the fifteenth century and had spread to other Western European countries by the end of the sixteenth century. The game is played with counters and two dice, and is a game of chance. According to a librarian at Magdalene College Libraries, Catherine Sutherland: "The goose is a symbol of good luck and spiritual advancement – by landing on the spaces depicting geese, the player advances further in the game [...]. There are also 'hazard' spaces, illustrated with symbols which hamper spiritual advancement, such as the prison (space number 19) or the inn (space number 52). Space number 58 with the skeleton is certainly to be avoided: if a player lands on this space, they must start at the beginning of the game again. [...N]umber 63 was known as the 'Grand Climacteric'. [...] 63 as the endpoint of the game represents 'the evolution of a human life: once the Grand Climactic was passed, peace and wisdom were to be enjoyed.'" <https://magdlibs.com/2016/11/18/game-of-goose>. Image from: <http://ursuladubosarsky.squarespace.com/the-game-of-the-goose>.

‘Good Smuggling’

“[Smugglers] are good. It depends, if your smuggler is good, you will be good. If your smuggler is not good, you won’t be good. When I was in prison [in Bulgaria], I met with a smuggler. His brother was with me for 15 months. This was good to know. Then I know he is good.

In this period, I did not get into any bad experiences with smugglers, just because he was very good to me. He took me from Bulgaria to here. He always tried to minimise the walking for me. He always tried to suggest a good game for me, a fast one.”

- 23-year-old Pakistani man interviewed in Serbia (RS-M-32)

The concept of ‘good smuggling’ can be understood in one of two ways, and is analysed accordingly here. **In some cases, effective and reliable provision of smuggling services by a smuggler or a group of smugglers can be a concrete, objective source of resilience.** This can be ensured by smugglers who are invested in their business reputation. **In other cases, although smugglers are actually deceiving or abusing migrants, they themselves perceive the smuggler in a positive light, as someone who is helping them, in a context of lack of alternatives** (EL-K-13; EL-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-30; RS-M-30; RS-M-32; HU-M-06; HU-K-05; HU-K-07; HU-K-27; DE-M-19; DE-K-15; IT-M-03; IT-M-06; IT-M-07; IT-M-08; IT-K-03; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE, 2015; Mandić, 2017; Bilger, 2018; Mengiste, 2018; Majidi, 2018).

For people who can afford more expensive, safer smuggling services, the smuggling experience is a factor of resilience. This applies particularly to those who can afford a ‘full package’ all the way to their intended destination country, provided by people of trust from their country of origin (EL-K-20; BG-K-03; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; MK-K-15; MK-K-19; MK-K-27; MK-K-30; MK-K-31; HU-K-11; IT-K-19; IT-K-30; Achilli, 2018; Bilger, 2018; Horwood, Forin & Frouws, 2018). This was the case particularly for Syrians, and particularly from May 2015 to March 2016 (EL-K-13; EL-K-20; BG-K-03; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; MK-K-08; MK-K-19; Achilli, 2018). The experiences of Afghan people are generally more unsafe and risky than the experiences of Syrian people along the routes. For Afghans, the journey is much longer and more difficult, and generally their first contact with smugglers is in Afghanistan or Iran (MK-M-02; MK-K-04).

Using the services of reliable smugglers who do not abuse or exploit their customers is a crucial source of resilience. In all of the countries under study, there were indications, particularly among people on the move who were interviewed, of positive experiences of smugglers. In a context where options for onward travel are limited, and people are desperate to move on, smugglers are among the few people who can really provide the assistance that people want (HU-K-05; HU-K-07; HU-K-27).

‘Good Smugglers’



‘Good smugglers’ make sure that everyone is safe and reaches their destination. An Afghan man interviewed in Germany and a key informant from a German NGO described how smugglers made sure that women and children were taken by cars through dangerous areas, such as a mountainous area in Iran, while men had to walk (DE-K-15; DE-M-19). A 19-year-old East African woman also spoke of how smugglers helped her during her journey to Serbia as a teenage girl: *“A lot of the time I was tired, after ten days without eating or sleeping normally. One day I even sat down and I said I couldn’t do it anymore. It was the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere. [...] The [smugglers] even tried to pick me up off the ground, one of the guys put me on his back and carried me. Most of them were helpful, sometimes they gave us peanuts and said you need energy in your hands, eat them”* (HU-M-06).

Also in the Libyan context, ‘good smugglers’ can protect people from exploitation and extortion, as well as making sure they reach their intended destination safely (IT-M-06; IT-M-07; IT-M-08; IT-K-03). People who had travelled the route mentioned smugglers as playing a crucial role in helping them to avoid being locked up in Libya (IT-M-06; IT-M-07; IT-M-08).

‘Good smugglers’ care about their business reputation. Particularly when there is a lower demand for migrant smuggling services, smugglers depend on a positive reputation in order to make a profit (MK-K-15; MK-K-30; RS-M-30; Bilger, 2018). An Afghan man interviewed for this research in Serbia considered that the situation changed in 2017-2018, due to the decrease in demand: *“customers are treated better now that there are less customers - smugglers must treat their customers well, otherwise they will risk losing their customers”* (RS-M-30). One key informant also argued that smuggling in itself is sufficiently profitable that it is not necessary for most smugglers to engage in exploitation, extortion or deception (MK-K-30; see also: Neske, 2006).

Such straightforward experiences of migrant smuggling seem common along the route (Achilli, 2018), and can be classified according to Bilger's (2018) typology as "service smuggling": *"At the beginning of their relationship, migrants identify a smuggler who will agree to convey them to their desired destination, after which the two parties agree on a trajectory and a fee for arrival there. Smugglers deliver on this agreement, or at least credibly try to do so. They have a strong interest in successfully delivering their services, as repeated failure would be communicated through migrants' communities very quickly and the consequential loss of reputation would put them out of business within a short time"* (Bilger, 2018: 46).

Clearly then, smugglers who care about their business reputation would also not perpetrate abuses or exploitation against their clients. The likelihood of having a more negative experience, including abuses and exploitation, is related to the power balance between migrant and smuggler. In contexts where there are many people on the move, with limited resources, and a high demand for smuggling services, the business reputation of the smuggler is less important and therefore abuses and exploitation may be more common.

'Good smugglers' are often not part of a sophisticated, organised criminal network. Most smuggling services are provided in an opportunistic, sporadic manner, on a step-by-step basis, rather than by a highly organised transnational criminal network (MK-K-04; MK-K-10; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-30; Bilger, 2018; Forin & Healy, 2018; Healy, 2018; Campana, 2018; UNODC, 2018; Mandić, 2017; Crawley *et al.*, 2017; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE, 2015; Neske, 2006; Achilli, 2018; Mengiste, 2018; Majidi, 2018). On the one hand, this makes people more vulnerable, as they have to contact different people along the way. It is a more dangerous situation than a 'full package' to the final intended destination, particularly if such a full package is provided by a 'good smuggler'. However, low-level smugglers also have less sophisticated levels of organisation and less contact with organised criminal groups.

Sometimes smugglers seem like 'good smugglers' even when they are not, because they are the only actors meeting people's needs. While the situations described above represent resilience for people who use 'good smugglers,' in other cases people perceive their smugglers as helping them, even if that is not case. This is due to a lack of alternatives for travel, and risks of abuse and exploitation by other actors (EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-28). For example, because some women and girls travelling along the Balkan route had been subject to repeated rapes and sexual violence, they described their smugglers as having saved them from abusers (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017).

Three West African men who had travelled the Central Mediterranean route explained their situation of having no alternatives to being subject to labour exploitation by smugglers in Libya (IT-M-01; IT-M-04; IT-M-08). In all three cases, the men described their employers, who did not pay them at all for the work, as helping them. As a Malian-Ghanaian man described: *"In Tripoli I met a Libyan, a good man, who searched for Africans who wanted to cross the sea and helped them. I worked for him for seven months to make carpets. He didn't pay me, but he organised the trip for me and one day he put me on the boat. There were three of us, all Ghanaians, working for him"* (IT-M-01).

'Bad Smuggling'

"You rub homeland deodorant on your armpit not to smell bad, you who made good people bad."

(*"Lams"* from the album *Eshtebahe Khoob*)

While there are indications of experiences of 'good smuggling,' many people also had negative experiences of smuggling, varying from deception in relation to prices and routes, to threats, sexual and physical violence, extortion and exploitation. Negative experiences of deception, threats and violence significantly reduce people's general resilience, and increase their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking directly by smugglers or by other actors.

In the context of the Balkan route, exploitation occurs due to people being in debt to smugglers, and due to smugglers requesting increasing amounts of money for their services (Forin & Healy, 2018; Horwood, Forin & Frouws, 2018). ICMPD's study on trafficking in the context of the Syrian war and refugee situation identified an overlap between trafficking and smuggling (ICMPD, 2015). As examined in more detail in chapter 4 below, using the services of smugglers is a specific and acute vulnerability if those smugglers directly perpetrate forms of exploitation against people using their services.

Particularly when smugglers are part of sophisticated transnational criminal networks, people using their services are at a heightened risk of exploitation and abuse. Although much of the smuggling that takes place along the Balkan route in particular is low-level and sporadic, there are also some organised transnational groups operating in this context (HU-M-04; MK-K-13; MK-K-31; BKA, 2017a), and their connections with other forms of transnational organised crime, including human trafficking, make people who use their smuggling services acutely vulnerable.¹¹¹ Even for people using more low-level smugglers, particularly when unforeseen obstacles arise along the route, and borders are closed, people lose contact with their smugglers or are cheated out of their prior agreements (EL-K-01; Mandić, 2017). This causes increased psychological and financial vulnerabilities.

Some people paid a fee for an entire journey to the final intended destination, but were only transported along part of the route (EL-K-01; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-24; MK-K-26; HU-K-09; HU-K-20). As an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia described: *"They are left by smugglers, or cheated, where the smuggler tells them 'wait for me I'm going to get a meal and bring you drinks and food,' and never returns"* (MK-K-13). Other people were promised a better mode of transport, with accommodation and food, which was not provided (MK-K-23; HU-K-20).

¹¹¹ According to the German Federal Criminal Office (BKA) statistics, on the Balkan route, smugglers sometimes cooperate in a structured manner (BKA, 2017a). Also, for smugglers who transport people from Libya to Italy, there is a higher level of organisation, which also includes intermediaries operating in countries of origin in West and East Africa (IT-M-03; IT-M-06). However, a higher level of cooperation does not necessarily make people using smuggling services more vulnerable, unless there are connections to other abusive or exploitative actors.

Dependence on, and fear of, smugglers is also a source of vulnerability (MK-M-03; MK-K-03; MK-K-27; MK-K-31; GMDAC, 2016). Fear of smugglers and smugglers threatening their families means that people are unlikely to seek help if something goes wrong during the journey (MK-K-27; MK-K-31). An interviewee from the Border Police in North Macedonia described how: *“Pakistani and Afghan criminal groups have a lot of power in their countries, and migrants are much more afraid of what could happen to them if they disclose anything, than of what might happen to them if they stay in any of the countries for a certain period”* (MK-K-27).

People making the Eastern Mediterranean sea crossing from Turkey to Greece are often put on unseaworthy boats by smugglers, and experience the drowning of other passengers. According to a child psychologist interviewed in Hungary: *“I have heard the story many times that people cross the sea at night with very aggressive smugglers. They had to swim. They were saved, but sometimes they saw people drown next to them, sometimes even their relatives”* (HU-K-20).

A social worker interviewed in Hungary described how the smuggler organising the boat trip may dictate that people are not allowed to take certain things with them, so they lose all of their belongings, including their mobile phones - which, as analysed in the next section, are an important source of resilience (HU-K-06). Risks and abuses are also common during the sea crossing from Libya to Italy, with the use of unseaworthy boats.

Case 3.6 – Malian man abused by migrant smugglers in Libya

A 30-year-old Malian man interviewed in Germany described his experience with smugglers in Libya before crossing to Italy: *“Then for the crossing, the smugglers divided us into small groups. They took us to a huge fenced garden and told us to hide among the flowers. Then we were robbed of our money again, and those who still had phones had them taken by the smugglers. After robbing us of our last goods and dinars [Libyan currency], the smugglers went to pay for food (biscuits, cakes, bread and fruit juice) with the money they had taken from us, in order to sell them to us later. We waited for about a week, then they took us to the beach. We were split up again - to get rid of anything that could be a burden for the crossing. Women who had their periods could not travel [...]. From that moment, we understood that we were at their mercy. They loaded us in like sardines: there were more than 100 people on a makeshift boat. Not to mention the cans of drinking water and dozens of cans of fuel for the engine. It was clear that the load was too much for this makeshift boat. But we all wanted to believe in a miracle and asked God to be kind”* (DE-M-11).

Similarly dangerous conditions were described for people using smuggling services to cross borders in the North of Italy (Ventimiglia, Bardonecchia, Como and Brenner), with Ventimiglia considered to be the most dangerous crossing (Save the Children, 2018). People transit by train, in extremely dangerous conditions, according to an interviewee from Caritas in Ventimiglia: *“traffickers and smugglers give them information about some parts of the trains that are not*

checked during the day, they let migrants in and they lock them up in these spaces that can only be opened from outside. Sometimes in France, officers find people almost dead, dehydrated, because the smugglers do not always go to open them” (IT-K-28).

“Smugglers rape children if they can’t pay. According to my experience, most unaccompanied children are raped. There is no boy who didn’t experience any abuse during the journey. When they resist violence, smugglers burn their body with cigarettes. I have also heard of children who resisted and kicked, so the smugglers handcuffed them and raped them like that.”

- Child protection expert from a migrant community in Hungary (HU-K-30)

Smugglers also perpetrated severe physical violence on the routes (MK-M-01; MK-K-29; HU-K-20; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017). An interviewee from the Centre for Social Work in Skopje, North Macedonia, shared the story of an Afghan woman with five children who testified that they were physically assaulted by smugglers, with large sticks (MK-K-29). Sexual violence is prevalent on the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes, and on the trans-Saharan and Central Mediterranean routes. Both men and women were sexually assaulted and exploited by smugglers (HU-K-30; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-14; DE-M-17; UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018).

Case 3.7 - Attempted rape of Afghan boys and rape of Afghan boys in Serbia by smugglers

Two similar cases were shared by a child protection expert in Hungary: *“There was an Afghan Pashtun boy with a very beautiful face who came with his cousin from Afghanistan. He was very small, eight years old and the cousin was 12 or 13. They waited a lot in Serbia, eight or nine months. One night the smugglers (two men, an Afghan and an Albanian) got very drunk and visited the children, they wanted to rape them and started to touch them. The boy got so scared that he asked someone to help him to go to another camp. He didn’t have any money but wanted to cross the border and come to Hungary. His parents sent him money through Western Union and he managed to pay the smuggler. The cousin stayed there and arrived here legally eight months later, so they met again here”* (HU-K-30).

“There was a 16 or 17-year-old Afghan boy who came here with his nine-year-old brother. Both of them were raped by smugglers. They came to Hungary to a childcare facility. The older brother was very scared and didn’t tell anyone.

He had gotten an STD [...]. One day he told other children who reported this to the institutional supervisor, this is how the rape came to light. He was raped in Serbia by smugglers. He was always wearing long shirts to hide his cigarette burns. He felt so ashamed” (HU-K-30).

Nearly everyone interviewed for this research who had travelled along the Central Mediterranean route experienced some form of theft, violence or exploitation *en route*, in many cases perpetrated by militias in Libya and border police along the route through West, East and North African countries. Some of these militia groups are also involved in migrant smuggling, or work in collaboration with smugglers to rob and extort people.

A Cameroonian woman and an Ivoirian woman interviewed for this study in Germany described how they had been raped during the journey (DE-M-09; DE-M-17). In addition, men from Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon, Mali and Eritrea described how they witnessed and heard of girls and women being raped during the journey (DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-14). A 42-year-old Eritrean man interviewed for this research spoke of his journey along the Central Mediterranean route: *“The smugglers [...] constantly raped girls and men, mistreated them, beat them up and even fired bullets at them”* (DE-M-14).

What is also common along the Balkan route, and far more so along the Central Mediterranean route, is the experience of being locked up by smugglers, and deprived of liberty for the purposes of extortion. As well as deception, threats, abuses, violence and extortion, some people providing smuggling services also perpetrated exploitation or forced people to engage in ‘survival sex’.

Paying for Smuggling Services

“Three or four thousand euros I [spent] here in Europe. Big problem. It is too expensive. I am trying [hard] to cross, but the smuggler wants a lot of money. When my family call me, they tell me ‘you haven’t crossed’ – it makes me very sad.”

- Young Afghan man interviewed in Serbia (RS-M-21)

In other cases, vulnerabilities arise not directly through interaction with smugglers, but as a result of the need to pay for their services. In these cases, smuggling services are provided without involving abuses or exploitation, but people on the move may run out of money or go into debt in order to pay for the services, making them vulnerable to labour exploitation in particular. If high costs are incurred, this increases people’s vulnerability to trafficking (Forin & Healy, 2018; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Mandić, 2017; GMDAC, 2016). People need money – and may work along the way to earn it - in order to pay for smuggling services (EL-K-01; EL-K-03; EL-K-20; EL-K-21; EL-K-24; MK-K-11), but also for basic survival (EL-K-10; EL-K-19; EL-K-21; EL-K-22).

Literature and interviews for this research suggest costs ranging from €1,000 to €8,000 per person

for smuggling services from Turkey to transit and destination countries in Europe, often paid on a step-by-step basis (EL-K-06; EL-K-20; RS-K-04; HU-M-05; IOM, 2017b; Mandić, 2017; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; REACH, 2016). The costs seem to have generally briefly decreased, and then increased significantly, as a result of the border restrictions introduced after March 2016, due to the increased difficulty of crossing borders (RS-K-04; RS-K-07; RS-K-16; HU-M-05; Mandić, 2017; IOM, 2017b; REACH, 2016).

People transiting through Bulgaria, particularly during 2016, were more vulnerable, and did not have the resources that people travelling before that period had. For this reason, they could not ensure a transactional interaction with the smugglers, nor full payment for smuggling services, meaning that they had to find more risky or exploitative ways to pay (BG-K-03; BG-K-15; BG-K-16). According to an interviewee from an NGO in North Macedonia: *“The worst route is the Afghan route. One migrant told me that his trip together with his brother cost him about €20,000 per person from Afghanistan to [North] Macedonia. [...] And that’s not a guarantee that you will arrive in [North] Macedonia”* (MK-K-04).

Therefore, a *“clear division in services has developed: safer journeys for those who can afford it, alongside services of reduced quality for the masses”* (Bilger, 2018: 58). Financial resources strongly influence the duration and organisation of the journey. People opt for longer and more dangerous routes because they do not have enough money to travel directly to their destinations. Running out of money while in transit also creates specific factors of vulnerability (EL-K-10; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; GMDAC, 2016).

On the other hand, conditional payment in phases for smuggling services may enhance the safety of service-users, increasing their resilience and reducing the likelihood of abuses (MK-M-01; DE-M-19; HU-M-05; MK-K-10; MK-K-18; MK-K-27; MK-K-31; HU-K-18; HU-K-19). With conditional payment, it is often not the person travelling who pays the smugglers, but rather family members in the country of origin or already in an EU country (MK-M-01; DE-M-19; MK-K-10; MK-K-27; HU-K-19). Even if some money is paid in advance, the remainder is only paid when the person being smuggled arrives at the agreed destination (MK-M-01; MK-K-31), without requests for additional payment, abuses or exploitation.

An Afghan man explained that his father, who was still in Afghanistan, conducted all the negotiations with smugglers before and during his journey. His father had paid half of the fee to the smugglers before he left and transferred the other half when his son informed him that he had arrived safely. This is how the father ensured that the smugglers would take care of his son’s safety (DE-M-19). This remote, phased and conditional form of payment is sometimes carried out using Western Union (HU-M-05) or the *hawala* system¹¹² (EL-K-33; MK-K-18; HU-K-37). To a certain extent, then, the conditionality of payment, together with the reputation of the smuggler,

¹¹² Hawala is an informal customary financial practice, “rooted in Islamic moral traditions and based on trust that enables the transfer or remittance of money between two parties in a fast and inexpensive manner, without the direct involvement of a financial institution” (Redín, Calderón & Ferrero, 2014: 327). The word *hawala* comes from Arabic and means a form of transfer. The system functions on the basis of the operations of an international network of brokers – *hawaladar*. It is used as a parallel financial system in many countries around the world, for various purposes, including in many of the countries of origin of people using the migration routes, in the Middle East, West and South Asia, North Africa and Horn of Africa.

represent a form of resilience. If the family pays upon arrival, the person travelling does not have to deal directly with smugglers (HU-K-19).

The parents of many unaccompanied children and young adults selected and contacted smugglers, also organising the payment directly without involving the child or young adult. This also means that these young people do not carry money with them (HU-M-04; HU-M-06; MK-K-25; HU-K-19; HU-K-30). Not carrying cash is also an additional source of physical protection (MK-K-29), as described by a young Afghan man: *“No one takes that much money on the journey, because the smuggler will kill you for it or steal your money”* (HU-M-05).¹¹³ Unaccompanied children shared their experiences with field workers from the Centre for Social Work in Skopje: *“the boy does not carry money with him, and everything goes through a quick money transfer. As one border is crossed, the money is transferred [by his parents], and another smuggler arrives, so he transfers him to the next border. And the boy confirms this, so the money is paid, and to the third border, until the final destination”* (MK-K-29).

Also in the personal experience of a young man interviewed in North Macedonia, his parents made contact with the smugglers in his country of origin, with support from relatives living in Europe, and these relatives paid for his journey to Greece. Friends of these relatives in Europe provided the contact for smugglers in Greece (MK-M-01). As a 19-year-old East African woman described: *“My mum actually helped me to find a smuggler, after that incident with my father. There were stories about people who took people from home to Europe somewhere. [...] My mum found a guy and she paid him money from [the sale of] a piece of land she owned. And from there I actually went from [country of origin] to Greece”* (HU-M-06).

However, it should be noted that if parents and other family members cannot afford to pay these conditional, remote payments, it puts children and young people at acute risk of abuse by the smugglers, or by potential exploiters, as they may be desperate to earn money to pay the next instalment.

2.4 Situational Factors during the Journey

In addition to factors of resilience and vulnerability determined by people’s experiences of migrant smuggling, the group that they travel with also has a significant influence on the likelihood of them being abused or trafficked. Group dynamics are distinct for girls, boys, women and men, and depend on whether someone travels with their family or alone, and whether they travel with people from the same extended family or community, or with strangers.

In general, the possibility to travel in a group is perceived as a way of protecting people from trafficking networks (IT-M-03; IT-M-06; IT-M-08; EL-K-03; EL-K-27; IT-K-11). However, these dynamics are complex, and while for some people travelling with family members or with a group of people from the same country of origin is a factor of resilience, for others it can make them vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, particularly for women and girls in a context where the majority of people travelling are men and boys (REACH, 2016; Save the Children, 2017).

¹¹³ Indeed, an interviewee from the Border Police of North Macedonia commented that: “there were quite a lot of robberies of migrants along the route when they were walking on foot by local criminals here” (MK-K-27). A 26-year-old Syrian man had heard of several cases where people travelling along the Balkan route were stopped on the way by militia who took all their belongings (DE-M-13).

a) Travelling with family

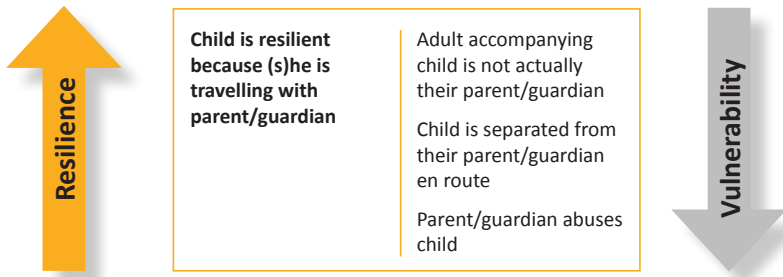
Travelling in the company of immediate family members was more common for Syrians and Iraqis on the move during 2015-2016 than for other groups, especially Afghans, and represents a key factor of resilience (EL-K-03; EL-K-27; MK-K-07; MK-K-08; MK-K-10; MK-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-17; MK-K-20; MK-K-24; MK-K-26; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; RS-K-01; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-10; RS-K-11; RS-K-23; RS-K-24; RS-M-03; RS-M-4; RS-M-13; RS-M-19; RS-M-20; RS-M-21; RS-M-22; RS-M-23; RS-M-24; RS-M-25; RS-M-26; RS-M-27; RS-M-28; RS-M-29; RS-M-30; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017). Most Afghan men and boys travelled alone, while only around 7% of women and girls travelled without family (REACH, 2016).

According to Frontex (2018), 38% of people who crossed the Eastern Mediterranean travelled with other family members, while only 13% travelled with families across the Central Mediterranean. Among those who arrived in Germany, Somalian, Eritrean and Ethiopian women often travelled alone, while this was rarely the case for women from Syria and Afghanistan. The majority of the Syrian and Afghan women travelled with their children; most Afghan women also travelled in the company of their husbands (67%), while only 48% of Syrian women travelled with their husbands (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). When people travel with a family group, particularly when that group includes adult men, they are more resilient to abuses and better supported in general.

Travelling without spouses or other close adult relatives increases vulnerability to trafficking and other related abuses and violence, particularly for women and children (MK-K-07; MK-K-08; MK-K-10; MK-K-14; MK-K-15; MK-K-17; MK-K-20; MK-K-24; MK-K-26; MK-K-29; MK-K-31). Being physically together with family members is a factor of resilience in the sense that family members support each other psychologically and financially. For example, a Syrian woman with her three children was separated from her husband during their trip along the Balkan route. In Germany, it was possible to locate the husband and reunite him with his family, increasing the resilience of that family (Sindani, 2018).

When children travel in the company of one or both parents, this is a key source of resilience. Nevertheless, three crucial issues can be detrimental to the resilience of children travelling with parents. Firstly, children may appear to be travelling with their parents or family members, but in fact this is not the case (although, depending on the adult in question, this may still provide some form of protection). Secondly, a child's parent or parents may be the ones who are abusing and/or exploiting them. While unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable in the context of the migration routes, there is far less information available on the far larger number of children who travel in the company of their parents or guardians (MK-K-27). Finally, children may become separated from their parents along the route.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Children on the Move



During the journey, families can become separated by accident, because of border control operations, as a travel strategy or by smugglers in order to extort money. This is a key moment of increased vulnerability for children who started the journey with their parents or other family members, as well as increasing the vulnerability of adults who may be desperate to urgently reunite with their children. Children and parents may become separated: because of a chaotic situation at a border crossing point, during a sea crossing or during disembarkation; because some family members do not manage to cross the borders due to police operations; or as a strategy to be able to organise and finance the trip (MK-K-10; MK-K-22; MK-K-23; MK-K-24 HU-K-09; Sindani, 2018; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017).

In the study by Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer (2017), about 38% of the women interviewed mentioned experiencing forced separation from their family members in their countries of origin or during the journey, and six of the women had lost their children during the journey or gotten separated from them and had not found them since. One case was shared by an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia: *“a 16-year-old Syrian boy was travelling with his uncle and a larger group of people from Greece, and suddenly the group split up and he was left alone [...]. Part of the group left Greece, but he did not manage to [...]. The group was made up of members of an extended family, he also had a brother and other relatives, but he was left alone and came here [North Macedonia]”* (MK-K-22).

Case 3.8 – Separation of an Afghan family *en route* to Germany

An interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia described the following situation: *“two children from Afghanistan were identified as unaccompanied children [...]. Their mother had taken three of her children to Turkey, and the father and another child were already at the final destination in Germany, where he needed to earn some extra money for the rest of the family to continue the trip. But because one child fell ill in Turkey and had to be hospitalised there, the father decided to have his other two children brought to the final destination by smugglers, with the mother and the sick child following afterwards”* (MK-K-10).

Some smugglers intentionally separate families at certain points along the way in order to extort more money from other family members, or as a guarantee of payment (MK-K-22; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; RS-K-06; RS-K-13; Oxfam, 2016; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; GMDAC, 2016). A Syrian woman was travelling to Germany with her husband and his nephew, but was assigned to a different boat for the crossing from Turkey to Greece in October 2015. On arrival in Greece, she could not find them, and had to continue her journey to Germany alone, in constant worry and fear for her family members. The Bavarian Red Cross conducted family tracing and she learned that her husband had drowned; his nephew was among the survivors, but he had been returned to Turkey after the closure of the accommodation centre he had been staying at in Greece (Sindani, 2018).

Oxfam also recorded the testimony of an Afghan woman who travelled with her husband and children. In Bulgaria, they paid someone to drive them to Serbia, but they were separated – men and boys in one car, women and girls in the other. She arrived in Serbia, but her husband and sons were still in Bulgaria. At the time that she told the story, UNHCR was helping her to reunite with her family, but she did not know how long it would take for them to be together again (Oxfam, 2016).

Case 3.9 – Nigerian family separated in Libya

A 21-year-old Nigerian man who was living in Libya with his family was forcefully taken to a prison camp together with his mother and siblings. He was later separated from them: *“One day these Libyan criminals came and forced a group of 200 people to enter a boat. They forced me to enter the boat and go to Europe without my mother and siblings. ... My mother was since taken to a camp for forced labour. Two of my younger siblings were later also thrown into a boat and got stranded somewhere. We do not know where they are. We have lost everything. This is why I have to work now in order to help my mother”* (cited in: Sindani, 2018: 46-47; own translation).

Many children who do not travel in the company of their parents instead travel with a member of their extended family, a neighbour or a family friend, to whom the children were entrusted to take them to the destination country. Children sometimes travel with relatives in order to reunite with their families, who have already reached their country of destination (MK-K-04). Other people travel together, appearing to be a family, in order to make the journey easier (RS-M-01; RS-M-02; RS-M-03; RS-M-20; MK-K-03; MK-K-15; RS-K-10; RS-K-11).

For example, a 10-year-old Syrian boy and his three-year-old sister were travelling with a young married couple, who the children disclosed were not their parents, but had been paid by their parents to take the children to Germany, according to an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia (MK-K-16). In some cases poorly trained staff register children as accompanied, without proof that the person in charge is actually a family member (Save the Children & IRC, 2017). According to interviewees from IOM in North Macedonia: *“In 2016, there was a man with 13 children, and five of them said he was their father, five said he was their uncle, the others their*

neighbour, but their faces were saying that something was wrong. Since there were 13 children, guardians were not appointed. [...] and they boarded the train” (MK-K-15).

Children travelling in groups with unrelated adults can face risks, since they may be exploited by other members of the group, and these children are not protected by their actual parents, as was the case for an 18-year-old Somalian woman interviewed for this research (RS-M-36). Indeed, according to interviewees working at child rights NGOs, some children arrive in Germany with an adult who is not their parent but who claims to be a family member. In these situations, it can be difficult to identify whether the adult is indeed a family member, and whether they have already, or intend to, abuse or exploit the child (DE-K-01; DE-K-05).

Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable in the context of the migration routes, and were mentioned as a vulnerable group by almost all key informants in the seven countries under study. It is important to keep in mind that the vast majority of unaccompanied children are not orphans, but rather have become separated from their parents or guardians at some stage, either on departure from their country of origin or during the journey, when they become separated from their family *en route*, as examined above.

While children are vulnerable *per se*, travelling unaccompanied is an additional situational vulnerability (MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-08; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-15; MK-K-16; MK-K-20; MK-K-22; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; MK-K-25; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-32; HU-K-06; DE-K-03; DE-K-05; GMDAC, 2016; Morača, 2014; UNODC, 2013). In some cases, travelling unaccompanied may also be a contextual vulnerability imposed by border control, migration management or asylum policies or practices.

An interviewee from MSF in Serbia considered that official estimates of the numbers of unaccompanied children using the Balkan route do not reflect the actual situation, and the number of unaccompanied boys particularly is likely to be much higher (RS-K-07). Unaccompanied children transiting along the route may not be identified as such and provided with the necessary protection. The reasons are manifold, ranging from high numbers of people arriving at the same time, the children’s desire to continue the journey as soon as possible and/or not come into contact with authorities, to lack of ID documents and lack of effective indicators for identifying child abuse (MK-K-13; MK-K-28; RS-K-07).

Unaccompanied children do not have parental protection, they may experience health issues and may not be able to clearly communicate their needs, compounded by the fact that they do not speak the languages of transit countries (Morača, 2014). Various sources describe the situation of unaccompanied Afghan children, who comprise the largest group of unaccompanied children in this context, followed by children from Pakistan, Iraq and Syria (MSF, 2017; Save the Children & IRC, 2017; REACH, 2016; Save the Children, 2017a). The majority of these children are boys aged 15-17 years.

b) Gender-Specific Factors

Women and Girls

In the context of the migration journey, women and girls are particularly vulnerable because they are travelling in a context where they are significantly outnumbered by men and boys. This increases the risk of SGBV, sex trafficking, forced marriage and domestic servitude, perpetrated by members of the group they are travelling with, smugglers or, in isolated cases, by service providers and authorities (BG-K-03; BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; MK-K-02; MK-K-04; MK-K-28). Specific challenges were mentioned in North Macedonia due to the lack of female police officers during the period when large numbers of people were in transit, and the lack of female interpreters, meaning that women were reluctant to seek help (MK-K-02). Also, the vulnerabilities of women, girls and boys during mid-2016 were particularly relevant, as an increased proportion of women and children were travelling (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Oxfam, 2016).

Women without an adult male companion are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses perpetrated by men whom they encounter during the journey (MK-K-02; MK-K-04; MK-K-28; MK-K-31; IT-K-11; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). Some Eritrean women became pregnant as a result of sex trafficking or rape during the journey. For some of them, these experiences were a continuation of experiences of violence in Eritrea, including rape, imprisonment, forced marriage or female genital mutilation (Solwodi, 2017). The constant threat and fear of SGBV for women and girls during the journey, particularly in the context of the Central Mediterranean Route, is illustrated by the following case.

Case 3.10 – Syrian woman’s fears of sexual violence *en route* through Sudan

A 36-year-old woman fled from Syria with her four daughters and one son. She described how, during their journey from Khartoum to Libya, she covered her daughters’ faces with scarves so that no men would see their beauty, and how at night she rarely slept because of her fear that one of the smugglers or a man working at a road block might sexually abuse her daughters. Throughout the entire journey, she was in a panic about this, until they reached Germany (Solwodi, 2017).

Women travelling with their children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to gender-specific risks (MK-K-15; MK-K-28; MK-K-29). In Ventimiglia, Italy, an interviewee from Caritas stated that *“women can more easily be victims of violence. Eritrean women often travel without men, often with their children, and they are more prone to ask for any kind of help to cross the border”* (IT-K-28). Women may travel with their children but without the children’s father, either because they became separated during the journey or because the father has already arrived at the destination (MK-K-02; MK-K-04; MK-K-26; MK-K-28; MK-K-31; IT-K-11; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). An interviewee from an NGO working with children in North Macedonia described how: *“the woman has the task of safely transferring her children from point A to point B. She can endure anything, but the children should be brought healthy and alive to the father. That’s the mission. And what a woman experiences and survives during that process is not important,*

what matters is that the children are taken to that point” (MK-K-28).

However, this factor of vulnerability is complex, in that women and girls are at risk from some of the men and boys they are travelling with, and therefore they seek protection from other men, including family members. If the men whom they seek protection from do in fact protect them, then this is a source of resilience. On the other hand, some women and girls may be abused or exploited by these men whom they sought out for protection. Exploitation or abuse by family members was mentioned by a number of key informants in Greece, particularly of women by male family members, making them more psychologically vulnerable (EL-K-03; EL-K-10; EL-K-14; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; Marković & Cvejić, 2017; Solwodi, 2017).

In contrast to the description of the vulnerabilities of women travelling alone, set out above, research conducted by the NGO Atina among asylum applicants in Serbia indicated that, among the people they surveyed, women travelling with family members were in fact more vulnerable to violence than those travelling alone (RS-K-02). Women travelling with a husband or partner and children suffered most violence, while those travelling alone experienced it least (Marković & Cvejić, 2017). Nevertheless, these data should be taken with the caveat that, based on Atina’s experience, women travelling alone often state that they are travelling with a partner in order to ‘protect themselves,’ although the man is actually only a member of the group they are travelling with and not actually a husband or partner (Marković & Cvejić, 2017).

An interviewee in Greece referred to women travelling alone or with their children being approached by men of the same nationality along the route, in accommodation centres or at informal accommodation, who claim that they will protect them. This may be a strategy for abuse or exploitation (EL-K-10). Some women and girls who had travelled to Germany described how at certain stages during their journey they had had no choice but to ask men for help. In some cases, this led them into situations of exploitation (DE-K-09; DE-K-14; Solwodi, 2017).

An interviewee from an international organisation in Hungary described a group of Afghan children in the Transit Zone, who were being physically abused by their father. The older children asked NGOs to help them and the man was separated from them. The children were taken into childcare in Hungary, while their father was transferred to another sector within the Transit Zone (single men sector) and later went back to Serbia. The children’s older sister was already living in Germany and she helped them to pay for and organise their onward travel from Hungary to Germany (HU-K-28).

Case 3.11 – Moroccan woman subjected to ‘survival sex’ by men she was travelling with

An interviewee from a Crisis Management Centre in North Macedonia shared the following case: *“At the beginning of 2015, a pregnant woman from Morocco came*

to the camp, and she asked for help to remove the three men [whom she had arrived with], because none of them was her husband. The lady was alone, but she had started to travel with those three men, because they guaranteed her safety. She paid them money, but all the time they demanded sexual services from her. One man was from the same country of origin, the other two from different countries” (MK-K-14).

Some women pretend to be married to a man, or get married to a man in the context of the journey, in order to ensure their safety. However, this may also be a source of vulnerability. Women and girls are also at risk of getting pregnant, including as a result of sex trafficking or rape, or through relationships that they enter into in order to protect themselves (DE-M-07). An interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia described the situation of an Iranian woman who arrived in North Macedonia from Serbia with a group of about 15-20 Pakistani, Afghan and Iraqi men: *“They were moving in the ‘reverse’ direction [...]. She introduced [an Iraqi man] as her boyfriend, her husband, [...] because this made her feel a little more secure, to avoid complications [...]. She considered that being in relationship with a man protected her because she supposedly had a man at her side” (MK-K-26).* This can either be a situation of resilience if the man does protect her, or a situation of vulnerability if he takes advantage of the situation. One case in Hungary illustrates how marriage can also be a source of abuse.

Case 3.12 – Iraqi woman who married an Afghan man *en route*, subjected to domestic violence

“There was a Yazidi Kurdish woman [from Iraq] who met a man during the journey to Europe. The man was Afghan. He became friends with the brother of the woman. The Afghan man and the Yazidi woman fell in love with each other. The woman’s brother got very angry and hurt the woman badly, so she ended up in hospital in Serbia. The brother and her family didn’t wait for her and left without her.

The woman married the man and they managed to get to Hungary. The woman got pregnant and their child was born. The man severely abused the woman, physically and mentally. Social workers at the accommodation centre reported the abuse to the police, but the woman asked them not to press charges, as she wanted to stay with her husband. Women often stay with their husband even if he is an abuser. They hope that they can get to Germany, because they expect that women are treated well there and they can get a divorce and keep the children with them” (HU-K-31).

On the other hand, if men who are accompanying women and children on the journey do indeed protect them, then this is a factor of resilience for those women and children. According to a Somali woman interviewed in Serbia, men protect women even if they do not know them (RS-M-36). The women become their ‘sisters’ and they have to protect them (Morača, 2014). A Nigerian woman, for example, met a Sub-Saharan African man in Libya whom she entered into a

relationship with and who paid for her journey to Italy. Shortly after their arrival in Italy, she left the man (DE-M-07).

Men and Boys

“What makes you vulnerable in your home country or along the route is, in essence, the thing that helps you when you arrive in Greece.”

- Interviewee from MSF in Greece (EL-K-21)

If women and girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking other abuses in the context of the migration journey, then it follows that men and boys are more resilient. Yet this presumption of resilience among many state and NGO service providers may actually exacerbate men’s and boys’ vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses. Single adult men are a vulnerable group in this specific context precisely because they are considered the least vulnerable, and because they are more likely to be victims of physical violence perpetrated by law enforcement, smugglers or other adult male migrants.

Adult men are regularly denied access to essential services during their journey, compromising their resilience and exacerbating their vulnerability. It is evident from men’s and boys’ experiences of the migration journey that in many cases the assumption by service providers and frontline workers that men and teenage boys are more resilient than women and girls leads to them being denied services and de-prioritised in terms of crossing borders and continuing their journeys. As Brunovskis and Surtees (2017) point out, the fact that men and boys often travel alone has not raised the same level of concern as for women and girls.

The Paradox of ‘Vulnerable Groups’

This creates a paradox of ‘vulnerable groups,’ whereby people considered the most vulnerable tend to have better access to services *en route* and in destination contexts, while people not considered vulnerable are actually rendered more vulnerable due to lack of access. It is the perceived vulnerability of an unaccompanied child or a woman travelling alone that ensures better protection and increased resilience in transit and destination countries in Europe.

Single men are regularly denied entry to accommodation centres along the route (MK-K-12; MK-K-14; RS-K-24). In Hungary, *“not every nationality could go to the Transit Zone, for example people from Pakistan or single men. It was the most difficult to enter for single men”* (HU-K-01). As an interviewee from UNICEF in Serbia put it: *“We work with women and children and we know how challenging the whole transit is for them. On the other hand, women and children are less vulnerable upon arrival to the camp after failing at the game, as no one will ever reject them, which is not the case with men who often stay on the streets in these situations”* (RS-K-24).

Men travelling alone are also more likely to be sent back across a border: *“on the highway, they are intercepted and placed in vehicles. Some of them are interviewed, lately at least those who are families, in order to be detained. If they are only men, then they are immediately returned, [...] deported through illegal border crossing points”* (MK-K-11).

“Single young men are not seen as vulnerable by any organisation, programme or state authorities, thus making them the most vulnerable in the long run in Serbia. Smugglers are more violent towards them, the police are more aggressive, and many of them are under a lot of pressure – in terms of mental health – there is a lot of PTSD among single men.”

- Interviewee from an NGO in Serbia (RS-K-07)

Vulnerabilities for men and teenage boys also arise from the fact that smugglers may take young men and boys travelling alone along more dangerous routes than families, women and children.

An Afghan man interviewed for this research described how the group of young men he was travelling with were frequently separated from a group of families, women and children during his journey along the Balkan route. Families, women and children were taken across dangerous or difficult parts of the journey in vehicles, while the group of young men had to walk. During the safer parts of the journey, like when they were using public transport, the two groups travelled together (DE-M-19; DE-K-15). Another Afghan man described similar experiences: *“there were 31 or 32 of us. Most of us were Afghan, but we also had people from Pakistan, one or maybe two people from Syria. They were young people. This route was through mountains with too much climbing up and down. It was too difficult. Families travelling from Turkey to Bulgaria went along different routes, but our route was very difficult”* (MK-M-02).

In some instances, boys and men are also exposed to sexual abuse along the journey. Based on the experiences of boys and men on the Balkan route, Brunovskis and Surtees conclude that *“both boys and men are exposed to risks of sexual and physical violence as well as human trafficking along the Balkan route”* (2017: 24). A 42-year-old Eritrean man spoke of witnessing men and boys, as well as women and girls, being raped by migrant smugglers, in the context of the Central Mediterranean route: *“The smugglers were heartless people. They did not consider us as human beings. They constantly raped girls and men, mistreated them, beat them up and even fired bullets at them”* (DE-M-14). A psychologist in Hungary described such a case: *“There was also a man at the institute where I worked. I heard that he was raped. He was the most vulnerable and most fragile man in the whole institute. He escaped to parties. He was a 21-year-old Afghan man, but he seemed 15 to me. I didn’t talk with him about details, I respected his silence about it. It is also very hard to talk with women about rape. But it is even harder with men because of the stigma, they just can’t talk about it”* (HU-K-23).

Afghans, Pakistanis and groups of other nationalities, although fewer Syrians and Iraqis, reported a high percentage of physical assaults *en route* (REACH, 2016). According to an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia: *“Sometimes men may be vulnerable, for example, people*

from Afghanistan, Pakistan, not wealthy people, mostly single men. So they are subject to labour exploitation in Greece for example” (MK-K-16). Similarly, in Italy, young men from West and North African countries who travel by sea from Libya are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation. A certain corpus of literature already exists on labour exploitation in the context of the *caporalato* system of labour intermediaries in agriculture, although, as is the case on the Balkan route, there is little focus on young men as a vulnerable group in the context of abuses and trafficking in general (IT-K-05; see also chapter 4 below).

“I have fragments of all wars on my shoulders.”

(“Lams” from the album Eshtebehe Khoob)

Among children using the routes, boys are significantly over-represented, especially among unaccompanied children (MK-K-04; RS-K-02; Save the Children, 2017a). **Unaccompanied boys are a particular at-risk group for trafficking** (RS-M-01; RS-M-03; RS-M-23), and the forms of trafficking that affect them are examined in chapter 4 below. According to a key informant with experience of humanitarian work in accommodation centres in Southern Serbia: *“unaccompanied boys aged 12-16 are another vulnerable category. They suffered the most violence - even being passively involved is a great trauma”* (RS-K-12). Many boys were victims of physical and sexual violence during the journey, including an 18-year-old Afghan man who was interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-05; HU-K-02; HU-K-30).

The incidence of violence against unaccompanied boys travelling the Balkan route was so high that a Serbian women’s rights NGO decided in 2016 to extend access to its women’s shelter for boys and men who are victims of violence and exploitation. As an interviewee from this NGO noted: *“We, as a feminist women’s organisation with a focus on women and girls, registered the most violence against boys, often unaccompanied children”* (RS-K-02).

There is a particular stigma attached to boys who have been sex trafficked along the route and some boys may believe that they are to blame and not the perpetrators (traffickers and men buying sex from children). This may also make it very unlikely that they will report cases and seek help from NGOs (EL-K-13; EL-K-22; EL-K-24; HU-K-23).

c) Group Resilience

People often travel in groups of people from the same country, either formed in the countries of origin or in Turkey, Greece or Serbia (EL-K-03; BG-K-12; BG-K-14; MK-M-02; MK-K-05; RS-M-01; RS-M-03; RS-M-10; RS-M-13; RS-K-01; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-23; RS-K-24). **This can provide a source of group resilience, if group ties are maintained.** In general, people who have support from their peer group are more resilient (Majidi, 2018; Mengiste, 2018; Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016). An interviewee from an anti-trafficking NGO in Bulgaria described how people with a shared language establish strong social support networks to exchange information, practices, and strategies, forging a sense of community loyalty and providing a source of resilience (BG-K-12; BG-K-14).

A Senegalese man who travelled along the Central Mediterranean route explained that he became friends with another Senegalese man during the journey. When they reached Algeria, he paid for the other man's journey to Libya, in order for them to be able to remain together; otherwise the man would have had to stay in Algeria and find work to make the money to continue to Libya (DE-M-08). A 25-year-old Cameroonian woman described her experiences with the travel group: *"We had left Cameroon together and were very supportive of each other. Without the men [in the group], I cannot even imagine how I could have managed alone on this journey. It would have been suicide. I could never have achieved this goal alone"* (DE-M-16).

She also explained that even when some of them did not have the money to continue, the others would stay with them until they had made enough money for the next part of the journey. The members of the group are now in different European cities, but they remain connected. As the woman commented: *"We kept our links, we will be inseparable for life"* (DE-M-16).

Nevertheless, travelling as a family or community group means resilience for some people, but vulnerabilities for others, such as Afghan boys who have been sexually abused but are prevented by men from their own community from accessing assistance. Such groups can make people more vulnerable to trafficking because traffickers actively seek to embed themselves within a group. In addition, people of particular ethnic groups may have a sense of group loyalty that insulates them from contact with others (BG-K-09; BG-K-13). Also minorities, such as Syrian Kurdish people, Afghan Hazara people, or LGBT people, may be subject to discrimination or violence from co-national groups they are travelling with.

In addition, sometimes homogenous groups set out together, but the groups change and re-group along the way, becoming more heterogeneous as the journey continues, thus compromising this group resilience (MK-M-01; MK-M-02; MK-K-20). According to an interviewee from the Prosecutor's Office of North Macedonia, unaccompanied teenage children: *"gather and wait in Athens to form a larger group, then they [smugglers] bring them close to the [North] Macedonian-Greek border, and there they wait again for a few days to form a group and then go. So they are in a group from different countries, different ethnicities and genders. We have never intercepted, for example, only Syrians, only Afghans or just Palestinians"* (MK-K-20).

There are many reports of solidarity among people who travelled along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Sometimes people who did not know each other before, and may not be from the same country, decide to travel together during the journey for safety. An Afghan man who travelled along the Balkan route described how fellow travellers always helped him whenever he got injured during difficult walks and gave him food when he was too weak to continue walking (DE-M-19).

In prisons in Libya, people who managed to hide their mobile phones from the traffickers let other prisoners use them in order to remain in contact with their families and organise help, while others helped each other to escape the prison (DE-K-15; DE-M-01; DE-M-06; DE-M-08). A Ghanaian man who travelled to Germany with the money provided by a German NGO worker interviewed for this research paid for several other people who had no funds themselves to make the trip from Niger to Libya, because the truck that took the group had to be full in order to make

the journey (DE-K-15).

A Cameroonian man spoke of how he had befriended an Ivoirian man while they were both in transit in Algeria and that systematically, when they had a little respite, each attacked the other on the results of their national football teams, and on the singers or music styles, but always in a spirit of brotherhood, as a form of general psychological resilience (DE-M-10).

Also, migrant networks already present in West and North African countries (see, among others: Maher, 2017) can represent an useful source of knowledge and support for contemporary migrants in transit towards Libya, and a 'safe place' to rest and collect information (Casentini, 2018). However, in the specific context of Ventimiglia, at the Italian border with France, the obligation to apply for asylum as the only way to stay regularly in Italy creates new vulnerabilities and imbalances, especially with regards to migrant communities already settled in Italy for many years. An interviewee in Venice remarked that: "[Compared to some years ago] *what have completely changed are their needs and their level of rootedness in Italy. Now migrants seem lost, disorientated. They disembark in Sicily, they are sent here by bus during the night and they have no tools to build up their geographic and social map of the place they are currently living in. Their own communities are abandoning them. Here in Venice there is a historical Senegalese community, well rooted and integrated. They had always taken care of the newly arrived from Senegal. Now they don't do it anymore. There are several reasons: first, they don't see the newly arrived abandoned in the streets [as they are living in reception structures] and they don't feel obliged to host them; secondly, they perceive them as 'privileged,' asylum seekers do not need to squat as they did*" (IT-K-04).

In contexts where groups are more heterogeneous, inter-group conflicts may also be exacerbated in the tense migration context, causing vulnerabilities to violence, robbery and other abuses (HU-M-03; HU-M-06; MK-K-02; MK-K-08; MK-K-12; MK-K-27). An interviewee from the Border Police in North Macedonia commented that: "*Afghans and Pakistanis were attacking people from Syria and Iraq, primarily to rob them because at that time the Syrians and Iraqis went with much more money*" (MK-K-27). A 27-year-old Iranian woman recounted how: "*We went to Serbia and we saw that the camps were very dangerous there, because no one controlled the Afghans. They stole my purse, my brother had a fight with them, I had to stop them. The police were there but they didn't do anything, they didn't break up the fight, they just stared at them*" (HU-M-03).

In order to mitigate such conflicts, according to an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia, there was an "*unwritten rule among national authorities not to mix migrants from Syria with Afghanistan, due to their conflicts*" (MK-K-08). When humanitarian assistance items were being provided to people on the move in North Macedonia, delivery was scheduled at different times for groups of different nationalities (MK-K-02).

d) Working en route

People often stay for some time in what they intend to be transit countries, like Libya, Turkey and Greece, where they look for jobs in order to earn enough money to pay their debts, continue their journey and/or to send money to family members (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-08; DE-M-15; DE-M-18; EL-K-03; EL-K-06; EL-K-11; EL-K-21; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Morača,

2014). This is part of the step-by-step process of travelling referred to above, whereby they pay for smuggling services in stages. Some people start the journey with little money, and it is dangerous to carry large amounts of money with them. **Because they generally do not have authorisation for employment, they engage in irregular work, which can make people vulnerable to labour exploitation.**

A Senegalese man interviewed for this research explained that: *“My son was four months old when I left, and after six months on the road, my wife was out of money, so I had to be able to send something to my son every month. Some of the money earned was used to pay for my trip and the rest to send to my family back home”* (DE-M-08).

People may only have enough money to escape conflict, violence and other harsh conditions in their countries of origin. For example, the brother of a 25-year-old Syrian man with a disability due to the conflict had to work for one year in Turkey in order to make enough money to pay for the crossing to Europe for both of them (DE-M-15). Boys and men in particular work for some time in Turkey, particularly in agriculture, and then continue to their journey to Greece. In some of the cases identified by Brunovskis & Surtees (2017), people were subjected to forced labour (unable to leave the workplace, passports were seized and payment withheld), or they were subject to other labour abuses. Some unaccompanied children are subject to labour exploitation in Turkey for years, often under inhumane conditions (EL-K-03; EL-K-06; EL-K-19; EL-K-22).

Unaccompanied children may also need to work in transit countries in Europe in order to pay part of the smuggling costs and/or send money home to their families by either finding a regular job or by being exploited (DE-M-08; EL-K-06; HU-K-06; DE-K-17). In addition to making money to continue their journey, they also have to provide for the family’s needs; this forces them into accepting exploitative work.

This irregular and/or exploitative work may be perceived as resilience, particularly by the people themselves, because earning some money is better than having no money at all. Being able to work in some way was a source of general resilience, both financially and psychologically. Working along the way is considered simply a means to an end, with the hope that once they get to their intended destination, they will find a better job, repay their debts and solve their problems (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-14; DE-M-18). A 42-year-old Senegalese man had to return three times to Dakar, Senegal, to work, because he had run out of money to continue his journey and the money he was made in countries such as Morocco and Algeria was not enough to pay for his crossing to Europe (DE-M-18).

A 34-year-old Nigerian man who was interviewed in Germany was a mechanical engineer and knew how to repair bulldozers (“caterpillars”). He found a job working with bulldozers in Libya, and managed to make enough money to continue to Italy and Germany: *“I found the job myself. The working conditions and the payment were fine. I was paid regularly. Others had to take jobs in exploitative conditions but my advantage was that I had a skill that not many had. This was appreciated by my employer”* (DE-M-04).

Although this may be perceived as a form of resilience, and at the very least, of hope and survival,

in some cases, these experiences of working along the route may constitute labour exploitation or trafficking.

e) Digital resources

“I must say that I was alone during this journey, I had no friends, but I was with people who had gone on the same journey. Luckily I was connected with people on Facebook at each stage of my trip. I wrote to them and described to them where I was and asked them what to do and which route to take. These people explained to me what they had done at that place and which route they took. For example, in the last village in Serbia, I didn’t know how to proceed. I logged onto Facebook and immediately I received a reply and was directed to a village where I could find taxis.”

- 26-year-old Syrian man interviewed in Germany (DE-M-13)

Throughout the journey, digital and computer literacy allow people to access information through social media, mobile apps and other online sources, also representing an important alternative source of information other than information provided by migrant smugglers and constituting a factor of resilience (MK-M-02; MK-M-03; DE-M-09; HU-M-05; HU-M-06; DE-M-13; EL-K-03; EL-K-04; MK-K-02; MK-K-13; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; MK-K-32; HU-K-09; HU-K-11; HU-K-30; HU-K-31; IT-K-17; IT-K-19).¹¹⁴ As an interviewee from a childcare NGO in North Macedonia described: *“With the internet, they received information in their own language about what was happening in the [transit] countries, and on EU policy at the European level and at the regional level, and remained in contact with their families, wherever they were”* (MK-K-28).

People used social media to obtain information and support both before and during the journey (DE-M-09; DE-M-13). Friends and relatives who had already travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes provided information on what to expect by phone and internet, increasing people’s level of information about safer options and boosting resilience (MK-M-02; MK-M-03; MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-05; MK-K-07; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-15; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; MK-K-30; MK-K-31; MK-K-32). Often, Syrians in particular carefully plan their route before their departure and know exactly what will happen at each stage (MK-K-03). This led the EU Asylum Support Office (EASO) to establish a Social Media Monitoring system (EL-K-05; EASO, 2017).

According to an interviewee from an NGO in Hungary: *“The biggest asset for every migrant is the mobile phone. Internet is not a big deal, anyone can go get Wi-Fi in Mc Donald’s and so on. But the telephone is full of maps and this is how refugees prepare and orientate themselves during the journey”* (HU-K-09).

¹¹⁴ See: Zijlstra, J. & Van Liempt, I. (2017). “Smart(phone) travelling: understanding the use and impact of mobile technology on irregular migration journeys.” *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*. 3: 174. For an in-depth study on communication channels used by migrants in Italy, see: Sanchez, G., Hoxhaj, R., Nardin, S., Geddes, A., Achilli, A. & Kalantaryan, S. (2018). *A study of the communication channels used by migrants and asylum seekers in Italy, with a particular focus on online and social media*. For the European Commission. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

A 26-year-old Afghan man and a 27-year-old Iranian man interviewed in North Macedonia, both with university education, spoke about their firm stance on relying on their own capacities to cross borders, utilising smartphone applications, and considered smugglers as a last resort (MK-M-02; MK-M-03). As the Iranian man described: *“We are just trying to do it ourselves [...] by using websites for travel and accommodation”* (MK-M-03).

Therefore lack of access to online information and social networks can be a key source of vulnerability. Some Pakistanis in particular were considered to have a lack of alternative sources of information other than from smugglers: *“The Pakistanis used only smuggling networks, not social networks, not the media, so they were not aware of the opening of the Balkan Corridor and unfortunately during the entire opening of borders they used only smugglers”* (MK-K-05).

According to childcare workers in Hungary, unaccompanied children usually talk to their parents every day on the phone and using messaging apps (Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, etc.) (HU-M-05; HU-M-06; HU-K-09; HU-K-11; HU-K-30; HU-K-31). The centrality of the possession of a mobile phone in terms of resilience in the context of the journey is described by an 18-year-old Afghan man, who travelled the route when he was still a child. He spoke of his experiences of attempting to enter Bulgaria from Turkey: *“The worst is not the abuse and that they take everything from you, but that when you get back, you don’t have a mobile phone and you can’t call the smuggler and you cannot ask for help”* (HU-M-05).

Using social media to share knowledge and maintain contacts with a support network is also an important factor of resilience for people who travelled along the Central Mediterranean route to Italy (IT-K-17; IT-K-18). As a researcher from the University of Palermo in Sicily described: *“Facebook and Instagram are widely used by adult migrants but also by children. They are fundamental nowadays to keep in contact with families and friends, especially after disembarkation. I think that we should invest in the digital literacy of unaccompanied children. Technology can be a resource, a tool for resilience, but this is possible only if the user is conscious and competent”* (IT-K-17).

Case 3.13 – Mobile phone as a source of resilience

One interesting case of resilience was shared by an interviewee from the Helsinki Committee in North Macedonia: *“in a freight truck at the [Greece-North Macedonia] border, smugglers with 15 migrants were caught. And the case is interesting because in the group there were men and women, and one of the women was following the route on her phone using a GPS application. She noticed that the truck should not have been driving along the highway, at the regular border crossings, but rather should have been driving to a ferry from Greece to Italy.*

The women noticed on the GPS on the phone that they were off the planned route that had been arranged for them and began making noise and knocking on the truck, disturbing all the refugees in the truck, which was then noticed by the border officials” (MK-K-02).

f) Assistance from Organisations and Individuals

Help provided by local people in transit countries and support from religious communities, NGOs and government authorities, are important sources of resilience for those travelling the Mediterranean and Balkan routes. 55% of the women interviewed in Germany by Schouler-Ocak and Kurmeyer (2017) had received help during their journey, including food and drinks (41%), clothes (34%), transport (26%), orientation (21%), medical help (20%) and accommodation (18%), from co-travellers, private individuals, and governmental and non-governmental organisations. Women travelling along the Balkan route (mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq) reported having received more help than women who travelled the Central Mediterranean route (from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia), who had received hardly any support from state services, although 44% had received help from co-travellers.

Local people in transit countries may be a source of support. Suggesting an important factor of general resilience, an 18-year-old Afghan man interviewed for this research in Hungary described his positive experiences in Turkey: *“The best thing was that in Turkey people are really kind, very helpful. They saw that we didn’t have anything, because it was taken and we were beaten. But they gave us accommodation, gave us mobile phones to call someone. The best part of this trip is Turkey because you get everything there, they are very helpful and kind-hearted”* (HU-M-05).

An interviewee from an NGO in Germany commented that many asylum applicants whom he counsels received help during their journeys, such as an Afghan woman who had lost her husband and was travelling with her four children. She met a man in Iran who told her that it was not safe for her as a woman with children alone in Iran. He gave her money so that she could continue her journey to Turkey. The same happened to her in Greece, where a man gave her money for a flight to Germany for herself and her children (DE-K-15).

The interviewee also described how he himself had organised and financed the journey of several Ghanaian men to Europe. He had previously travelled to Ghana, met gay Ghanaian men, and learned about the dangers and violent treatment they were exposed to whenever they were intercepted by the police. He has spent around €20,000 enabling several men to leave Ghana for Europe. During their journeys, he remained in contact with them and with their smugglers, and helped them whenever necessary. He organised for people to bring them food and water when they were in prison in Libya, and organised for someone to get them out of prison and take them to Europe. This allowed: two men to reach Italy, one of whom was doing vocational training; one man to reach Austria, who has since obtained protection status; and another man to reach Germany - his asylum procedures are still ongoing. Before he applied for asylum, this man lived with the interviewee in Germany for 14 months in order to prepare his asylum application, including obtaining documents and evidence from Ghana, and learning German (DE-K-15).

A key informant spoke of how an Afghan man had joined various groups of religious believers during his journey along the Balkan route to Germany, and prayed with them. In Greece, he stayed at monasteries and received food and accommodation. This man believed that God was in every religion and that he could find support in every religious group. The man had said: *“If I had not met strangers again and again on my way through Iran, Turkey and Greece, and along the Balkan route, who helped me, just like that, I would not have survived. In every country, regardless of their religion, there were people who helped me, just to help.”*

- NGO worker interviewed in Germany (DE-K-15)

Religious groups can be a factor of resilience in the sense of giving a person psychological strength and guidance, as set out above, as well as a concrete source of support during the journey. During 2015, some people travelling the route gathered at a mosque in Kumanovo in the northern part of North Macedonia, and were provided with humanitarian assistance (MK-K-04; MK-K-19). In another case, a Christian Nigerian woman was trying to escape trafficking for sexual exploitation in Libya. She fled to a church and asked the pastor to protect her. Due to their shared religion, she found help from the church, was able to live there for a while, found a male companion among the church community and together with him continued her journey to Europe (DE-M-07).

Some people who arrived in Germany reported that Muslims from Sub-Saharan African countries were sometimes treated slightly better than Christians from the same countries in Libyan prison camps, due to the fact that Christians were considered unbelievers, while Muslims were considered ‘brothers’ (Sindani, 2018). Hence, belonging to Islam served as a protecting factor, while identifying as Christian was a source of vulnerability. Similarly, an interviewee from a German NGO described a case where an Eritrean man was invited to the house of a family in Egypt who wanted to help him. However, when they found out that he was Christian, they sent him away (DE-K-15).

2.5 Legal Status in a Destination Context

Resilience is maintained or enhanced, and vulnerabilities are created or exacerbated, by personal characteristics and circumstances, as well as experiences during the journey. In addition, once people arrive in a destination context, whether the intended or *de facto* destination, various contextual and situational factors influence their resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and related abuses. Particularly for those who managed to reach their intended destination country, arrival in itself is a form of resilience, as it means the end of a risky journey and the potential for legal status, employment and integration in a new home.

However, on arrival, people who have experienced a difficult journey, especially children and young people: *“not only have to deal with complex legal immigration processes and their trauma history, but also with the social, cultural, and linguistic differences between their places of origin*

and their new settings” (Sleijpen *et al.*, 2016: 158). In prior research on Iraqi asylum applicants, Laban *et al.* (2004) referred to challenges arising from the policy framework as “*post-migratory stress factors*” that increase people’s vulnerability.

The final two sections of this chapter focus on the national responses of the seven countries under study, as countries of transit where people end up staying for a significant period of time, as countries of *de facto* destination or as intended destination countries. Factors of resilience and vulnerability are related to legal status, access to asylum and status as an unaccompanied child, as well as to essential services such as accommodation, education, employment, healthcare and access to information.

a) Legal Status and Asylum Procedures

The immigration status of a person in a country they are residing in is a strong determinant of their resilience or vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. This section focuses on the implications of the legal and policy framework for people who have travelled the route, while they are in one of the seven countries under study or another EU country, either in transit, stranded or residing in a destination country.

As set out above, if a person was granted regular entry to an EU country, such as through a refugee resettlement programme, work or study visa or family reunification procedures (or in the future, perhaps, through humanitarian visas), then they are significantly more resilient, as they avoid the journey completely. In the destination context, this usually also means that their residence status is already regular, and, in most cases, they can seek employment or enter education. If that is not the case, then **the next best scenario in terms of general resilience is timely access to a fair asylum procedure on arrival, or to alternatives for regularisation of their status.**

For the smaller number of people on the move who wish to apply for asylum in countries along the Balkan route, gaps within the asylum systems may discourage people who would otherwise consider it as an option and leave them with no alternative but to continue the irregular journey using smuggling services (Golubovska & Smailovikj, 2017; Brmbeska, 2018).

In Serbia, systemic flaws and delays were highlighted in asylum procedures prior to the legal changes in 2018, as well as gaps in provisions for reception of asylum applicants. For example, during the second half of 2016, people were transferred from overcrowded Asylum Centres and Reception Centres to other accommodation centres where asylum procedures were not carried out by the Asylum Office, effectively denying access to asylum for those who wished to remain in Serbia (RS-K-06; BCHR, 2017; BCHR, 2016; Lilyanova, 2016; Morača, 2014). During 2017, the Serbian Asylum Office continued to dismiss asylum applications by people considered to be from a ‘safe country of origin’ without examining the cases in detail (AIDA, 2018).

Also in Hungary, people’s access to asylum when they arrive in the Transit Zone is hampered by the fact that they often have their asylum interview on the day they arrive and the Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office (IAO) decides on the asylum application based on this interview. There is little time to organise for a legal representative to be present (HU-K-15; HU-K-17). According to an interviewee from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the questions are also framed in such a

way as to be misleading and so people may not be able to answer them accurately. Furthermore, there are no questions on vulnerabilities in the asylum interview; a missed opportunity to identify any abuses (HU-K-17; see also: Forin & Healy, 2018).

“Many people seeking protection did not expect that after their arrival in Germany, a new adventure would start and that their odyssey was not yet over. [...] They made it through mortal danger, humiliation, hunger, thirst and other threats, and thought they had found a safe environment in Germany. Then they have to learn that at first this safety does not exist.”

- Sindani, 2018: 39-40, own translation

In Germany, the context is different, as the majority of people who arrive in the country from the Balkan and Mediterranean routes intended to apply for asylum there. **Resilience is therefore determined to a significant extent by whether they are granted refugee status or some other form of legal residence status, how long the procedure takes, and what the conditions are for them while awaiting the decision and after being granted or refused status.**

Timely access to asylum in Germany is dependent on the country of origin of the person applying. Syrians, Eritreans and, to a lesser extent, Iraqis, Iranians and Somalians, particularly during 2015-2016, had better access to international protection in general, and better chances of obtaining refugee status rather than less secure statuses like subsidiary protection or protection from deportation (‘tolerated status’). Afghans, Pakistanis and people from West and North African countries, on the other hand, are considered to be from ‘safe countries of origin’ and therefore are less likely to be granted any form of protection status, and if they are granted protection, then it is less likely to be refugee status. In addition, rights such as access to the labour market and the right to move freely within Germany differ according to a person’s country of origin and based on their likelihood of being granted international protection.

Delays in obtaining protection status are detrimental to a person’s resilience, with the uncertainty making them lose hope of resolving their residence status. Even people from countries that have higher prospects of staying may have to wait up to 18 months for a decision on their asylum application. According to a 42-year-old Eritrean man: *“Since I had the interview here in Germany, nothing happened in my life. I cannot ask them anything, they do not accept anything. They do not answer questions”* (DE-M-14). According to an interviewee from K.O.K., EU and German asylum policies that restrict people’s rights are a key factor of vulnerability: *“The precarious and insecure situation in Germany makes them particularly vulnerable to (repeated) exploitation”* (DE-K-10).

The situation of people considered as having low ‘prospects of staying’ (*Bleibeperspektive*) in Germany, meaning all those who are not from the ‘top five countries,’¹¹⁵ is particularly precarious. Assigning rights and conditions based on this category has led to desperation, despair, frustration, fear of deportation and insecurity about the future, thereby severely compromising people’s psychological resilience (Sindani, 2018; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). Due to being allocated

¹¹⁵ In 2018, the ‘top five countries’ were Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Somalia (BAMF, 2018).

to the category of having 'low prospects to stay', asylum applicants from Afghanistan, Ghana and Senegal who were interviewed for this research felt that they were subject to unfair treatment by the German authorities (DE-M-01; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-18; DE-M-19). According to a Ghanaian man speaking at a demonstration in Bamberg against the introduction of AnKER centres in September 2018: *"There are no safe countries; those countries that are called 'safe' in Germany are not safe. Our rights are not being respected here"* (DE-O-01).

"If someone had told me six years ago that we would have developed a reception system for everyone, where no one becomes irregular, I would have said wow, great! But now they have no choice but to enter the asylum system: they are stuck here in Italy because of the Dublin Regulation, they cannot reach their network in other European countries, and in practice they cannot find a real job. Here in Italy people are forced to seek asylum even if they are not entitled to it."

- Lawyer interviewed in Venice (IT-K-04)

Similarly, in Italy, challenges within the asylum system were identified as a key factor of vulnerability to ending up without a regular status and to being trafficked (IT-K-03; IT-K-04; IT-K-12; IT-K-13; IT-K-22; IT-K-25). This is particularly important given that in Italy, as in other EU countries, many people from countries in the West and Horn of Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and non-EU countries in Eastern Europe have no alternative to reside to Italy other than applying for asylum, as employment and tourist visas are limited. Furthermore, they may be applying in Italy only because they were not allowed to travel onwards to their intended destination countries.

Similarly to the situation in Germany, at the hotspots in Italy, people are subject to: *"pure procedural treatment: they are differentiated between 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants,' mainly on the basis of their country of origin. People are inserted into a scheme that depersonalises you, you become a number, regardless of your previous experience and trauma"* (IT-K-23).

At the hotspots, 'eligible' people are immediately identified (Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis), while others arriving from West Africa or North Africa are defined using the non-legal category of 'economic migrants' and often denied access to asylum procedures (Garelli & Tazzioli, 26.02.2016).

People who are granted access to asylum procedures may spend up to two years in Italian accommodation centres awaiting a decision on their asylum application, even though the law provides for a maximum period of 45 days. During this period, they are officially entitled to work, but are rarely able to obtain formal employment, making them vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. CrossOverDiritti (2015) considers that one of the key factors of vulnerability is the lengthiness of asylum procedures.

Many people who are refused any form of protection status, or effectively denied access, remain in EU countries without a regular status, significantly increasing their vulnerability to labour exploitation in irregular work, as well as other forms of exploitation (DE-K-03; DE-K-09; IT-K-13; IT-K-14; IT-K-15; IT-K-16; IT-K-20; IT-K-25; IT-K-28; IT-K-29; IT-K-30; Sindani, 2018; Ambrosini, 2016;

ASGI, 2015). A 35-year old Senegalese man explained: *“Many people will prefer to spend their whole lives here trying to find something, but they will rarely agree to return. Indeed, many think that, considering the suffering they endured to get here to Europe, they deserve to be here, to stay. [...] What is worse, if you return without having achieved your goal, it is a failure that many do not accept”* (DE-M-08).

Interviewees for this research in Germany from the ILO, K.O.K. and the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) consider that those who stay in Germany without a regular status or permit are highly vulnerable to trafficking for labour exploitation and other forms of exploitation (DE-K-03; DE-K-06; DE-K-10). The issue of residence permits was a key difficulty experienced by migrants in Europe who responded to an ENAR survey (ENAR, 2018). What makes it particularly difficult for people without a regular residence and work permit, according to an interviewee from the BKA, is the fact that they may not seek assistance, and if they are trafficked, they may not want to be identified as victims of trafficking for labour exploitation because of their fear of deportation (DE-K-06).

Some people whose asylum application has been rejected, who discontinued the procedure because of being considered as having ‘low prospects’ or who have no regular status in Germany, may decide to move to another EU country, making them potentially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation related to migrant smuggling once again (DE-M-19; DE-K-09). An Afghan man interviewed for this research, who is currently appealing a negative decision on his asylum application, was planning to move to France, where his status would be irregular, if his appeal was not successful (DE-M-19). As a key informant in Hungary put it: *“France is one of the main target countries, because people can get there illegally and can live there without papers. Living like this under the radar raises the security risk”* (HU-K-09).

Also in Italy and Greece, lack of legal status is a crucial factor of vulnerability to exploitation (IT-K-13; IT-K-23; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-14; Ambrosini, 2016; ASGI, 2015). Many key informant interviewees in Italy considered the 2002 Bossi-Fini law on immigration and subsequent restrictive legislation as a source of vulnerability (IT-K-13; IT-K-14; IT-K-15; IT-K-16; IT-K-20; IT-K-25; IT-K-28; IT-K-29; IT-K-30). As in Germany, the majority of people whose asylum application is refused do not return, but remain in Italy with irregular status, according to an interviewee from the NGO Dedalus in Naples (IT-K-13).¹¹⁶ Similarly, in Greece, lack of work authorisation leads people to work in the informal labour market, making them particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation and trafficking (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-14).

Specifically in relation to regularisation of status, marriage can be a source of resilience, particularly mentioned by men, if it grants them the right to regularly travel to, or regularly reside in, a country of destination (DE-M-08; DE-M-18; IT-M-02). People who have spouses or children regularly residing in destination countries have facilitated access to legal residency and work permits. A Senegalese man who is married to a German woman, with whom he has children, commented: *“I was very lucky, I must admit. I did not really suffer like many others who have been here for years, but do not thrive in their lives”* (DE-M-08). Another Senegalese man who is

¹¹⁶ On the proportion of people subject to a return decision in an EU country who are effectively returned, see: Mananashvili, S. (May 2017). “EU’s Return Policy: Mission Accomplished in 2016? Reading between the lines of the latest EUROSTAT return statistics.” ICMPD Policy Brief. Vienna: ICMPD. www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/2017/Policy_Brief_22.05.2017_Mananashvili.pdf.

also married to a German woman explained that during the first few years in Germany he was allowed to work, but due to new regulations for people from ‘safe countries of origin’, he lost his permission to work in 2016. Afterwards, he was engaged in exploitative work in agriculture. However, after his marriage and the birth of their child, he was once again granted a work permit and was working regularly at the time of the interview (DE-M-18).

Some men and women who have ‘low prospects of staying’ in Germany, or whose asylum application has been rejected, have a child with someone who has regular status in Germany as a means to regulate their own status (DE-K-11). This makes them vulnerable to different forms of exploitation. While being married to someone with regular status or having in children in an EU country may be a source of resilience in terms of regular status, if family reunification procedures are not followed by the authorities, it may leave a person vulnerable due to not having the possibility of living with their family, as exemplified by the case below.

Case 3.14 – Eritrean man denied family reunification

After five years of living in conditions of labour exploitation in Italy, a 42-year-old Eritrean man met an Eritrean woman who was living in Norway, on the internet. They got married and he joined her in Norway. They had two children together. His asylum application in Norway was refused three times. He and his children were diagnosed with HIV. As he explained: *“It was really hard for us to see our children sick. The doctors who had diagnosed us wanted to help my family on their own, but the state objected. They rejected me three times. I don’t know how to explain it, because it was a very severe problem for us and they [the state] didn’t want to help us with this situation.*

I spent four years in Norway and then they told me I was no longer allowed to stay in the country. I had no choice. But at the same time I didn’t want to go back to Italy because it would have meant living under the same conditions as I did when I was there the first time. I wanted to give myself another chance in life, to explore other horizons. Therefore I decided to come to Germany” (DE-M-14).

Having birth registration and regular status is also an important factor of resilience for children. If the authorities do not ensure that children have birth registration, this is a factor of vulnerability (RS-K-27). In a case of severe domestic violence and abuse in Hungary among a family who travelled along the Balkan route, described below, the issue of the legal status of each member of the family caused difficulties in accessing essential treatment, putting a woman and her child at particular risk of further abuse and exploitation.

Case 3.15 – Domestic violence and abuse of a woman and her child without regular status in Hungary

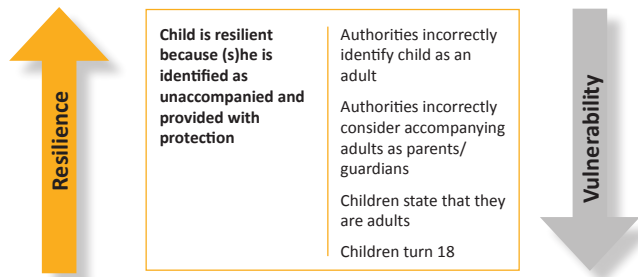
An interviewee for this research from an NGO working with asylum applicants in Hungary described the experiences of a family she worked with, from an East Asian country. The couple met in Greece when the woman bought drugs from the man. The man was involved in drug dealing and the woman was engaged in prostitution. They travelled together from Greece to Hungary in 2015, but only the man was granted legal status. They had a religious wedding, so they were not officially married, and the baby they had in Hungary did not have regular status. The father had mental health issues, as he had been tortured in his country of origin, and was being treated for PTSD in Hungary. The man physically assaulted the woman and the child, and they were admitted to hospital. Because of the child's lack of status, the parents had to pay the hospital fees (approximately €800-1,000). The mother had to go to the responsible authority at national level, due to hers and the child's irregular status, where they recorded the incident. The mother told the staff that she and the baby had been abused by the man. The woman had a black eye and a bloody, swollen mouth, but she rescinded her first report, and said that she had just fallen down the stairs. The staff did not enquire about her injuries, and 'believed' the woman when she said that there had been no abuse, despite the obvious signs of physical assault. They disagreed amongst each other, and were hesitant to grant the couple custody of the child or refer him to care. One of them said that the child needed to be separated from his parents, while the other said that the child was stateless, the parents would be deported soon, and it was in the interests of the child to stay with his parents rather than growing up in Hungarian state care. In the meantime, the hospital urged the national authority to take care of the case quickly because the child had no legal status. In the end, the woman went back to the man and the child was returned to them (HU-K-24).

b) Unaccompanied Children

Unaccompanied children, if they are identified as such, are entitled to an extensive set of rights and protection measures in European countries. If an unaccompanied child is correctly identified by the authorities of the country that they are in, they can be provided with the specialised services that they are entitled to (legal guardian, specialised accommodation, access to schooling, etc.) and are then far more resilient to exploitation and abuse in general.

One of the practices that specifically affects the resilience and vulnerabilities of unaccompanied children is age assessment – the process applied by states to determine whether a person is in fact a child, in cases of doubt. In all the countries under study, issues were identified in relation to age assessment, preventing unaccompanied children from remaining resilient based on their access to child rights and other protection measures. This is complicated by the fact that some young adults state that they are still children, if they have reason to believe that it will improve their chances of being granted a regular residence status or better services.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Unaccompanied Children



In all the countries under study, there are either no standardised procedures for the identification of unaccompanied children, or the mechanisms in place do not function correctly, leading to unaccompanied children either being registered as adults, or being ‘attached’ to the adults they are travelling with, even if they are not their parents or legal guardians. The authorities may record children as adults, even if they say that they are under 18, or the children themselves claim to be adults, in order to be able to continue their journey more swiftly. They are therefore allocated to accommodation centres with adults, presenting a significant factor of vulnerability (EL-K-19; EL-K-20; BG-K-04; BG-K-05; BG-K-06; BG-K-11; BG-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-28; RS-K-01; RS-K-08; RS-K-17; RS-K-18; RS-K-20; RS-K-29; RS-K-31; HU-K-01; HU-K-08; DE-K-01; DE-K-05; IT-K-01; IT-K-06; Oxfam, 2016; Save the Children & IRC, 2017).

“They told me you’ll grow up and forget. [But] since I was a kid, I’ve gotten smaller.”

(“Lams” from the album *Eshtebeahe Khoob*)

The vast majority of the unaccompanied children arriving in Europe along the migration routes are teenage boys aged 15-17 years old. This means that often, during the process of the journey, arrival and the asylum application, they ‘age out’ of protection systems, turning 18 and then being considered as adult men in terms of status and service provision. Children who turn 18 during the journey or shortly after arriving in a European country are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This makes it difficult for them to receive the assistance they require and may make them more susceptible to recruitment by traffickers, as traffickers may be able to respond to their needs (EL-K-19; EL-K-20; BG-K-14; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; IT-K-15; Save the Children, 2017).

In Italy, the 2017 Law Zampa on protection measures for unaccompanied minors addressed some of the vulnerabilities of young adults, by providing for programmes for autonomy, education and integration for unaccompanied children who age out (IT-K-12; IT-K-15). However, there are some issues with its application, including long waiting times for the appointment of a guardian, a prerequisite for initiating the asylum process, leading to some children ageing out while waiting (IT-K-12; IT-K-14). According to the NGO ARCI in Palermo, Sicily: *“In Italy we are doing fabulous things for unaccompanied children, but what happens to them when they turn 18? The new emergency*

is the ‘new adults,’ more than the children. It is as if an Egyptian boy becomes invulnerable on the exact day that he turns 18” (IT-K-15). The situation of children who age out is a particular risk for labour exploitation, according to an interviewee from the Italian Ministry of Labour (IT-K-09).

The resilience of many unaccompanied children in this context, even if they are correctly identified, is also compromised by a lack of trained guardians with the capacity to take care of these children, and who are appointed as swiftly as possible. The proper identification of unaccompanied children and the timely appointment of a guardian is a key source of resilience (MK-K-13; IT-K-23). Delays in the appointment of a guardian for unaccompanied children and the lack of training or capacity among guardians are issues in many of the countries under study, contributing to children going missing from accommodation centres, making them acutely vulnerable (BG-K-05; BG-K-11; BG-K-05; BG-K-11; BG-K-14; HU-M-06; DE-K-01; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; IT-K-23; Forin & Healy, 2018; Gyurkó, Németh & Sánta, 2016; HRW, 08.09.2016; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017).

Until a Law on Guardianship was adopted in July 2018, Greece lacked a formal guardianship system for unaccompanied children.¹¹⁷ In Bulgaria, there are few documented visits by legal guardians to Refugee Registration and Reception Centres, according to an interviewee who works directly with unaccompanied children in Bulgaria (BG-K-05). Unaccompanied children in the Bulgarian asylum system cannot, in practice, access social services, enrol in school, access healthcare, or live outside of accommodation centres without the approval of their legal guardian (BG-K-05; BG-K-11; BG-K-14). In the absence of guardianship, unaccompanied children may be explicitly targeted by traffickers (BG-K-05; BG-K-11; Forin & Healy, 2018).

A 19-year-old East African woman spoke of her experiences with her appointed guardian in Hungary, and described how she only met her personally “*when we went to interviews. [Has she ever visited you? Like getting to know you, talking with you?] No, never. She was a paperwork guardian*” (HU-M-06). According to an interviewee from the Helsinki Committee in Hungary, the appointment of guardians slows down asylum procedures, and the guardians are not from the official guardianship system: “*Only a few of the guardians actually represented the interests of the children. It is not common for them to ask the children privately about their wishes or anything like that. But that is how it works. Even to bring a book, or anything. There was one very nice guardian who brought a small muesli bar for a young boy, these kinds of small things*” (HU-K-17).

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe (GRETA), in its 2015 report on Hungary, stated that: “*Given the high level of disappearances of unaccompanied minors, measures need to be taken to provide them with safe accommodation and, noting the current obstacles in promptly assigning legal guardians for unaccompanied minors, GRETA urges the authorities to ensure that adequately trained legal guardians are assigned without delay after the arrival of unaccompanied minors*” (GRETA, 2015/11).

In Germany, according to an interviewee from a child rights NGO, social workers often act as guardians, in some cases for up to 50 unaccompanied children. Apart from their lack of training in identifying trafficking, high numbers of children per guardian leave them with little time for the

117 Law No. 4554 of 18 July 2018 on the regulatory framework for the guardianship of unaccompanied minors.

individual child and the identification of his/her situation and needs (DE-K-01). Also in Italy, while the system for voluntary guardians may function well, not all voluntary guardians are actually qualified for the role, according to an interviewee from the Catania court in Sicily (IT-K-23).

In addition to incorrect age assessment and issues related to guardianship, a number of abuses and potential violations of the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child for unaccompanied children were identified in the course of the research, rendering the children affected particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Many of these issues relate to the accommodation conditions of unaccompanied children. In Greece, for example, there was a shortfall of over 2,000 places at the special accommodation facilities for unaccompanied children in September 2018 for the 3,320 unaccompanied children recorded as present in the country (EKKA, 2018).

In Bulgaria, key informants considered that, paradoxically, the accommodation of unaccompanied children in specialised spaces or areas within Refugee Registration and Reception Centres could render those children more vulnerable to recruitment by traffickers, particularly those who also reside at the centres. This is because there is a clear lack of additional safeguards for their safety and well-being, and adults residing in the centres can easily enter their rooms (BG-K-04; BG-K-05; BG-K-06; BG-K-11; BG-K-12).

In Serbia, while general statistical data were collected on children transiting through the country and children residing at accommodation centres during 2015-2016, adequate information was not recorded on their parents, relatives and caregivers, a *“prerequisite for monitoring Serbia’s fulfillment of its obligations to extend adequate protection under the Convention on the Rights of the Child”* (BCHR, 2016: 75). Unaccompanied children are accommodated at Serbian social welfare institutions that are not specialised for children who are applying for asylum, while some accommodation centres for asylum applicants do not have a separate facility for children (RS-K-18; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017). An 18-year-old Somalian woman commented that the moment she entered the accommodation centre she felt intimidated because of the presence of so many men: *“I am also worried for my younger sister. I know how to defend myself, but I am scared [about] what will happen to her, she is 17”* (RS-M-36).

In Hungary, although there are intercultural mediators (employees of civil society organisations) working at the childcare facilities, there are gaps in the system (HU-K-23). Child rights concerns in Hungary relate to reception conditions, police mistreatment and brutality, lack of assessment of the best interests of children, lack of access to education, lack of foster care and, particularly, the detention of 14- to 17-year-old children, who are not considered to be covered by child protection laws (MSF, 2017; Gyurkó, Németh & Sánta, 2016). In 2016, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee identified 35-40 unaccompanied children in immigration and asylum detention (Iván, 2016). An interviewee from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee described children’s experiences of detention: *“Unaccompanied minors ask for sleeping pills because they can’t rest in the night. They are there the whole day and they don’t really know what to do. There isn’t any activity during the day that would make them tired or keep them busy. Sometimes they are traumatised by all the police, the uniforms”* (HU-K-17).

The police were informed about abuse against children in an accommodation centre for unaccompanied children in Hungary. Children at the centre received money from their parents

through Western Union, but they could only receive the money with ID documents as adults. There were young men at the centre who knew this, and offered to collect the money. The parents sent smaller amounts of money, usually €100, but these young men took a commission and children only received €10-60. The social workers at the centre realised what was happening and reported it to the police, but the police said that they did not know what to do (HU-K-22; HU-K-30, HU-K-31).

Case 3.16 - Child sexual abuse within the child protection system in Hungary

“There was a medical doctor who particularly liked a 17-year-old Afghan boy. [...] The boy kept posting pictures on Facebook about how much this doctor – I say it now very carefully - loved him. She overwhelmed him with her love. We assume that she was sexually abusing him. The doctor took the boy to Greece to ‘rest’, but officially she took him to translate to her, when she had to work there. We gave a signal to his guardian and asked him to deny the boy permission to travel. The child didn’t see it as exploitation. His quality of life improved, his position suddenly improved, he saw it as a positive event. He got the official HUF 5,300 [€18] monthly allowance, but it seemed like he had regular income, an iPhone and so on. Then he turned 18, so he has left child protection and the doctor was very angry with us. We lost track of him afterwards” (HU-K-03).

Unaccompanied children live in protected housing in Germany (DE-K-05). Interviewees from ECPAT and ILO pointed out that lack of access to appropriate education, social activities and peers while living in a reception facility has a particularly severe impact on children and makes them vulnerable for trafficking (DE-K-01; DE-K-03). Furthermore, some social programmes that are available for other children are not accessible for asylum-seeking children. Among other crucial issues, children aged older than 15 years do not have access to schooling in some *Bundesländer*, missing the opportunity for school staff to identify vulnerabilities and ensure access to child rights, including the right to education (DE-K-01).

In Germany, the system for the protection of children and young people seems to be in conflict with asylum and immigration laws, and the child’s rights are not always prioritised (DE-K-01; DE-K-05; Forin & Healy, 2018). An interviewee from the BKA also pointed out that there are no specific NGOs working with vulnerable unaccompanied or trafficked children, so they are referred to the general youth welfare system or a law enforcement agency, which do not generally have staff qualified to identify trafficking (DE-K-05). Due to the deficiencies in the identification of trafficked children, ECPAT Germany (Working Group for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation), together with the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, is working on a national concept for referral mechanisms, which exist for adults but not for children (DE-K-01).

In Italy, some children reside at first reception centres for up to a year, although the maximum is supposed to be 30 days. During this period they are allocated to inadequate centres and are often deprived of the possibility of applying for asylum as children, since they often become adults during this long waiting period, as described above, according to Intersos in Palermo, Sicily (IT-K-14).

2.6 Essential Services in a Destination Context

a) Accommodation

Accommodation is a basic need for girls, boys, women and men transiting through and residing in a country, and effective access to adequate, safe accommodation both along the route and in a destination context is a key factor of resilience (IT-M-03; EL-K-03; EL-K-10; EL-K-14; EL-K-21; EL-K-22; EL-K-24; BG-K-02; BG-K-10; IT-K-04; IT-K-11). Many people resided, or are residing, in official accommodation centres in the seven countries under study, including reception centres, transit centres and detention and pre-removal centres. In some cases these centres can provide conditions of resilience, however, there are reports of vulnerabilities and abuses due to conditions inside the centres.

Table 8: Centres for Registration, Transit, Accommodation, Detention in the Countries under Study

<p>Greece</p>	<p>Five Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) are operating on the islands of Lesbos (Moria), Chios (Vial), Samos (Vathy), Kos (Pyli) and Leros (Lepida), and there is one RIC in Fylakio - Evros. The EU-Turkey statement is only applicable on the islands, and Fylakio is a closed registration facility.</p> <p>In addition, 28 open reception facilities are in operation on mainland Greece and the islands, the majority still (as of end-2018) operating on an emergency basis, with the assistance of the Hellenic Army. Only a few have been officially established under the provisions of Law 4375/2016. Site Management Support (SMS) is provided by an NGO or IOM.</p>
<p>Bulgaria</p>	<p>The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) operates four Refugee Registration and Reception Centres: Voenna Rampa, Ovcha Kupel, Harmanli and Vrazdebna. From January to September 2016, the SAR also operated one primary transit centre, Pastrogor, near the Bulgarian-Turkish land border, with a capacity for 1,000 people. Designated transit zones have also been in place in municipalities since December 2017, which asylum applicants cannot leave without prior permission.</p> <p>The Migration Directorate at the Ministry of Interior operates two closed-access centres for people subject to deportation – Special Centres for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (SCTAFs) in Busmansti and Lyubimets.</p>
<p>North Macedonia</p>	<p>Vizbegovo Centre in Skopje, managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, is the accommodation centre for asylum applicants, and there is a detention centre in Gazi Babi, also in the capital, the Reception Centre for Foreigners. There is also a Safe House in Skopje for unaccompanied children and other vulnerable people, supported by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).</p> <p>In addition, there is Tabanovce Refugee Transit Centre near the border with Serbia and Vinojug Migrant Reception Centre in Gevgelija near the border with Greece, both managed by the Crisis Management Centre.</p>

<p>Serbia</p>	<p>There are five Asylum Centres with a total reception capacity of 1,700 people (Banja Koviljača, Bogovađa, Tutin, Sjenica, Krnjača (Belgrade)) and 13 Reception Centres (Preševo, Vranje, Bujanovac, Sombor, Principovac, Obrenovac, Adaševci, Subotica, Bela Palanka, Dimitrovgrad, Bosilegrad, Pirot and Kikinda), with an estimated capacity for 4,720 persons in total (all of whom must have officially registered their intention to seek asylum in order to be accommodated at the centres). Five of the Reception Centres were previously Transit Centres.</p>
<p>Hungary</p>	<p>There were four Asylum Detention Centres: Vámosszabadi, Békéscsaba, Nyírbátor and Kiskunhalas; three Reception Centres; and an Asylum and Immigration Police Centre and policy community shelter in Balassagyarmat. As of end-2018, only Vámosszabadi, Békéscsaba, Nyírbátor, Bicske and Balassagyarmat are in operation. Unaccompanied children are placed at Károlyi István Children’s Centre (in Fót). In addition, there are two Transit Zones in Tompa and Röske, both close to the border with Serbia.</p>
<p>Germany</p>	<p>A special processing centre in Erding, north of Munich, conducts the first registration and distribution of asylum applicants to 24 reception centres across Germany. On 1 August 2018, the first Arrival, Decision and Return (Ankunft, Entscheidung, Rückführung, AnkER) Centres opened in seven districts of Bavaria (Donauwörth, Zirndorf, Regensburg, Deggendorf, Schweinfurt, Bamberg und Manching).</p>
<p>Italy</p>	<p>Italy has a national system for the reception of asylum applicants and refugees, organised into: first-line assistance - First Assistance and Reception Centres (Centri di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza (CPSA, hotspots) and Reception Centres for Asylum Applicants (Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (CARA)); second-line assistance – Protection System for Asylum Applicants and Refugees (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati, SPRAR); and emergency assistance – Emergency Reception Centres (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria, CAS), set up by the Ministry of the Interior in 2014.</p> <p>The SPRAR is a publicly funded network of local authorities and NGOs running 877 smaller reception structures where assistance and integration services are provided (as of end-2018). The ‘Salvini Decree’ that became law at the end of 2018 (L. 132/2018) restricted access to the SPRAR to people who have already been granted international protection¹¹⁸.</p> <p>In addition, the 2017 Orlando-Minniti instituted Residence Centres for Repatriation (Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio, CPR), to be distributed on a regional basis, according to the previous model of the Centres for Identification and Expulsion (Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione, CIE). In addition to the above-mentioned centres, there are other private structures managed by the Catholic church or voluntary associations.</p>

118 www.asgi.it/asilo-e-protezione-internazionale/le-nuove-norme-su-immigrazione-e-sicurezza-punire-i-poveri/.

In Greece, the state and civil society organisations provide access to housing for vulnerable populations (EL-K-03; EL-K-24). UNHCR's Accommodation Scheme provides 27,000 places in rented housing to vulnerable asylum applicants and refugees in the country (UNHCR, 2018a). The situation at Greek accommodation centres in Drama (EL-K-34; EL-K-37), Kavala (EL-K-36; EL-K-37) and Kara Tepe on Lesbos¹¹⁹ demonstrate that adequate reception facilities with humane living conditions can make people more resilient.

Also the Italian reception system, when it is well organised, can be a resource for protection and promote integration, according to a lawyer interviewed in Venice (IT-K-04). The SPRAR (see Table 8 above) in particular provides more structured job training, Italian courses and a vocational plan for integration, promoting resilience, both in terms of avoiding being trafficked or re-trafficked, and in relation to societal and labour market integration (IT-K-04; IT-K-15; IT-K-25; IT-K-29). Benefiting from a programme of social care and assistance can significantly boost people's general resilience, according to an interviewee from the IRC (IT-K-11).

However, if access to accommodation is conditional, then people may not benefit from this resilience factor. A Sudanese man interviewed in Ventimiglia, Italy suggested that to protect people in transit to France from trafficking networks and the risk of living on the streets, they should be given: *"the possibility to stay here or to have access to the Red Cross reception camp without forcing them to give their fingerprints. This will prevent them from suffering and risking their lives on the streets, especially for women and children. Many of them consider it a better solution to reside informally on the streets instead of sleeping in the camp and leaving their fingerprints"* (IT-M-03).

Nevertheless, in the countries under study, the potential resilience that can be provided by adequate, accessible accommodation is significantly compromised by inadequate and sometimes inhumane and unsafe conditions at these accommodation centres (DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-07; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-12; DE-M-13; DE-M-14; EL-K-03; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-24; BG-K-10; HU-K-02; HU-K-11; HU-K-20; DE-K-01; DE-K-03; IT-K-03; IT-K-04; IT-K-07; IT-K-12; IT-K-13; IT-K-15; IT-K-19; IT-K-20; IT-K-22; IT-K-25; IT-K-26; IT-K-29; HRW, 22.08.2018; Hess *et al.*, 2018; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; Oxfam, 2016; REACH, 2016). In addition, many of the centres do not have properly trained staff who can identify abuses or vulnerabilities in order to adequately protect people at risk and prevent exploitation, or people working at the centres do not coordinate with each other (BG-K-04; BG-K-14; MK-K-14).

On various occasions, reception centres in countries along the Balkan route became overcrowded and conditions unsafe (EL-K-03; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; EL-K-24; EL-K-29; MK-K-01; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-08; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-29; RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; RS-K-14; RS-K-16; RS-K-27; HU-K-02; HU-K-11; HU-K-20; Mijatovic, 2018; UNHCR, 2018a; Oxfam, 2016; BCHR, 2017). Centres designed for temporary stay are not suitable for longer periods of residence (Oxfam, 2016), and adequate security was not always provided for, leading to dangers of violence and abuse for residents (EL-K-03; EL-K-19; EL-K-21; EL-K-22; RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; RS-K-14; RS-K-16; RS-K-27; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Mijatovic, 2018).

¹¹⁹ The Country Researcher for Greece had a meeting with the Coordinator of Kara Tepe, and a small tour and presentation of the facilities by the Deputy Director. Unfortunately, due to the Coordinator's other obligations, an interview was not conducted.

Moria Reception Centre in the Greek island of Lesbos, designed to accommodate up to 2,000 people, had around 7,500 residents in September 2018,¹²⁰ while the reception centre on Samos was operating at six times its capacity as of late 2018. NGOs characterised conditions at Moria as “shameful,”¹²¹ with overcrowding, criminality and poor living conditions (EL-K-24). After her visit to Moria in June 2018, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe noted that: “Living conditions in the islands’ RICs are extremely worrying [...], serious overcrowding, combined with poor hygiene conditions, insecurity and despair put the human rights of the camp’s residents at high risk” (Mijatovic, 2018).

In Serbia, living and security conditions vary from centre to centre (BCHR, 2017),¹²² but during 2016, because of the large number of people in need, assistance and basic services were not adequately provided (Oxfam, 2016). In all 18 accommodation centres in Serbia, residents have to be present for headcounts in the evening if they want to keep their places and stay in the asylum procedure, though they do not need permission to leave them during the day (RS-K-28; RS-K-30; RS-K-32). Security conditions deteriorated throughout 2017-2018 in most of the centres, according to most people on the move interviewed in Serbia, as well as key informants (RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; RS-K-14; RS-K-16; RS-K-27). People may also be exposed to risks of trafficking and other abuses because of inadequate security measures, such as insufficient lighting around isolated communal toilets, lack of presence of security guards, particularly at night, or lack of gender-segregated areas (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017).

A system in the centres in Serbia that is particularly open to abuse was described by a human rights lawyer: “Informal organisations have been created in the camps. The camp personnel from the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants control the migrants who are accommodated in the centres. To facilitate organisation and control, the camp personnel appoint ‘community leaders,’ migrants or refugees who are perceived [by the camp authorities] as exceptionally good-natured. The police and SCRM rely on these individuals to control the other migrants. For some reason, it is usually Pakistanis who dominate this role. It is established and widely known who gets the privileges, the good rooms, whom you are permitted to interview, and who is off-limits inside the camp” (RS-K-16).

People admitted to Hungary according to the ‘waiting list’ have to stay for an uncertain period of time in metal containers in the Transit Zones, which are very cold in winter and very hot in summer, and are closed-access (HU-K-02; HU-K-11; HU-K-20). People are taken to the hospital, sometimes in handcuffs, only in emergencies, and they may be in a state of mental psychosis or attempt suicide. People are accompanied to the hospital by police officers, who sit in on medical examinations (HU-K-02; HU-K-33). There is a prison-like atmosphere, as described by a psychologist: “Sometimes pregnant women are taken in handcuffs to medical examinations. People there are traumatised by the conditions” (HU-K-02).

In 2018, adults who had applied for asylum and were from a ‘safe third country’ were denied food in Hungarian Transit Zones: “The Immigration and Asylum Office (IAO) on August 20 stated

120 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66038>.

121 <https://mdmgreece.gr/app/uploads/2018/09/13.09-final-NGO-statement-Greek-islands-EN>.

122 The Country Researcher for Serbia visited seven of the eighteen official accommodation centres in Serbia during the course of the field research in 2018.

that there is nothing in Hungarian law that explicitly obliges authorities to provide food to people in the “aliens policing procedure” in the transit zones” (HRW, 22.08.2018). On 20 August 2018, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee filed an emergency appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, and food distribution was resumed.

The situation in accommodation centres in Germany and Italy can also be precarious. People remain in German centres for several months to more than one year (DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-07; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-12; DE-M-14) and the conditions in the centres are generally negative for integration (DE-K-01; DE-K-03; Hess *et al.*, 2018). The lack of privacy and insufficient hygiene conditions, and of access to appropriate counselling or treatment for trauma, education and social activities, and the fact that discrimination, insults and other conflicts are common mean that vulnerable people may become even more vulnerable (DE-K-01; DE-K-03; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; Hess *et al.*, 2018; Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat, 2018).

Also in Italy, the critical conditions of some accommodation centres are factors that increase vulnerability, often leading to people having no regular status, or being trafficked for exploitation in begging, labour or prostitution (IT-K-03; IT-K-04; IT-K-12; IT-K-13; IT-K-22; IT-K-25). Staying for a longer period at accommodation centres leads to dependency and isolation among asylum applicants, and compromises their agency, self-sufficiency and psychological resilience (IT-K-04; IT-K-07; IT-K-15; IT-K-19; IT-K-20; IT-K-26; IT-K-29). According to an assistant prosecutor at Catania Court in Sicily, the greatest factor of vulnerability is the: “total lack of choices, and the impossibility of planning their future. So they feel that they are forced to rely on these kinds of criminal networks to achieve something for themselves and for their families” (IT-K-23). Since the Orlando-Minniti Law came into force at the end of 2017, asylum applicants are assigned to a larger CAS facility, with less access to services.

The geographical location of accommodation centres may also be isolated, which means that people have to travel for hours to go to a supermarket. The situation in Ventimiglia is particularly critical, according to an interviewee from Caritas: “the position of the new Red Cross camp is a major vulnerability. It is located 5km from the city, and to arrive you have to cross a highway, where there is no pedestrian access. Two migrants died already trying to get to the camp. This is a crazy contradiction” (IT-K-28).

In addition to generally poor conditions in accommodation centres, in certain cases the conditions in centres make people residing there feel unsafe and at risk, which increases their vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. At some centres, women and children in particular are harassed or subject to SGBV, and there are reports of smugglers and traffickers residing at centres in order to recruit service-users or victims.

The presence of police and military personnel at the centres also make people feel unsafe, as is the case on the Greek islands, at Voenna Rampa in Sofia and in the Transit Zones in Hungary (EL-K-22; HU-M-05; HU-K-11; HU-K-17; HU-K-27; HU-K-33). According to an interviewee from the Greek NGO Praksis: “People in the camps are protected by people who wear police and military uniforms. And they left their country in order to protect themselves from people wearing uniforms, or people in uniforms were the ones who abused them along the route. That increases their stress,

especially at the beginning” (EL-K-22).

Hungarian police officers were reported to have verbally and physically abused people residing at the Nyírbator Reception Centre close to the Romanian border, according to a migration expert: *“Verbal abuse was continuous from police officers. The security personnel [private company contracted by the centre] entered the rooms in the middle of the night, and picked out someone who had shouted or had [been heard making] comments about Hungary. They took him to a room without camera and beat him there. Later they took him back to his room. When migrants complained, the police said that they had been beaten by their roommates and they would not record it” (HU-K-27).*

At centres in Germany, police officers arrive during the night to enforce returns and deportations, disrupting residents’ sleep, and contributing to feelings of insecurity and fear (DE-K-15). The safety situation for women and girls is considered severe in the new AnKER centres (Hess *et al.*, 2018). According to a study by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ, 2017: 3) people residing at accommodation centres *“often remain exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation.”* There are major deficiencies in protection measures for vulnerable groups at accommodation centres in Germany (Bekyol & Bendel, 2016; Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat, 2018; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017).

Security guards at German accommodation centres are reported to have assaulted and beat residents, interfered with their privacy, and then told the police that it was the asylum applicants who initiated the violence (DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-K-15; Korvensyrjä, 21.08.2018). A doctoral researcher who investigated the situation in Bavarian reception centres in-depth, in particular the reception centre in Bamberg, found when the police intervene, they generally assume that the security guards acted in an appropriate manner. Some asylum seekers who were victims of violence at the reception centre in Bamberg have left the centre out of fear of the security guards (Korvensyrjä, 21.08.2018; DE-M-04; DE-M-05).

A number of cases of sexual abuse, sexual violence, domestic violence and physical violence took place at accommodation centres along the Balkan route and in Germany (HU-M-05; RS-M-02; RS-M-04; RS-M-05; RS-M-06; RS-M-07; RS-M-08; RS-M-09; RS-M-10; RS-M-11; RS-M-12; RS-M-13; RS-M-14; EL-K-03; MK-K-01; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-08; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-28; MK-K-29; RS-K-02; RS-K-09 RS-K-25, RS-K-32; HU-K-07; HU-K-27; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-K-15; Korvensyrjä, 21.08.2018; Oxfam, 2016). Direct and indirect experiences of this type of violence are severely detrimental to people’s general resilience, particularly if survivors of such abuse are not provided with treatment for their recovery. A 19-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary described sexual violence at a centre in Sofia, Bulgaria: *“I only want to say that from the entire journey, this camp was the worst. There were a lot of rapes in the camp. Girls were raped there. There were a lot of men there, this is why. I stayed there for six months. Police officers behaved very badly. There was theft and rapes every day” (HU-M-05).*

People who were travelling the route testified that physical and sexual violence was common in accommodation centres in Serbia (RS-M-02; RS-M-04; RS-M-05; RS-M-06; RS-M-07; RS-M-08; RS-M-09; RS-M-10; RS-M-11; RS-M-12; RS-M-13; RS-M-14). According to a 24-year-old Pakistani man

interviewed in Serbia: *“You know the camp situation. It’s full of mafia. They’re doing everything there, you know, you hear about rape [...]. I saw that before, two months ago, you should’ve heard about that. But when we complained to the Commissariat, the Commissariat just kicked me out, kicked me outside on the street, not those mafia people, but me. [...] Yeah, it happens. Every camp is full of mafia. If you want to [engage in] illegal activities, you can stay in a camp. The Commissariat does not care. The [‘mafia’] are raping the girls and women, stealing phones, everything”* (RS-M-02).

In some accommodation centres in Serbia close to the Croatian border, NGOs distributed whistles and torches to women because of harassment at night (Oxfam, 2016). There were also indications of three Iranian women involved in prostitution at an accommodation centre in Serbia, according to an Iranian man and a Syrian man staying at the centre (RS-M-17; RS-M-18), though it was not possible to determine whether there were indicators of trafficking in this case.

The risks for women, boys and girls in particular at accommodation centres may be mitigated if there are special designated areas for these groups within centres or gender-segregated provision of services, with adequate safety measures and female staff, police officers and interpreters (EL-K-16; EL-K-21; MK-K-02). However, if these are inadequate, then women and children are rendered vulnerable (EL-K-21; BG-K-04; BG-K-12; BG-K-14; MK-K-02; Hess *et al.*, 2018; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017).

“If I want to try the ‘game’, I just send a Viber message or meet a smuggler here in the playground.”

- Iranian man interviewed at an accommodation centre in Serbia (RS-M-18)

Smugglers and/or traffickers reside at accommodation centres together with other asylum applicants in the countries under study, or live outside but specifically recruit clients or victims at the centres. When traffickers target potential victims at centres, this is a direct and specific vulnerability, while interacting with migrant smugglers may also render people vulnerable. Smugglers travel with groups of people on the move, and stay at the accommodation centres (BG-M-01; BG-M-05; BG-M-06; BG-M-07; RS-M-02; RS-M-04; RS-M-05; RS-M-18; EL-K-13; EL-K-24; BG-K-02; BG-K-03; BG-K-09; BG-K-13; BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16; MK-K-02; MK-K-10; MK-K-14; RS-K-01; RS-K-02; RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; HU-K-22; HU-K-31; DE-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-06; DE-K-10; DE-K-12; IT-K-01; Frontex, 2017).

People residing at Moria centre on Lesvos, for example, may be specifically targeted for exploitation, according to a local NGO (EL-K-24) and *“reception facilities attract the attention of people smugglers, human traffickers and terrorist recruiters”* (Frontex, 2017). Traffickers may either reside at Refugee Registration and Reception Centres in Bulgaria, or appoint an intermediary residing at the centres to act as a recruiter on their behalf, offering assistance to people travelling alone, who may not have a financial or emotional support network (BG-M-01; BG-M-05; BG-M-06; BG-M-07; BG-K-02; BG-K-03; BG-K-09; BG-K-13; BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16). A 27-year-old Syrian man had who had resided at a centre in Sofia, Bulgaria considered that there should be

better protection for people residing at the centres, as he observed various people both within the centres and right outside, seeking to recruit centre residents for work in the city (BG-M-07), potentially for labour exploitation.

An interviewee from the Crisis Management Centre in Kumanovo in North Macedonia described how: *“the main smugglers from Pakistan were housed in the camp, when the Balkan route was closed, at the Tabanovce transit centre. [...] One of the main smugglers from Pakistan, his brother was in the camp. They were recruiting people from the camp who wanted to cross the northern border illegally. They introduced themselves as refugees and moved together with the refugees”* (MK-K-14).

According to key informants, some police officers and NGO employees were also involved in migrant smuggling, and drugs were also smuggled inside the transit centres by people who worked there (MK-K-02; MK-K-14).

An interviewee from ECPAT in Germany suspects that children staying at accommodation centres may be recruited by traffickers, as they often disappear from the centres. Attempts are not always made to trace them, and if they are, they are frequently unsuccessful (DE-K-01). An interviewee from K.O.K. mentioned how a Nigerian woman was approached by Nigerian traffickers at an accommodation centre in Brandenburg and offered a job in a bar. She accepted the job and only later found out that she was being exploited (DE-K-10).

On the other hand, an interviewee who works at an accommodation centre in Germany did not think that people were being recruited for trafficking at the centres. However, they were aware of asylum applicants telling each other about opportunities for irregular work (DE-K-07). People on the move who were interviewed in Germany were not aware of recruiting happening at accommodation centres.

A key informant from Save the Children in Rome, Italy, was more explicit: *“in the CAS, real recruitment procedures take place, with the internal presence of madams who recruit victims and induce them to prostitution. They force them to leave the CAS during the day to engage in prostitution, and then go back during the night, in order not to lose their right to stay in the reception system”* (IT-K-01).

“When migrants feel that they have arrived in Europe, to them it means immediate imprisonment and waiting in prison conditions to see what the future holds. People always ask why are they in prison, are they bad people?”

- Child psychologist interviewed in Hungary (HU-K-20)

When people are accommodated in closed centres, under conditions of detention and with restricted access to essential services and fair asylum procedures, they suffer trauma, become desperate and lose trust in authorities, all of which makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Asylum applicants in detention are subject to many factors that compromise their

resilience: the prison-like environment; lack of information about their legal status; mistreatment; isolation; abuse by peers or staff; and uncertainty about the future. An international project conducted in 23 EU countries concluded that detention harms: *“otherwise healthy persons. It is important to stress that a person becomes vulnerable from the first day of their detention, as the individual’s personal condition is instantly affected due to their disadvantaged and weakened position”* (JRS Europe, 2010: 97).

In Bulgaria, people who are intercepted by the Migration Directorate and not registered with the SAR as an asylum applicant are accommodated in closed-access Special Centres for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners. They are not always or consistently able to apply for asylum, making them more vulnerable to developing dependencies and to being exploited by traffickers (BG-K-04; BG-K-07; BG-K-08; BG-K-14; BG-K-15; BG-K-16).

In Hungary, due to the declaration of a ‘crisis situation caused by mass immigration,’ the 28-day limit on the duration of detention in Transit Zones was suspended. An interviewee from IOM in Hungary described the situation of uncertainty: *“Clients do not know the duration of this type of detention. It’s even worse than being in prison for stealing a chicken, because at least then people know that they are there for a month, two months or twelve months. [...] People often come here with serious mental and psychological issues and they end up here in hopeless detention without even some kind of structured free time”* (HU-K-11).

Many people in detention do not understand why they have been detained and do not know how long they will remain there, fenced in with barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards (HU-K-02; HU-K-08; HU-K-09; HU-K-11; HU-K-17; HU-K-20; HU-K-33; Haraszti, 2017).¹²³ Asylum applicants generally do not receive proper psychiatric treatment before their detention, despite the fact that a high proportion of them are traumatised or have fled from armed conflict or other crises (Barna & Gyulai, 2016). According to an interviewee from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, children who are with their families in detention: *“are afraid, sometimes the parents tell them that when dad leaves the sector, he is accompanied by two guards. So the children ask: where is daddy going? Are they taking him to prison? Why are we in prison? We didn’t do anything. Four to six-year-old children understand what is going on around them. They see bars around them and this upsets children”* (HU-K-17).

If adequate and safe accommodation represents a source of resilience for people in a destination context, then people who do not have access to accommodation centres may be particularly vulnerable. On the other hand, if people have sufficient resources to live independently, they are more resilient due to not being exposed to the risks of residing at accommodation centres that do not provide adequate conditions and safety.

123 At the Tompa Transit Zone, 250 people are accommodated in four sectors for: families; unaccompanied children aged 14-17; single men; and single women. www.police.hu/hu/hirek-es-informaciok/legfrissebb-hireink/zsaru-magazin/ellenorzes-nelkul-senki-nem-lephet-be.

A lack of adequate housing in Greece makes people more vulnerable (EL-K-01; EL-K-03; EL-K-10; EL-K-14; EL-K-21; EL-K-22; EKKA, 2018).¹²⁴ People in Bulgaria who do not have sufficient resources to find their own accommodation or cannot access accommodation may seek out a third party either to assist them in moving on to another country, or to assist them in finding housing in Bulgaria (BG-K-01; BG-K-02; BG-K-06; BG-K-12). UNHCR is carrying out a study on the accommodation of recognised refugees in Bulgaria, particularly in Sofia, and found that there is limited available housing for people leaving the Refugee Registration and Reception Centres, putting them at risk of becoming homeless, increasing their vulnerability (BG-K-12).

The ‘closing’ of the borders, according to a key informant from an NGO in North Macedonia “*did not stop people from continuing to transit. It had a different effect. We had more people outside the transit camps than inside the transit camps*” (MK-K-28). Also in Serbia a significant number of people, especially those who do not have regular status and who are stranded, stay in parks or abandoned buildings at night, making them extremely vulnerable (RS-K-08). In spring 2016, after border closures and pushbacks, many people ended up staying at informal sites close to the Serbian borders with Hungary and Croatia. Difficult conditions were exacerbated by lack of access to sanitation facilities, which led to the outbreak of illnesses (MMP, 2017; Oxfam, 2016; REACH, 2016). Furthermore, they could not always access humanitarian aid provided by international, governmental or nongovernmental agencies, as they were not residing at an official centre.

Also in Italy, the point at which someone leaves an accommodation centre, without support from a community or a network of co-nationals, is a moment of heightened vulnerability, according to an interviewee from the Social Services in Mestre, Venice: “*Less virtuous cooperatives [that run accommodation centres] let people exit their structures with few tools to deal with life in Italy, with no knowledge of the Italian language*” (IT-K-07).

In the North, at the Italian border with France, in 2016, the Italian Minister of the Interior closed the accommodation centre at Ventimiglia and declared that the ‘flow of migrants’ had stopped. According to an interviewee from Caritas, people who continued to transit through the region “*were camping out everywhere, along the Roia river, under the bridge, in critical conditions*” (IT-K-28). When a new accommodation centre was opened by the Red Cross in 2017, the situation did not significantly improve. It was not in people’s interest to reside there, as they would be fingerprinted. This meant that in winter 2017-2018, many people camped out again along the river (IT-K-28).

b) Education and Training

Access to education is one of the most important resilience factors to human trafficking for children. Aside from providing literacy, it is also an opportunity to socialise with peers, for teachers to identify any issues with children, and to assist in integration in general (HU-K-03; HU-K-23; DE-K-03; Cancedda *et al.*, 2015).

124 As of November 2018, there were an estimated 17,900 people on the Greek islands and 49,200 on the mainland. Around 17,800 people were staying at Open Reception Facilities and around 14,500 at RICs, as well as around 26,000 accommodated within UNHCR’s accommodation scheme, leaving around 10,000 people without accommodation (see: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66914>; <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/66657>; <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66038>. There were around 3,300 unaccompanied children, with only 1,200 accommodation places (EKKA, 2018).

As of end-2018, over 11,000 refugee and asylum-seeking children were attending school in mainland Greece, including around 3,500 accommodated within UNHCR's housing scheme and 8,000 children living in accommodation centres. In addition, on the islands, around 2,500 children attended preparatory afternoon classes in order to attend regular primary and secondary schools the following year, and UNHCR supports other forms of complementary, non-formal education.¹²⁵ In Serbia, a number of educational activities are being carried out in the framework of Circulars issued by the Minister of Education in 2017 for the inclusion of refugee/asylum-seeking pupils in the education and childcare system. 2,035 children in the asylum system participated in structured formal and informal education activities in Serbia in 2017 (UNICEF, 2018).

Sleijpen *et al.* (2016: 169) found that young refugees commonly place high value on education, seeing it as a *“way of gaining control over their lives, as the key to a higher status, and as a way out of their current lives and their disempowered positions”*. Children and young people in the asylum system are eager to attend school and acquire education and training. A comparative study on the education of refugee children and young people in EU countries found that: *“many young refugees and asylum seekers are highly motivated and ambitious; many of them see education as their main chance of succeeding in the receiving country”* (Köhler *et al.*, 2018: 11).

Afghan children in particular are generally motivated to attend school, as many of them did not have the opportunity to attend school in Afghanistan or Iran (HU-K-23). Three Afghan girls living at an accommodation centre in Germany in 2016 said to a Caritas counsellor: *“From now on, I want to go to school with my sisters; we want to learn how to be a lawyer, a professor and a doctor, this way we can help other girls in Afghanistan. [...] Please show us the school. Even if it is far from here, we will walk there and learn”* (cited in: Sindani, 2018: 33, own translation).

There were no educational activities at that time at the accommodation centre, except for a very basic language course. A few months later, a school-like class was started for the children, which contributed to generally more positive and hopeful atmosphere among adult and children residing at the centre (Sindani, 2018).

However, access to education for children on the move may be limited. Some children in the Hungarian asylum system are home-schooled, which not only excludes them from education but also from other benefits like learning the language, meeting Hungarian peers, and reintegration in a structured life (Neuberger, 23.11.2017; DE-K-03). Lack of official translation of school certificates and lack of these documents is also problematic. Previously some NGOs (particularly SOS Children's Villages) provided such translation services, but that programme ended.

According to Hungarian law, unaccompanied children must be enrolled in school within three months of arriving. However, young people may feel that the asylum system in Hungary is designed with the logic of hosting asylum applicants for as short a period as possible. They can only start school at the beginning of the next school year, meaning that some of them have wait for almost a year to start school. They can only go to certain schools, where they attend two days in a week, and teachers are often not fully prepared for teaching migrant children (Tarafas, Mészáros & Mouchenik, 2016). If children were not in school before, and have been in Hungary

125 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67410>.

less than three months, some schools say that there is no place for the child (HU-K-22).

Also, in some accommodation centres in Germany, children are not allowed to attend regular schools (Sindani, 2018). Lack of access to appropriate and quality education in Germany and its effect on perceptions of future prospects constitutes a vulnerability that makes it more likely that potential traffickers are trusted (DE-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-04; DE-K-11).

“We have been waiting here [in the Transit Zone] for four months. What do I do during the day? Unfortunately, there is no library here. There is wifi now. When we arrived, there wasn’t. I am upgrading my French studies online, I study every day, I think I have now reached intermediate level. I also teach kids here in the evenings, if they want to learn.”

- Iranian woman interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-03)

Vocational training is a specific factor of resilience, both during the course of the training itself, as engaging in a meaningful activity provides hope for the future, and as a way of subsequently integrating into the labour market (OECD, 2017). For example, a 22-year-old Syrian woman participated in a coding and programming course at the Red Cross Community Centre in Sofia, Bulgaria, and bonded with the other women on the course. The women were hoping to subsequently apply for work at telecommunications companies in Sofia (BG-M-10).

Asylum applicants in Germany are particularly eager to learn the German language, acquire education and work (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). An Afghan man had attended a vocational integration class in Germany for two years, but after that he was excluded from vocational training due to his ‘low prospects of staying’: *“This was a good time. We learned a lot there. And then, in the [vocational school], I was able to obtain my school completion certificate”* (DE-M-19). The so-called 3+2 rule in Germany grants protection from deportation to certain people who have received a negative decision on their asylum application, or are still in the asylum process, and who undergo vocational training (usually for three years) and then work as skilled professionals after graduation (for at least two years) (OECD, 2017). However, in Bavaria, asylum applicant from ‘safe countries of origin’ are excluded from this rule.

A 26-year-old Senegalese man spoke of the element of hope that comes with education. While he was in Germany he attended a vocational integration class, and was offered positions for vocational training by two companies. However, due to his status, coming from a country considered a ‘safe country of origin’, he was not allowed to enter into employment contracts with these companies. When he was informed that he would be returned to Italy under the Dublin Regulation, he continued to study and regularly attend classes in Germany, as he considered it important for his own resilience and his future, as well as keeping him occupied, so that he would not *“lose his mind”* sitting at home waiting for the police to come (DE-M-01).

The Waldesians NGO in Palermo, Sicily, provides vocational training and sees this as a factor of resilience: *“those women who can access our training can have better access to a regular job in*

the future" (IT-K-25). Digital literacy is a particularly important instrument of resilience, especially with regards to inclusion, civic integration, re-engagement in formal or non-formal education and employment. For those who did not benefit from digital literacy and access to the internet as a factor of resilience during the journey, training in the destination country can fill this gap (Colucci *et al.*, 2017).

Engaging in meaningful activities in general is a factor of resilience (OECD, 2017). A 36-year-old Syrian woman interviewed in Bulgaria spoke about the situation at Harmanli accommodation centre, where many young men who arrived alone were waiting for a decision in their asylum case. They were not attending any courses and were simply hanging around. She did not directly observe anything of concern, but considered it a risk factor that people were isolated and marginalised and did not have activities to occupy their time (BG-M-09). Similarly, according to an interviewee from an NGO in Serbia, there is a: *"massive population of people in limbo, with no means of working or doing anything with their time. This means that criminality is inevitably going to happen [...] I don't think you can eradicate it [...], but there needs to be a different immigration policy, rather than a state-led policy where the social services try to intervene"* (RS-K-22).

c) Employment

Because economic vulnerabilities are one of the key factors making people more prone to trafficking and related abuses, accessing decent employment in a destination country is an important factor of resilience. An OECD study on the labour market integration of refugees in Germany paints a positive picture of the situation in the main destination country for people travelling the routes. Having been granted access to the labour market, by February 2017, around 9% of all registered job seekers in the country were refugees and asylum applicants, more than half of whom were Syrian (OECD, 2017).

General labour market conditions in the destination country are a strong determining factor – also influencing the choice of Germany as a destination country. Low unemployment rates and an ageing population mean that there is a demand for labour, and facilitating access to the labour market as quickly as possible on arrival is essential for long-term integration outcomes (OECD, 2017). According to a comparative study on Germany, Austria and Sweden, by mid-2016, 22% of asylum applicants who arrived in Germany in 2014, and 14% of those who arrived in 2015 and early 2016, had a job. The employment rates of people from the main countries of origin of asylum applicants (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and Syria) increased by 54% overall from mid-2016 to mid-2017 (Konle-Seidl, 2018). Having a regular job is a strong driver of resilience to trafficking and other abuses.

OECD considered it positive that, subject to certain conditions, access to the labour market is granted to asylum applicants in Germany after three months, particularly in a context where asylum procedures may take a much longer time. However, one issue identified was the: *"very uneven nationality distribution of asylum seekers for whom employment permits were requested and approved. Some nationalities with relatively few asylum seekers in the first place, and of whom few subsequently obtain refugee status, are largely over-represented among those who receive approvals for employment by the public employment services"* (OECD, 2017: 11).

Employers also reported generally positive experiences of employing asylum applicants and people with refugee status: *“overall, three out of four participating employers who hired refugees or asylum seekers experienced only few or no difficulties with them in daily work. Accordingly, 85% are broadly or fully satisfied with their work performance. Among the difficulties mentioned, the lack of German language skills was most prominent – more than 60% of those employers who experienced difficulties stated that this posed considerable difficulties, followed by a lack of vocational skills, different work habits (about 25% each), and uncertainty regarding the length of stay in Germany (23%)”* (OECD, 2017: 12).

People on the move particularly value the opportunity to engage in regular employment. A 28-year-old Afghan man described how he had found work at a call centre in Sofia, Bulgaria, together with his roommate who also had refugee status (BG-M-08). As a Senegalese man described, after experiencing many difficulties during his journey: *“Then I had the opportunity to have humanitarian protection, and now I found a job as a security guard at a big supermarket. I am very happy”* (IT-M-07). According to an interviewee from Borderline in Sicily, Italy, people in employment *“feel less lonely and excluded, and this is in my opinion a great factor for resilience. Having contacts and people of trust in Italian society is very important”* (IT-K-22).

Access to employment is also a crucial factor of resilience in countries along the Balkan route to protect people from being trafficked (EL-K-01; EL-K-14; EL-K-19; EL-K-22; BG-K-10; BG-K-12; HU-K-03). In Greece, UNHCR supports people within its accommodation scheme with issuing of social security numbers (AMKA), Tax Identification Numbers (AFM) and registering with the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED). In addition, UNHCR’s partners assist beneficiaries in job matching or referral to vocational training and language courses (EL-K-30). In Serbia, the ALMIT project (Acceleration of Labour Market Integration of Immigrants through Mapping of Skills and Trainings), supported by the European Commission and coordinated by Sofia University in cooperation with other partners, including Serbian organisations, promotes employment.¹²⁶

In Hungary, social workers employed by the accommodation programme of the Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions (BMSZKI) for people with refugee and subsidiary protection status provided employment support, in cooperation with other NGOs. 64 adults, mostly Afghans, Syrians, Iranians, Nigerians, Somalians and Ethiopians (68% men and 32% women) participated in the programme, of whom 35 people were in employment, 15 of them working informally. The social workers also informed employers about the employment of non-EU citizens, mediated conflicts and supported participants’ integration into the labour market. By the end of the project, all but three of the 64 participants were in employment, with just three people still working informally (Tatár & Vida, 2018).

126 The Serbian partners are Philanthropy, Municipality of Šid and Belgrade Open School. The project runs from 1 January 2018 – 30 June 2020. www.bos.rs/uz-eng/projects/270/2018/02/14/almit---acceleration-of-labour-market-integration-of-immigrants-through-mapping-of-skills-and-trainings.html.

“Life in the camps is an additional suffering, because every day I see people getting crazy, crazy into madness. Indeed, how is it possible to abandon people who risked their lives to find work to take care of their families, for one or two years, without [allowing them to] do anything? For many of us, our families went into debt, especially to get us out of the hands of the Libyan militias. You have to pay back that money.”

- 32-year-old Cameroonian man interviewed in Germany (DE-M-10)

On the other hand, the ‘enforced idleness’ created by restrictions to access to the labour market, and, to a lesser extent, limited opportunities in the labour market for those who do have access, is detrimental to both financial and psychological resilience (EL-K-03; EL-K-21; HU-K-35; DE-K-06; DE-K-10). **In some cases, it may lead people to accept exploitative work due to the lack of alternatives.** The lack of the legal right to work makes asylum applicants *“particularly vulnerable to false promises regarding job and livelihood opportunities”* (Forin & Healy, 2018: 67).

A 28-year-old Syrian man interviewed in Bulgaria described how restaurant owners and shop owners in Sofia take advantage of the situation of asylum applicants (BG-M-07), while an Iraqi man considered that he was very negatively affected by not being allowed to work regularly in Serbia. He needed to work in order to cover the everyday costs of providing for his family, as well as ‘game’ attempts, but the family were entirely reliant on the state distributions of the CashCard allowance they received at the accommodation centre (RS-M-19).

If people do not have authorisation for employment in Hungary, they often work in low-skilled jobs in the informal market, are not registered for their actual position or working hours and are not aware of their labour rights (HU-K-35; HU-K-36; Hungarian Labour Inspectorate, 2018),¹²⁷ making them more vulnerable to labour exploitation. People who have received protection status, but who do not have a proper contract, may work excessive hours and be paid below minimum wage (HU-K-27). An 18-year-old Afghan man in Hungary also described the particular vulnerability of children, due to their economic situation: *“I am sure the prostitution of children is going on, we get 5,700 forints per month. This is €17; this is what minors get. [...] My parents help me but in the last two months they couldn’t”* (HU-M-05).

Restrictions on work permits are a major obstacle for asylum applicants in Germany (DE-K-06; DE-K-10). In addition to being eager to work, many asylum applicants have financial obligations to support family members in their countries of origin (DE-M-01; DE-M-10; DE-M-18). In addition, people may be in a situation of debt bondage to traffickers or smugglers, or may need to pay ransoms for family members still under the control of traffickers or smugglers. Having kept up hopes throughout the journey of quickly finding a job in Germany, repaying debts and ensuring their future, they do not understand why they have to wait for months in the accommodation

¹²⁷ The Hungarian Labour Inspectorate often conducts random site visits at enterprises and in 2018 they conducted inspections at 1,037 workplaces. They found labour rights violations among 80% of the employees. During the years 2015-2018, on average, 83% of employees were employed irregularly, and 40% of these employees had undeclared employment. On average, 49% of construction companies employed people informally, 36% of agricultural companies, 22% of catering firms and 19% in commerce. 1% of undeclared employment involved non-EU citizens (Hungarian Labour Inspectorate, 2018).

centres before they can work (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-07; DE-M-10; DE-M-11; DE-M-12; DE-M-13; DE-M-14; DE-O-01; Sindani, 2018). A Syrian man said that his time at the accommodation centre was *“the worst time of my life after the war in Syria”* (DE-M-13).

In Italy, despite the fact that asylum applicants are allowed to work from 60 days after they obtain their residence permit in Italy, they often work irregularly, especially in agriculture (IT-K-03; IT-K-09; IT-K-13; IT-K-19; IT-K-20; MEDU, 2015). The system of labour exploitation in agriculture and livestock is particularly connected with the problem of *‘caporalato’*. Intermediaries (*caporali*) manage and organise the workers, by mediating with the owner and exploiting workers (IT-K-13).

People working without a regular status are more vulnerable because of the lack of viable alternatives. According to an interviewee from the Anti-Trafficking Hotline in Venice: *“If they cannot access the regular job market, and the vast majority of migrants cannot, they decide to accept a condition of exploitation”* (IT-K-08). The scarcity of decent work opportunities encourages some people to move on from Italy. As a young Malian man described: *“I didn’t know where I wanted to go. I just wanted to find a job and to earn some money. But here it is difficult, Italy is a difficult country for jobs. This is why I moved here to Ventimiglia to try to cross the border to get to France”* (IT-M-01).

When a Nigerian man was asked whether he was aware of anyone trying to exploit asylum applicants’ labour, he replied: *“Oh, we would be so happy if somebody would try to exploit us. But there is nobody. Even if we had to work for seven days a week and get paid for one day, we would happily do it”* (DE-M-04).

Many of the countries under study have a relatively large informal labour market. While working irregularly is a clear risk for labour exploitation, some people on the move and key informants consider that the possibility to earn at least some money is a form of resilience to worse forms of exploitation. Greece and Italy, for example, have large informal sectors, and people who could not otherwise meet their basic needs work informally in order to survive (EL-K-20; EL-K-24; IT-K-03; IT-K-13; IT-K-25). Based on data elaborated by Censis, during the years 2012-2015, regular jobs in Italy declined by 2.1%, while irregular employment increased by 6.3%, leaving a total of 3.3 million workers working in the informal economy (*La Repubblica*, 31.01.2018).

In Hungary, some people work first under exploitative conditions, but then manage to improve their situation at the same firm (HU-K-04; HU-K-22; HU-K-25). Particularly Afghan men in their twenties, who have prior experience in the sector, work in construction in Hungary (HU-K-36). Afghan and Syrian school pupils also work after school and at weekends, receiving regular salaries even though they are employed informally (HU-K-06; HU-K-25; HU-K-30; HU-K-36). According to an interviewee from an NGO in Hungary: *“Sometimes you have to appreciate black work as well. I have been working for 16 years in [social work]. There is one type of black [informal] employer who pays you properly and another who does not. As long as society works like this, it is irrelevant to expect that immigrants will find employment in the regular employment market immediately”* (HU-K-26).

In Germany, an interviewee from the BKA explained that asylum applicants receive an allowance, but when they urgently have to send money home, the money they receive from the State is not enough (DE-K-06). They may therefore accept extremely low paid jobs at the accommodation centres. For example, an AnKER centre in Bavaria offers work in the kitchen, cleaning and gardening to people who live in the centre. Even though the payment is €0.80 per hour, most people residing at the centre are eager to do these jobs (DE-K-09).

Also in the context of the unstable and irregular working conditions connected to the *caporalato* system in Italy, especially in agriculture, the possibility to work irregularly, even in conditions of exploitation, is perceived by one NGO interviewee in Naples as a better option than having no occupation at all. In addition, the relationship between exploited workers and *caporali* is blurred: *“exploited workers themselves trust caporali as the ones who help them to find a job and get their daily salary (sometimes just €3 per day)”* (IT-K-13).

d) Healthcare

“The right to health is one of the core rights of children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and good health is essential to give all children the best start in life, develop their full potential and prevent problems in later life. On the other hand, poor physical or mental health can be a major obstacle to integration and can impact negatively on refugee and migrant children’s ability to learn the host country’s languages, engage with public institutions, or perform well in school.”

- UNICEF, 2017: 1

Lack of effective access to adequate medical care for physical and mental health is a factor of vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses, and a specific vulnerability to re-trafficking for those who have already been trafficked.

Access to healthcare in Serbia was challenging during 2015 and the first half of 2016 due to the constantly increasing number of people arriving. However, efforts were made to ensure that healthcare was provided to people on the move. At entry points, people were subject to medical triage, medical assistance was available at accommodation centres and highly specialised care was available at healthcare institutions (Ministry of Health of Serbia, WHO & IOM, 2015). Even prior to 2015, people arriving without any documents or certificates received the necessary medical care in Serbian hospitals (Morača, 2014). However, healthcare at accommodation centres in Serbia is often not adequate, and despite generally broad access, the different practices of health institutions at local and national level can be a factor of vulnerability, as well as translation issues (RS-M-35; RS-K-29; Morača, 2014). Sometimes, women refused to go to local health institutions because they were afraid that they would be separated from the group they were travelling with (RS-M-38), and difficulties in communicating directly with women and girls may have an impact on the quality of information and services provided (Oxfam, 2016).

On arrival in Germany, people who travelled along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes expect to find adequate health care, often having not been able to access healthcare *en route*. However,

there are considerable shortcomings in medical care for asylum applicants in Germany. Upon arrival, asylum applicants only have the right to free medical treatment for acute symptoms (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). The system of health insurance certificates in Germany is a further barrier to accessing adequate healthcare. In some *Bundesländer*, asylum applicants have to go to the social services office and ask for a certificate to see a doctor. The non-medical staff of the social services office take the decision about the type of doctor the person should see. Especially for women, there is a lack of gender-specific treatment (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017).

For trafficked women and girls in Italy who became pregnant during the journey and decide to have the baby, the baby may grow up in precarious and isolated conditions, with the risk of witnessing violence and exploitation, and being excluded from social and health services. As an interviewee from the NAVE project in Venice describes: *“The risk of having ‘phantom children’, who come to the attention of the Italian services only when they start compulsory primary school, is very high”* (IT-K-06). A 24-year-old Nigerian woman who was interviewed for this research explained that she had a miscarriage in Italy because she could not find adequate and timely medical treatment. When she got pregnant again, she decided to go to Germany, fearing that she would have a similar experience if she remained in Italy (DE-M-07).

A Nigerian woman in Italy identified a decisive source of resilience to exploitation in her case: *“[In Lampedusa], some staff came and asked me about the trip, and I started telling them all my troubles [...] and they told me ‘if you have a number to call, remember that that number belongs to a person who wants to exploit you, and force you to have sex with men’. I refused [their help] at the beginning, then a very gentle lady came several times to talk with me and to make me feel ok. Then I decided to tell her”* (IT-M-05).

Mental health issues related to trauma experienced prior to departure or during the journey require immediate, effective and long-term treatment in order to boost people’s resilience to further abuse and trafficking (EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-29; BG-K-12; BG-K-14; HU-K-20; HU-K-33; HU-K-36). During the journey, people cannot start to work on the psychological effects of the experience, and may only seek psychological assistance when they feel secure in a destination country (EL-K-29; HU-K-02; HU-K-15; HU-K-17; HU-K-20; HU-K-23; HU-K-33). For example, a resilience group was set up in an accommodation centre in Hungary for parents and children to achieve this level of stability, according to a child psychologist in Hungary (HU-K-20).

In order to build resilience for people at an extreme risk of exploitation, the NAVE project in Venice, Italy is designing an experimental CAS as a preparatory reception phase for people presumed trafficked, but who have not yet been exploited. They are usually young women aged 18-24 years old, especially from Edo state in Nigeria. Women can be sent there directly from disembarkation and can stay 90 days, working with trained anti-trafficking staff (IT-K-05; IT-K-06).

Yet a number of factors are detrimental to the resilience that arises from adequate psychological treatment. MSF (17.09.2018) noted a worrying increase in suicide attempts and self-harm among young people on the move in Greece, as well as depression and insomnia. Having survived violence

and traumatic events in their journey, conditions on Samos and Lesvos may exacerbate rather than improve their mental health conditions. According to an MSF clinical psychiatrist working on Lesvos in September 2018: *“In all of my years of medical practice, I have never witnessed such overwhelming numbers of people suffering from serious mental health conditions, as I am witnessing now amongst refugees on the island of Lesbos. The vast majority of people I see are presenting with psychotic symptoms, suicidal thoughts – even attempts at suicide – and are confused”* (Barberio, 02.10.2018).

NGOs in Hungary have difficulties providing mental health support, because they have not had access to the Transit Zones since 2017, even though NGOs have translators, psychologists and psychiatrists available. At the time of the field research for this study in mid-2018, there was a psychologist in the Transit Zone, but translation was not provided for. There is a high level of traumatisation and PTSD among people on the move in Hungary, but diagnoses and the provision of adequate assistance are rare (HU-M-05; HU-K-02; HU-K-08; HU-K-15; HU-K-17; HU-K-20; HU-K-23; HU-K-24; HU-K-33; HU-K-36).

Case 3.17 – Inadequate psychological care for Afghan boys in Hungary

According to a migration expert working in Hungary: *“There were two or three cases when minors [14-15-year-old Afghan boys] tried to commit suicide. They cut themselves with blades. They asked for blades from the social workers for shaving. The social workers didn’t even check if they needed them or not, they just gave the blades to them. Two boys started to make cuts and tattoos. The social worker didn’t see it for days.*

A few days later, two of the boys cut their veins. The other roommate called the ambulance and the police and the kids were taken to the hospital. A few days later they were taken back to the same room in the Transit Zone” (HU-K-27).

In Germany, medical treatment for victims of torture, rape and other severe psychological, physical and sexual violence has to be applied for individually, including a justification as to why the treatment is needed. This constitutes a considerable barrier not only for the medical treatment itself but also for the identification of victims of trafficking and vulnerable people. Women on the move interviewed for Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer’s (2017) study expressed psychological stress and the need for treatment: 40% of the women interviewed suffered from ‘extreme sadness’ and 52% ‘tended to cry’; 13% had suicidal thoughts. However, only 8% had access to a psychological consultation.

An umbrella organisation of women’s shelters in Germany reported a high increase in the need for shelter places for women. 90% of those requiring a place at the shelters are non-EU citizens, with an increase in Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan women during 2017-2018. Some women also seek protection for their children, who may be affected by domestic or gender-based violence (DE-K-16).

e) Social Support

Many people on the move and key informants mentioned social networks of friends and family as playing an important role in resilience in the destination context. In general, the ability to self-organise and construct a social network in the country of destination is an important resource to avoid trafficking and exploitation (IT-K-07; IT-K-18; IT-K-24). A 28-year-old Afghan man spoke of how he was fortunate to make friends with other men in Sofia, Bulgaria, so that he could settle down in the city and build stability for himself (BG-M-08). In Budapest, Hungary, there is an active Afghan community, and an advocacy association for the Cameroonian community (HU-K-02).

In Germany, people from Syria, Afghanistan and Turkey, for example, can count on family and community structures during their travel and upon arrival. Upon arrival, family and communities in Germany help them with guidance and support, making it less likely that they are trafficked, according to an interviewee from the BKA (DE-K-06). Having a family network in a European country can facilitate integration, like many Eritreans in Northern Europe or Francophones (especially Tunisians) in France, helping them to avoid being trafficked. According to an interviewee from the IRC in Italy: *“They are not alone, they don’t feel alone, and they integrate much faster”* (IT-K-11). An Ivorian man described the Muslim community in Rome as providing a source of belonging and a social network: *“now I have found the Great Mosque of Rome and I go there every Friday, I like that place, it looks like the mosque of Daloa [his home town in Côte d’Ivoire]”* (IT-M-06).

On the other hand, when people arrive in their intended destination country, they are considered to have ‘made it’ by families and communities in their countries of origin, and are therefore expected to provide for the needs of dependents and family members – in the country of residence as well as in the country of origin. **These expectations, and the feeling of obligation to provide for the needs of the family and community make people more vulnerable**, especially for trafficking for labour exploitation (DE-K-03; DE-K-06; DE-K-17), and particularly in the context of limited or no rights to work legally.

Conversely, the absence of a social network to rely on is a major vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. Being isolated and not being aware of the context where they are now living was underlined by an interviewee from the Italian Red Cross in Catania, Sicily, as a widespread condition of vulnerability (IT-K-24). People subject to labour exploitation often live in conditions exacerbated by spatial isolation, which makes them even more vulnerable. They have few relations with the social context, no possibility to integrate, no chances to find a viable alternative and exit the cycle of exploitation. For example, Sub-Saharan Africans, North Africans and Eastern Europeans exploited in Sicilian warehouses for agricultural production are living in conditions of extreme isolation (IT-K-20).

Enforced idleness is an issue that is not solely economic, as mentioned above. Engaging in meaningful activities, especially learning the language of the destination country, also enables people to build up resilience (DE-M-15; IT-M-03; HU-K-03; HU-K-23; DE-K-15; DE-O-01; IT-K-25; Arnetz *et al.*, 2013; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). A psychologist interviewed in Bulgaria suggested that resilience to trafficking can be promoted by continuing to organise open, interactive, and safe activities and events for people residing at the Refugee Registration and Reception Centres, to develop a sense of community belonging (BG-K-14). However, in Bulgaria, there is no refugee integration plan through which people can access certain basic services, like

language training (BG-K-01; BG-K-04; BG-K-06; BG-K-14).

A Syrian man who was attending a German language class described how: *“When I go to the language class every day, I can escape my loneliness and meet people. It enables me also to keep busy all day and forget my problems”* (DE-M-15). People considered as having few prospects of staying in Germany have no access to the free German language courses that would enable them to acquire a basic understanding of the administrative and legal processes (DE-K-15). According to a Ghanaian speaker at a demonstration in Bavaria in September 2018: *“We are being sent these letters in German and are requested to fill in forms in German but we don’t understand the language. There are no translators and we are not given the opportunity to learn the language. What are we to do?”* (DE-O-01).

“The secret to surviving in this kind of case is to always stay active and not sit around lamenting my fate, because we would go crazy if we just spend every day thinking about problems. At the moment I have been working for about eight months at the camp’s medical centre. I do not receive any salary. I try to help other people, because there are a lot of people who have problems and I spend my time helping them and also in order to forget about my own problems. I go outside to help communicate with the lawyers, hospitals and different places. I am busy all day and that helps me to survive.”

- 42-year-old Eritrean man interviewed in Germany (DE-M-14)

A number of people interviewed for this research shared their experiences of volunteering and working at NGOs as an important source of resilience for them, allowing them to stay occupied, make friends and feel part of their new communities. A 36-year-old Syrian woman volunteered at an NGO in Sofia, Bulgaria as a teacher for children and as a translator at the accommodation centres where she stayed (BG-M-09). A 28-year-old Afghan man assisted Afghan asylum applicants in Sofia to submit their application and was a volunteer translator at a legal aid centre (BG-M-08).

Helping fellow residents at accommodation centres is both a means of coping with their own situation and with the enforced idleness, as well as being considered by many people as a duty. A 34-year-old Nigerian man counsels other asylum applicants at the accommodation centre in Germany, and is engaged in activism, defending the rights of asylum applicants (DE-M-04). A 42-year-old Eritrean man describes: *“Helping each other is everyone’s duty. So here we try to share our problems with others; to help those who are most in need, the weakest, to find solutions together when the situation is hard for us and this helps us also to survive”* (DE-M-14).

According to a 22-year-old Nigerian woman in Italy: *“I met the Waldesians who helped me a lot to find my way. Now I sometimes work with them, to help other women to realise where they are, what they can do and what are their possibilities”* (IT-M-05). Similarly, a 27-year-old Sudanese man in Italy works with the NGO NoBorders, *“because I believe in solidarity and in the power of helping other people”* (IT-M-03). A young West African man was also volunteering at the NGO Collettivo 20k in Ventimiglia (IT-M-01).

Other people received assistance from private individuals or NGOs in the countries under study, boosting their resilience in a destination context. A survey conducted in Germany in early 2016 found that around 11% of the German population had provided support to people arriving, either through donations or active engagement. Furthermore: *“more than 40% of employers who [...] hired asylum seekers or refugees did so through the involvement of civil society initiatives, at least in part. Furthermore, it should be noted that almost 80% of participating employers who hired asylum seekers or refugees did so at least in part because of a sense of social responsibility”* (OECD, 2017: 14).

A 19-year-old East African woman interviewed in Hungary spoke of people who had helped her in Greece where she was in prison: *“In the first month I didn’t even have any contact with anyone, anything. [They] were afraid to come, afraid that they would end up in a prison too. One Bangladeshi[-Greek] guy whom we had bought clothes from before, he came and brought me second-hand clothes and some shampoo, because we didn’t have anything. He was the only one who could come in, the others were scared”* (HU-M-06).

A child protection expert of Syrian origin also mentioned the assistance her parents received on arriving to a Greek island: *“On this island people were very enthusiastic and also the social workers. A lot of humanitarian organisations were there on the coast and my mum told me that when they arrived they got a baby stroller and warm clothes. People were enthusiastic back then”* (HU-K-31).

In Germany, a large number of NGOs, welfare organisations and volunteer groups are engaged in supporting people who arrive in the country along the migration routes. Some of the people interviewed for this research explained how this facilitated them in navigating the complicated administrative and legal procedures, in education and generally in dealing with life in Germany, as well as helping them to overcome traumatic experiences.

Case 3.18 – German family supporting a Senegalese man

A NGO in Bavaria runs a ‘godparents’ programme for asylum applicants. People who want to join the programme are matched with German families or individuals who volunteer. A 26-year-old Senegalese man joined the programme and considered that the support that he received from his ‘god-family’ made a big difference for him. They helped him to find an appropriate training institute, write letters to German authorities, access information, take decisions and have a ‘family away from home.’ After he was returned to Italy under the Dublin Regulation and was left without a place in an accommodation centre and without any other support, this family sent him money that enabled him to find a place to stay and buy food (DE-M-01).

In Italy, NGO drop-in centres provide information and assistance. Some of the people on the move interviewed in Italy stressed their relationships with local associations run by volunteers, and the support provided (IT-M-01; IT-M-02; IT-M-03; IT-M-07). Free access to spaces that facilitate interaction with locals and avoid victimisation are a form of resilience (IT-K-13; IT-K-14; IT-K-15). A Sudanese man said that the Colletivo 20k activists in Ventimiglia: *“do a good job, they provide*

legal assistance to migrants who need to understand what the Dublin Regulation is and what they can do. They offer internet connection for free, and no police come inside. It is a free space” (IT-M-03).

Another coping strategy and factor of resilience is involvement in sport. Some Afghan boys started socialising and learning the Hungarian language through football. Many unaccompanied boys dream about a sports career and becoming famous football players (HU-K-03; HU-K-23). Distraction in general is a source of resilience and a coping strategy, because, according to a meta-study on resilience of young refugees in Western countries, *“spending time with friends and keeping busy with school or sports took their mind off their problems, decreased their stress, and gave them the feeling of power to cope. Boredom had, therefore, the opposite result” (Sleijpen et al., 2016: 170).* A 25-year-old Syrian man interviewed in Germany explained: *“In order not to go crazy, I started to go to the soccer field to play with others and forget my situation” (DE-M-12).*

An Afghan man interviewed in North Macedonia described his strategy: *“from far away people don’t know that I’m a migrant, I pretend to be a tourist travelling by bicycle” (MK-M-02).*

Some people interviewed for this study who had travelled the routes described their experiences of how not ‘looking like a migrant’ increased their resilience. This reflects an attempt to deal with anti-migrant sentiments in European countries, and resist experiencing xenophobic discrimination and abuse. Xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments have an effect on a person’s feelings about the country that they are in and how they are perceived (Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; Küey, 2015).

A Senegalese man and a Nigerian man each explained in different ways how they had been able to move around Germany quite freely, without being stopped by the police, because they were not immediately ‘recognisable as refugees’ (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-08). An 19-year-old Afghan man in Hungary described how he feels they are perceived: *“...maybe that most of the migrants are not normal, we come from Islamic countries, we are dangerous. But when they get to know us, they understand and they don’t hate. That is why I say to be positive and the world is positive. Hungarians didn’t invite us, we came here, we are guests. I hope migrants do good things too and the government gives us time to prove that we are good” (HU-M-04).*

Some of the people interviewed for this research spoke of their experiences of racism, discrimination and exclusion in Germany. According to a Senegalese man: *“The country is so closed off that Black migrants suffer in silence. Even Africans who have been living in Germany for a long time feel like newcomers. There is no one to really turn to when there are problems” (DE-M-08).* A Ghanaian man explained that he and other Ghanaians are regularly subjected to racial profiling by security guards at supermarkets and at the accommodation centre, and by police on the street. They do not observe these frequent checks being carried out on other people (DE-M-05). This also means that they are less likely to trust the authorities and go to them for help.

f) Access to Information, Translation and Mediation

Effective access to information about their situation, available services and options for training and employment when people arrive in a destination context, in a format they understand, is a crucial aspect of resilience to trafficking and other abuses. People need to know how long they will stay at an accommodation centre and what their legal options are, otherwise frustration and uncertainty may lead people to look for alternative, irregular options (EL-K-19; EL-K-20; DE-K-05; DE-K-10; DE-K-11; IT-K-01; IT-K-04; IT-K-11; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; Mijatovic, 2018; Frontex, 2017; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017; BKA, 2017). Lack of information regarding employment opportunities in is a particular factor of vulnerability (EL-K-20; DE-K-02; DE-K-06; DE-K-10): *“Nobody has explained to these people the ways in which they can earn some kind of money [...] Many people become victims of exploitation or turn to prostitution to earn small amounts of money, because they think there is no other way to earn money and work for a decent wage”* (EL-K-20).

In a context where there are frequent legislative changes in Germany that affect people’s situation, access to accurate information is particularly important. As a speaker from Afghanistan at a demonstration in Bavaria in September 2018 described: *“Every week a new law comes up or an existing law changes. Just when we think we have understood a law, it has already changed. Even our counsellors [at NGOs in the accommodation centre] find it difficult to keep up with all these changes. We don’t think we have a fair chance under these conditions”* (DE-O-01).

Arriving in a new context in Italy without adequate information about the legal system that affects them and about their attendant rights makes people particularly vulnerable, and creates fear and insecurity, leaving potential traffickers as the only source of information and assistance (IT-K-01; IT-K-04; IT-K-11; IT-K-12; IT-K-14). This is because, according to Intersos in Palermo: *“At disembarkation there is no time, they are too many people in the centres, [...] there is no moment when they can be properly informed about where they are, and what they should do. And also about the fact that delayed procedures are common in this country. The absence of information makes them increasingly vulnerable because they can lose trust in the social workers and leave the centre”* (IT-K-14).

An important aspect of access to information is the availability of translation services and cultural mediators to ensure effect communication between the authorities of countries of destination and people on the move (MK-K-28; IT-K-01; IT-K-04; IT-K-05; IT-K-10; IT-K-22; IT-K-24). Therefore the lack of sufficient and adequate translation is a key factor of vulnerability (BG-M-10; BG-K-01; BG-K-02; BG-K-04; BG-K-05; BG-M-06; BG-M-07; BG-K-10; BG-K-11; BG-K-12; BG-K-13; BG-K-14; HU-K-15; HU-K-17; HU-K-34; DE-K-15; Schouler-Ocak & Kurmeyer, 2017). In addition, some people may have physical disabilities that cause communication barriers, while others may experience mental and psychological distress, making communication more difficult (BG-K-14).

An interviewee from an NGO in Germany pointed out that **due to a lack of translation, many people fail to take appropriate action during their asylum procedures, because by the time they manage to find a translator for documents they receive, deadlines for action, such as an appeal, have already passed** (DE-K-15).

Cultural and linguistic mediators were recommended for Italy (GRETA, 2016/29; Anti-Trafficking National Plan, 2016), especially with respect to referral mechanisms for victims or potential victims

of trafficking (Nicodemi, 2017). At disembarkation, the presence of cultural mediators is essential in order to intercept potential trafficked people and prevent them from entering the trafficking network (IT-K-01; IT-K-10; IT-K-22; IT-K-24). **Cultural and linguistic mediators can immediately detect a situation of vulnerability and create a relationship of trust with the potential victim in various crucial situations**, for example in the reception system, with lawyers and/or the Territorial Commission and with doctors and psychologists (IT-K-04; IT-K-05; IT-K-10).

A Nigerian woman, a former victim of trafficking, and currently attending a regular job training programme, often dedicates her time to helping newly arrived Nigerian women to understand the context, especially in relation to the possibility of finding a regular job: *“If they are searching for a job as ‘badanti’ [care workers], I explain them which is the soap you have to use to clean an old person, which is different from the one you use to wash clothes. In Nigeria many things are different from here! Then I also have to explain that here old people don’t have their children taking care of them, but that they pay a stranger to do it, and sometimes they die alone. This is very strange if you come from Nigeria”* (IT-M-05).

Also migrant community representatives can act as social mediators within the new context of arrival, as a source of support and resilience. For example, a key informant from the Ghanaian community in Palermo, Sicily describes: *“Here I work as a support for my community, and as a support for migrant communities in general living in Palermo. Sometimes they call me from the reception centres if they are in need of help, consultation, directions. Both migrants and operators can call me. Often migrants call me because the conditions in the reception centre are bad, or maybe because they have not yet received the invitation from the [Territorial] Commission. Then I can refer the situation to the authorities, and facilitate the improvement of their conditions”* (IT-K-16).

Chapter 4: Trafficking



1. Introduction

Official identification of trafficking victims in the countries under study among people travelling the route is very limited and unlikely to reflect the actual prevalence. Those who have been identified along the Balkan route are mostly from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria, and mostly boys and men, while along the Central Mediterranean route, they are mostly Nigerians and other Sub-Saharan Africans, mostly women, and usually trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Quantitative data on trafficked people is patchy at a global level. Some organisations have attempted to estimate overall prevalence, taking into account that officially identified victims represent only a fraction of the total number of trafficked people (UNODC, 2016; 2018a; ILO, 2017; Global Slavery Index, 2018). However, qualitative research is necessary in order to have a better understanding of the forms of trafficking and the profiles of victims that are less likely to come to the attention of the authorities and civil society. People travelling the migration routes are evidently among the lesser-identified profiles of victims in the countries under study.

The official statistics in the seven countries under study indicate a minimal incidence of trafficking among people using the Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes, apart from sex trafficking of Nigerian women, which is commonly identified in Italy and, to a lesser extent, in Germany and Greece. With the exception of Greece, most trafficked people officially identified in all these countries are adult women trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Greece is also an exception in that 90 people who can be assumed to have travelled the migration routes were presumed to be or identified as trafficked during 2015-2016, as is evident from the statistics below. In addition, around 200 people who entered North Macedonia irregularly in 2016-2017 were considered potential trafficking victims, though there is no information about their profiles or about any follow-up. In Serbia, similarly, 75 people were considered potential trafficking victims among this group, with no information about any follow up, and one woman and one girl were identified as trafficked. No information on any people considered potential, presumed or identified trafficking victims among those who travelled the routes was obtained in Bulgaria or Hungary.

Among people using the **Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes**, potential, presumed or identified victims in Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia tend to be Pakistanis, Afghans and Syrians, and in Greece and Serbia, boys and men. It was not possible to precisely determine the forms of trafficking that they were subjected to, but they seem to include labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and forced criminality.

On the other hand, among those potential, presumed or identified victims in Greece, Germany and Italy who used the **Central Mediterranean route**, there is a predominance of Nigerians and Cameroonians, and of women.

Potential Trafficking Cases Identified in the Research

Despite the lack of official statistics, there are many indications of trafficking among people using the migration routes, including commercial sexual exploitation, labour exploitation,

exploitation in forced criminal activities (especially migrant smuggling and drug trafficking) and forced marriage, as well as the related abuses of deprivation of liberty for extortion and child abduction. This research does not seek to identify confirmed trafficking cases, as this can only be carried out by the responsible authorities in the country in question, but rather seeks to uncover sufficient indicators for a follow-up by these authorities. As UNODC points out in its Human Trafficking Indicators leaflet: *“Although the presence or absence of any of the indicators neither proves nor disproves that human trafficking is taking place, their presence should lead to investigation”* (UNODC, 2013a).

Given this general lack of official identification, and the challenges related to identifying trafficking in this context, it was not possible to estimate the prevalence of trafficking among people travelling along migration routes to Europe for the purposes of this study. Instead, the research relies to a large extent on more qualitative information in order to understand the indications of trafficking and exploitation among people using these routes.¹²⁸ **What is clear is that the official statistics do not represent the actual prevalence, based on the widespread indications of exploitation, trafficking and related abuses in the seven countries under study.**

While not an indication of prevalence in itself, specific details about a total of 69 potential trafficking cases involving one or more potential victims were identified in the course of this research, as well as 14 cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion. 42 potential trafficking cases involved men and boys and 27 involved women and girls. Some of these cases are included in this chapter, while the others are in Annex. In addition, there were many general indications about the occurrence of exploitation, trafficking and related abuses, even if precise details of individual cases were not provided.

Table 9: Potential Trafficking Cases Identified in the Course of the Research

Form of Trafficking	Total Number of Cases	Cases involving Women and Girls	Cases involving Men and Boys
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	21	14	7
Forced Marriage	5	5	0
Labour Exploitation	29	7	22
Forced Criminal Activities	7	1	6
Sale of a Child/Illegal Adoption	3	0	3
Removal of Organs	4	0	4
Related Abuse			
Deprivation of Liberty for Extortion	(14)	(4)	(10)
Total Potential Trafficking Cases	69	27	42

¹²⁸ The analysis of trafficking is also informed by sets of indicators of various forms of trafficking in persons developed by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2013a) and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2009), together with relevant international legal frameworks as they apply to certain forms of trafficking, such as forced marriage, child labour exploitation and sale of a child.

The cases described in this chapter and in Annex include:

- (a) cases where people were officially identified by the authorities as victims of trafficking;
- (b) cases where the authorities or non-governmental actors considered the people in question as potential victims of trafficking; and
- (c) cases where interviewees and/or literature consulted for this research provide significant indications that a person has been trafficked, but there has been no official response, or there is no information available as to whether there has been any official response.

Forms of trafficking

Forms of trafficking
Commercial Sexual Exploitation
Forced marriage
Labour exploitation
Domestic Servitude
Forced criminal activities
Sale of a Child/Illegal Adoption
Removal of Organs
Deprivation of liberty for extortion

Official Identification in the Countries Under Study

Disaggregated data on people recorded as presumed or identified victims of trafficking in **Greece** during 2015-2016 was directly provided by the Office of the National Rapporteur for the purposes of this research. Among the 84 girls and women and 79 boys and men presumed to be or identified as trafficked in 2016, including 52 unaccompanied children, were at total of 90 people who, based on their nationality, can be assumed to have used the Eastern Mediterranean or Central Mediterranean routes.¹²⁹ According to the US *TIP Report*, unaccompanied children in Greece are vulnerable to exploitation. Unaccompanied Afghan children in particular: *“engage in survival sex and are vulnerable to trafficking. Recruiters target migrants in refugee camps from their own countries. Most migrants and asylum-seekers are believed to rely on smugglers at some point during their journey and in some instances are forced into exploitation upon arrival in Greece”* (US Department of State, 2018: 203).

129 The other presumed or identified trafficked people in 2016 were 3 Romanian girls, 10 Romanian women, 5 Romanian boys and 14 Romanian men; 6 Greek girls, 3 Greek women and 3 Greek men; 9 Bulgarian women; 7 Ukrainian women, 5 Moldovan women; 4 Albanian women; 3 Hungarian women; 3 Dominican women; 1 Haitian woman; 1 Albanian girl; and 1 Bulgarian girl.

Among the 58 (48 boys, 7 women, 3 men and no girls) presumed or identified trafficked people in Greece in 2016 who probably used the Eastern Mediterranean route are:

- 21 Pakistani boys and 1 Pakistani man;
- 14 Syrian boys, 1 Syrian woman and 1 Syrian man;
- 10 Afghan boys, 1 Afghan woman and 1 Afghan man;
- 2 Iranian boys and 5 Iranian women; and
- 1 Iraqi boy.

Among the 32 people (26 women, 6 boys, and no girls or men) who probably used the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa are:

- 12 Nigerian women;
- 6 Cameroonian women;
- 3 Moroccan women;
- 2 Ugandan women;
- 1 Eritrean boy;
- 1 Eritrean woman;
- 1 Somali woman;
- 1 Sudanese boy;
- 1 Ghanaian woman;
- 1 Bangladeshi boy;
- 1 Malian boy;
- 1 Guinean boy; and
- 1 Algerian boy .

No further information was available on the forms of trafficking or the assistance provided.

The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of **Bulgaria** launched criminal proceedings in relation to 1,017 trafficked people during 2015-2017, and during the same period, the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings received signals in relation to 331 people who were possibly trafficked. All of these people were Bulgarian or from another EU country, and there was just one case in 2017 of a presumed victim of trafficking from outside the EU (NCCTHB, 2015; 2016; 2017). No non-EU citizens were formally identified as victims (BG-K-01), and there is little focus by the authorities on trafficking of people using the migration routes (BG-K-06).

In **North Macedonia**, there are scarce official data on trafficking among refugees and migrants (MK-K-01; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-20; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; MK-K-31). Of 219 presumed victims of trafficking during 2016-2017, 195 were people who irregularly entered the country, and the trafficking

was committed outside North Macedonia. No further information was available on the forms of trafficking or the assistance provided. There were just six officially identified trafficking victims, with no further details provided. According to the US *TIP Report*, “[m]igrants and refugees traveling or being smuggled through [North] Macedonia are vulnerable to trafficking, particularly women and unaccompanied minors” (US Department of State, 2018: 282). In addition, North Macedonian NGOs recorded 149 presumed victims of trafficking among people on the move, comprising 80 men, 16 boys, 24 women, 9 girls and 20 ‘children’ (National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration, 2017; 2018). A further 12 migrant men were recorded as presumed trafficking victims by the Ministry of Interior (National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration, 2018).

According to the available data, from 2015 to mid-2018, there were 67 reports of presumed trafficking in human beings in **Serbia**, involving 59 children and 8 adults. In all cases, the identification procedure was initiated. Five cases of trafficking were formally identified during the same period:

- exploitation in criminal activities, including migrant smuggling - 1 man (2015);
- sexual exploitation - 2 boys (2017 and 2018) and 1 woman (2016); and
- multiple exploitation (forced/servile marriage and domestic servitude) - 1 girl (2016) (RS-K-34, CPVT, 2018).

However, according to GRETA, during 2015-2016, a total of 95 victims of trafficking were identified in Serbia, including: 35 women exploited in sexual exploitation, but also in forced marriage; 6 men subjected to labour exploitation and one man exploited in forced criminality; and girls, and, to a lesser extent, boys trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced begging and forced marriage. The majority of the identified victims were Serbians, but there was one Afghan, one Pakistani and one Syrian (GRETA, 2017/37).

According to the Serbian Government’s Reply to the GRETA questionnaire in February 2017, in 2016, 40 applications for identification as a victim of trafficking related to Syrians and Afghans. One woman and one girl among people on the move were officially identified as victims of sexual exploitation, and forced marriage and labour exploitation, respectively, along the migration route, in Turkey and Greece (GRETA, 2017/9). The US *TIP Report* referred to “[t]housands of migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and neighboring countries transiting through or stranded in Serbia [who] are vulnerable to trafficking within Serbia” (US Department of State, 2018: 376).

Investigations were initiated in **Hungary** for a total of 51 trafficking cases during 2015-2017. No non-Hungarian victims of trafficking were recorded during 2015-2016, but there were 6 foreign victims of trafficking in 2017, and 8 victims of ‘related exploitation crimes’, including one young Iranian woman (aged 18-24) subject to sexual coercion for the purposes of sexual exploitation (ENYÜBS).¹³⁰ The US *TIP Report* states that: “Hungary is a transit country for asylum-seekers and

¹³⁰ Unified Statistical System of Investigations and Prosecutions (ENYÜBS) of the Statistical Department of the Ministry of Interior. The other foreign victims were: an Austrian girl and a Danish girl subjected to child pornography (child sexual abuse imagery), 6 Chinese women who were trafficked (form not specified), a Polish woman and a British woman who were victims of sexual coercion and 2 Slovakian women who were victims of pimping.

illegal migrants, some of whom may be or may become trafficking victims” (US Department of State, 2018: 220).

As of end-2017, there were 100 people living in **Germany** with a residence permit as a victim of trafficking: 22 men and 78 women.¹³¹ Among them were 13 people from Nigeria, and three from Iraq or unspecified origin (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018).¹³² In 2016, there were 80 people with such a residence permit, including six people from Nigeria (Deutscher Bundestag, 2017).¹³³ The German Federal Office for Migration and Asylum (BAMF) was involved in identifying people from 38 different countries as potential victims of trafficking in 2017, though they did not record the forms of exploitation. The interviewee assumes that most cases of human trafficking identified through asylum procedures involve sexual exploitation (DE-K-17).¹³⁴

According to the Federal Criminal Office (BKA), the majority of non-EU victims were Nigerian (BKA, 2017), and the prevalence of Nigerians as identified victims of trafficking was confirmed by key informants (DE-K-06; DE-K-08; DE-K-17). Throughout 2017, a total of 474 trafficking cases were investigated, and 842 victims (including 171 children) and 747 suspects were identified (BKA, 2018). According to BKA data, the number of trafficking cases is highest in Berlin, followed by North Rhine Westphalia (BKA, 2017).¹³⁵

However, German NGOs working with trafficked people consider that the actual number is much higher (DE-K-05; DE-K-06; K.O.K., 2015; K.O.K., 2017). For example, the NGO *Jadwiga* in Bavaria reports that in 2015-2016, they counselled 129 Nigerian women, 9 Ethiopian women, 7 Eritrean women, 4 Ugandan women, 3 Sierra Leonean women and 13 women from other African countries on cases of sexual exploitation (*Jadwiga*, 2016).

131 Trafficked people can receive a residence permit in Germany according to §25(4a), §25(4b) and §29(3) of the Aufenthaltsgesetz [Residency Act].

132 The other women and men were from Bulgaria (15), Romania (10), Ukraine (9), Albania (5) and China (5).

133 The other women and men were from Bulgaria (15), Romania (11), China (6) and Albania, Kosovo and unspecified origin (3).

134 The criminal courts also collect data on criminal investigations on trafficking (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016) and the department Finanzkontrolle Schwarzarbeit (Financial Control of Irregular Work, FKS) collects data on the basis of the Schwarzarbeitsbekämpfungsgesetzes (Act on Combating Irregular Work). The FKS may encounter trafficking for labour exploitation or forced labour. However, neither the FKS nor the Gewerbeaufsichtsämter (Trade Supervisory Boards) collect data specifically on human trafficking.

135 According to an interviewee from the Berlin police, the higher numbers in Berlin – about 120 in 2017, involving 130-140 victims (10 of whom were of nationalities who use the Balkan or Mediterranean routes) – are a result of the fact that trafficking investigations in Berlin are carried out by three different commissioner’s offices. In most other Länder there is no separate commissioner’s office for trafficking, and prosecution of trafficking is part of the commissioner’s office for organised crime. Of the three commissioner’s offices in Berlin, one investigates sexual exploitation of children, one sexual exploitation of adults, and one investigates all other forms of human trafficking. Berlin is the only Land that has a commissioner’s office for the prosecution of sexual exploitation of children (DE-K-19).

Table 10: Solwodi¹³⁶ counselling statistics, 2015-2017

Year	Number of women counselled for first time	Cases that appeared to be THB ¹³⁷	Main countries of origin of women seeking consultation ¹³⁸
2015	1,700	272	Romania (108, including girls and young women), Nigeria (204), Afghanistan (38), Iraq (36), Iran (16), Syria (55)
2016	2,295	261	Iraq (37), Iran (19), Bulgaria (126), Romania (240), North Macedonia (19), Serbia (65), Syria (93), Afghanistan (109), Nigeria (230), Somalia (42)
2017	2,471	276	Nigeria (383), Somalia (64), Cameroon (42), Kenya (41), Eritrea (54), Ethiopia (32), Ghana (53), Afghanistan (95), Iraq (60), Iran (16), Syria (114), Turkey (68), Serbia (55), North Macedonia (35), Albania (90), Romania (208), Bulgaria (101), Sierra Leone (33)

Source: Data directly provided by Solwodi (DE-K-08).

These figures demonstrate a considerable increase in women from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, and West and Horn of African countries (especially Nigeria, Somalia, Eritrea and Ghana) seeking counselling. This is confirmed by another NGO working with women who report that most of the women whom they counsel are from Sub-Saharan African countries, mainly Nigeria, followed by The Gambia, Cameroon and Kenya, usually aged 18-35 years (DE-K-11). According to the US *TIP Report*, in Germany: “*The large influx of migrants during the 2015 and 2016 refugee crises, and a continuing flow of irregular migrants northward from Mediterranean crossings, continue to strain government resources at all levels and among agencies responsible for combating trafficking*” (US Department of State, 2018: 198).

Data on people in the National Protection Programme for Trafficked People in **Italy**, and admitted to the programme for the first time, was available for 2016.¹³⁹ The majority of the people within the programme were women (954 - 81.4%) and Nigerian (696 - 59.4%). There were also 62 Moroccans, 23 Senegalese, 21 Ghanaians, 20 Pakistanis and 13 Cameroonians. Among people newly admitted to the programme in 2016, 668 (84.6%) were women and 527 (66.7%) were Nigerian. 29 Moroccans, 14 Pakistanis, 12 Senegalese, 11 Ghanaians and 9 Gambians were also admitted to the programme in 2016.¹⁴⁰

136 Solwodi (Solidarity for Women in Distress) is a major NGO with 18 branch offices in Germany, and has been in operation for 33 years. The statistics are not disaggregated by age, reason for counselling or nationality. Solwodi’s annual report contains information on individual cases (Solwodi, 2017). This information is included in relevant sections of this report.

137 According to the assessment of Solwodi (DE-K-08).

138 Excluding women from countries unlikely to be relevant for the Balkan and Mediterranean Routes (e.g. Vietnam).

139 Computer System for Information Collection on Trafficking (Sistema Informatizzato per la Raccolta di Informazioni sulla Tratta, SIRIT): www.osservatoriointerventitratta.it.

140 The other victims in protection were from Romania (82), Albania (42), China (17) and El Salvador (14). Among the newly admitted, the other victims were from Romania (58), Albania (16), China (11) and Moldova (10).

The US *TIP Report* refers to risks of trafficking for people en route to Italy and on arrival, especially for unaccompanied children, “including boys forced to work in shops, bars, restaurants, bakeries, or in forced begging” and people working in informal sectors (US Department of State, 2018: 242).

Exploitation of people on the move takes place in countries of origin prior to departure, in transit countries outside Europe, such as Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Libya, and in countries of transit/destination in Europe (EL-K-01; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-21; EL-K-22; EL-K-29; EL-K-31; DE-K-10; DE-K-11; Forin & Healy, 2018). Brunovskis and Surtees, in their research on trafficking along the Balkan route, define three possible scenarios: a trafficked person becomes a refugee/migrant due to their trafficking situation; a refugee/migrant is trafficked en route; or a refugee/migrant is trafficked in the destination context (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; see also: UNHCR, 2006). These scenarios reflect the different phases of the migration journey. Exploitation is generally not coordinated along the route, but often a person is exploited in different countries and locations by actors who are not in contact with each other.

2. Forms of Trafficking

a) Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Prostitution

Sex trafficking of women and girls in this context is clearly prevalent, despite the relatively lower proportion of women and girls travelling the routes, compared to men and boys. However, there were also indications of sexual exploitation of men and boys.

Sex trafficking affects Nigerian women and, to a lesser extent, girls, in Italy, Germany and Greece, and women and girls from other West, Central and Horn of Africa countries, as well as Syrian, Afghan and Moroccan women and girls. Less indications were found of Iraqi, Pakistani and Iranian women and girls affected by sex trafficking. Most indications that were found were linked to migrant smuggling, whereby the sex trafficking was perpetrated by migrant smugglers.

Among women and girls who travelled along the Balkan route, many of the cases of sexual exploitation take place in Greece and Turkey (see also: Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017) and in some cases the same victims are exploited in both countries. Based on what he had experienced in Greece and Turkey, a man who had travelled the route spoke of women, boys and men, being sexually exploited: “*These mafia people do that, or they bring other clients who pay to have sex with them. The smugglers didn’t do this kind of thing with us, but these mafia people did*” (MK-M-01).

There were indications of an unaccompanied girl from Syria sexually exploited in prostitution in Turkey (EL-K-11, Case 4.1 below), as well as another Syrian girl, aged 16, who was handed over to migrant smugglers in Turkey to be sexually exploited for a period of a few months, before reuniting with her family in Germany (DE-K-01). A young Syrian woman was sexually exploited by her smuggler and a group of men from different countries in Turkey, partly as payment for the smuggling service to Greece. In Greece she was also sexually exploited, and was only identified as a victim of trafficking while travelling from Serbia to Hungary, by IOM and the Serbian NGO Atina. She subsequently moved to an EU country with the aid of legal and humanitarian aid institutions (RS-K-34). Two Afghan girls, sisters aged 15 and 5, were also presumed trafficked in Turkey and

Greece, either for sexual exploitation or sale of children, by their neighbour (MK-K-29).

Case 4.1 – Sex trafficking of a Syrian girl in Turkey

“A case we worked on involved an unaccompanied minor girl from Syria, who stayed in Turkey for two years. They had her locked in a basement and sexually exploited her (they used her to provide sexual services to others). They cut her hair and even used some kind of acid on her, you could see marks on her body. She managed to escape and arrive on Samos. Our team found her, and along with the First Reception and Identification Service and with the assistance of EKKA, we transported the girl [who by that time had aged out] to an EKKA shelter in Thessaloniki. She didn’t want us to see her face. She told us part of her story on the way to Thessaloniki” (EL-K-11).

A particular case reported by interviewees from an NGO in Greece involved Congolese women who were commercially sexually exploited in Congo, in Turkey, and possibly also in Greece:

Case 4.2 - Sex trafficking of Congolese women in Congo and Turkey

A group of Congolese women were apprehended by members of the military in Congo, who locked them in a room, raped them and used them as sex slaves. After a while, a seemingly ‘good’ soldier appeared, who told them that he had a friend in Turkey, that he would save them and send them to Turkey. He prepared everything, paid for their journey and as soon as they arrived in Turkey, they were commercially sexually exploited. After some time in Turkey, they found that the door of the place where they were locked up was suddenly open, and they left. Then a seemingly ‘good’ person heard their story, pitied them, and told them they would help them to go to Greece for free (EL-K-13).

A number of the key informants and people who had travelled the route who were interviewed in Greece, North Macedonia and Hungary also had information about **sex trafficking of women and girls in Greece**, perpetrated by smugglers or people connected with smugglers. The women in the cases identified were from Eritrea, Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan. The Eritrean woman’s case is described below (Case 4.3). A similar case that took place close to the Greek border with North Macedonia involved women of unspecified nationalities who were forced into prostitution by migrant smugglers in order to pay for smuggling services (MK-K-31).

The Iraqi woman had been subjected to forced marriage before departure, and when she arrived in Greece, with no remaining financial resources, a man proposed that she earn money through prostitution, which he organised. Though she was clearly in a vulnerable position, she eventually earned enough money to continue her journey (EL-K-28). The Sudanese woman, aged 25, had given birth to a baby in Sudan, but was excluded by her family. She travelled to Greece and was sexually exploited at a brothel by a Greek man. According to the Hungarian NGO Baptist Aid, she subsequently managed to travel to Hungary (HU-K-25). The Afghan woman, aged 26-27 and

travelling with two small children, was sexually exploited in prostitution by a Pakistani smuggler who took them from Greece to the Serbian-Hungarian border (HU-K-28).

Case 4.3 – Sex trafficking and ‘survival sex’ of an Eritrean woman in the context of smuggling in Greece

The NGO Open Gate-La Strada in North Macedonia was aware of a case of sex trafficking of a 50-year-old Eritrean woman in Greece: *“The woman, an English professor, had to leave Eritrea because of family circumstances. When she arrived in Greece, in Thessaloniki, she said that she had asked for help at the ‘African Park’, a place known to all migrants where they could seek help [...]. She was taken from there, with a group of other women, to a village near Thessaloniki, to a derelict house, and had to pay US\$15 for a bed. Because she did not have money she was forced to have sex with the group of smugglers or with other people who were brought by the smugglers”* (MK-K-03).

One case of sex trafficking, of a Syrian woman by a Syrian man, took place in Bulgaria:

Case 4.4 – Sex trafficking of a Syrian woman by a Syrian man in Bulgaria

In 2017, a Syrian woman entered Bulgaria with a Syrian man, whom she had met in Turkey and who had promised to help her to get to Bulgaria. He had also advised her that it would be easier for her to receive refugee status in Bulgaria if she declared that they were a married couple. They were registered by the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) as a married couple. While awaiting refugee status determination at an accommodation centre in Sofia, the man told the woman that she had to pay him for agreeing to act as her husband. She told him that she could not pay him, so he told her that she had to engage in prostitution.

The woman was attacked by another man while engaging in prostitution and attempted suicide. She was treated for fractures at a hospital, and then discharged and advised to return to the accommodation centre. When she returned to the centre, SAR social workers, affiliated with the Bulgarian Red Cross, submitted a signal to the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) about her case. The woman’s ‘husband’ was still residing at the same centre. However, they did not provide specific information, including the woman’s name and age, so the NCCTHB requested additional information, which the social workers refused due to privacy concerns. This meant that the NCCTHB could not refer the case to the Sofia prosecutor.

Nevertheless, the NCCTHB mobilised a committee of experts and appealed to IOM for assistance. IOM provided a housing allowance, so that the woman would not have to continue to reside at the centre. The NCCTHB also reached out to the NGO Animus, who sent a statement of support for the woman to the SAR. Despite this, the woman's asylum application was refused (refugee status and humanitarian protection status) and she was appealing this decision at the time of the interview (BG-K-01).

Sexual abuse and sex trafficking of women and girls was also reported in the Lojane and Vaksince region of **North Macedonia**, close to the border with Serbia (MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-11; MK-K-14; MK-K-18; MK-K-24; MK-K-29; MK-K-31). Afghan women and girls were suspected to have been sexually exploited at a transit centre in North Macedonia (MK-K-14) and a teenage girl from an unspecified African country was also presumed trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Case 4.5 – Sex trafficking of a girl from a Sub-Saharan African country by Afghan and Pakistani men in North Macedonia

A 17-year-old girl was travelling with a group of 14 Afghan and Pakistani men. She was from an African country, the interviewee thought it was Kenya. She was immediately identified as a potential victim of trafficking by the services in the Transit Centre, so the Standard Operating Procedures were followed and the girl was separated from the group and accommodated in a safe house in Skopje. However, none of the men were investigated (MK-K-02).

Interviewees in Hungary had more information about sex trafficking experienced during the migration journey, rather than within Hungary. However, there is also evidence of the victimisation of children on the move in sex trafficking in Hungary. The low amount of state support, drug dependencies and the number of unaccompanied girls undergoing abortions are among the indications (HU-K-03; HU-K-06; HU-K-18; HU-K-19; HU-K-22).

An interviewee in Hungary referred to criminal networks kidnapping women from Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia on the Sinai Peninsula for sex trafficking and extortion of their families. Some Eritrean and Somali women were then kept in slave-like conditions in Lebanon, subject to rape, illegal abortions, physical abuse and torture. A number of these women managed to leave Lebanon and travelled to Hungary to apply for asylum (HU-K-02).

In Ventimiglia in Italy, close to the French border, as highlighted by Save the Children (2018), migrant smugglers commercially sexually exploit women and girls. One interviewee, an activist based in Ventimiglia, said that *“prostitution is often used as a tool to pay the traffickers for the trip. When the camp along the river was still here, everyone knew about the presence of a tent for sexual exploitation”* (IT-K-30).

Women from different countries who travel the Central Mediterranean route often wait in Libya for weeks or months until they get a chance for the crossing. During this time in Libya, they may be sexually exploited in prostitution (DE-M-07; IT-M-05; DE-K-14; IT-K-07). Women from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Somalia and other Sub-Saharan African countries were sexually exploited *en route* in order to continue their journey (DE-K-14; Sindani, 2018). A young Nigerian woman described her experience in Libya of sexual exploitation in order to “*pay for our trip*” (IT-M-05). Another Nigerian woman, who had barely escaped trafficking for sexual exploitation, spoke of how the traffickers had told her that if she was pregnant, they would have killed her immediately because she would have been ‘of no use’ to them (DE-M-07).

Women and girls are kept in brothels, referred to as ‘connection houses’ in Libya: “violence and sexual exploitation often start there, especially if the madam and/or a trafficker needs more money to continue the transit. Girls and women are then ordered to engage in prostitution to earn money for the traffickers. Conditions in these houses are inhumane, also because they have to witness the public violence perpetrated against other women. This is used as a tool to subjugate and terrorise them” (IT-K-07).

Case 4.6 – Sex trafficking of a Nigerian woman by a Nigerian woman in Libya

A 29-year-old Nigerian woman who was interviewed for this research was escaping domestic violence by her husband, and her family gave her about €250 to start her own business in order to gain independence from her husband. A friend from her village took her money and promised to take her to a place where she could start a good business.

When they reached Libya, the ‘friend’ took her to a brothel that was run by other Nigerians. She was told that she had to pay back the costs of the trip to Libya through prostitution. There were other Nigerian women and girls being sexually exploited at the brothel who had been there for a longer time. When the interviewee refused to engage in prostitution, the owner of the brothel ordered the other women and girls to beat her, which they did out of fear of the owner. When she continued to refuse, an older Nigerian man was called to negotiate, and he convinced the owner not to force the interviewee into prostitution until she stopped menstruating. During those six days, she received no food.

After the sixth day, a Nigerian girl who was a victim of sex trafficking helped her to take a bath and gave her clothes to wear. The interviewee told the girl that she would try to escape and encouraged the girl to escape with her. The girl agreed. When the owner discovered that the girl had helped the interviewee to bathe, he beat both of them severely, and the girl was too afraid to try to escape. The interviewee spoke to the Nigerian security guard at the brothel and convinced him that he was working for nefarious purposes. He agreed to step away from the gate and let her pass, so she escaped from the brothel (DE-M-07).

In Greece, Germany and Italy, there are a higher number of formally identified cases of women trafficked for sexual exploitation, particularly among those who travelled the Central Mediterranean route. Cases of sexual exploitation particularly concern Nigerian women, but also other West African women, and women from East and Horn of Africa countries.

In Italy and Germany, there is a particular focus on the vulnerabilities of young Nigerian women and teenage girls. Many Nigerian women trafficked for sexual exploitation have been officially identified by the authorities in Germany and Italy, in some cases through the asylum process (DE-K-17). Women and girls from Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, trafficked for sexual exploitation in prostitution, have increasingly been identified in Germany in recent years (DE-K-01; DE-K-04; DE-K-06; DE-K-08; DE-K-11; DE-K-14; Forin & Healy, 2018; BKA, 2017; 2018). There are no data available at national level in Italy, but many informants referred to the increasing number of Nigerian girls in sexual exploitation (IT-K-01; IT-K-02; IT-K-03; IT-K-04; IT-K-05; IT-K-06; IT-K-07; IT-K-08; IT-K-10; IT-K-11; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; IT-K-18; IT-K-19; IT-K-20; IT-K-21; IT-K-22; IT-K-23; IT-K-24; IT-K-25; IT-K-28; IT-K-32).

Some of them are young teenage girls (IT-K-03; IT-K-10; IT-K-21; IT-K-23): *“When I say that the age is lower, I mean 13-14 years old. Before 2015, we had maximum 17-year-old victims. The number of girls has been dramatically increasing since 2015. Half of our protected victims are children. We have a difference with the national data: among victims of THB, 20% are children at the national level, while in the Catania-Messina area [Sicily], it is 50%”* (IT-K-21).

More teenage Nigerian girls have been arriving along the Central Mediterranean route in recent years, and there is a perception that these girls, as well as young Nigerian women, are extremely vulnerable to human trafficking. In a report published in mid-2017, based on their own indicators, IOM Italy stated that around 80% of Nigerian women and girls arriving by sea during 2016 were probable victims of sex trafficking destined for Italy or other EU countries (IOM, 2017).

Some interviewees suggested, however, that there are certain perceptions about the profiles of trafficked people that may divert from the actual situation. Key informants – from the NAVE project and the Anti-Trafficking Hotline - suggested that this proportion is overestimated (IT-K-05; IT-K-06), and many others stressed the need for caution in assuming that most or all Nigerian women and girls are victims of trafficking, since this attitude can cause social stigma (IT-K-04; IT-K-01; IT-K-15; IT-K-22).

The sexual exploitation takes place Greece, Germany and Italy, as well as Libya. Trafficked Nigerian, Congolese and Eritrean women are sexually exploited in Greek cities and on the islands, and some of them had already been sexually exploited along the route (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-10; EL-K-20). An interviewee from the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) explained that Germany is just one of the European countries of destination (DE-K-06), as they are also trafficked to Greece, Italy, Austria, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and other countries in Northern Europe.

Trafficked Nigerian women and girls may:

- be sexually exploited in Libya before arriving in Germany or Italy (DE-K-07; DE-K-14; IT-K-05; IT-K-07);

- arrive in Germany after fleeing from trafficking in countries like Italy and Libya (DE-K-04; DE-K-11; DE-K-09; DE-K-13; DE-K-14; DE-K-15);¹⁴¹
- be exploited in Italy before arriving in Germany or other European countries (DE-K-07; DE-K-07; DE-K-09; DE-K-13; DE-K-14; IT-K-01);
- be circulated and ‘traded’ among traffickers in Europe (DE-K-04; DE-K-13; IT-K-01; IT-K-06; IT-K-07; IT-K-12);
- be trafficked directly to Germany for sexual exploitation there (DE-K-01; DE-K-06; DE-K-07; DE-K-11; DE-K-14);
- be recruited by ‘madams’ in Germany and Italy, for example in accommodation centres (DE-K-11; DE-K-13; IT-K-01).

Trafficking from Edo State, Nigeria

Edo State in Nigeria is one of the main regions of origin for regular migrants from Nigeria living, working or studying in European countries, and it also one of the main locations of recruitment of women and girls for sexual exploitation (DE-K-06; DE-K-13; IT-K-01; IT-K-03; IT-K-05; IT-K-06; IT-K-20; UNODC, 2016). UNODC assumes that 94% of all Nigerian women trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation are from Edo State (UNODC, 2016). Edo State, especially the city of Benin, as well as neighbouring Delta State, and the city of Kano in the north of the country, are also transit locations for Nigerians and people from other West and Central African countries *en route* to Niger, before crossing the Sahara (DE-K-13).

Women and a smaller number of girls from Edo State and other parts of Southern Nigeria are trafficked for sexual exploitation to Libya, Italy and Germany (DE-K-06). Before departing Nigeria, they may be subject to a traditional ceremony in the presence of a ‘*juju*’ priest, swearing that they will pay back the debt incurred for their journey to Europe and that they will not tell anyone about what has happened to them on the journey and in the countries of destination (EL-K-04; EL-K-08; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-28; DE-K-04; DE-K-07; DE-K-10; DE-K-14; IT-K-05; IT-K-13; BKA, 2017; Sindani, 2018). These oaths reinforce their level of dependency until the ‘travel fee’ of tens of thousands of euro has been ‘paid off’ through sexual exploitation (DE-K-06; DE-K-07).

141 Some of these Nigerian women arrive in Germany pregnant or with young babies as results of these abuses (Sindani, 2018; DE-K-04; DE-K-09; DE-K-14; DE-K-15).

Recently, the traditional leader of this particular community in Edo State in Nigeria, Oba Ewuare II of Benin, declared that the oaths are no longer valid¹³⁹ and that those who use *juju* swearing would be victims of their own threats (DE-K-08; IT-K-03; IT-K-09; IT-K-12; IT-K-23; IT-K-25). However, so far counselling organisations in Germany have not perceived a change of patterns as a result of this declaration¹⁴⁰ (DE-K-08) and key informants in Italy warn that traffickers may simply use other, more violent means of control (IT-K-05; IT-K-09; IT-K-12; IT-K-23).

There is a particular pattern to the sexual exploitation of Nigerian women and girls in Germany and Italy. The ‘madam’ (trafficker) either travels with them in order to make sure they reach the destination safely (DE-K-01; DE-K-06; DE-K-07; DE-K-11); or she is already in Germany and sends someone to bring the trafficked woman or girl (DE-K-06; DE-K-11; DE-K-14). The trafficked women and girls are either instructed to register as asylum applicants in Italy or Germany, or they apply for asylum after fleeing the sexual exploitation (DE-K-14; IT-K-04).

Some of the affected women and girls are not aware of the situation that they will be exposed to in Europe, and they expect to get a job in Europe, e.g., as hairdressers, nannies or saleswomen (IT-M-05; DE-K-04; DE-K-07; DE-K-13; IT-K-06; Sindani, 2018), while others know that they will be involved in prostitution (DE-K-06; DE-K-07; IT-K-01; IT-K-03; IT-K-05; EASO, 2015). Trafficked women and girls either do not tell their families in Nigeria about the realities of their lives in Europe, or, if they do reveal aspects of their living circumstances, they are put under pressure by their families, who encourage them to continue because money was invested in their journey and returns are expected (DE-K-01; IT-K-05; IT-K-06; IT-K-12; IT-K-14; IT-K-21; IT-K-23).

The women and girls generally have to pay off a debt for the journey (IT-K-01; IT-K-06; IT-K-12; IT-K-21), as well as living expenses and protection money for using a particular location (IT-K-06; IT-K-08). After paying off the ‘travel fee’, the victims may then become *madams* themselves (DE-K-06; DE-K-07; DE-K-08; DE-K-11; IT-K-01; IT-K-06; IT-K-32; Sindani, 2018). Some are forced to do so (Sindani, 2018).

While Nigerian women and girls are most affected, similar patterns are also found for women of other West, Central and East African countries, such as Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya (DE-K-07; DE-K-10; DE-K-11; DE-K-14; IT-K-11; IT-K-12; IT-K-25), many of whom also arrive using the Central Mediterranean Route. According to an interviewee from Waldesians in Palermo, Sicily: *“at our help desk, we see around 200 victims per year - in the past year we have had 3-4 non-Nigerian women [other sub-Saharan Africans]. It is a small number, but it must be underlined, because until 2016 we only had Nigerian victims. So, something seems to be moving also in other African countries”* (IT-K-25).

142 See, e.g.: www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/gods-will-destroy-oba-benin-curse-human-traffickers.

143 While the oaths used to be formulated in the form of threats, there have recently been reports of ‘positive’ oaths, e.g. traditional healers in Nigeria who promise healing to the respective woman or girl under the condition of her taking the journey and consenting to the demands of the trafficker (DE-K-08).

Among people arriving along the Balkan and Mediterranean migration routes, men and boys are also affected by sex trafficking. This predominantly affects Afghan and Pakistani boys and men, but men and boys from West Africa and Horn of Africa are also exploited in this context, from countries such as Nigeria, Eritrea and Ethiopia. According to a key informant in Hungary, a Nigerian man was sexually exploited by a Greek woman, who took advantage of his need to pay for migrant smuggling services to get as far as Serbia (HU-K-28).

Case 4.7 – Cameroonian man sexually exploited in prostitution in Libya

A lawyer in Venice who was interviewed for this study described a case they had dealt with: *“I personally had a case of an adult man from Cameroon, a homosexual man, who had been tortured in Libya. He fled Cameroon autonomously, because of [persecution based on] his homosexuality. He started engaging in prostitution to earn money during the trip and in Libya he was forced by a trafficking network into prostitution. He has suffered a lot: he became HIV positive, [...] he suffered physical violence everywhere on his body”* (IT-K-04).

Afghan and Pakistani boys are particularly affected by sex trafficking, as well as sexual abuse. This is a complex phenomenon, as most unaccompanied boys are in their late teens, and some of those affected have already ‘aged out’, i.e., turned 18, meaning that they are no longer covered by child protection policies and services. This means that the involvement of boys and young men in commercial sex is sometimes referred to as ‘survival sex’ rather than sexual exploitation.

Afghan and Pakistani men and boys are subject to commercial sexual exploitation in Turkey, Greece and Serbia, by providers of smuggling services and other groups. The vulnerability of these boys due to their financial situation and their desire to travel onwards, despite the restrictions imposed since March 2016, is abused by sex-buyers and traffickers who engage in child sexual exploitation (MK-M-01; EL-K-02; EL-K-03; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-13; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-28; EL-K-30; EL-K-32; EL-K-33; MK-K-02; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-11; MK-K-14; MK-K-18; MK-K-24; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; RS-K-01; RS-K-02; RS-K-05; RS-K-06; RS-K-07; RS-K-08; RS-K-09; RS-K-12; RS-K-16; RS-K-22; RS-K-23; RS-K-24; RS-K-25; HU-K-27; DE-K-07; DE-K-09; Digidiki & Bhabha, 2017).

Media coverage of the issue in Greece in particular refers to ‘survival sex’ (child sexual exploitation) among teenage boys who are stranded and cannot otherwise afford to meet their basic needs (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-27; EL-K-30; Smith, 15.04.2018; Digidiki & Bhabha, 2017; US Department of State, 2018). Some unaccompanied boys who have arrived in Greece are sexually exploited in prostitution, sometimes simply in order to earn enough money to survive (EL-K-13; EL-K-22; EL-K-24; EL-K-27). One case involved two 16-year-old Pakistani boys residing in the Hungarian Transit Zones, who had been sexually exploited by Pakistani men in Greece, who gave them money to finance their journey to Serbia, where they were also sexually exploited (HU-K-27).

Case 4.8 - Sex trafficking of an Afghan boy by Afghan men in Serbia

A 16-year-old Afghan boy in Serbia was contacted regularly by an Afghan man, who promised him 'game' attempts (attempts to cross the border) and would then deprive him of liberty and rape him, along with several other men, mainly from Afghanistan. The boy was occasionally given money by some of these men. The boy had temporary accommodation at a Safe House, as an unaccompanied child, but he was told to leave, as his violent behaviour had become a danger to the other residents. He sought help at a refugee aid centre in Belgrade in 2016, as he said he was being sexually exploited.

During the two months while the centre staff assisted him in preparing the case for the Centre for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking (CPVT), the boy was constantly moving between different accommodation centres, his depression grew worse and he engaged in self-harm. He was treated at a psychiatric hospital in Belgrade and subsequently transferred to a specialist clinic in child psychiatry, where he was diagnosed with depression, altered behaviour and a tendency for self-harm.

Meanwhile, the process of his identification as a victim of human trafficking was completed. The boy then left the psychiatric hospital for an asylum accommodation centre, where he was residing at the time of the field research. A Prosecutor for Sexual Offences launched an investigation and the boy was officially identified as a victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation. He received organised support and assistance. No information was available on the prosecution of his traffickers (RS-K-34).

In the German capital Berlin, and to a lesser extent in Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg, there are reports of the sex trafficking and abuse of boys and young men, and prostitution among young men, from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq. All of the boys and many of the young men were being commercially sexually exploited, mainly in and around the Tiergarten Park in Berlin during 2016 and 2017 (DE-K-03; DE-K-10; DE-K-19; Lorenz, 30.10.2017; Heine & Abdi, 02.11.2017; Bückmann & Schaible, 22.05.2017; DW, 25.10.2017; Gräf, 28.07.2018).

Some of the boys were living at accommodation centres or with their families, while others were homeless and living in the Tiergarten Park. According to an interviewee from K.O.K., young men and teenage boys from Afghanistan and Iran considered good-looking were approached in front of public authorities and offered support and places to stay, before being sexually exploited, with threats of disseminating on social media the fact that they were engaging in these activities (DE-K-10). In conversations with social workers, the boys and men said that they were trafficked by a group people of the same nationality, or they were operating independently, but were in fear of these larger groups (Lorenz, 30.10.2017, 2017; Heine & Abdi, 02.11.2017).

According to a media report, the boys and young men in Berlin may move in with traffickers

and sex-buyers who provide them with a place to stay, food and clothes, creating relationships of dependency (Lorenz, 30.10.2017). Some of the boys and young men are engaged in drug abuse, which may have also been used as a means of control in the context of sexual exploitation (Bückmann & Schaible, 22.05.2017; Lorenz, 30.10.2017).

The Berlin Police were aware of this situation but did not manage to refer cases for prosecution because the boys and men were not willing to provide the police with information (DE-K-19). Nevertheless, according to the NGO Hilfe für Jungs, there was a considerable decrease in the phenomenon in 2018 (Bückmann & Schaible, 22.05.2017). An interviewee from the Berlin police said that, due to intense police operations, boys and young men are no longer involved in commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution in Tiergarten Park (DE-K-19).¹⁴⁴

Child sexual exploitation in the context of *bacha bāzī* was identified in North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Germany (MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-08; MK-K-11; HU-K-02; HU-K-17; HU-K-18). *Bacha bāzī* (dancing boys) is perpetrated by Afghan men, who abuse boys for social and sexual ‘entertainment’ (Bückmann & Schaible, 22.05.2017; Lorenz, 30.10.2017). Although Afghan law criminalises acts associated with *bacha bāzī*, it continues in Afghanistan, Iran and along the migration routes. These boys are targeted at an early age and brought up in a manner to be sexually exploited and abused by wealthy adult men (MK-K-03).

An interviewee in North Macedonia referred to a “traditional Afghanistan dance” taking place at the Tabanovce Transit Centre one night in 2016. She explained that: “*in Afghan tradition, boys of 12-13 years are dressed to look like girls - usually boys who are beautiful and may be regarded as feminine get selected for bacha bāzī, which means that those boys dance for older men and entertain them. One of the adult men selects one of the boys who are dancing to be his sexual partner for the night and the boys do that for money. They usually receive gifts and money from these ‘clients’*” (MK-K-04).

Case 4.9 – Sex trafficking of an Afghan boy by Afghan men in Afghanistan (*bacha bāzī*)

A 17-year-old Afghan boy had been abused in Afghanistan in the context of *bacha bāzī*. The boy never explained how he had been recruited. He and other boys performed dance shows for adult men. After the shows, they were forced to dance for a smaller group of men who subsequently sexually abused them. He stated that they were raped several times by drunken and armed men, and on one occasion he received serious injuries. He was nine years old when he was first raped, by two men.

144 Three sexually exploited boys were referred to protection services (e.g., the Youth Office) and were accommodated in safe places outside of Germany in order to ensure their protection, though none of them were from nationalities of people commonly using the migration routes (DE-K-19).

Neither he nor any of his peers had attempted to report the sexual abuse, as the boy said that no-one would react. Among the men who exploited them were high-ranking officials and police officers, which intimidated them and prevented them from speaking out. The boy was diagnosed as HIV positive, identified as a victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation, and resettled to an EU country (RS-K-34).

b) Forced Marriage

Forced marriages affect some women and girls from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Morocco in their countries of origin, *en route* and in European countries. Some of these marriages are for the purposes of domestic servitude or sexual exploitation, while in other cases significant sums of money are exchanged for the marriage itself: girls and young women are ‘bought and sold’ (trafficked) for forced marriage.

A number of interviewees in Greece mentioned women and girls travelling the migration routes and in accommodation centres on the islands and the mainland who were trafficked for forced marriage (EL-K-04; EL-K-11; EL-K-13; EL-K-22; EL-K-27; EL-K-32). Some are girls aged 14-16 years old, forcibly married to men aged around 50. Cases were recorded where parents sent their underage daughters for marriage with a man of the same nationality in Greece or other European countries (EL-K-27). Traffickers and smugglers may be aware of these practices, and try to take advantage of them (EL-K-13). One interviewee mentioned girls approaching NGOs crying and asking for assistance: *“There was one case on Lesbos, where an underage girl ran away with an underage boy, in order to avoid getting married to an adult man”* (EL-K-22).

Key informants in North Macedonia rarely referred to forced marriages, and when they did, they did not consider it as a harmful traditional practice or a possible form of trafficking, but rather a ‘traditional’ issue (MK-K-01; MK-K-29). For example: *“Regarding forced marriages there is no confirmed information, rather there have been rumours related to their culture and patriarchal norms that govern marriages. In this context are the rumours that some marriages are concluded in order to gain some privileges and benefits in the asylum procedures in EU countries”* (MK-K-01).

A 13-year-old Syrian girl was trafficked for forced marriage to a 32-year-old Syrian man in Syria – who had financed her entire family’s migration journey. She gave birth to a child at a hospital in Skopje, North Macedonia. According to the interviewee who described the case: *“They had a document, they showed a family card, and we couldn’t treat her as an unaccompanied child”* (MK-K-29). The same interviewee recalled a situation where a Syrian Kurdish man ‘bought’ a wife, an 18 or 19-year-old woman, from close relatives in Greece. Money changed hands, but the interviewee assessed that it was not forced marriage because *“they liked each other”* (MK-K-29).

Another case in Greece involved a girl of unspecified nationality who was living at an accommodation centre in Athens. Her family were putting pressure on her to get to a country in Northern Europe to be married to a man aged over 50. She asked for assistance from organisations at the centre as she did not want to move on, but she subsequently left (EL-K-27). An Algerian woman in her twenties staying in the Hungarian Transit Zone was subject to forced marriage for

sexual exploitation in Greece, having already been sexually exploited in Algeria (HU-K-27).

Case 4.10 – Trafficking for forced marriage and domestic servitude of an Afghan girl by an Afghan man in Afghanistan

A 15-year-old Afghan girl arrived in Serbia in 2016 with her 14-year-old brother, her two-year-old daughter and her Afghan husband (age unknown). The girl said that she was married according to the religious customs of their local community. The girl first reported as domestic violence after they had spent several weeks at a Serbian reception centre, saying that her husband had tried to suffocate her with a pillow. The man was arrested. In discussions with her social worker and NGO staff at the accommodation centre, she explained that her parents had died when she was very young, and that her husband, who was her first cousin, had proposed to her she was 12 years old.

After her marriage, the girl was subjected to domestic servitude by her husband and his family. After the birth of their daughter, she also had the responsibilities of a mother. She suffered physical violence, with visible scars on her face and arms, and was subjected to threats and blackmail to remain in the marriage and continue the domestic labour expected from her. The girl accepted all the assistance that was possible in the framework of the reception facility. Because she had reported her abusive husband, the girl received constant threats from other people residing at the reception centre, of different nationalities. Her brother considered that she had violated the expectations and duties of a woman or girl by reporting her husband, and agreed with the others that she should be punished. The girl decided to take her child and relocate to a special protection facility in Belgrade.

However, she soon felt isolated and could not communicate with anyone at the facility, as they did not speak Pashto. She opted to return to a regular reception centre – the authorities chose a location with a high number of families, on the assumption that she would be secure in that environment. A CPVT staff member was called to register the girl as a victim of human trafficking for the purposes of forced marriage and labour exploitation (domestic servitude). After several months at the new reception centre, the girl's marriage was dissolved according to religious customs, her husband was deported to Afghanistan, and she and her child were relocated to a safe third country (RS-K-34).

Generally, very little is known in Germany about trafficking for forced marriage and trafficking for forced marriage is not defined as a trafficking offence in German law. However, the NGO Jadwiga reported an increase in forced marriages during 2015-2016 (Jadwiga, 2016). Interviewees from K.O.K., Jadwiga and Solwodi reported that women from Syria, Afghanistan (DE-K-10; DE-K-13; DE-K-14), Iraq (DE-K-10; DE-K-13), Iran (DE-K-13) and Lebanon (DE-K-14) are affected by forced marriage or by the threat of it. In 2015 and 2016, Jadwiga counselled 28 women from Afghanistan,

11 women from Iran and Iraq, eight women from Syria, five women from Pakistan, five women from Ethiopia, four women from Somalia, three women from Sierra Leone, one woman from Senegal, one woman from Nigeria and one Libyan woman who were forcibly married or under the threat of it (Jadwiga, 2016). An interviewee from Jadwiga added that in some cases, women from Afghanistan, Iran or Iraq seek counselling after fleeing forced marriages or threats of forced marriage in their countries of origin (DE-K-07).

Generally, women from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq may find it very difficult to report cases of forced marriage or domestic violence because of social acceptance of such practices among certain communities in their countries of origin and pressure by their families to remain in a marriage. On the other hand, women from Sub-Saharan African countries generally find it easier to report their cases and start a life on their own (DE-K-14).

One case of forced marriage, involving a number of Moroccan women, was indicated in Italy.

Case 4.11 – Trafficking for forced marriage, sexual exploitation and servitude of Moroccan women by Moroccan smugglers in Italy

Informants in Sicily described Moroccan women being subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, in the context of marriage brokering and migration. The women are forced to provide sexual services to pay back the debt contracted with a network of co-nationals who organise the trip to Italy. The women believe that they are coming to Italy to get married to a Moroccan man who already has regular status in Italy, and they contract a debt to pay for the trip, the marriage and accommodation. They are commonly in their 40s, and single or widowed. After the marriage, they are commercially sexually exploited and kept in a condition of servitude until the debt is paid. They are usually introduced to the future husband by people close to their families (IT-K-18; IT-K-19).

c) Labour exploitation

Men and boys, and to a lesser extent women and girls, are trafficked for labour exploitation in agriculture, as well as other sectors such as textiles, services industry, construction and in begging. Women and girls are exploited in domestic and care work. Labour exploitation is the most common form of exploitation affecting people travelling the route. Labour exploitation of adults and children takes place in Turkey and Greece (EL-K-04; EL-K-10; EL-K-22; EL-K-31; EL-K-32; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-08; MK-K-09; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; HU-M-06; HU-K-03; HU-K-17; HU-K-24; HU-K-27).

In Greece, the phenomenon mainly affects men from Pakistan and Afghanistan (EL-K-10; EL-K-31), and children are also exploited (EL-K-11; EL-K-22). As an interviewee from Metadrasi mentioned, children have turned down places in shelters, because they felt they needed to work: *“I cannot stay in the shelter, I have to go and work. I can’t tell you more, or else they will kill my parents in Pakistan”* (EL-K-11). Nevertheless, a lack of identification efforts for victims of trafficking for

forced labour in Greece, particularly in the agriculture sector, as well as in cleaning, domestic service and tourism was observed by GRETA (2017/27).

Interviewees were not aware of many cases of labour trafficking taking place in North Macedonia, presumably because people were scared to report, but also because of its position as a transit country (MK-K-31). However, a young boy was exploited by smugglers in North Macedonia, who forced him to collect humanitarian supplies: *“in Lojane, a child [age and nationality not specified] came to our office to receive humanitarian aid. For a week, the child, a young child, was coming, getting supplies, taking them to other refugees. He was taking the goods to a smugglers’ house where other refugees were staying. And when we asked him why he was doing this, he said that he had to earn money for his travel”* (MK-K-05).

Interviewees in Hungary also reported debt bondage and labour trafficking of Afghan, Iranian, Pakistani men and women and children during the migration journey in Greece and Turkey, and in Hungary (HU-M-06; HU-K-03; HU-K-17; HU-K-24; HU-K-27). In Hungary, both adults and children are exploited in different types of work: construction, restaurants and hotels. According to one interviewee: *“I have heard about labour exploitation, from educators at the institutions. Children do not see any contract, they work 12 hours a day, they do not work regularly, there is a lot of exploitation in their employment. Afghan children have been working since a young age”* (HU-K-23).

According to an interviewee from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Germany, **only a very limited number of victims of labour trafficking, child trafficking or other forms of exploitation been identified through asylum procedures** (DE-K-17). An interviewee from K.O.K. reports that there were only a small number of cases when their member organisations identified trafficking for labour exploitation of asylum applicants through their counselling services (DE-K-10). Labour trafficking in Germany affects young adults (DE-K-01) in construction, agriculture, hospitality, care, cleaning, domestic work, meat processing and transport services (DE-K-02; Forin & Healy, 2018). The NGO Jadwiga (2016) reported that in 2015-2016, they counselled 24 women from Ethiopia, four women from Eritrea, one from Somalia, one from Nigeria and one from Uganda on cases of labour exploitation.

Some interviewees considered that recruitment for labour trafficking generally takes place in countries of origin (DE-K-07; DE-K-08), while an interviewee from the Berlin Police assumes that asylum applicants may be recruited for labour trafficking in front of accommodation centres in (DE-K-19). Many trafficked people, especially those without a work permit or with no regular status in Germany, do not speak about their situation and do not want to report the exploitation to the police because of fear of the trafficker/employer and of losing their source of income (DE-K-02; DE-K-19). According to an interviewee from the Berlin Police, this is partly due to insufficient police capacities in investigating cases in many regions of Germany (DE-K-19).

An interviewee from UNHCR in Italy considered that because so much attention is paid to women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation, men trafficked for labour exploitation are rarely identified: *“for sure trafficking for labour exploitation is underestimated. 80% of protection programmes provided by anti-trafficking services in Italy are provided to victims of sexual*

exploitation. Labour exploitation is very difficult to identify: less official identification, and less preparation for identifying it” (IT-K-03).

Many asylum applicants in Germany who travelled the Central Mediterranean route experienced labour exploitation in Libya. According to a recent report by UNSMIL and OHCHR, based on first-hand accounts: *“male migrants and refugees are also routinely taken out of captivity for forced manual labour, including in farms, construction work, offloading heavy merchandise or weapons, and cleaning. Less frequently, women also reported being transferred out of detention by smugglers and traffickers to carry out domestic work without any remuneration” (2018: 29).*

Particularly in Algeria and Libya, but also in other African countries, people from Sub-Saharan African countries stop to work in order to make enough money to continue their journey. This work is often under exploitative conditions (DE-M-11). A Ghanaian man and two of his co-nationals were exploited making carpets for a Libyan man in Tripoli, who organised for them to cross the Mediterranean in return for seven months of work (IT-M-01). Another Ghanaian man was trafficked for domestic servitude in Libya at a man’s private home: *“He didn’t pay me but he gave me a place to sleep and food” (IT-M-04).*

In an interview for this research, a young Ivoirian man spoke of how the possibility of being caught by trafficking networks is just a matter of luck and ability to hide in the Libyan context: *“I think that all my brothers who ended up in the hands of the traffickers in Libya were less lucky than me, or maybe they were travelling alone. Or they were not careful enough: while in Libya as a migrant in transit, you have to hide, not to show yourself around. Libyans know that you can be exploited as a migrant, they just wait for you to be visible and they catch you, they imprison you” (IT-M-06).*

Case 4.12 – Labour trafficking of a Nigerian woman at a prison camp in Libya

A 21-year-old Nigerian man who was living in Libya with his family was forcefully taken to a prison camp together with his mother and siblings, and was later separated from them. He managed to reach Germany, but his mother and siblings were still in Libya at the time he was interviewed. His mother was being exploited for forced labour at the camp, and he was working irregularly in Germany in order to be able to pay to get her released (Sindani, 2018).

The sector in which labour trafficking among people using the Balkan and Mediterranean routes is most commonly reported is in agriculture, particularly in Turkey, Greece and Italy. Most indications of trafficking for labour exploitation, of labour exploitation in general and of poor working conditions among the population under study, involve adult men working in agriculture. Much of the labour exploitation was mentioned in relation to Turkey and Greece (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017).

Afghan and Pakistani men and boys are subjected to forced labour in seasonal harvests in Turkey and Greece (particularly olive and orange harvests). Their intention is often to earn enough money in order to travel to onwards to North Macedonia (MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-08;

MK-K-09; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; MK-K-29; MK-K-31). As with other forms of trafficking, this is often perpetrated by migrant smugglers, or takes place because people desperately need to earn money to pay smugglers (MK-K-15; MK-K-29).

People in this situation particularly work in seasonal fruit harvests, for below minimum wage, less than what was agreed or they are not paid at all. Those who are not staying at accommodation centres reside in rudimentary housing on the plantations (MK-K-03; MK-K-08; MK-K-12; MK-K-13). Labour exploitation on plantations in Turkey and Greece is particularly widespread among people on the move: *“I believe that 90% of them have agreed to work for certain amount and at the end they are not paid the whole salary”* (MK-K-12). One case in North Macedonia was indicated, whereby a man of unspecified nationality was left alone in a sheepfold to tend sheep. He was not given any additional food other than what he could produce there, and was told that he could not leave the sheepfold. After working there for two months, he was not paid at all (MK-K-03).

The Country Researcher for Serbia, who also works at a Serbian NGO, discussed experiences of labour trafficking and related abuses with several boys who had travelled through Turkey. Due to ethical concerns in relation to interviewing children, no formal research interviews were conducted with them. However, according to the research guidelines for referral, two boys who had experienced labour trafficking in Turkey were referred to Centres for Social Work and specialised anti-trafficking organisations to report their experiences to the authorities. The other boys already had access to some kind of counselling or primary support.

Men and boys are exploited on poultry farms and raspberry plantations close to reception centres in Serbia, sharing some or all of their wages with smugglers. They work irregularly for very low wages (RS-K-16; RS-K-38).

Case 4.13 – Labour exploitation of men and boys in agriculture by a Serbian vintner

Men and boys of various nationalities who were residing at a Serbian transit centre close to the border with Croatia were working in vineyards. Many Serbians from the region had migrated to find work in Slovakia, and there was not enough labour to tend the vineyards (RS-K-16). The Serbian boss paid €10 per day per person, and provided lunch. There were also Serbians working there.

The men and boys on the move were given a blank piece of paper to sign their names and state how many days they wished to work: *“I work when I need money. Most times for two or three days. The payment comes after a week. It is good because I can buy some things for my family”* (RS-M-40). The vintner picked them up from the centre in the morning and took them to the vineyards.

As an interviewee who provided information on this situation commented: *“That’s not enough pay for locals. It would be interesting to see if they would do it even for €5 a day. They would maybe agree to that, because they have no other options. The boss could also possibly make arrangements with the smuggler and give their wages to the smuggler; the migrant workers would scrounge for loose change and their journeys would be financed in this fashion. Classic human trafficking”* (RS-K-16). These vineyards were also visited during the course of the research. In this case, it is not clear whether each of the men and boys were trafficked, subjected to labour exploitation or to poor working conditions.

In Italy, labour trafficking takes place particularly in the south, mainly in seasonal work but also in year-round agriculture, affecting Malian, Guinean, Ghanaian, Ivorian, Gambian and other West African men in their 20s and 30s (IT-K-25; IT-K-32). In many cases this functions according to the *caporalato* labour intermediary system, although legal and policy provisions aiming to combat the practice have been in place since 2016 (see also: MEDU, 2015).¹⁴⁵ However, it is often quite difficult to determine whether the conditions of exploitation constitute trafficking (IT-K-09).

Especially in the southern region of mainland Italy and Sicily, where farms are numerous and in constant need of workers, both seasonally and at year-round greenhouses, trafficked and/or exploited people are working (IT-K-13; IT-K-15; IT-K-25). According to an interviewee from the NGO Dedalus in Naples, West African men are organised in hubs (Naples and Caserta in Campania, Rosarno in Calabria, Foggia in Apulia and Trapani-Ragusa in Sicily) and they move around according to the seasons (IT-K-13). They often live in so-called ‘ghettos’, self-organised informal small towns, in temporary structures or at the workplace (IT-K-08; IT-K-13).

Sub-Saharan African and North African men are trafficked for labour exploitation, or subjected to poor living and working conditions, harvesting potatoes, tomatoes, olives and grapes, and in greenhouse agriculture in the Sicilian provinces of Siracusa (IT-K-20), Trapani (IT-K-19; IT-K-21; IT-K-25) and Ragusa (IT-K-20; IT-K-21; IT-K-25). Pakistani and Bangladeshi Sikh men are also victims of trafficking for labour exploitation in the livestock industry, according to an interviewee from the NGO Dedalus in Naples (IT-K-13). Some of the people interviewed in Germany, who had travelled the Central Mediterranean route, had also worked under exploitative conditions in agriculture in Italy. Similar working conditions are described by several men who worked in Italy (DE-M-01; DE-M-11; DE-M; 14; DE-M-18).

¹⁴⁵ In May 2016, the Italian Ministries of the Interior, Labour and Agricultural Policies signed a protocol against *caporalato* and labour exploitation in agriculture. In October 2016, Decree-Law 4008/2016 was approved: ‘Provision to combat informal work and labour exploitation in agriculture, and conformity of wages in the agricultural sector.’

Case 4.14 – Labour exploitation of an Eritrean man in agriculture in Sicily, Italy

A 42-year-old Eritrean man arrived in Lampedusa, Italy, where his fingerprints were recorded. He was then taken to Catania, Sicily where he had to wait eight months for a decision in his asylum procedure. Afterwards, he tried to find work: *“It was very difficult to live in Italy because there were no jobs for us. I was working outside on the farms with other people; about 400 or 500 people on one farm. We collected potatoes, tomatoes and olives. The working conditions were very hard, for a miserable salary. For example, we collected tomatoes in crates that were two metres wide by one metre high for only €4 [per crate]. That means we just worked to pay for food because it was impossible to save anything.*

And when the work was finished, because it was seasonal work, we had nothing in our pockets. And this work was illegal because our employers did not want to pay taxes and we did not have permission to work. At the same time, like many other migrants, I was homeless, without social assistance, without health insurance. We had to fight to survive. We slept on the ground in old buildings” (DE-M-14). Similar to the previous case, this case presents indications of labour exploitation or poor working conditions, and it is not clear whether the elements of human trafficking are present.

Two Senegalese men were also exploited in agriculture in Germany.

Case 4.15 – Two Senegalese men exploited in agriculture in Germany

A 26-year-old Senegalese man and his 42-year old brother, who was also interviewed for this research, worked during the summer time in a rural area in Bavaria, Germany, for farmers in the asparagus and hops industries. The 42-year old man had been living in Germany longer than his brother and had been to the area before, so he took him there. Neither of them had a work permit.

The men’s mother in Senegal frequently asked them to send her money for medical treatments and school fees for children in the extended family. Because the money they could spare from their state allowances was too little to meet the family’s needs, they felt that they had no alternative but to engage in low-paid agricultural work. They stayed in the rural area for several weeks and worked every day for about ten hours. The work was exhausting and the payment was low (about €3-5 per hour) (DE-M-01; DE-M-18). The 42-year-old man is now connecting others who have no work permit with the farmer whom they used to work for, to enable them to earn some money (DE-M-18). This appears to be a case of labour exploitation rather than labour trafficking.

146 Due to a new ruling for citizens of ‘safe countries of origin’ in Germany in summer 2016, the 42-year old man lost his work permit that had previously enabled him to work regularly. People from ‘safe countries of origin’ who applied for asylum in Germany after 31 August 2015 have had no right to work since summer 2016. Prior to that, they were allowed to work under the same conditions as other asylum applicants. In some Länder, the new ruling led to a general prohibition on work for asylum applicants from ‘safe countries’, while in other Länder asylum applicants from ‘safe countries’ are still allowed to engage in vocational training, which provides the basis for a deportation ban (tolerated status).

The sector where many people on the move are exploited in transit countries like Serbia and Hungary is the services industry. A key informant in Serbia referred to many people in transit working in restaurants and then *“splitting a portion of their wages directly with their smugglers - some of them give them all of it. This is human trafficking”* (RS-K-16).

Afghan, Iranian and Syrian boys and young men work in restaurants in Hungary, especially in gyros buffets and Indian, Iranian and Mexican restaurants (HU-K-02; HU-K-03; HU-K-09; HU-K-15; HU-K-19; HU-K-31; HU-K-35). They do night shifts and are not paid overtime or extra money for working night shifts, and they are employed irregularly. Generally they work for 12 hours a day for salaries that are below minimum wage (€2.80 per hour) (HU-K-02; HU-K-09; HU-K-31; HU-K-35). According to a psychologist interviewed for this research, these teenage children *“send home their salary and they almost starve here”* (HU-K-02).

A catering company in Hungary is reported to irregularly employ Afghan and Syrian people, providing them accommodation and reduced salaries (HU-K-09; HU-K-18; HU-K-30; HU-K-35). One man whose nationality cannot be specified was working for the company and receiving 150,000 forints (around €450), but he was required to pay the company 130,000 forints for sub-standard accommodation (HU-K-09).

Case 4.16 – Young Afghan man exploited at a restaurant in Hungary

A young Afghan man interviewed for this research described his experiences of labour exploitation in Hungary: *“I have been working now in a restaurant kitchen for a year. I sometimes work 14-16 hours a day, from eight in the morning till midnight or two in the morning. I get 700 forints [around €2-3] per hour. Now I also go to school [...], so sometimes I can only work 6 hours, not 14 hours every day”* (HU-M-04).

There were also indications of people being exploited in shops and bars in Germany. An Eritrean man was working in a fruit shop in a city in Germany. He had to work seven days a week and was paid €5 per hour (DE-K-15). A Nigerian woman was living at an accommodation centre in Germany and was approached by other Nigerians who offered her a job at a bar. She earned very little there but was forced to continue until she sought help from the police (DE-K-10). A Senegalese man was also exploited at a shop in Italy.

Case 4.17 – Exploitation of a Senegalese man in a shop in Naples, Italy

A 26-year-old man from Senegal who was interviewed for this research described how, on arrival in Naples, Italy, after crossing the Central Mediterranean, there was no place for him at an accommodation centre and so he had to work in order to survive.

He was offered a job in the storeroom of a shop owned by a Pakistani family. He had to work seven days a week for up to twelve hours per day. Often he was refused a break. After one month, he received €350; this money was just enough to travel to Germany. This man has been exploited in various sectors in Italy, in Germany and then again in Italy after he was subject to a Dublin return (DE-M-01).

There were also indications of the labour trafficking of children and adults who had travelled the route in the textile and garment industries in Turkey, Greece and Libya (MK-K-03; MK-K-15; IT-M-01), and of young Bangladeshi and Pakistani men in the textiles industry in Italy. According to a key informant in North Macedonia, in Turkey particularly children were trafficked for labour exploitation in textile factories. A 17-year-old boy had been: *“locked up in a small space, they had to not lift their heads from the sewing machine, because if they raised their heads they would be whipped because they were not working. [...] They did not receive food, they were starved, they did not have air”* (MK-K-03).

Another informant referred to stories that people had told about exploitation in textile factories in Turkey and Greece (MK-K-15).

There are also indications of exploitation of young Bangladeshi and Pakistani men in Italy in the textile industry, as well as in agriculture and the livestock industry. They are either recruited through an organised network in their country of origin, or when they are already in Italy. According to interviewees from UNHCR and Dedalus in Naples, there is an increasing demand for research on these people’s situation, but there is little evidence (IT-K-03; IT-K-13).

Case 4.18 – Labour trafficking of Bangladeshi men in the textile industry in Italy

Lawyers from the NGO ASGI represented a group of Bangladeshi men in the Naples area during a trial, which led to the conviction for labour exploitation in 2017 of a Bangladeshi man. The man promised them a job and a place to live in Italy, subject to a payment of €10,000-12,000 per person for the trip and for a regular permit. The accused was bringing them to Italy to exploit them in his textile workshop, forcing them to work 12-14 hours per day, for a monthly salary of €120-300 euro. No regular permit had been issued for any of these men.¹⁴⁷

A case of exploitation in the construction industry in Iran was described by an interviewee in Hungary.

147 See: www.asgi.it/notizie/sfruttamento-lavorativo-napoli-tessile-bengalesi.

Case 4.19 – Afghan boy trafficked for exploitation in construction in Iran by his uncle

“There was an [Afghan] boy who told me that his family was missing. He was quite young, 8 or 9 years old. It was not clear to me whether they had disappeared or died. The Taliban is strong there, some entire villages disappeared in a short time. One day the boy got home from school and there was no one there, only food for him on the table. His uncle appeared within a short time and they cried together.

Then this uncle took him away. They went to Iran where the uncle worked. The boy had to work with him as well, it was construction work, physical work. He never found out what happened. He couldn't mourn what happened. He was a very resilient boy, we talked a lot. He told me that when his uncle came for him, he said: from today I am your mother, your father, your family. He said that everything is thanks to the uncle and the uncle is his family. The uncle became the reference person of his life” (HU-K-23).

Only in Italy was exploitative begging reported, involving young men in their 20s from West African countries (Nigeria, Guinea, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire) begging in front of supermarkets, or asking for money after cleaning the streets, especially in Rome. They are also involved in street vending or other street-based labour, such as selling socks or small items on the streets (IT-K-01; IT-K-02; IT-K-03; IT-K-14; IT-K-25). There are signs that these men are subject to labour trafficking by other men residing at the same accommodation centres. According to an interviewee from Save the Children: *“This is a very new phenomenon. They don't show any evident sign of vulnerability (physical), but they beg showing a sign (always the same for everybody) with a phrase in perfect Italian”* (IT-K-01). They may be paying back some form of debt to someone, according to an interviewee from UNHCR: *“in considering young men (18-20 years), especially Nigerians exploited for begging, it seems very clear that they have to hand the money over to someone else, so it is possible that this is a form of debt. It is difficult to determine if they came autonomously but they are in debt to someone who paid for their trip, or if they are recruited here. It is possible that some of them are recruited in their country of origin by a criminal network with the aim of exploiting them, which is definitely trafficking”* (IT-K-03).

In Germany, an interviewee from the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) considered that people who arrive in Germany through the Balkan or Mediterranean routes are hardly ever exploited for begging, and the interviewee was not aware of any cases (DE-K-07). An interviewee from a counselling organisation in Baden-Württemberg, on the other hand, reported that, in some cases, women from West African countries who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are also exploited in begging (DE-K-11).

d) Trafficking for Domestic Servitude and Care Work

Potential cases of trafficking for domestic servitude were indicated in Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as in Germany. An unaccompanied Afghan boy was trafficked for domestic servitude in

Turkey for four months, in return for being able to continue his journey (RS-K-16). Two West African women were trafficked for domestic servitude in Bulgaria. The employers of one woman withheld her ID, did not pay her, and limited her freedom of mobility. She left and applied for asylum, and was also referred by an NGO to the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) (BG-K-10). The other woman was working for a diplomat's family, with a valid visa, and was sexually abused and raped by her employer. She was also referred to the NCCTHB, but she was eventually returned to her country of origin (BG-K-01).

Case 4.20 – Exploitation in domestic work of a Syrian woman at an accommodation centre in Bulgaria

A Syrian woman in her early 20s was abused by her husband while they were residing in Istanbul, Turkey. She travelled to Bulgaria to apply for asylum, and arrived at the Harmanli Refugee Registration and Reception Centre, close to the Bulgarian border with Turkey. She did not speak Bulgarian or English, but established contact with other women who spoke Arabic at the centre. She was then approached by another woman who already resided in the centre and spoke Arabic. This woman offered her domestic work, primarily laundry. The young Syrian woman agreed and began working for the woman at the centre. However, after an extended period of time, the woman was not paid for her laundry work.

Some time afterwards, social workers at the centre noticed that there was something wrong with the young woman. They described her as frail, losing weight, and emotionally distraught. They approached the woman and she explained the agreement with the other woman and how she was not paid for her work. They referred the case to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) and to the NGO Animus, so that she could receive support at an Animus crisis centre (BG-K-09).

According to an interviewee from an NGO in Baden-Württemberg in Germany, trafficking for domestic servitude of people using the Central Mediterranean route happens *en route*, in Italy, Spain and Libya, and is closely connected with sex trafficking. Trafficked women from West African countries are exploited in a house during the day and in prostitution at night. In some cases, this pattern starts in their countries of origin. For example, some women from Nigeria described how they were 'sold' when they were children and were exploited in private households in Nigeria, where they were also sexually exploited (DE-K-11).

While not strictly relevant to the Balkan or Mediterranean routes, specific cases were identified in Munich, Germany, of women from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Cameroon and Kenya who are trafficked for domestic servitude in countries in the Arabian Gulf and Lebanon, and who exit the situation while they are with their exploiters on trips to Munich for tourism or medical treatment (DE-K-07; DE-M-02; DE-M-03). The women are recruited as domestic workers for families in Gulf countries by agencies in their countries of origin. After the expiration of the contract with the agency, their passports are taken they are not allowed to leave the house, they have to work

day and night, they are not allowed any contact with other domestic workers and they are not paid their salaries (DE-K-07; DE-M-02; DE-M-03). The NGO Jadwiga counselled eleven Ethiopian women in 2016 who were trafficked for domestic servitude to Qatar, Dubai and Kuwait; some of them were also trafficked for exploitation in the service industry and some were additionally sexually exploited or abused by their employers. Half of them were trafficked to these countries as children (Jadwiga, 2016).

A number of cases of exploitation in care work were identified by an interviewee from the Palermo court in Sicily:

“badanti, especially West African women (usually Nigerian women who are no longer young enough to be exploited in prostitution), are kept in private houses where they take care of elderly people; they have a place to sleep and food to eat, and they cannot go out ‘for their own safety’. They themselves have difficulties in identifying their condition of exploitation, because it is almost like the job the traffickers promised them before leaving their home country. They normally start realising their condition when sexual violence also occurs” (IT-K-32).

e) Exploitation in forced criminal activities

Apart from sexual and labour trafficking, the main form of trafficking affecting men and boys who travel the routes is forced criminal activities, particularly migrant smuggling (EL-K-11; EL-K-13; EL-K-30; MK-K-05; MK-K-11; MK-K-15; MK-K-23; MK-K-26; MK-K-27; MK-K-30; RS-K-08; RS-K-16; RS-K-20; RS-K-34; HU-K-16; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Oxfam, 2016). Unaccompanied Afghan and Pakistani boys and young men in Greece, Serbia and Hungary are recruited by migrant smugglers to provide migrant smuggling services, smuggle drugs and sell drugs. Men and boys are also forced by migrant smugglers to navigate boats from Turkey to Greece and from Libya to Italy. In an interview, a representative of the Serbian Centre for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking (CPVT) stated that: *“The situation with the migrants has completely erased the boundary between smuggling and human trafficking. It is very close to both of those activities”* (RS-K-34). This is in line with the findings of recent literature on smuggling along the route: *“Refugee smuggling has been a major catalyst of human trafficking in the Middle East and Europe migrant crises”* (Mandić, 2017: 28; see also: Forin & Healy, 2018; ICMPD, 2015).

Children are particularly affected by trafficking for exploitation in migrant smuggling (EL-K-11; EL-K-30). In a number of road accidents in Northern Greece during 2018, some of which were fatal, children were in the driver’s seat (EL-K-30). One interviewee spoke of: *“Afghan and Pakistani boys who wanted to cross the Evros region, and the smugglers told them it would cost €1,000. As soon as they crossed, they were informed that the price had gone up to €1,500, which they could not pay. Therefore, they were forced to smuggle people in order to repay their debt, and sometimes they were arrested as smugglers while in reality they were the victims”* (EL-K-13).

Syrian children were also reported by one interviewee as providing smuggling services between Turkey and Greece, in order to repay their debts for the journey (EL-K-11).

Men and women who lack funds to pay for smuggling services, particularly Pakistanis and Afghans, or whose children were being kept hostage, were forced by smugglers to act as ‘guides’

from Greece to Serbia (MK-K-05; MK-K-15; MK-K-23; MK-K-26; MK-27; MK-K-30). According to an interviewee from the Border Police of North Macedonia: *“migrants who do not have the money to pay for smuggling are forced by their smugglers to bring other migrants across the border. The first two or three times they transport them across the border with an experienced guide, and afterwards the migrant learns the route. Then he becomes a guide to transfer a certain number of groups, thus the route will be paid to the next stage. [...] He is forced to do it, he is blackmailed - if you want to go on, you will do this or give me money”* (MK-K-27).

There were also suspicions at an accommodation centre in North Macedonia of a Tunisian man exploiting an Algerian girl in migrant smuggling, as a ‘guide’ (MK-K-11).

Pakistani boys and men are recruited in accommodation centres by people from the same country who are working with smugglers, sometimes by means of a debt for the ‘travel fee’ (RS-K-08; RS-K-16; RS-K-20; HU-K-16; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; Oxfam, 2016). A 16-year-old Pakistani boy trafficked for forced migrant smuggling in Serbia, employed by a ‘big boss’ based in France. He was forced to work for him, with threats of being killed, and in order to ‘pay his way out’ (RS-K-20). An Afghan boy residing at a childcare facility in Hungary was organising onward travel for other children. According to one key informant: *“They keep a fox in the chicken pen”* (HU-K-22). An Afghan girl aged under 14 paid the boy at the facility, but he did not provide any services, so she reported the case to the carers (HU-K-02; HU-K-21; HU-K-22; HU-K-28; HU-K-30; HU-K-31).

An Afghan man living with his family in Hungary, who ran a small restaurant, was also subject to an attempt to force him into becoming a migrant smuggler. He had testified against the smugglers who had taken him to Turkey and they had been imprisoned. When they were released, they came to the man’s restaurant in Hungary, and contacted him with photos of his children to force him into smuggling, on threat of death. The family left Hungary and were granted status in another EU country, as they were able to prove that the state could not provide for their safety (HU-K-25).

Case 4.21 – Attempted trafficking for exploitation of an Afghan man in migrant smuggling in Serbia

An Afghan man was engaged to a Serbian woman and applied for asylum in Serbia. He was residing at an Asylum Centre in Belgrade. The man was leaving the centre one day when two Afghan men whom he was acquainted with pulled up to him in a car. They told him to take a ride with them and made him an offer: he would help them to guide people across informal border crossings.

He would lead them as far as the border and they would provide him with protection and pay him. The man refused to collaborate, after which they began driving around in circles in their car and threatening him, in an attempt to force his decision. They said that they would inform on him to the authorities and that he should just agree. He fled from the car and contacted an NGO involved in the protection system. The CPVT case was filed and the man was identified as a victim of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminal activities (RS-K-34).

People are also forced by migrant smugglers to navigate boats across the Mediterranean. One man among those wishing to cross from Turkey to Greece is forced to navigate the boat to one of the Greek islands – either fishermen from Syria or Iraq, who knew how to operate a boat, or someone without any sailing knowledge or skills (EL-K-14). A 30-year-old Malian man interviewed in Germany described his experience of crossing to Italy from Libya: “[The smugglers] *chose a Senegalese man to drive the boat. He was not willing, but they forced him*” (DE-M-11). According to a Ghanaian man: “*Libyans were managing the boats, but one of us was in charge of navigating the boat. They gave him a GPS and they let us go*” (IT-M-04).

Exploitation in other criminal activities was also reported, though it does not seem to be as common as exploitation in migrant smuggling. Some of those involved are also exploited by the same groups in other forced criminal activities, especially smuggling and sale of drugs, such as Afghans in Turkey, Greece and Hungary and Nigerian and Afghan groups in Germany. Boys are recruited into drug trafficking in Greece, both in the cities (EL-K-03; EL-K-13; EL-K-30), as well as at accommodation centres on the islands and the mainland (EL-K-04; EL-K-20; EL-K-21), along the route and in Hungary (HU-K-03; HU-K-09; HU-K-21; HU-K-30; HU-K-31).

Smugglers put directions into boys’ mobile phones and told them that someone would wait for them at that location to receive the drugs, and they would get a lot of money. The boys were in touch with the trafficker via Viber and WhatsApp, and in each city they received the phone numbers of the person they should contact (HU-K-30; HU-K-31). According to a child protection expert: “*There is a group in [railway station in Budapest] who deal with drugs and [migrant] smuggling. Boys are used as mules to transport the drugs within the country and internationally. The nationalities of the children are varied*” (HU-K-03)

A man who was interviewed for this study had personally witnessed attempts by smugglers to force people to commit crimes, as well as deprive them of their liberty, in Turkey: “*migrants who were kept in the houses in Turkey were ordered to commit property crimes, home break-ins or robberies, and when they refused they were beaten severely. [They said] ‘go to this house, there is a lot of money, you have to go and take that money for us’. And they didn’t do that, and they beat them so much and they kept them in house*” (MK-M-01).

In Germany, according to the BKA (2018), no cases of exploitation in criminal activities or petty crime were prosecuted in 2017. Interviewees from the BKA and the Berlin Police considered that people who arrive in Germany along the migration routes are rarely exploited in criminal activities or petty crime, and they were not aware of any cases (DE-K-07; DE-K-19). An interviewee from Save the Children, however, assumes that children who arrive along the routes are exploited in criminal activities or petty crime, even if there is no evidence. Exploitation in drug trafficking, also with the involvement of children, is mainly organised by German, Eastern European, Nigerian and Afghan groups, and groups from Arab countries; this is particularly true for the city of Berlin (DE-K-05).

An interviewee from a German NGO was aware that some people in the asylum system in different cities in Germany dealt drugs as a means of making money, due to the lack of opportunities for legal work, though he was not aware of indications of exploitation (DE-K-15). A 26-year-old

Senegalese man described how he was frequently approached in different cities in Germany by people he assumed to be from Arab countries, who tried to engage him in selling drugs. However, he rejected this activity because he felt it was not reconcilable with his religious beliefs as a Muslim and with the dignity of his family (DE-M-01). In many cases, however, it is unclear if there is a case of human trafficking for forced criminal activities, and law enforcement and protection workers have difficulty identifying trafficking indicators in such cases.

Case 4.22 – Trafficking of two Afghan boys for forced criminal activities (drug trafficking)

“An Afghan man came to Hungary with two Afghan boys. They came here from Greece. They didn’t have money to pay the smuggler. They were told in Thessaloniki to take small packages to Serbia and give them to someone whom they would meet. The adult man had a bigger, approximately 2kg package. They told them not to check the packages, not to open them. The adult man did, he thought it was hashish. The man put in in his backpack, and the two boys placed the smaller packages in their belt bags.

The smuggler took them by car and by foot. They came along the route Greece – [North] Macedonia – Serbia. The smugglers were not the same. They took them to the land border, where they had to walk, and on the other side they waited for a phone call and they got the order for where to go and then someone else picked them up. The smugglers were Afghans and Pakistanis. The man and the boys got permission to enter Hungary” (HU-K-28).

Boys and young men from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan who are commercially sexually exploited in larger German cities, like Berlin, Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg, are often also involved in drug abuse (and possibly exploitation in drug trafficking). Some were introduced to drugs before their involvement in prostitution, while others started using drugs in Germany after free drugs were offered to them in the context of the exploitation (Bückmann & Schaible, 22.05.2017; Lorenz, 30.10.2017).

Case 4.23 – Trafficking of an Afghan boy for forced criminal activities (sale of drugs) in Hungary

A 16-year-old unaccompanied Afghan boy was in a childcare facility in Hungary. His mother had left Afghanistan in 2001 when she was pregnant with him and he was born in transit. They had lived in several countries, and tried to come to Europe in 2015. The boy became separated from his mother on the way and arrived in Hungary alone. He was admitted to a childcare facility, where he learned that his mother had died.

The boy started to use marijuana and opiates. Then he started to sell drugs and worked for drug traffickers at the childcare institution. Sometimes he went missing from the childcare institution. He told the carers that he was doing someone's shopping. The social workers realised that he was in a sexual relationship with an older man and that he received money from him. He always had money and disappeared for shorter or longer periods. He seemed to come back to the institution to 'rest,' as a reprieve from drug abuse and sexual abuse. After a while they only saw him when he felt very bad (HU-K-06).

f) Sale of a Child/Illegal Adoption

Key informants interviewed in North Macedonia mentioned that there were suspicions of potential trafficking for the sale of children during 2015-2016 (MK-K-03; MK-K-05; MK-K-12; MK-K-20; MK-K-26; MK-K-27; MK-K-29; MK-K-32), with one interviewee mentioning a demand for children for illegal adoption in Western Europe (MK-K-27). Children travelling with adults who seemed not to be their parents raised suspicions among frontline workers of trafficking for sale of children, particularly in relation to babies (MK-K-03; MK-K-27; MK-K-29; MK-K-32). One particular case involved two Syrian brothers, one aged 12 and the other a 13-month-old baby, who were travelling alone. The social workers suspected that the parents were going to sell the baby in order to get the Germany, "*because [...the baby] was beautiful and they had seven children, and maybe a lot of people who sent messages [to the Safe House] were interested in the baby*" (MK-K-29). One specific case of trafficking for sale of a child was indicated.

Case 4.24 – Trafficking for sale of a Congolese boy by Dutch men in North Macedonia and Serbia

A Congolese man and a Congolese woman¹⁴⁸ travelling with a two-year-old boy were stopped at the North Macedonia-Serbia border in March 2018, in the company of two Dutch men. They were stopped because they did not have the same documents and it was suspected that the Congolese man wanted to sell the boy to the Dutch men (MK-K-32). Another key informant described the case: "*The man and woman,*

148 It was not specified whether they were from the Democratic Republic of Congo or Congo-Brazzaville.

originally from Congo, were staying at a motel in Skopje, and the woman was using false documents. They crossed the border at Gevgelija border crossing, legally, with documents, in a vehicle with two others, two men with Dutch passports, and the woman was hidden. [...] She wanted to go to the Netherlands, but she had no documents; so she goes to a police station in Skopje claiming that she lost her documents here [...]. They were issued a certificate for stolen documents, and they appeared at the Tabanovce border crossing [...to Serbia], all in the vehicle. But due to the lack of documents, the woman was returned. [...]

The woman was pregnant, but it appeared that she had another child, a two-year-old child who crossed Tabanovce border crossing with another child's document, with a French travel document and it turned out that that child had been sold for €3,000. So the mother sold the child for €3,000 to the smuggler, who was with her at the motel. They left together with the Dutch men and went to Serbia. Only the mother and the man involved in the smuggling were found here. [...] The two Dutch citizens were caught in [Serbia] with the child. They had original documents, but in another name, they were not his [the child's]. According to the mother's statement, the arrangements for the child had started in Congo" (MK-K-26).

The woman was accommodated at the Safe House in Skopje, and the child was taken into the care of the Serbian authorities. The Congolese man travelled onwards to France (MK-K-32)

In another case described by a key informant in North Macedonia, there were indications of trafficking for sale of a child but the case remained unclear.

Case 4.25 – Child trafficking of a boy from an Arab country in North Macedonia and Serbia

One suspicious case took place during 2015-2016, involving a boy and a man who claimed to be his father, both Arabic speakers. The case was later considered as trafficking, following media coverage in Belgrade about a boy with a broken jaw who had been reported missing by his alleged father: *"The boy was in the camp in [North] Macedonia and was accidentally hit by a police jeep. His jaw was injured and he ended up in Gevgelija [near the Greek border], at the hospital. The 'father' immediately signed to discharge the boy from hospital, although the child was in pain. I think the hospital immediately let the little boy go with his father, they took the train to Tabanovce [near the Serbian border]. The child was screaming with pain. We had a doctor on our team, and since the Red Cross doctor was afraid to give him something for the pain, our doctor gave it to him, and so we remembered the child's face as he had a broken jaw.*

Three days later, organisations in Belgrade identified the child as a victim of trafficking, and confirmed that the man was not actually his father. Unfortunately, they lost trace of the boy. The UNHCR believed that the father - or the man who said that he was his father - intentionally pushed him under the police jeep to get injured, so that the child would not react or speak, and not disclose that the man was not his father. Both the boy and the alleged father were from the same community, an Arab community” (MK-K-05).

g) Trafficking for Removal of Organs

Isolated cases of trafficking for removal of organs were indicated in the research. According to a report by the Mixed Migration Platform (MMP): *“Those in Serbia are particularly vulnerable, as it is the country where many run out of money to fund their onward journeys. Aid workers have reported cases of smugglers taking organs...”* (MMP, 2017: 6-7). A few interviewees in North Macedonia shared suspicions of trafficking for the removal of organs, although there was little concrete evidence or direct experiences (MK-K-05; MK-K-11; MK-K-14; MK-K-15).

One man of unspecified nationality was admitted to a hospital in Turkey in early 2016, according to a key informant, given sedatives and woke up in pain. He realised afterwards that one of his kidneys had been removed (MK-K-15). One suspicion related to a ‘healthy-looking’ Afghan man aged around 40 years, who shared his experience with frontline workers in Lojane, a North Macedonian village close to the Serbian border, in 2015: *“the smuggler patted him on the shoulder, biting him and telling him ‘you look good, you look good. Well, your organs are healthy’, which scared him, making him think that the smuggler would harm him”* (MK-K-05).

One case of trafficking for removal of organs was identified in Serbia. A key informant in Hungary had met a young man of unspecified nationality who had a wound on his body. He asked about the scar, which seemed to be fresh. The young man said that he had had to sell his kidney during the journey. The interviewee assumed that this had happened in Serbia (HU-K-09). A key informant from an NGO in Germany reported a case of a Nigerian woman who was trafficked for removal of organs to India, where one of her kidneys was removed. She later escaped to Germany (DE-K-11).

Case 4.26 – Attempted trafficking for removal of organs in North Macedonia

A man (nationality not specified) reported at a Transit Centre that he, his wife and his children had been kidnapped along the route and taken to a house, where they were locked in the room and he had overheard conversations in English: *“a Dutch doctor was saying that they had been detained for removal of organs in that house. He could not describe the house. When he heard this, he waited for an opportune moment, picked up the children and the woman, and somehow escaped from the house. This was some time in May or June 2016, after the closing of the route”* (MK-K-14).

h) Related Abuse - Deprivation of Liberty for Extortion

While there is an ongoing debate at international policy level and among researchers as to whether deprivation of liberty for the purposes of extortion (also referred to as ‘kidnapping’) should be considered human trafficking, **the findings of this study present the *modus operandi* of the perpetrators, the experiences of the victims and the existence of acts and means, and show that extortion involves the abuse of a person’s rights in order to obtain a financial or material benefit.** In one case of deprivation of liberty for extortion in Libya that was prosecuted in Palermo, Italy, in 2018, the defendants were accused of human trafficking, as well as aggravated kidnapping, homicide and sexual violence (see case 4.29 below).

People travelling the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes are deprived of their liberty for extortion in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, rural areas of North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Victims of this abuse include Afghan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Syrian people. They are deprived of liberty, subject to physical violence and threats, and instructed to tell their families to send money - in addition to smuggling fees that they have already paid -, before they are set free (MK-M-01; RS-M-03; RS-M-27; RS-M-30; MK-K-06; MK-K-08; MK-K-11; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-28; MK-K-32; RS-K-08; RS-K-16; HU-K-02; HU-K-27).

A 19-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Serbia spoke of ‘jail-houses’ used by smuggling networks to extort more money from their hostages. He himself was deprived of liberty for extortion by migrant smugglers in Iran, Turkey and Bulgaria, always in a remote village (RS-M-03). Another Afghan man described the *modus operandi*: on the first day that he was kept hostage in North Macedonia, they were fed good food, given plenty of water, and were not threatened. Then the smugglers gradually began to apply pressure; his friend was severely beaten after a week inside the house. This crime is systematic and also takes place in other countries along the route (RS-M-30). A human rights lawyer in Serbia described a similar *modus operandi* in North Macedonia, where people were not only deprived of liberty, but also of food, and physically and sexually abused: *“In 2016, migrants testified to us that villages in [North] Macedonia [...], Lojane and other villages [...]. In places like these, people lost their liberty in the houses of smugglers. Members of the victims’ families received threats of violence if they did not send money. Many people were starved and abused”* (RS-K-16).

Unaccompanied Afghan and Pakistani boys are particularly affected by deprivation of liberty for extortion in the context of migrant smuggling, accompanied by physical violence and threats, in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia (HU-M-05; MK-K-08; MK-K-28; RS-K-08). A 16-year-old Pakistani boy was kept in a container by a Pakistani man who instructed him to tell his brother, who was living in an EU country, to send money, even though his brother had paid the whole smuggling fee in advance. The boy managed to seek help from the authorities (MK-K-08). An 18-year-old Afghan man described how he was taken to a “prison-like” place in Bulgaria, when he was still a child, by a Bulgarian smuggler, who was waiting for money from a Turkish smuggler: *“they told us that we would be locked up until they got the money. They closed the windows and the doors too. We were there for a week”* (HU-M-05).

A Bangladeshi man was deprived of his liberty for extortion in Bulgaria: *“The first time I travelled*

into Bulgaria, I met another Bangladeshi guy. He said that he would help me, 'no problem', he said, 'I'm Bangladeshi, you're Bangladeshi', come to my house'. [I didn't realise that] he was mafia [a smuggler]. He took me into his home, took my passport, and I was left without food for four days. He demanded money from me. I was forced to call my friends. This situation - I could not tell my family. My father and mother would have been too upset. I called friends and together they gave me €5,000 - some 500, some 1,000. And then [he said], 'tonight you go to Serbia'" (RS-M-27).

Two Syrian Kurdish families were deprived of their liberty for extortion by smugglers in the village of Lojane, close to the Serbian border, in North Macedonia. A woman with four children and a man with two children were travelling to reunite with their spouses in Germany. The woman had agreed on a code word with her husband if she was in danger, and he alerted the police in Germany. The families were accommodated at the JRS Safe House in Skopje, and then the woman and her children travelled to Germany, while the man and his children returned to Greece (MK-K-32).

Case 4.27 – Pakistani man deprived of liberty for extortion in Serbia

A young Pakistani man was deprived of his liberty and tortured by a Pakistani smuggler in Serbia, close to the border with North Macedonia, in March 2018. The smuggler had been his 'friend' in Greece, but when he found out that his parents, still in Pakistan, were wealthy, he threatened to kill him and demanded around €50,000 from his father. The man managed to escape through a bathroom window and returned to North Macedonia (MK-K-11; MK-K-13).

When families travel together, children are held hostage by smugglers in order to get more money from their parents (MK-K-12; MK-K-23; Oxfam, 2016). When Afghan women were deprived of their liberty by smugglers, who threatened to abduct their children if they did not pay them large sums of money, the Serbian police intervened, and they were released and transferred to an Asylum Centre. Their husbands were being held hostage by the same smuggling network in Bulgaria, so they were afraid to talk to authorities and report abuses (Oxfam, 2016). Deprivation of liberty for extortion is also associated with physical and sexual violence and sexual exploitation (MK-K-02; MK-K-11), particularly when women and girls are involved.

Deprivation of liberty for extortion was not indicated in Italy or Germany, but it is systematic in Libya. People are extorted by migrant smugglers, and forced to stay in prison camps for extortion and forced labour. Their families in the country of origin or destination are instructed to send money in order for them to be set free (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-14; DE-M-17; IT-K-11; IT-K-12; IT-K-24; IT-K-32; UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018; Sindani, 2018; Amnesty International, 2017; Healy & Forin, 2017). In December 2018, the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a joint report on the situation of migrants in Libya: *"Migrants and refugees [...] were systematically held captive in abusive conditions with the aim of extorting money from their families through a complex system of money transfers, extending to a number of countries. They were frequently "sold" from*

one criminal gang to another and asked to pay ransoms multiple times before being set free or taken to coastal areas to await the Mediterranean Sea crossing” (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018: 27).

People from countries in West and Horn of Africa were locked up in detention centres, such as in Sabha in Southwestern Libya, where Libyan militias and smugglers request a ‘ransom’ from families. Men, women and children are tortured at these centres, and women and girls are raped (DE-M-04; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-14; IT-K-32; UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018; Amnesty International, 2017). A 42-year-old Eritrean man was *“imprisoned eight times and eight times I was able to escape. I tried every time to earn some money, but every time the police or the militia stopped me and put me in prison”* (DE-M-14).

If the ‘ransom’ cannot be paid, they are either killed, forced into hard labour or forced to take a boat to Europe (DE-M-01; DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-14; DE-M-17; IT-K-12; IT-K-32; Sindani, 2018). Some people are tortured while they make the calls to their families, in order to put more pressure on the family to send the money (DE-M-04; DE-M-05; DE-M-06; DE-M-08; DE-M-09; DE-M-10; DE-M-14; DE-M-17). A 27-year-old Ivorian woman interviewed for this study explained: *“I had barely arrived in Tripoli and we were captured by the various militias that abound in the country. After they beat us and took all our savings, they put us in jail. They took me to a room where I found other women, and that’s where they raped us every day. We struggled and fought against them, but they were violent and did not hesitate to hit us with iron bars or wood. Those were the worst moments of my life and I will never forgive the Libyans for what they did to me. They asked us to pay a ransom of 200,000 CFA francs [€305] each, my friend and me. Luckily, we had been advised not to travel with all our savings. [Therefore they had money that their family sent them.] Once we were freed, we started to hide”* (DE-M-09).

Case 4.28 – Nigerian man subjected to deprivation of liberty for extortion in Libya

A 38-year-old Nigerian man had been working in Libya for six months, when he was kidnapped by Libyan men and boys, whom he referred to as ‘Asma boys.’¹⁴⁹ They took him to prison blindfolded. There were around 80 people in the prison, all from Sub-Saharan African countries. All of them were tortured and the girls and women were regularly raped by the prison staff. Sometimes they brought other Libyans who did not work in the prison to rape the girls and women.

149 “Asma boys,” a term that many sub-Saharan migrants use to describe those in the business of holding migrants for ransom. Several migrants said that the Asma boys can belong to either criminal gangs, militias or the Libyan police.” D’Agostino, L. (21.03.2018). “They use black men as slaves”: Migrants tell of brutality in Libya”. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/12/23/world/migrant-rescue-brutality-libya/index.html>; see also: <https://crprotezioneinternazionale.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/libia-e28093-gruppo-e2809casma-boyse2809d.pdf>.

One day, they came to take the girls and women to rape them and left the door open. He and other men fought the guard who was still there and escaped. While escaping, the guards shot at them and people died. He and other survivors were taken away by soldiers who 'sold' them to another prison. They were told that they had to pay US\$3,000 to an Egyptian account in order to be freed. He contacted his family in Nigeria but no one was able to provide that amount.

He explained that a common strategy in Libya is to 'sell' a 'black person' for about US\$100. The person who 'buys' them then tells them they have to pay at least US\$1,000 to be released. However, often they are not released after paying the amount, but they have to pay the amount over and over.

At the other prison they were tortured again. One day he was tortured so much that he thought he was dying. He pretended to be dead. The prison staff took him and left him in the desert.

After a day lying in the desert, an elderly Libyan couple took him to their house. They treated his wounds and helped him to recover. After a few days, the neighbours found out that he was at their house. They told the Libyan man that it was improper for a man to stay at his house with his wife, and they threatened him. It was no longer safe for the Nigerian man to stay there, so the Libyan man arranged for him to travel to Tunis by boat. Some people came to pick him up and took him to the Libyan coast, from where the boat took him not to Tunis, but to Italy (DE-M-04).

A key informant in Italy referred to: *"an Eritrean man who told me he had been incarcerated in Libya for seven months, beaten and threatened. In the end he had to call his family to ask for money to stop the torture and violence against him. Unfortunately this is a very common case among Eritreans and Somalians"* (IT-K-24).

A young Malian man interviewed in Italy recounted his experience of extortion: *"When I entered Libya, I was caught by some Libyans who put me in a Libyan jail, outside the city of Bani Walid. I spent some months there, it was terrible. I was tortured because they wanted money from me. But I had no money. Only those who have money can exit that hell. They want like €5,000 from you to let you go. I even called my father but he had no money to send me. My mother had surgery in her stomach at that time, and he could not give me anything"* (IT-M-01).

Research at accommodation centres in Germany published in 2018 also indicates experiences of deprivation of liberty for extortion in Libya. A 21-year-old Nigerian man spoke of how his father ran a business in Libya, employing other West Africans there. After his father was imprisoned and killed, he and his family wished to return to Nigeria. Before they could leave, armed men broke into their home, beat them, took all their belongings, raped their mother and took them to a prison camp together with other people, including small children. They were beaten, and girls and boys were raped multiple times. Together with 200 others, but without his mother and siblings,

he was forced onto a boat to Europe (Sindani, 2018).

A 20-year-old Malian man was sent to a prison camp in Libya in 2014, because he could not pay a 'ransom' to a militia group. He was subjected to hard labour and then forced on to a boat to Italy: *"They [the people who ran the prison camp] gave me a telephone and said I should call my family so that they could send me money for my release. But I do not have a family anymore; I do not know where my sister is, my parents both died during the war. I was not able to call anyone. Then they beat me and did not give me any more food"* (quoted in: Sindani, 2018: 48-49, own translation).

Case 4.29 – Deprivation of liberty, extortion, torture and murder of West African men in Libya – Court case

An investigation was followed by the anti-trafficking section of the Prosecutor's Office of Palermo in Sicily, which led to the arrest of two traffickers, a Nigerian man and a Ghanaian man, from 'Ali's Ghetto' in Sabha in Southwestern Libya. The trial of the defendants, accused of trafficking in human beings, aggravated kidnapping, homicide and sexual violence, took place on 5 July 2018. 'Ali' is a Libyan man who owns and manages a prison where people on the move are deprived of liberty and tortured for extortion. According to the interviewee: *"the witnesses were all men from West African countries [three Nigerians, three Ivoirians, two Guineans]. When they disembarked in Lampedusa, they claimed to recognise two of the traffickers [who were also disembarking], who had tortured them in Sabha inside 'Ali's Ghetto'. These two men were working for Ali, together with other West African men who were acting as jailers and torturers. Migrants were arbitrarily kidnapped during their transit through the desert, kept captive in a structure in the middle of the desert and subjected to various forms of violence with the aim of convincing their families to give a certain amount of money (300,000 CFA francs [€457]) to Ali. The two accused men had beaten and tortured migrants, also with electric wires. Women suffered sexual abuse. They are accused of having caused the death of some of the migrants jailed in the 'Ghetto'"* (IT-K-32). The two defendants were handed down life sentences by the court in December 2018.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ See: https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/12/18/news/immigrazione_torture_e_omicidi_nel_campo_di_prigionia_libica_due_condanne_all_ergastolo-214557185.

i) Related Abuse – Child Abduction

Many cases of child abduction¹⁵¹ were indicated in the research, some of which were related to the phenomenon, analysed in chapter 3 above, of children travelling with adults who were not their parents, while other cases may present indications of trafficking. Some children were abducted by adults on the move, in order to facilitate a faster border crossing. There were suspicions of possible trafficking of unaccompanied children in North Macedonia (MK-K-29; MK-K-32), particularly when pressure was exerted by adults who wanted to take the children. As a key informant explained: *“we suspected potential trafficking cases, because when they were accommodated at the Safe House, immediately on the website of the Jesuit Refugee Service that manages the house, several messages arrived from foreigners who claimed to know the children, and requested that the children be handed over to them at the Tabanovce border crossing, so that they could transport them safely to their father who was in Germany”* (MK-K-29).

During 2015-2016, a Pakistani man attempted to present an eight-year-old Syrian boy as his son, in order to be allowed to cross the border from Greece to North Macedonia. However, the family reacted and the child was located and returned to his family (MK-K-31). An interviewee from an NGO described: *“a pregnant woman [nationality unknown] in her fifth or sixth month, who crossed the [North Macedonia] border from Greece. She claimed that she was the mother of a baby and she was also five months pregnant. After that, it was established that the actual mother of that baby was in Greece, and the pregnant woman had taken the baby because she thought that it would be easier to pass as a vulnerable category, to cross the border. The mother of the baby had been in panic at the Greek border, and thanks to cooperation between the NGO sector and border police authorities in both countries, the baby was returned to its real mother”* (MK-K-03).

One case of parental child abduction was also reported in Bulgaria, involving Syrian children. Their mother was divorced from her husband and had sole custody of her children. Their father, who resided in Sweden, came to Bulgaria to take the children. Before he could leave the country, an anonymous signal was sent to the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) that the children could be victims of trafficking and that the woman was sexually exploited by her husband. However, the man returned to Sweden with the children (BG-K-01).

3) Challenges for Identification

Most trafficking cases among people on the move are not identified, and trafficked people rarely report their case and seek help, due to challenges that affect trafficked people in general, as well as challenges specifically affecting this group (EL-K-03; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-07; EL-K-10; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-20; EL-K-22; MK-K-01; MK-K-04; MK-K-05; MK-K-09; MK-K-10; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-14; MK-K-17; MK-K-18; MK-K-19; MK-K-20; MK-K-27; MK-K-28; MK-K-31; RS-K-34; HU-K-15; HU-K-21; HU-K-31; HU-K-35; DE-K-02; DE-K-03; DE-K-05; DE-K-06; DE-K-10; DE-K-11; DE-K-17; DE-K-19; IT-K-06; IT-K-23; Forin & Healy, 2018; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2017; GRETA, 2017/9;

151. Child abduction is the wrongful removal or retention of a child. It is considered wrongful if it is: “in breach of rights of custody attributed to a person, an institution or any other body, either jointly or alone, under the law of the State in which the child was habitually resident immediately before the removal or retention; and at the time of removal or retention those rights were actually exercised, either jointly or alone, or would have been so exercised but for the removal or retention.” Art. 3 of the 1980 Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Convention).

BKA, 2017; K.O.K., 2017; K.O.K, 2015). The challenges to identification of human trafficking by national stakeholders in this context are:

- a) **High numbers of people transiting** at certain times, and in certain locations, and entering and exiting countries within a short time, making it difficult to assess individual cases;
- b) **Lack of capacity among among asylum authorities** to identify potential cases within the asylum system;
- c) **Lack of capacity among national authorities and NGOs** to identify potential trafficked people and gaps in protection systems for trafficked people;
- d) General **lack of political will** to address the issue.

The factors that are detrimental to the likelihood that people on the move who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking will seek assistance are:

- a) The desire to **transit as quickly as possible** to the intended final destination;
- b) **Lack of trust** in the authorities;
- c) **Fear of possible retaliation** by traffickers, especially if they do not trust the authorities to protect them.

In Greece and North Macedonia during mid-2015 to 2016, high numbers of people travelling prevented an adequate response (MK-K-01; MK-K-13; MK-K-19; MK-K-28; Frontex, 2016). In a context where people transit through countries within a relatively short time period, there is little time for the identification of trafficking and vulnerabilities to trafficking. According to Frontex (2016), in 2015, the numbers of people arriving in Greece did not allow for effective screening, registration, identification and provision of assistance to those in need. People transited through the country within a few days. Also in North Macedonia and Hungary, frontline workers do not have sufficient time to identify potential trafficked people, as they transit swiftly through the countries (MK-K-18; MK-K-28; HU-K-15; HU-K-21; HU-K-31).

Also in Italy, the short amount of time that people spend at hotspots is not conducive to the identification of potential victims of trafficking, and once they leave the hotspot it is difficult to follow up on them and help them to access anti-trafficking services (IT-K-03; IT-K-10 IT-K-22; IT-K-23; IT-K-32).

Related to this, another aspect of the transit context that presents a challenge is that cases of trafficking often taken place outside the country that they are identified in (DE-K-11; DE-K-14; DE-K-19). According to the European Commission's *Second report on progress in the fight against trafficking*, issued in December 2018: "*Particular challenges arise when identifying victims in mixed migration flows and international protection procedures, including in cases where the victims have been exploited outside of the jurisdiction of a Member State*" (European Commission, 2018: 8; see also: Forin & Healy, 2018).

The Serbian Government, in its reply to GRETA in 2017, suggested: *“that certain persons in Serbia are in transportation phase, and that human trafficking in other phases happened in the country of origin or transit, or that it will happen in the countries of destination”* (GRETA, 2017/9).

The lack of capacity among asylum authorities to identify potential trafficking cases among asylum applicants is particularly detrimental to identification in this context (EL-K-05; EL-K-07; EL-K-11; EL-K-22; EL-K-32; BG-K-02; BG-K-13; HU-K-34; DE-K-05; DE-K-10; DE-K-17; IT-K-03; IT-K-09; IT-K-10; IT-K-12; IT-K-22; GRETA, 2016/29; 2018/1; *Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2017*; AIDA, 2017; Healy, 2018; ICAT, 2017; Elliott, 20.06.2018). According to interviewees in Greece, the number of presumed or identified trafficking victims is minimal in view of the number of asylum applications in the country, particularly during 2016 and 2017, suggesting that the identification process within the Greek Asylum Service is not functioning as it should (EL-K-05; EL-K-07; EL-K-11). This is exacerbated by understaffing among NGOs, particularly on the Greek islands (EL-K-22; EL-K-32).

Delays in the asylum process in Bulgaria may contribute to an overall distrust in the authorities by asylum applicants (BG-K-02). The Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants (SCRM) was among the institutions that referred the least potential trafficking cases to the Centre for Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (CPVT) (RS-K-34), as the SCRM staff have limited capacity, and lack sufficient training on anti-trafficking (RS-K-06; RS-K-26). In Hungary, there are no standard protocols for trafficking identification or identification of vulnerabilities in the asylum process in the Transit Zones (HU-K-34; *Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2017*). According to the Asylum Information Database (AIDA): *“Although both the Asylum Act and the Asylum Decree provide that the special needs of certain asylum seekers should be addressed,¹⁵² there is no further detailed guidance available in the law and no practical identification mechanism in place to adequately identify such persons”* (AIDA, 2017a: 48).

The asylum authority in Germany, BAMF, reports any indications of trafficking to the regional police services, but the possibility of taking a case against traffickers depends to a large extent on the willingness of the victim to testify (DE-K-17). The lack of social workers at accommodation centres for asylum applicants, including the new AnkER Centres, and especially social workers with child protection training, presents a challenge for the identification of trafficked children as well as adults, and there is a lack of follow-up structures (DE-K-05; DE-K-10). Accelerated asylum procedures also jeopardise the possibility of identifying trafficking and vulnerabilities to trafficking (DE-K-10).

There are also issues in Italy with the identification of trafficking at larger accommodation centres (particularly CAS) that lack staff with the requisite training (IT-K-03; IT-K-10; IT-K-12; IT-K-22; GRETA, 2016/29; 2018/1). According to IOM in Italy: *“What is missing is a ‘bridging structure’, where we could refer potential cases and explore their specificities and understand if they are trafficked people or not”* (IT-K-10). Despite the fact that the right to asylum and the right to protection as a trafficked person are not mutually exclusive, many interviewees referred to the ‘necessity to choose’ for victims (IT-K-09).

152 Section 4 (3) of the Hungarian Asylum Law.

In addition to challenges within the asylum system, there is a lack of training for social workers, police and other professionals who work with people on the move on identifying trafficking and protecting vulnerable groups (BG-K-02; BG-K-13; MK-K-08; RS-K-06; RS-K-23; RS-K-26; RS-K-34; DE-K-05; DE-K-19; Oxfam, 2016). **This may be exacerbated by gaps in the trafficking protection systems in destination countries** (DE-K-02; IT-K-04; IT-K-10; IT-K-20; IT-K-25; IT-K-28; GRETA, 2016/29; 2018/1). In North Macedonia, issues with access to services and cooperation among institutions were identified as obstacles (MK-K-08). Specifically in the German context, there are few authorities or NGOs providing services for victims of labour trafficking and trafficked children (DE-K-02).

In Italy, there are gaps in the ‘Article 18’¹⁵³ protection system for trafficked people, that are detrimental to identification. Some anti-trafficking stakeholders require potential victims to report their traffickers before entering into the protection system, a misinterpretation of the legal provisions (IT-K-04; IT-K-10; IT-K-25). Places within the system are limited and presumed trafficked people do not have access to specialised shelters in some areas (IT-K-20; GRETA, 2016/29; 2018/1). An interviewee from Caritas in Ventimiglia, for example, described how a Nigerian woman was beaten by a Nigerian man because she did not want to continue her trip with him: *“this seemed to be a case of trafficking, but here we don’t have any structure to protect women and to take care of them”* (IT-K-28).

In Greece and North Macedonia, key informants also noted a general lack of political will to address trafficking in general, and trafficking among people on the move in particular, combined with excessive bureaucracy and delays. In Greece, for example, it may take up to two years to be identified as a victim of trafficking, and even longer for a court case to be concluded (EL-K-06; EL-K-22; US Department of State, 2018). In addition, the handling of the ‘Manolada Case’ by the Greek courts,¹⁵⁴ involving labour trafficking of a group of Bangladeshis, sent a message about excessive bureaucracy and delays (EL-K-06).

Similarly, a criminologist who was interviewed in North Macedonia considers prevention and identification to be dependent on the political will of the state authorities, as well as their capacities. This means that potential cases are not recorded, according to a *“philosophy of: ‘if there is no person, there is no problem’”* (MK-K-19). The most commonly applied intervention when abuse or exploitation was suspected was separation of that person from the abuser and accommodation in a different tent or a different location (MK-K-01; MK-K-02; MK-K-08; MK-K-12).

153 Article 18 of the Italian “Consolidated Act of Measures Governing Immigration and Norms on the Condition of Foreign Citizens” (“Testo Unico”, Italian Legislative Decree n. 286/1998).

154 This case involved 42 Bangladeshi men with undocumented immigration status who worked on a farm in Manolada, Greece during 2012-2013. The Greek courts initially acquitted the defendants in the case of trafficking in human beings. According to the ECHR decision in the case, *Chowdury and Others v Greece*, Application No. 21884/15, in March 2017, which ruled that this was a case of trafficking for forced labour: “The employers of the farm promised the workers’ wages of 22 euros for seven hours labour and 3 euros for each overtime hour, less 3 euros for food. They worked in plastic greenhouses picking strawberries every day from 7 a.m. till 7 p.m. under the supervision of armed guards. They lived in makeshift tents of cardboard boxes and nylon without running water and toilets. They were warned by their employers that they would only receive their salaries if they kept on working for them. After striking several times in order to receive their wages a further group of Bangladeshi nationals were recruited to work in the fields. Fearing that the wages of those recruited for the 2012-2013 season would not be paid 100-150 of the workers demanded their salaries from their employers. They were subsequently shot at by an armed guard, who seriously injured several of the workers.” See: www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/ecthr-chowdury-and-others-v-greece-application-no-2188415-30-march-2017. GRETA also noted in relation to the case: “that before this incident the Greek authorities had known for years about the circumstances under which thousands of workers lived and worked in strawberry farms around Manolada, due to media reports and an Ombudsman’s report which had been submitted to all relevant authorities and labour inspections, but no effective action to remedy the situation had been taken” (GRETA, 2017/27: 23).

For people on the move, their desire to continue their journey as quickly as possible also discourages them from reporting their case to the authorities or NGOs, as they fear that it will delay them, and they may not subsequently be able to continue (MK-K-05; MK-K-10; MK-K-14; MK-K-17; HU-K-15; HU-K- 21; HU-K-31).

“Most, if not all, of the cases of some form of exploitation or abuse remained only rumours, since the refugees avoided answering questions, because answering with the truth would have meant remaining in the country. If she had said that she had been raped, the police would have come, questioned her, taken her to the Safe House, taken her to the hospital [...]. And that would have delayed their trip. The refugees’ biggest fear was that the borders would close.”

- Interviewee from an NGO in North Macedonia (MK-K-05)

Another reason why trafficked people are not identified is that they may fear the authorities in the country they are in, or lack trust that the authorities or NGOs will meet their needs (BG-M-03; BG-M-05; EL-K-04; EL-K-10; EL-K-24; EL-K-27; BG-K-02; BG-K-03; BG-K-09; BG-K-11; BG-K-12; BG-K-15; HU-K-35; DE-K-07; IT-K-24). This is particularly the case for people travelling along the route, or residing in a destination country, without a regular status (EL-K-04; EL-K-10; DE-K-02).

There is often insufficient time for the necessary trust-building to take place (EL-K-24; EL-K-27). According to interviewees from the Greek Council for Refugees and the Prosecutor’s Office in North Macedonia, people may fear that going to the police would mean that they would be arrested, returned or deported (EL-K-04; MK-K-20). On the other hand, people may prioritise asylum status over any other type of assistance or status – people who have been granted asylum may think *“since I am secure now, I have no reason to do that”* (EL-K-04). The lack of political will to address trafficking in this context may also be understood by victims of trafficking, who may then consider that there is no point in reporting their case (EL-K-06; EL-K-22; MK-K-19; RS-K-34).

People on the move and key informants in Bulgaria pointed out that there is a lack of trust in state authorities and the justice system among people on the move (BG-M-03; BG-M-05; BG-K-02; BG-K-03; BG-K-09; BG-K-11; BG-K-12; BG-K-15). This may also be due to personal experiences of police brutality in Bulgaria (BG-K-09) or a fear that their asylum procedures would be delayed if they reported an abuse (BG-K-11).

In Greece, Germany and Italy, fear of retaliation by traffickers, particularly in the absence of protection systems, also discourages people from reporting their case to the authorities (EL-K-03; EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-10; EL-K-13; EL-K-14; EL-K-20; DE-K-11; DE-K-14). People who are exploited or abused by family members are particularly unlikely to come forward (EL-K-10). This may also be a challenge if traffickers are residing at the same accommodation centre as the people they are trafficking (EL-K-10; DE-K-14). Trafficked people, if they do not trust the protection system to keep them safe from the traffickers and their networks, fear for themselves and for their families, and

therefore do not wish to report their cases (IT-K-32).

For example, an interviewee from the German NGO Solwodi recalled a Nigerian woman who reported her sexual exploitation to the police. The traffickers in Germany were involved with the Nigerian criminal confraternity Black Axe and the *madam* of the victim and some of her siblings were arrested. However, during the trial, the victim did not reveal much information, as she was still afraid because one of the *madam's* brothers had not been arrested. In addition, she had to return to the apartment where she had been exploited, and would afterwards be returned to an accommodation centre that the traffickers were aware of (DE-K-14).

4. Traffickers

Overall, it was difficult to obtain empirical information on the profiles of traffickers and exploiters in this context, apart from the overlap with the provision of migrant smuggling services. Very few cases of trafficking of people who used the Balkan and Mediterranean routes have been prosecuted (BG-K-01; RS-K-25; RS-K-26; DE-K-02; DE-K-13; DE-K-14; DE-K-19; IT-K-06; IT-K-23; ENYÜBS; Sebhelyi, Varga & Sabján, 2016; BKA, 2017; 2018).¹⁵⁵ This is also related to the fact that no exploiters, traffickers or smugglers were interviewed for this research. Nevertheless, interviewees from law enforcement and prosecution authorities were interviewed in the countries under study, and statistics and literature on prosecutions and on traffickers in general were consulted.

What is clear is that in the context of the migration routes, traffickers:

- a) are often also involved in migrant smuggling, or take advantage of people's vulnerabilities, due to their need to pay for smuggling;
- b) are either from same country and/or linguistic group as the people they exploit, or from the country where the exploitation is taking place;
- c) may be opportunistic actors operating at a low level, without much cross-border cooperation;
- d) or, in the context of the Central Mediterranean route, belong to more sophisticated trafficking networks.

The exploitation of people on the move is very often linked to migrant smuggling situations. To a certain extent, then, the most common form of abuse of vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation is to take advantage of the fact that a person cannot travel regularly, and desperately desires to reach their final intended destination.

This takes one of two forms: either the person or the group providing migrant smuggling services also exploits and/or traffics the person being smuggled (EL-K-04; EL-K-06; EL-K-08; EL-K-13; MK-K-01; MK-K-19; IT-K-30; Morača, 2014), or the exploiter/trafficker takes advantage of the vulnerable and desperate position of a person who needs to pay for smuggling services, or needs to pay off a

¹⁵⁵ For Italy, see also: https://temi.camera.it/leg18/post/pl18_la_tratta_di_esseri_umani__statistiche.html.

debt contracted to pay for smuggling services (IT-M-01; IT-M-06; EL-K-19; MK-K-01; MK-K-03; MK-K-04; MK-K-08; MK-K-09; MK-K-12; MK-K-13; MK-K-15; MK-K-23; MK-K-24; MK-K-29; MK-K-31; HU-K-06; HU-K-09; DE-K-06). People may perceive exploitation or abuse as part of the smuggling process (EL-K-01; EL-K-10; EL-K-11).

Smuggler = Trafficker	The same person or group of people who provide smuggling services also traffics the person being smuggled.
Smuggler ≠ Trafficker	The trafficker takes advantage of the vulnerable position of a person paying for smuggling services.

Traffickers and exploiters are from the same country or region of origin as their victims, or from the same linguistic or ethnic group, or from the country where the trafficking and exploitation takes place (EL-K-13; EL-K-29; EL-K-33; DE-K-01; DE-K-06; DE-K-11; DE-K-13; DE-K-14; DE-K-17; IT-K-21; IT-K-23; IT-K-29; BKA, 2017; 2018). They may travel together with the people they are exploiting, or intend to exploit, or engage in targeted recruitment at accommodation centres or other areas where people on the move congregate (BG-M-01; BG-M-06; EL-K-13; BG-K-06; BG-K-14; MK-K-01; DE-K-03; DE-K-06; IT-K-12; IT-K-23; IT-K-32; Frontex, 2017; US Department of State, 2018).

Those involved in smuggling and trafficking tend to operate locally in a non-coordinated manner. With some exceptions, they are usually not members of organised criminal groups, but rather opportunistic actors, with minimal levels of cooperation between traffickers across borders. They may be family members, extended family members, or acquaintances of the person they are exploiting. This is confirmed by recent literature on migrant smugglers on these routes (Bilger, 2018; Campana, 2018; Achilli, 2018; Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012; Baird, 2016; Laczko & McAuliffe, 2016; Aziz, Monzini & Pastore, 2015; Optimity Advisors, ICMPD & ECRE, 2015; UNODC, 2018).

Only in Italy and Germany were there reports of more organised networks in some cases, particularly involving Libyans and Nigerians, and, in the case of Italy, some level of cooperation with Italian mafia groups in some cases. Indeed there was far more information about traffickers and their *modus operandi* in relation to the sexual exploitation of Nigerian women and girls than in relation to any other form of trafficking or profile of trafficked people. According to a key informant in Italy: *“there is a stratification, with Libyans at the apex, who compete for control of the territory. They authorise all the movements, of both traffickers and smugglers. Then there are the co-nationals of the victims, who depend on Libyans for movement on the territory”* (IT-K-12; see also: Amnesty International, 2017).

This is considered to be a well-structured network, operating at an international level, with West African traffickers cooperating with Libyan actors, and depending on the them to be able to carry out their activities (IT-K-11; IT-K-23; IT-K-32; DE-K-04; DE-K-07; BKA, 2017; Sindani, 2018). Libyan and Nigerian traffickers may also have connections with Italian criminals (IT-K-12; IT-K-13; IT-K-14; IT-K-15; IT-K-21; IT-K-25; IT-K-29; DE-K-11). Intermediaries in the trafficking of Nigerian women,

often referred to as *madams*, operate in Nigeria, Libya and European countries, and may be in contact with one another (IT-M-05; IT-K-12). The *madam* may already know the family of the victim, and so recruitment in Nigeria takes place with the complicity of the family of the victim, or the family may be threatened, as a means of controlling the victim (DE-K-01; DE-K-14; DE-K-17; IT-K-03; IT-K-10; IT-K-12; IT-K-21; IT-K-23).

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The Strength to Carry On analysed resilience and vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses along migration routes to Europe

This study analysed human trafficking among people travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Central Mediterranean migration routes to Europe; factors of resilience to trafficking and other abuses; and factors of vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. The geography of the travel routes, the duration of the journey, the policies and practices applied during different periods in different places, and the different obstacles encountered along the way, all determine the experiences of people using these routes. **When regular travel by plane, train or road is not permitted, the circumstances of travel are a determining factor of people's experiences.** Policies and practices also had an impact on the profiles of people who travelling - and on their respective vulnerabilities and resilience.

Despite the 'migration crisis' in Europe being the focus of attention in the media, among politicians and in public policy, and some research on the situation in general, little research has been conducted specifically on vulnerabilities and resilience to trafficking in this context, at national and regional level. This study, covering Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany and Italy, sought to address this knowledge gap.

During most of the period 2015-2018, in most locations, the people who are the subjects of the study were not allowed to travel regularly, so **interactions with providers of migrant smuggling services play a key role in determining people's resilience or vulnerability.** Many of the trafficking cases identified by the research were connected to smuggling situations, either because people needed to pay for smuggling, or because those providing migrant smuggling services directly exploited the service-users. Risks of trafficking related to migrant smuggling are exacerbated by difficulties in onward travel, lack of regular status and lack of access to the formal labour market.

Four key moments marked experiences along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan migration routes since 2015

While conditions on the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes were dynamic throughout the four years that the study covers, there were **certain specific moments of significant change**, marked by:

- an increase in the numbers of people arriving along the migration routes in early 2015;
- the regularisation of transit through the Balkans and suspension of Dublin returns from Germany in summer 2015;
- the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016 and the 'closing' of the route; and
- significantly reduced numbers of people travelling and 'reverse' movements during

2018, while the field research for this study was being conducted.

The first phase (January – June 2015) of the four years covered by the research was characterised by **an increase in the number of people travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes**, starting in late 2014, and generally ‘open borders’ facilitating swift transit, even if transit was not yet regular. Although migrant smuggling services were often needed to make the short sea crossing from Turkey to the nearby Greek islands, in general people were able to transit relatively swiftly through the countries under study. Throughout 2015, Syrians comprised the majority of people arriving across the Eastern Mediterranean, with significant numbers of Afghans, Iraqis and Eritreans also making the crossing and continuing along the Balkan route.

During the second phase, from June 2015 until March 2016, the Balkan route was more regulated and controlled, and **policies and practices generally allowed for legal transit through the Balkan countries**. The EU Agenda on Migration was adopted in May 2015, setting out immediate measures and a new strategic framework for migration management. As part of the Agenda, ‘hotspots’ were set up in Greece and Italy, and, linked to this hotspot approach, a temporary intra-EU emergency **relocation** scheme was approved in September 2015, with EU Member States committing to relocate a total of 160,000 people ‘in clear need of international protection’ from Greece and Italy by September 2017.

North Macedonia and Serbia put in place legal amendments in mid-2015, whereby **people were allowed to regularly transit through the countries, provided that they registered their ‘intention to seek asylum’ and left the country again within 72 hours**. The German government issued a statement in August 2015 that it would suspend the application of the Dublin Regulation to Syrians, allowing Syrian people to apply for asylum in Germany even if they had already transited through another EU Member State.

A barbed wire fence, almost 200km in length, was constructed along Hungary’s borders with Serbia and Croatia, and completed in September 2015. Those who tried to enter Hungary through the border fence were to be charged with committing a crime. At the beginning of 2016, countries along the route restricted entry to everyone other than Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans. Afghans were subsequently removed from the list. By 20 December 2015, one million people had been recorded as arriving by sea or overland in EU countries of first arrival since the beginning of the year.

The Eastern Mediterranean route by sea from Turkey to Greece, followed by the overland route through the Western Balkans, were considered safer and easier routes to travel than the Central and Western Mediterranean during 2015. There was generally no need for smuggling services for this section of the journey, thereby maintaining people’s resilience to any risks arising from interaction with migrant smugglers. Many people travelling were from Syria and had sufficient resources and the opportunity to travel all the way to their intended destination (usually Germany or Sweden) relatively swiftly.

The beginning of the third phase (March 2016 to December 2017) was marked by **the EU-Turkey Statement and characterised by border closures, restrictions and fortification of borders** in the countries along the Balkan route. The number of people making the sea crossing from Turkey to Greece decreased significantly throughout the rest of 2016, a trend that continued throughout

2017. IOM recorded an overall total of 384,527 people irregularly arriving by sea and land in the EU in 2016, as compared to 1,046,599 during 2015.

The possibility to legally transit from Greece through North Macedonia and Serbia was effectively removed. Many people who had intended to transit along the routes to Western Europe became ‘stranded’ along the way. Policies in Germany also started to move in a more restrictive direction from 2016 onwards, limiting labour market access for certain groups of asylum applicants, speeding up asylum, return and deportation procedures, limiting the freedom of choice of location of residence for recognised refugees and increasingly accommodating asylum applicants in camp-like structures rather than in normal housing structures.

During 2018, the year during which the field research was conducted for this study, a total of 141,938 people entered EU first countries of arrival. **Some people began to travel in the ‘reverse’ direction, not only towards Western Europe, and people attempted to take new – and usually more dangerous – routes.** ‘Reverse’ movement was either:

- for seasonal work in the harvests in summer and autumn;
- because people became separated from family members along the way who could not carry on and wanted to return to them;
- because they wished to return irregularly to their country of origin; or
- because they had not been able to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border to re-enter the EU, and therefore wished to return to Greece as the only accessible EU Member State.

From August 2017 to early October 2018, based on reciprocal measures on visa liberalisation for Serbians travelling to Iran, **Iranians could fly to Serbia without the requirement of a visa.** For some Iranians, this was a method of travelling regularly and safely as far as that country in order either to take a trip as a tourist; apply for asylum in Serbia; travel from Serbia to Western Europe to apply for asylum; or travel to Greece in order to fly to Western Europe by plane and apply for asylum.

In the wake of the 2017 general election in Germany and the 2018 elections in Bavaria, **the German Government introduced accelerated procedures for people applying for asylum in Germany who had already travelled through other EU Member States,** referred to as ‘secondary migrants’ in the German political debate.

The numbers of people arriving in Italy by sea peaked in 2016, before decreasing gradually in 2017, and dramatically in 2018

Until 2015, Italy had received the highest numbers of people arriving along the migration routes to the EU – around 170,000 people during 2014. **The majority of people arriving along the Central Mediterranean route and applying for asylum in Italy in 2015 were from West Africa and Horn of Africa,** most of whom were men, although there was a slight increase in unaccompanied children compared to 2014. Much smaller numbers of people from Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Ukraine also arrived in Italy and some applied for asylum there. During 2016, a larger proportion of those who arrived in Italy also applied for asylum in the country, particularly

West Africans and Eritreans, and more women and unaccompanied children. During that year, there was an increase in refusals of all types of protection status to around 60% and a reduction in the proportion of applicants who were granted full refugee status.

On 2 February 2017, **Italy and Libya signed a Memorandum of Understanding** on cooperation in the fields of development, the fight against “illegal immigration,” human trafficking and fuel smuggling and on reinforcing border security. The 2017 Orlando-Minniti Law set up the Centres of Residence for Repatriation (CPR), to be distributed on a regional basis. In terms of profiles of people arriving, an increased number of Nigerians and Bangladeshis arrived in Italy in 2017, and an increased proportion of unaccompanied children. Apart from those who used the Balkan route, an increased proportion of Eritreans, Nigerians and Somalians also used the Central Mediterranean route to travel onwards and apply for asylum in Germany. While there has been a steady decrease in the number of people arriving in Italy since 2016, the number of people arriving in Spain has steadily increased since 2015, from just 3,845 in that year, to 14,558 in 2016, 28,707 in 2017 and 64,427 in 2018.

The Security Law adopted by Italy in late 2018 provides for measures to combat “illegal immigration”, guaranteeing the effective implementation of deportation orders, and regulates special cases of temporary residence permits for humanitarian purposes. It also defines rules regarding the revocation of international protection status in case of conviction for serious crimes and the revocation of citizenship acquired by people convicted of terrorism. Italy and other EU member states increasingly restricted the operations of search and rescue ships. The main nationality of the 23,370 people arriving in Italy by sea in 2018 was Tunisian.

Resilience is understood as the capacity to resist trafficking, while vulnerability relates to the likelihood that trafficking will take place

Resilience to trafficking and other abuses is understood in this research as the factors that contribute to preventing trafficking and other abuses from occurring. Resilience refers to the more positive aspects of the experience of the migratory journey and focuses on those people who were not abused or exploited – and why that was so. **Vulnerability, on the other hand, refers to risks of trafficking and factors that make people travelling along the migration routes more likely to be trafficked or exploited.**

Vulnerability and resilience are inextricably connected. That is, in order to reduce trafficking and other abuses, the focus should be on building people’s capacity to resist abuses, on the one hand, and reducing vulnerabilities and exposure to dangers on the other. Factors of resilience and vulnerability:

- are dynamic over time – they do not remain static throughout the journey;
- affect different people in different ways - what may be resilience for some is vulnerability for others; and
- are cumulative – determined by a combination of interacting factors.

For people travelling, circumstances and contexts prior to departure, during the journey, in transit

countries and in intended and *de facto* destination countries all have effects on resilience and vulnerability.

Personal characteristics and circumstances drive resilience and vulnerability

Personal factors are not in themselves sources of resilience or vulnerability to trafficking. Rather, they interact with contextual factors of resilience or vulnerability in specific ways to increase resilience or exacerbate vulnerability. Personal vulnerabilities and factors of resilience are relevant throughout the journey, from the pre-departure phase in the country of origin or former residence to settling in the intended final destination. Personal factors of vulnerability may also determine the form of exploitation.

Issues related to age and gender were the vulnerabilities most frequently cited by key informants for the research, specifically, that children (particularly unaccompanied children), and women and girls are more vulnerable. **Children are vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses *per se*,** because of their lack of life experience. However, the circumstances of their migration journey may increase or reduce that vulnerability. Age interacts with gender, making girls, boys, women or men particularly resilient or particularly vulnerable, depending on the context and situation.

Women and girls are at a higher risk of sexual trafficking in particular, as well as related abuses such as ‘survival sex’ (the exchange of sex for a good or service that the person needs) and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). **Men and boys are generally considered more resilient, yet they are also exposed to specific vulnerabilities and gendered expectations.** In some cases, the presumption of their resilience may in fact exacerbate their vulnerabilities.

Little information was obtained about people on the move who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), though they are subject to specific vulnerabilities due to discrimination. People with disabilities, as well as elderly people, also have specific vulnerabilities in the context of migration journeys.

Religious faith provides people with the psychological strength to endure the difficulties of journey and, in some cases, religious communities provide concrete assistance. The majority of the 91 men and women interviewed for this study who had travelled the route stressed their religion or faith as a crucial source of resilience - not specifically resilience to trafficking, but as a source of strength to endure all of the difficulties of the migration journey and their experiences in destination countries.

People travelling the routes rely on their psychological strength, motivations, plans for the future, and a general sense of hope, in order to carry on. People’s ability to be flexible about their plans and adapt to changed circumstances is also a form of resilience. On the other hand, if people’s expectations of the journey and of their situation on arrival in the intended destination country are too far removed from reality, this can represent a specific source of vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

An additional source of resilience and hope for people on the move is support from members of their families. However, people may be motivated to make the journey by the prospect of

being able to improve their family's future, and are under pressure because of the expectations of family members who are still in the country of origin. While these family expectations may be a source of hope and endurance, they can also make people **more vulnerable and more likely to endure suffering themselves, including abuse and exploitation, in order to ensure their family's wellbeing.**

Some personal factors of vulnerability are also motivations for taking the decision to migrate, such as poor economic circumstances and future prospects, and experiences of violence, conflict and SGBV. Such factors also include interactions with public authorities in the country of origin and the treatment of marginalised groups. For some people, their personal resilience is also compromised by traumatic experiences prior to departure. This traumatisation renders them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses, which may then be exacerbated by subsequent trauma experienced during the journey.

A person's general level of education, qualifications and literacy skills are also a determining factor for resilience, as well as risk awareness and general life experience. This also facilitates access to essential information, reducing reliance on migrant smugglers and other illicit actors. One crucial aspect of this is digital literacy and the ability to use the internet and social media. On the other hand, people with a lower level of education and who are less informed are generally more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.

A person's financial situation matters at all stages along the route, and defines the planning phase. Resilience to trafficking and other abuses, as well as general safety, are determined to a significant extent by a person's financial resources. Specifically, the ability to avoid going into debt, or at least to quickly pay off debts incurred, is important for resilience. This interacts with the ability to afford a swifter and safer migration journey to the intended destination. Poor financial status is therefore an important factor of vulnerability to all forms of trafficking, making it easier for people to be manipulated, deceived and exploited, and often correlating with low levels of education.

Resilience and vulnerability are determined by migration policies and practices

The circumstances of the journey determine many of the key factors of resilience and vulnerability, and are to a large extent determined by contextual policy factors, above all the need to use this route due to the lack of alternatives for regular travel, and the consequent need to use migrant smuggling services. Few resilience factors were identified in the context of the journey, apart from the alternative of regular travel. This clearly arises from the fact that the journey itself is the key factor of vulnerability, and that the subjects of this study are by definition people who took the journey.

A key driver of resilience therefore, to almost all forms of trafficking and other abuses, is the possibility to travel regularly by plane, with an entry visa for an EU country. Legal channels for making the journey are the single most important determinant of resilience, as they allow people to avoid this dangerous journey altogether. For the small proportion of people who managed to travel regularly, including those who travelled in the context of family reunification with a member of their family already regularly residing in Europe, the journey was cheaper and safer, and

they were more resilient to trafficking and other abuses.

In the absence of options for regular air travel, the possibility of legal travel by sea and/or overland is the next best source of resilience. This possibility was available to many people, at least for some sections of their trip from Greece to Germany and other EU countries, from mid-2015 to March 2016. So these people, and especially those among them who had higher chances of being granted international protection in an EU country, like Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis, had a more positive experience of the journey and less need to use smuggling services. This contrasts with the vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses of people who travelled since March 2016, and people from countries considered 'safe countries of origin'.

The restrictions on movement and mobility that have been progressively imposed by European countries since 2016 have significantly increased the vulnerabilities of people using the routes. Even if, logically, people wish to travel as cheaply and safely as possible, changing policies and restricting laws and measures leave them with few options but to make a costly, long, dangerous and irregular journey.

While transit countries outside Europe were not the main focus of this research, there were indications of vulnerability, including abuses suffered by people on the move, in Iran, Turkey and Libya. **The arduousness and trauma of experiences transiting through these countries, during the sea crossings to Greece and Italy and at border crossings in Europe, compromise people's resilience.** However, based on accounts of experiences in Turkey and the far shorter and safer sea crossing to the Greek islands, people travelling along this route experience less violence and exploitation in transit countries outside Europe than those who travel through Libya and across the Central Mediterranean.

Issues that contributed to people's vulnerability when crossing borders within Europe include reports of deferred refusals of entry in Italy, and reports of human rights abuses and illegal returns ('pushbacks') in Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. The abuses suffered by people on the move, including children, are highly detrimental to their resilience, with the trauma experienced constituting a significant factor of general vulnerability, as well leading to distrust in state authorities. In addition, since September 2015, official entry from Serbia into Hungary has been managed on the basis of an unofficial 'waiting list'. This means that people are left with few alternatives to using smuggling services to evade this system, and/or using alternative, riskier routes. The other option is to pay to be moved up on this list, increasing financial vulnerability.

The vast majority of people travelling along the Balkan route wish to carry on to the next country as soon as possible. These people never intended to spend any significant amount of time in these transit countries, and would not have entered them at all if they had an alternative, quicker, or safer route to their intended destination countries. However, **this desire to swiftly move on, when combined with policies and practices that increasingly restricted this transit since March 2016, significantly compromised people's resilience.** Not having official ID documents, or not being registered in a country they are transiting through, also make a person vulnerable to exploitation and other abuses, as they are more likely to avoid the authorities and less likely to request assistance. **Transiting through Italy to other European countries can also make people vulnerable to**

trafficking, particularly when borders with countries such as France, Switzerland and Austria, are closed for transit, making irregular crossing the only option. Therefore the situation at the northern borders in Italy (Ventimiglia, Bardonecchia, Como and Brenner) can cause vulnerabilities.

Positive experiences of migrant smuggling maintain people's resilience, but using migrant smuggling services can also make people vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses

As a consequence of the lack of legal channels for migrating and seeking asylum, and the lack of possibilities to transit regularly along the routes, **almost everyone who travels the route uses migrant smuggling services**, at least at some point. Many of the determining factors of resilience or vulnerability depend upon people's experiences of migrant smuggling.

The 'closing' of the borders in March 2016 resulted in an increased demand for smuggling services, due to the increased difficulty of transiting to intended destination countries. In the absence of regular channels for travel, people who wish to make the journey to Europe use smuggling services, either once or multiple times, until they reach their final destination or become stranded. **Using smuggling services constitutes resilience if smugglers carry out the task for which they have been paid, and vulnerability if people are directly abused and exploited by their smugglers, or are abused and exploited because they need to pay for smuggling services.**

Depending on the experiences that people have, using smuggling services may be a factor of resilience, or, if it is not, the user of smuggling services may perceive their interaction with smugglers in a largely positive light, due to their lack of alternatives. 'Good smugglers' make sure that everyone is safe and reaches their destination, care about their business reputation and are often not part of a sophisticated, organised criminal network.

For people who can afford more expensive, safer smuggling services, the smuggling experience is a factor of resilience. This applies particularly to those who can afford a 'full package' all the way to their intended destination country, provided by people of trust from their country of origin. Conditional payment in phases to smugglers may enhance the safety of service-users, increasing their resilience and reducing the likelihood of abuses.

People also had very negative experiences of smuggling, varying from deception in relation to prices and routes, to threats, sexual and physical violence, sex trafficking, forced labour and deprivation of liberty for extortion. Negative experiences of deception, threats and violence significantly reduce people's general resilience, and increase their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking directly by smugglers or by other actors. Severe physical violence is perpetrated by smugglers on the Balkan route. In addition, nearly everyone interviewed who had travelled along the Central Mediterranean route reported experiencing some form of theft, violence or exploitation *en route*.

In other cases, vulnerabilities arise not directly through interaction with smugglers, but as a result of the need to pay for their services. Smuggling services are provided without involving abuses or exploitation, but people on the move run out of money or go into debt in order to pay for the services, making them vulnerable to labour exploitation in particular.

The composition of travel groups has implications for resilience and vulnerability

The group with whom people travel also has an influence on the likelihood of them being abused or trafficked. Group dynamics are different for girls, boys, women and men, and depend on whether someone travels with their family or alone, and whether they travel with people from the same extended family or community or with strangers.

When children travel in the company of one or both parents, this is a key source of resilience. Nevertheless, there are three crucial issues that can be detrimental to the resilience of children travelling with parents. Firstly, children may appear to be travelling with their parents or family members, but in fact this is not the case. Secondly, a child's parent or parents may be the ones who are abusing and/or exploiting them. Finally, children may become separated from their parents along the route.

Family separation is a crucial factor of vulnerability related to the experience of the journey along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Families can become separated by accident, as a travel strategy, because of border control operations, or by smugglers in order to extort money. This is a key moment of increased vulnerability for children who started the journey with their parents or other family members, as well as increasing the vulnerability of adults who may be desperate to urgently reunite with their children.

Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable in the context of the migration routes. It is important to keep in mind that the vast majority of unaccompanied children are not orphans, but rather have become separated from their parents or guardians at some stage, either on departure from their country of origin or during the journey, when they become separated from their family *en route*.

Children may be sent by their parents to travel alone, whereby a family selects the child whom they consider best equipped to travel to the intended destination country, usually a teenage boy. This is either as a strategy for the entire family to migrate, by subsequently joining the child, travelling regularly through family reunification, or irregularly, using the migration routes; or it is a strategy to supplement the family income, with the expectation that the child will send money earned in the destination country. While both scenarios may cause the child to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, because of the risks of the journey and the pressure to earn money in the destination country, if the child's family subsequently travel and reunite with them, this boosts their resilience as they can once again enjoy parental care.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to gender- and child-specific risks. Women travelling without an adult male companion but with their children are particularly vulnerable. Women and girls may also be at risk from some of the men and boys they are travelling with, and therefore they seek protection from other men, including family members. If the men whom they seek protection from do in fact protect them, then this is a source of resilience. On the other hand, some women and girls are abused or exploited by these men whom they sought out for protection.

If women and girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses in the context of the migration journey, then it follows that men and boys are more resilient. **Yet this presumption of resilience among many state and NGO service providers may actually exacerbate men's and boys' vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses.** Single adult men are a vulnerable group in this specific context precisely because they are considered the least vulnerable, and because they are more likely to be victims of physical violence perpetrated by law enforcement, smugglers or other adult male migrants.

Vulnerabilities for men and teenage boys also arise from the fact that smugglers may take young men and boys travelling alone along more dangerous routes than families, women and children, and because of family expectations in terms of earning money to support family members. Among children using the routes, boys are significantly over-represented, particularly among unaccompanied children. Unaccompanied boys are a particular at-risk group for trafficking.

This creates a paradox of 'vulnerable groups', whereby people considered the most vulnerable tend to have better access to services *en route* and in destination contexts, while people not considered vulnerable are actually rendered more vulnerable due to lack of access. It is the perceived vulnerability of an unaccompanied child or a woman travelling alone that ensures better protection services and increased resilience in transit and destination countries in Europe.

People often travel in groups of people from the same country. This may provide a source of group resilience. There are many reports of solidarity among people who travelled along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Sometimes people who did not know each other before decide to travel together during the journey for safety. However, in contexts where groups are more heterogeneous, inter-group conflicts may also be exacerbated in the tense migration context, causing vulnerabilities to violence, robbery and other abuses.

People often work for some time in intended transit countries, like Libya, Turkey and Greece, in order to earn enough to continue their journey and/or to send money to family members. **Because they generally do not have authorisation for employment, they engage in irregular work, which can make people vulnerable to labour exploitation.** However, this irregular and/or exploitative work is often perceived as resilience, particularly by the people themselves, because earning some money is better than having no money at all.

Throughout the journey, digital and computer literacy allow people to access information through social media, mobile apps and other online sources, also representing an important alternative source of information other than information provided by migrant smugglers, and constituting a factor of resilience. Help provided by local people in transit countries and support from civil society actors are also key sources of resilience for those travelling the Mediterranean and Balkan routes. Religious groups can be a factor of resilience in the sense of giving a person psychological strength and guidance, as well as a concrete source of support during the journey.

Arrival in an intended destination country is a form of resilience

Once people arrive in a destination context, whether the intended or *de facto* destination, various contextual and situational factors influence their resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and

related abuses. **Particularly for those who manage to reach their intended destination country, arrival in itself is for many people a form of resilience, as it means the end of a risky journey and the potential for legal status, employment and integration in a new home.**

Legal status, timely and fair asylum procedures and appropriate identification of unaccompanied and separated children can boost resilience

The national responses in the seven countries under study - as countries of transit where people end up staying for a significant period of time, as countries of *de facto* destination or as intended destination countries – are a crucial determinant of resilience or vulnerability. Resilience and vulnerability are related to legal status and access to asylum.

If a person was granted regular entry to an EU country, such as through a refugee resettlement programme, community sponsorship programme, a tourism, work or study visa or family reunification procedures (or in the future, perhaps, through humanitarian visas), then they are significantly more resilient as they avoid the journey completely. In the destination context, this also means that for many of them **their legal status is already regular, and in most cases, they can seek employment or enter education.**

If that is not the case, then **the next best scenario in terms of general resilience is timely access to a fair asylum procedure on arrival, or to other alternatives for regularisation of their status.** For the smaller number of people on the move who apply for asylum in countries along the Balkan route, gaps within the asylum systems may discourage people who would otherwise consider it as an option and leave them with no viable alternative but to continue the irregular journey using smuggling services.

In Germany, **resilience is determined to a significant extent by whether people are granted refugee status or some other form of international protection or legal residence status, how long the procedure takes, and what the conditions are for them while awaiting the decision and after being granted or refused status.** Similarly, in Italy, challenges within the asylum system were identified as a key factor of vulnerability to having irregular status and to being trafficked. Many people who are refused any form of protection status or other regular immigration status, or effectively denied access, remain in the country without a regular status, significantly increasing their vulnerability to labour exploitation in irregular work, as well as other forms of exploitation.

Specifically in relation to regularisation of status, **marriage can be a source of resilience**, particularly mentioned by men, if it grants them the right to regularly travel to, or regularly reside in, a country of destination. People who have spouses or children in destination countries have easier access to legal residency and work permits.

Access to essential services determines people resilience or vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses

Accommodation is a basic need for girls, boys, women and men transiting through and residing in a country, and effective access to adequate, safe accommodation, both along the route and in a destination context, is a key factor of resilience. Many people resided, or are residing, in official

accommodation centres in the seven countries under study, including reception centres, transit centres and detention and pre-removal centres. In some cases these centres can provide conditions of resilience, however, there are reports of vulnerabilities and abuses due to conditions inside the centres. In addition, many of the centres do not have adequate staff who can identify abuses or vulnerabilities, in order to adequately protect people at risk and prevent exploitation.

In addition to poor living conditions in accommodation centres, in certain cases **the conditions in centres make people residing there feel unsafe and at risk**, which increases their vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. At some centres, women and children in particular are harassed or subject to SGBV, and there are reports of smugglers and traffickers residing at centres in order to recruit service-users or victims. When traffickers target potential victims at centres, this is a direct and specific vulnerability, while interacting with migrant smugglers may also render people vulnerable.

The risks for women, boys and girls in particular may be mitigated if there are special designated areas for these groups within accommodation centres and gender-segregated provision of services, with adequate safety measures and female staff, police officers and interpreters. However, if these are inadequate, then women and children are rendered vulnerable.

When people are accommodated in closed centres, under conditions of detention and with restricted access to essential services and timely and fair asylum procedures, they suffer trauma and lose trust in authorities, all of which makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Asylum applicants in detention are subject to many factors that compromise their resilience: the prison-like environment; lack of information about their legal status; mistreatment; isolation; abuse by peers or staff; and uncertainty about the future.

If an unaccompanied child is correctly identified by the authorities of the country that they are in, they can be provided with the specialised services that they are entitled to (legal guardian, specialised accommodation, etc.) and are then far more resilient to exploitation and abuse in general. One of the practices that specifically affects the resilience and vulnerabilities of unaccompanied children is age assessment – the process applied by states to determine whether a person is in fact a child, in cases of doubt. The vast majority of the unaccompanied children arriving in Europe along the migration routes are teenagers aged 15-17 years. This means that often, during the process of the journey, arrival and the asylum application, they ‘age out’ of protection systems, turning 18 and then being considered as adults in terms of status and service provision.

The resilience of many unaccompanied children, even if they are correctly identified, is also compromised by a lack of trained guardians with the capacity to take care of these children, and who are appointed as swiftly as possible. Also, a number of abuses and potential violations of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child for unaccompanied children were identified in the course of the research, such as lack of effective access to education and safe accommodation, rendering these children particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.

Access to education is one of the most important resilience factors to human trafficking for children. Vocational training is also a specific factor of resilience, both during the course of the

training itself, as a meaningful activity that provides hope for the future, and as a way of subsequently integrating people into the labour market.

Because economic vulnerabilities are one of the key factors making people more prone to trafficking and related abuses, **accessing decent employment in a destination country is a crucial factor of resilience**. On the other hand, the ‘enforced idleness’ created by restrictions to access to the labour market, and, to a lesser extent, limited opportunities in the labour market for those who do have access, is detrimental to both financial and psychological resilience. In some cases, it may lead people to accept exploitative work due to the lack of alternatives. While working irregularly is a clear risk for labour exploitation, some people on the move and key informants considered that the possibility to earn at least some money is a form of resilience to worse forms of exploitation.

Lack of effective access to adequate medical care for physical and mental health is a factor of vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses for children and adults, and a specific vulnerability to re-trafficking for those who have already been trafficked. Mental health issues related to trauma experienced prior to departure or during the journey require gender- and child-specific, immediate, effective and long-term treatment in order to boost people’s resilience to further abuse and trafficking.

People on the move and key informants mentioned **social networks of friends and family as playing an important role in resilience in the destination context**. Engaging in meaningful activities, especially language courses, enables people to build up resilience. A number of people interviewed for this research volunteered and worked at NGOs - an important source of resilience, allowing them to keep occupied, make friends and feel part of their new communities. Other people received assistance from private individuals or NGOs in the countries under study. On the other hand, xenophobia, anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments also have an effect on a person’s feelings about the country that they are in and about how they are perceived, rendering them more vulnerable.

Effective access to information about their situation and about their options when people arrive in a destination context, in a format they understand, is a crucial aspect of resilience to trafficking other abuses. People need to know what stage their asylum application is at, how long they will stay at an accommodation centre and what their legal options are, otherwise frustration and uncertainty may lead people to look for alternative, irregular options. One important aspect of access to information is the availability of translation services and cultural mediators to ensure effect communication between the authorities of countries of destination and people on the move.

Few trafficked people are officially identified among people on the move

Official identification of trafficking victims in the countries under study among people travelling the routes is limited and unlikely to reflect the actual prevalence. Those who have been identified along the Balkan route are mostly from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria, and mostly boys and men, while along the Central Mediterranean route, they are mostly Nigerians and other Sub-Saharan Africans, mostly women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation.

The research did not seek to identify confirmed trafficking cases, as this can only be carried out

by the responsible authorities in the country in question, but rather sought to uncover sufficient indicators for a follow-up by these authorities. Despite the lack of official statistics, there are many **indications of trafficking among people using the migration routes, including trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, exploitation in forced criminal activities (migrant smuggling and drug trafficking) and forced marriage, as well as deprivation of liberty for extortion.**

While not an indication of prevalence in itself, a total of 69 potential trafficking cases that took place during 2015-2018 in the seven countries under study were identified in the course of this research, as well as general indications of the incidence of trafficking. These included: 21 cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation; 5 for forced marriage; 29 for labour exploitation; 7 for forced criminal activities, 3 for sale of a child/illegal adoption and 4 for removal of organs. 14 cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion were identified. 42 of the cases involved potential trafficking of men and boys, while 27 of the cases involved potential trafficking of women and girls. A minority of these cases were officially identified by the authorities in the countries concerned.

Exploitation takes place in countries of origin prior to departure, in transit countries outside Europe such as Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Libya, and in countries of transit and destination in Europe. Exploitation is generally not coordinated along the route, but a person may be exploited in different countries and locations by actors who are not in contact with each other.

People on the move are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, labour exploitation and forced criminal activities, particularly forced migrant smuggling, and deprived of their liberty for extortion

Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls in this context is prevalent, despite the relatively lower proportion of women and girls travelling the routes. In Greece, Germany and Italy, there are a higher number of formally identified cases of women trafficked for sexual exploitation in Libya and in European countries, particularly among those who travelled the Central Mediterranean route.

Men and boys are also affected by sex trafficking. The exploitation sometimes does not involve prostitution *per se*, but rather ‘survival sex’ – the exchange of sexual services for a good or service that the boy or young man needs. Unaccompanied boys are particularly affected by sex trafficking, as well as sexual abuse. Sex trafficking of Afghan boys in the context of *bacha bāzī* (‘dancing boys’) was identified in North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Germany, an abusive and exploitative practice by men who abuse boys for social and sexual ‘entertainment’.

Forced marriages affect girls and women from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran in their countries of origin, en route and in European countries. Some of these marriages are for the purposes of domestic servitude or sexual exploitation, while in other cases significant sums of money are exchanged for the marriage itself, and girls and young women are ‘bought and sold’.

Men and boys trafficked for forced labour are mainly exploited in agriculture, as well as other sectors such as textiles, services industry, construction, and in begging. People are exploited in agriculture in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy and Germany. The sector where many people on the move are exploited in transit countries like Serbia and Hungary is the services industry. Women

are exploited in domestic and care work. Indications of potential cases of trafficking for domestic servitude were found in Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as in Germany. Only in Italy were cases reported of young men in their 20s from West African countries begging, especially in the city of Rome, with some indications of exploitation and debt bondage.

Apart from sex and labour trafficking, the main form of trafficking among people who travel the routes is forced criminal activities, particularly migrant smuggling. Unaccompanied Afghan and Pakistani boys and young men are recruited by migrant smugglers and forced to provide migrant smuggling services overland. Men and boys are also forced by smugglers to navigate boats from Turkey to Greece and from Libya to Italy. In some cases, those involved are also exploited by the same groups in other forced criminal activities, especially smuggling and sale of drugs. Isolated cases of trafficking for sale of a child/illegal adoption and for removal of organs were also indicated in the research.

While there is an ongoing debate at international policy level and among researchers as to whether deprivation of liberty for the purposes of extortion (also referred to as 'kidnapping') should be considered human trafficking, **the findings of this study presented the *modus operandi* of the perpetrators, the experiences of the victims and the existence of acts and means, and showed that extortion involves the abuse of a person's rights in order to obtain a financial or material benefit.**

Afghan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Syrian people travelling the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes are deprived of their liberty for extortion in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, rural areas of North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Deprivation of liberty for extortion is widespread in Libya, perpetrated either by isolated actors or when people are forced to stay in prison camps not only for the purpose of extortion, but also for forced labour.

Most potential trafficking cases among people on the move are not screened or identified, and people rarely seek assistance

Most trafficking cases among people on the move are not being identified, and trafficked people rarely report their case and seek help, due to challenges that affect trafficked people in general, and challenges specifically affecting this group. The challenges to identification of human trafficking by national stakeholders in this context are:

- a) **High numbers of people transiting** at certain times, and in certain locations, and entering and exiting countries within a short time, making it difficult to assess individual cases;
- b) **Lack of capacity among asylum authorities** to identify potential cases within the asylum system;
- c) **Lack of capacity among national authorities and NGOs** to identify potential trafficked people and gaps in protection systems for trafficked people;
- d) General **lack of political will** to address the issue.

The challenges affecting the likelihood that people on the move who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking will seek assistance, apart from a lack of understanding of their situation as a victim of trafficking, are:

- a) The **desire to transit** as quickly as possible to the intended final destination;
- b) **Lack of trust** in the authorities and fear of deportation, with the attendant risk of re-trafficking;
- c) **Fear of possible retaliation** by traffickers, especially if they do not trust the authorities to protect them.

Human trafficking takes place in the context of migrant smuggling

It was difficult to obtain empirical information on the profiles of traffickers and exploiters in this context, apart from the overlap with people providing migrant smuggling services. What is clear is that traffickers:

- a) are often also involved in migrant smuggling, or take advantage of people's vulnerabilities, due to their need to pay for smuggling;
- b) are either from same country and/or linguistic group as the people they exploit, or from the country where the exploitation is taking place;
- c) are opportunistic actors operating at a low level, without much cross-border cooperation;
- d) or, especially in the context of the Central Mediterranean route, belong to more sophisticated trafficking networks.

The main *modus operandi* of traffickers, regardless of whether or not they also provide migrant smuggling services, is to abuse people's position of vulnerability. **This position of vulnerability arises from their need to use, and to pay for, migrant smuggling services, in a context of lack of alternatives for regular travel.**

5.2 Recommendations

To prevent human trafficking, the focus should be on how people can remain resilient to trafficking and other abuses, and on mitigating vulnerabilities and exposure to dangers. These recommendations are derived directly from the findings of this research study, providing **evidence-based guidance** to policymakers and practitioners, and to people on the move. They should be implemented in order to address the urgent need to respond to human trafficking, to resilience and vulnerability to trafficking, and to the protection of the rights of adults and children on the move, contributing to overall stability, security and rule of law in the countries under study and the wider region.

The recommendations address **how to prevent human trafficking and other abuses among people travelling along migration routes to Europe, how to promote the identification and protection of trafficked people, and how to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.** The implementation of some of the recommendations is in line with a general consensus about the rights of people on the move among policy-makers, practitioners and the people themselves, while other recommendations require significant advocacy and political will in order to become a reality. The intention of this study is contribute on both fronts to an improvement in the situation portrayed by the findings of the research.

A. Policy-Level Recommendations

1. Expand alternatives for regular travel	
What?	Significantly expand the range of alternatives for regular travel for refugees and other migrants, and their availability, to avoid people making irregular and dangerous journeys. This includes possibilities for regular migration (including labour migration and family reunification) and programmes for regular travel for refugees, including resettlement, community sponsorship and humanitarian visas.
Why?	When adults and children can travel safely, swiftly and regularly, they avoid all of the vulnerabilities arising from making the journey along the migration routes to Europe, including using migrant smuggling services.
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies, including EASO; Governments of other destination countries; international stakeholders, including UNHCR.

2. Allow for legal transit along migration routes	
What?	For people who cannot access legal opportunities for travel, allow legal transit through countries along migration routes.
Why?	People who can transit legally and swiftly through transit countries are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses, and if transit regularised and registered, they are more likely to trust the authorities. This avoids situations where people become 'stranded' and reduces their reliance on migrant smuggling services.
Who?	European States; Governments of countries considered as 'transit countries' by people travelling the routes; EU bodies; international stakeholders.

3. Treat people at European borders with dignity and adhere to human and child rights	
What?	Enforce legal provisions that protect people's human rights and child rights when crossing a border.
Why?	Experiences of human rights and child rights abuses at borders make people more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses, and less likely to trust state authorities. Legal obligations on non- <i>refoulement</i> and positive obligations on identification and protection of vulnerable people are a state responsibility. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014) <i>Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders</i> provides guidance in this regard.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including Frontex; international stakeholders, including OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; border and coast guard staff; police.

4. Improve the safety of sea crossings	
What?	Ensure that people who travel across the Mediterranean Sea have access to protection, and that search and rescue operations are adequate in order to rescue people whose lives are at risk. Ensure effective cooperation with civil society to support search and rescue operations.
Why?	The dangerous sea crossing, as well as costing thousands of human lives, is a traumatic experience that compromises the resilience of survivors to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including Frontex; international stakeholders, including OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; NGOs engaged in search and rescue; border and coast guard staff.

5. Ensure timely access to a fair asylum procedure on arrival, or to other alternatives for regularisation of people's status in transit and in a destination context	
What?	Provide effective access to timely and fair procedures for all forms of international protection, including legal assistance and representation, and to other opportunities for regularisation of status in transit, <i>de facto</i> destination and intended destination countries.
Why?	While people are awaiting their status determination, and particularly if their asylum application is refused, or if they are without regular status, they are more likely to work under exploitative circumstances and to wish to move on to another country using migrant smuggling services.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including EASO; UNHCR; asylum authorities; immigration authorities.

6. Combat forced migrant smuggling as a form of human trafficking	
What?	Undertake any necessary legal amendments and ensure that anti-trafficking stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to identify cases where people who seem like perpetrators of migrant smuggling are actually victims of trafficking for forced migrant smuggling, to protect the victims, and to prosecute the actual perpetrators.
Why?	People forced to provide smuggling services may be considered perpetrators rather than victims, meaning that they are not identified as trafficked people and do not have access to protection and justice, as well as being held criminally responsible. This also means that the perpetrators, who have trafficked these people for forced migrant smuggling, are not brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Europol; Interpol.

7. Combat deprivation of liberty for extortion	
What?	Undertake any necessary legal amendments and ensure that stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to identify cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.
Why?	Cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion may meet the definition of human trafficking. People who have suffered the human rights abuse of deprivation of liberty for extortion, often accompanied by physical or sexual violence or other abuses, are not generally identified as victims and therefore do not have access to protection, and the perpetrators are not brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Europol; Interpol.

8. Apply non-punishment provisions to people on the move who have been trafficked	
What?	Ensure that people who have been trafficked for the purposes of forced migrant smuggling and other forced criminal activities are not punished for these crimes, by making any legal and administrative amendments necessary, ensuring effective implementation of non-punishment provisions and training all relevant stakeholders.
Why?	People who have committed crimes such as smuggling of migrants and drug trafficking as a result of their condition as a trafficked person should be subject to non-punishment provisions and not held criminally liable. The actual perpetrators should be brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

9. Implement measures to ensure that families can remain together	
What?	Implement measures to ensure that families can remain together: in countries of origin, by providing alternatives; in countries of transit, by allowing families to travel and reside together, and to reunite if they become separated; and in countries of destination, through family reunification.
Why?	Children and adults travelling or residing alone are more vulnerable than children and adults travelling or residing together with their families.
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies, including EASO and Frontex; international stakeholders, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; border and coast guard staff.

10. Ensure protection of unaccompanied and separated children transitioning into adulthood	
What?	When unaccompanied teenage children ‘age out’ of protection measures (when they turn 18), allow for a transition phase during which certain child protection measures are still applied, including legal representation if necessary, up to the age of 21 years, to ensure that they are adequately prepared for independent adult life. Take the young persons own wishes, decisions and their best interests into account.
Why?	On the day that unaccompanied children turn 18, they are no longer entitled to special protection services for unaccompanied children, and they become acutely vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies; international stakeholders, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

11. Fight xenophobia, anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments, and mitigate isolation of migrant communities	
What?	Combat anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments in countries of transit and destination, to combat discrimination and targeted abuse. Promote the social inclusion of migrant communities to avoid people becoming isolated.
Why?	People on the move who are subject to discrimination and abuse are less resilient to abuses, and less likely to trust the authorities and other actors in the country they are in. People who only interact with members of their own communities may be more vulnerable to exploitation or abuse by co-nationals.
Who?	European States; EU bodies; politicians; anti-racism bodies; media; schools; police; migrant-led organisations; migrant communities; NGOs.

B. Operational-Level Recommendations

12. Assess groups of people on the move to determine family relationships and identify potential abuses	
What?	Individually assess members of a group to ensure that those claiming to be family members are in fact related, and to identify any abuses taking place in a family context. Provide for separate immigration and asylum procedures for each member of a family.
Why?	People travelling with someone who fraudulently claims to be a family member are more vulnerable to abuse, particularly children. Only in cases where serious abuse takes place within a family should children be separated from their parents or guardians. Adults and children whose immigration and asylum procedures are conducted separately have better access to protection.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; family courts; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children; NGOs.

13. Put in place specific protection measures for girls, boys, women and men	
What?	Put in place specific protection measures for girls, boys, women and men, recognising the special needs of women and children, and recognising that men and boys are also vulnerable to abuses, particularly unaccompanied and separated boys.
Why?	Women and girls, and children in general, require special protection measures in order to remain resilient. In addition, when men and boys are not considered ‘vulnerable groups’, they may be denied access to protection and essential services, rendering them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; accommodation centre management; NGOs; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

14. Ensure protection of accompanied, unaccompanied and separated children	
What?	Children on the move should have effective access to decent education and other child protection measures, particularly while residing at official accommodation centres. Unaccompanied and separated children should be correctly identified as such, with accurate and fair age assessment, allocation of a guardian and special accommodation measures for their protection, in accordance with UNCRC General Comment No. 6 (2005) <i>Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin</i> and EASO (2018) <i>Practical Guide on age assessment</i> . The best interests of the child should be a primary concern in all decisions affecting them.
Why?	All the countries under study have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses <i>per se</i> due to their lack of awareness and life experience, and decreased capacity to resist traffickers and other potential abusers, as well as limited capacity to exit an exploitative situation. When they have access to appropriate child protection measures in transit and destination countries, children’s resilience can be increased and their best interests can be promoted.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children; accommodation centre management; police; border and coast guard staff; NGOs; schools; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

15. Ensure adequate, accessible and safe accommodation to provide conditions of resilience	
What?	For people on the move who are housed in official accommodation centres, ensure that humane and dignified living conditions, safety and access to services are in place. Special protection measures should be in place for women, girls, boys, unaccompanied girls and unaccompanied boys. Adults should be allocated to closed centres only as a last resort and children should not be detained. NGOs, translators, cultural mediators, lawyers and social workers should be granted access to all accommodation centres, including any closed centres.
Why?	Risks of trafficking and exploitation for people at accommodation centres may be mitigated if the living conditions and safety measures are adequate and if access to essential services is ensured. Gender- and child-specific risks can be mitigated if there are special services and designated areas for these groups within centres, with adequate safety measures and female staff, police officers and interpreters.

Who?	Accommodation centre management; private security firms operating at accommodation centres; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services; police; NGOs; lawyers.
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16. Make sure that human traffickers are not residing at accommodation centres or using centres in order to recruit victims

What?	Establish identification and security procedures at accommodation centres, to make sure that the centres are not locations for trafficking recruitment.
Why?	Traffickers target accommodation centres for people on the move as locations for recruiting victims, making people residing at these centres particularly vulnerable.
Who?	Accommodation centre management; private security firms operating at accommodation centres; police; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services.

17. Provide access to vocational training and decent employment

What?	Teenagers and adults in intended and <i>de facto</i> destination countries should have access to vocational training, studies and regular employment, with measures to promote their labour market integration and opportunities for employment in migrant-led and migrant support organisations. People who are working irregularly should have access to justice and protection if they suffer labour violations or labour exploitation.
Why?	People are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses when they are in training or studies or engaged in decent employment.
Who?	Vocational training centres; third-level educational institutions; state employment services; labour inspectors; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; employers; trade unions; NGOs.

18. Provide medical care for physical and mental health

What?	Ensure that all adults and children on the move have access to adequate and necessary physical and mental healthcare in transit and destination countries.
Why?	People who suffer physical abuse, trauma, physical or mental illness, or are elderly or have a disability, may be more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Their resilience can be boosted if they receive adequate treatment.
Who?	Health services; hospitals; accommodation centre management; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

19. Provide effective access to information about their situation and about their options when people are *en route* or in a destination context

What?	Provide accurate information for people on the move about their rights and duties in transit and destination contexts, and about the legal procedures affecting them, in a format that they understand (including online and through mobile apps for people who have access) and in a language they understand (including through translators and cultural mediators).
Why?	People's lack of accurate information about their situation can be exploited by traffickers in order to provide them with risky alternatives.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; NGOs; migrant-led organisations; migrant communities; translators and cultural mediators; international organisations.

20. Promote civil society and volunteering

What?	Fund and promote the activities of NGOs and faith-based organisations that support people on the move, and encourage the involvement of people on the move as volunteers in these organisations.
Why?	People on the move who are supported by civil society organisations, and who are active with civil society organisations, are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	NGOs; faith-based organisations; migrant-led organisations; state authorities; donors.

21. Build the capacities of asylum authorities to identify trafficked people

What?	Incorporate the screening and identification of vulnerabilities, and of potential trafficking cases, into the asylum process, by providing specialist training to asylum authorities and putting procedures in place for referral. People who are trafficked and have a right to international protection should have access to both protection mechanisms. People who are trafficked, and as a result of the trafficking have a right to international protection, should also have access to both protection mechanisms. People who are trafficked and who do not have a right to international protection, should be protected as a trafficked person and granted a residence permit as a victim of trafficking.
Why?	The asylum procedure presents an opportunity to identify cases of vulnerability to trafficking and of potential trafficking, which, if taken advantage of, can increase the identification of trafficked people among asylum applicants, and ensure that people have access to the protection measures and justice that they are entitled to.
Who?	Asylum authorities; EU bodies, including EASO; anti-trafficking stakeholders; migrant communities; international organisations.

22. Build capacities of anti-trafficking stakeholders to identify trafficked people among those using migration routes

What?	Provide specialist training, and put procedures in place, to ensure that people on the move, including asylum applicants, who have potentially been trafficked, are screened, identified and referred to anti-trafficking stakeholders for protection and access to justice.
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Why?	Anti-trafficking stakeholders may not have experience of working with asylum and immigration authorities to identify trafficked people. If these institutions work better together, more trafficked people can be identified and protected.
Who?	Anti-trafficking stakeholders (government and civil society); asylum authorities; immigration authorities; migrant communities; international organisations.

23. Investigate suspected cases of migrant smuggling for indications of trafficking, exploitation and abuse

What?	Focus law enforcement responses on cases of trafficking, exploitation and abuse by people providing migrant smuggling services.
Why?	Some people are resilient while using smuggling services, while others are rendered vulnerable by their interaction with people providing smuggling services who intend to abuse or exploit them. Law enforcement efforts on migrant smuggling cases should focus on severe cases involving human rights violations, including trafficking.
Who?	Border and coast guard staff; police; prosecutors; judges; Frontex; Europol; Interpol.

24. Increase identification and protection of trafficked men and boys

What?	Ensure that anti-trafficking stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to screen and identify trafficking cases among men and boys, as well as among women and girls, providing victims with protection and bringing traffickers to justice.
Why?	Men and teenage boys may be overlooked in anti-trafficking responses, meaning that they are not identified as trafficked people and do not have access to protection and justice.
Who?	Social workers; NGOs; accommodation centre management; labour inspectors; police; prosecutors; judges; migrant communities; border and coast guard staff.

25. Build trust in state authorities among people on the move, to encourage reporting of cases of trafficking and other abuses

What?	Build trust in state authorities among people on the move, use interpreters and cultural mediators to improve communication with people on the move, provide access to justice and protection measures to trafficked people without making access conditional on them remaining in a transit country, and protect trafficked people from retaliation by traffickers and their networks.
Why?	People on the move may not report trafficking cases due to a lack of trust in state authorities, communication difficulties, their desire for onward travel, fear that the authorities cannot protect them or their families from retaliation by traffickers and their networks and fear of deportation.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; social workers; NGOs; police; prosecutors; witness protection programmes; migrant communities; interpreters and cultural mediators; lawyers; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

26. Incorporate special measures related to people on the move into trafficking screening, identification, referral, protection and prosecution mechanisms

What?	Incorporate specific, adequate measures related to the context of people on the move into National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms for the protection of trafficked people, setting out the roles and responsibilities of asylum, migration and anti-trafficking stakeholders in the screening, identification, referral protection and assistance of trafficked people. Set up or strengthen bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for identification, protection, investigation and prosecution between transit and destination countries along the migration routes.
Why?	People on the move who are trafficked may not be identified or protected due to a lack of coordination between asylum, migration and anti-trafficking authorities, at national and transnational level. Trafficking cases that take place in transit may only be identified in intended destination countries, requiring bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to protect victims and bring traffickers to justice.
Who?	National Referral Mechanisms; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; anti-trafficking stakeholders; social workers; NGOs; police; prosecutors; judges; Europol; Interpol; Eurojust; Frontex.

C. People on the move and their families

27. Have a well-informed plan for the migration journey prior to departure

What?	Obtain as much information as possible about modes of travel, conditions, costs and rights and duties in countries of transit and destination prior to the departure. Avoid trusting only information provided by migrant smugglers. Use online and mobile sources of information where possible, making sure that the sources are reliable.
Why?	Accurate information about the journey, about rights and duties, and about the situation in transit and destination countries, is a crucial source of resilience to trafficking and other abuses.

28. Travel together with family members or close acquaintances

What?	If possible, travel in the company of family members or other people of trust, and do background checks on anyone you are travelling with whom you do not know well, examining their motivations and intentions. Avoid allowing children to travel alone.
Why?	Travelling together with family members and other people who can support each other keeps people safe during the journey and on arrival in the intended destination country. Children aged under 18 travelling without their parents or guardians are particularly vulnerable and at risk.

29. Stay informed and adapt to changed circumstances

What?	Use reliable sources of information, including people of trust, and online sources of information, in order to stay abreast of the situation, which may change during the course of the journey. When circumstances change and obstacles are encountered, where possible, adapt to these circumstances and change plans accordingly, ensuring that you have sufficient information about the changed situation.
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Why?	Being faced with an unforeseen obstacle or a change in circumstances can be a moment of frustration and desperation, increasing people’s vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. If people do not respond in an informed fashion, they may become even more vulnerable.
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30. Report any abuses suffered or witnessed to the authorities or NGOs that can provide assistance

What?	Seek assistance from NGOs, trusted persons, asylum or immigration authorities, social workers, lawyers, human rights defenders or police if you suffer abuse or you witness someone else suffering abuse.
Why?	If trafficking and other abuses are not reported and identified, victims of these abuses cannot receive protection services and the perpetrators cannot be brought to justice.

31. Avoid going into debt with migrant smugglers and other travel facilitators and make sure you have enough money for the journey

What?	If at all possible, ensure that you have sufficient finances for the journey, and that you do not go into debt with migrant smugglers.
Why?	Running out of money during the journey makes people vulnerable to exploitation, in order to earn money to continue the journey. Being in debt to migrant smugglers represents an acute vulnerability.

32. Family members should keep their expectations realistic

What?	Family members of people on the move, in countries of origin or destination, should keep their expectations realistic and understand that changes of circumstance can have an impact on the situation of the people on the move.
Why?	Family expectations can exert significant pressure that may cause people to enter into a situation of exploitation or make them more vulnerable to abuse.

Interview Codes

Greece

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
EL-M-01	Afghan woman	30.07.2018	Athens	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
EL-K-01	EKKA (National Center for Social Solidarity), Department of Reception of the Social Intervention Division	-	29.03.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-02	Herakles Moskoff	National Rapporteur on THB	04.04.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-03	ARSIS NGO	-	11.04.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-04	Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)	-	17.04.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-05	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	-	19.04.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-06	Médecins du Monde (MDM)	-	26.04.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-07	Asylum Service	-	03.05.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-08	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	-	10.05.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-09	First Reception and Identification Service	-	22.05.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-10	Solidarity Now	-	23.05.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-11	Metadrasi	-	24.05.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-12	Eleonas Refugee Site	-	29.05.2018	Athens	-

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
EL-K-13	A21	-	31.05.2018	-	Skype Focus group with 3 ppl.
EL-K-14	Asylum Service	-	06.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-15	Metadrasí	-	06.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-16	First Reception and Identification Service	-	07.06.2018	Lesvos	Focus group with 3 ppl.
EL-K-17	UNHCR	-	07.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-18	Hellenic Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (KEELPNO)	-	07.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-19	Metadrasí	-	08.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-20	Anonymous	Social Worker	08.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-21	Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)	-	08.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-22	Praksis	-	08.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-23	Hellenic Police	-	08.06.2018	Lesvos	-
EL-K-24	Iliaktida	-	08.06.2018	Lesvos	Focus group with 3 ppl.
EL-K-25	General Secretariat for Gender Equality	-	13.06.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-26	MSF	-	19.06.2018	Athens	-
EL-K-27	Smile of the Child	-	26.06.2018	Athens	Focus group with 2 ppl.
EL-K-28	Municipal shelter for victims of violence	-	17.09.2018	Athens	Focus group with 2 ppl.
EL-K-29	Social worker	-	21.09.2018	Thessaloniki	-
EL-K-30	ARSIS NGO	Social Worker, Lawyer	21.09.2018	Thessaloniki	Focus group with 2 ppl.
EL-K-31	A21	-	21.09.2018	Thessaloniki	-
EL-K-32	Praksis NGO	-	17.10.2018	Athens	-

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
EL-K-33	Hellenic Police	Anti-Trafficking Unit, Borders, Immigration	23.10.2018	Athens	Focus group with 3 ppl.
EL-K-34	Open Reception Facility	Social Workers	31.10.2018	Drama	Focus group with 2 ppl.
EL-K-35	Irene Logotheti, Reception and Identification Centre (RIC)	Director	01.11.2018	Fylakio - Evros	-
EL-K-36	Open Reception Facility	-	02.11.2018	Kavala	-
EL-K-37	IOM	Coordinator for Northern Greece, Site Management Support (SMS) Kavala, SMS Drama	02.11.2018	Kavala	Focus group with 3 ppl.

Bulgaria

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
BG-M-01	29-year-old Syrian man	02.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-02	22-year-old Syrian man	04.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-03	29-year-old Gambian man	06.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-04	32-year-old Iraqi man	10.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-05	27-year-old Iraqi man	26.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-06	27-year-old Afghan man	26.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-07	28-year-old Syrian man	30.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-08	28-year-old Afghan man	31.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-09	36-year-old Syrian woman	03.09.2018	Sofia	-
BG-M-10	22-year-old Syrian woman	04.09.2018	Sofia	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
BG-K-01	Dobryana Petkova, National Commission to Combat Trafficking of Human Beings	Senior Expert	22.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-02	Anonymous, international organisation	-	23.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-03	Anonymous, diplomatic mission	-	26.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-04	Anonymous, NGO	Social Worker	27.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-05	Mariana Ilcheva, Centre for the Study of Democracy	Lawyer and Legal Researcher	27.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-06	Alexey Pamporov, Office of the President	Assistant Professor	28.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-07	Vera Zaharieva, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Displacement Tracking Matrix Coordinator	29.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-08	Tsvetelina Naydenova, IOM	Anti-Trafficking Officer	29.03.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-09	Antoaneta Vasilieva, Animus Association	CTHB International Development and Programmes Coordinator	03.04.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-10	Anonymous	-	11.04.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-11	Anonymous, Foundation for Access to Rights	-	11.04.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-12	Anonymous, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	-	01.05.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-13	Martin Stefanov, A21	Director	18.05.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-14	Rossanka Venelinova, Centre Nadja	Psychiatrist and Director	11.06.2018	Sofia	-

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
BG-K-15	Anonymous, State Agency for Refugees (SAR)	-	14.06.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-16	Milen Peychev, SAR	Chief Expert, Directorate for Social Adaptation	14.06.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-17	Dimitrina Boyanova, Ministry of Interior, Border Police Directorate	Anti-Trafficking Expert	08.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-18	Dimitar Radev, Ministry of Interior, Border Police Directorate	Anti-Trafficking Expert	08.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-19	Anonymous, Ministry of Interior, Directorate on Combatting Organised Crime	-	17.08.2018	Sofia	-
BG-K-20	Anonymous, Ministry of Interior, Directorate on Combatting Organised Crime	-	17.08.2018	Sofia	-

North Macedonia

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
MK-M-01	Anonymous	03.04.2018	Skopje	-
MK-M-02	26-year-old Afghan man	20.08.2018	Tabanovce	-
MK-M-03	27-year-old Iranian man	20.08.2018	Tabanovce	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
MK-K-01	Anonymous, national NGO	-	09.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-02	Elena Brmbeska, NGO Helsinki Committee	Project Coordinator	09.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-03	Lenche Markovikj, NGO La Strada	Social Worker	09.03.2018	Skopje	-

MK-K-04	Sandra Tomovska, NGO Red Cross of the City of Skopje	Coordinator of Red Cross Mobile Team	12.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-05	Mersiha Smailovikj, NGO Legis	Secretary General	13.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-06	Anonymous, national authorities	-	22.03.2018	Skopje	Focus group with 4 ppl.
MK-K-07	Elena Grozdanovska, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	State Secretary and member of National Commission for Combatting Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration	26.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-08	Anonymous, national authority	-	30.03.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-09	Anonymous, national authority	-	02.04.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-10	Anonymous, national authority	-	19.04.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-11	Anonymous, international organisation	-	20.04.2018	Tabanovce	-
MK-K-12	Anonymous, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	-	20.04.2018	Tabanovce	Focus group with 4 ppl.
MK-K-13	Anonymous, national authority	-	20.04.2018	Tabanovce	-
MK-K-14	Goran Stojanovski, Crisis Management Centre	Manager	20.04.2018	Kumanovo	-
MK-K-15	Anonymous, IOM	-	23.04.2018	Vinojug	Focus group with 3 ppl.
MK-K-16	Anonymous, national authority	-	23.04.2018	Vinojug	-

MK-K-17	Anonymous, international organisation	-	23.04.2018	Vinojug	-
MK-K-18	Anonymous, national authority	-	23.04.2018	Gevgelija	-
MK-K-19	Trpe Stojanovski, PhD, Association for Criminology and Criminal Law	President	16.05.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-20	Prosecutor's Office for Organised Crime and Corruption	-	17.05.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-21	Anonymous, national NGO	-	11.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-22	Anonymous, national authority	-	11.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-23	Anonymous, national authority	-	11.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-24	Anonymous, Sector for Asylum, Ministry of the Interior	-	13.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-25	Anonymous, national authority	-	13.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-26	Anonymous, Section for Cross-Border Crime and Migration, Ministry of the Interior	-	16.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-27	Anonymous, Border Police, Ministry of the Interior	-	16.07.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-28	Srdjan Amet, NGO SOS Children's Village	Project Manager	10.08.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-29	Natasha Stanojevikj, Centre for Social Work, Skopje	Head of Centre	13.08.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-30	Anonymous, national authority	-	14.08.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-31	Anonymous, national authority	-	14.08.2018	Skopje	-
MK-K-32	Anonymous, Safe House	-	15.08.2018	Skopje	-

Serbia

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
RS-M-01	18-year-old Pakistani man	09.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-02	24-year-old Pakistani man	11.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-03	19-year-old Afghan man	13.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-04	27 Iraqi man and 23 -year-old Iraqi woman	19.04.2018	Subotica	2 people (married couple)
RS-M-05	29-year-old Iraqi Yazidi man	19.04.2018	Subotica	-
RS-M-06	45-year-old Kurdish man	20.04.2018	Kikinda	-
RS-M-07	21-year-old Pakistani woman	20.04.2018	Kikinda	-
RS-M-08	41-year-old Pakistani man	20.04.2018	Kikinda	-
RS-M-09	42-year-old Yazidi man	21.04.2018	Sombor	-
RS-M-10	34-year-old Syrian Kurdish man	21.04.2018	Sombor	-
RS-M-11	36-year-old Syrian man and 29-year-old Iraqi man	28.05.2018	Vranje	2 people
RS-M-12	19-year-old Afghan man	28.05.2018	Vranje	-
RS-M-13	Iraqi man and Iraqi woman	28.05.2018	Vranje	2 people (married couple)
RS-M-14	29-year-old Iranian man	28.05.2018	Vranje	-
RS-M-15	19-year-old Afghan woman	29.05.2018	Bujanovac	-
RS-M-16	29-year-old Iraqi man	29.05.2018	Bujanovac	-
RS-M-17	28-year-old Iranian man	30.05.2018	Preševo	-
RS-M-18	36-year-old Iranian man	30.05.2018	Preševo	-
RS-M-19	27-year-old Iraqi woman and 31-year-old Iraqi man	02.06.2018	Preševo	2 people (married couple)
RS-M-20	24-year-old Afghan man	02.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-21	21-year-old Afghan man	06.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-22	Afghani man	06.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-23	18-year-old Afghan man	07.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-24	18-year-old Afghan man	18.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-25	21-year-old Afghan man	21.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-26	24-year-old Afghan man	21.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-27	25-year-old Bangladeshi man	25.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-28	26-year-old Afghan man	26.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-29	26-year-old Afghan man	26.06.2018	Belgrade	-

RS-M-30	31-year-old Afghan man	26.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-31	23-year-old Indian man	26.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-32	23-year-old Pakistani man	28.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-33	25-year-old Pakistani man	28.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-34	25-year-old Afghan man	28.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-35	22-year-old Afghan man	29.07.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-M-36	18-year-old Somalian woman	31.08.2018	Adaševci	-
RS-M-37	46-year-old Syrian man	31.08.2018	Adaševci	-
RS-M-38	41-year-old Iranian woman	01.09.2018	Principovac	-
RS-M-39	28-year-old Algerian man	01.09.2018	Principovac	-
RS-M-40	Iraqi Kurdish man	01.09.2018	Principovac	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
RS-K-01	Dubravka Vranjanac & Tanja Markalj, Save the Children	Field Office Manager & Child Protection Manager	12.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-02	Anonymous, women's rights NGO	-	13.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-03	Snežana Elez, Ministry of Interior, Border Police Directorate	-	15.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-04	Anonymous, Ministry of Interior, Asylum Office	-	15.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-05	Anonymous, ASTRA NGO	-	15.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-06	Anonymous, Asylum Protection Center (APC)	-	16.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-07	Andrea Contenta, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)	-	19.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-08	Irena Vari, Info Park NGO	Protection Officer	19.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-09	Miodrag Ćakić, Refugee Aid Serbia (RAS)	Executive Director	20.03.2018	Belgrade	-

RS-K-10	Vanja Paran, Refugee Foundation	Psychologist	21.03.2018	-	-
RS-K-11	Anonymous	Social Worker	22.03.2018	Pirot	-
RS-K-12	Anonymous	Humanitarian worker	22.03.2018	Pirot	-
RS-K-13	Anonymous, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)	-	30.03.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-14	Milena Timotijević, International Rescue Committee (IRC)	GBV Specialist	02.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-15	Anonymous, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	THB Programme Specialist	04.04.2018	-	-
RS-K-16	Anonymous	Human Rights Lawyer	04.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-17	Anonymous	Social Worker	17.04.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-18	Anonymous	Social Worker	19.04.2018	Subotica	-
RS-K-19	Anonymous, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM)	-	19.04.2018	Subotica	-
RS-K-20	Anonymous	Social Worker	20.04.2018	Kikinda	-
RS-K-21	Anonymous	Frontline Worker	20.04.2018	Kikinda	-
RS-K-22	Martin Milanseid, No Name Kitchen, Simon Campbell, BelgrAid, Rigardu Organisation	Independent Volunteers	20.04.2018	Subotica	Focus Group with 4 ppl.
RS-K-23	Anonymous	THB Specialist	-	Belgrade	-
RS-K-24	Katarina Mitić, UNICEF	-	25.04.2018	Belgrade	-

RS-K-25	Radmila Dragičević Dičić	State Judge	25.05.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-26	Anonymous	State Prosecutor	28.05.2018	Vranje	-
RS-K-27	Anonymous	Social Worker	28.05.2018	Vranje	-
RS-K-28	Anonymous, SCRM	-	28.05.2018	Vranje	-
RS-K-29	Anonymous, Centre for Social Work	-	29.05.2018	Bujanovac	-
RS-K-30	Anonymous, SCRM	-	29.05.2018	Bujanovac	-
RS-K-31	Anonymous, Centre for Social Work	-	30.05.2018	Preševo	-
RS-K-32	Anonymous, SCRM	-	30.05.2018	Preševo	-
RS-K-33	Zoran Pašalić, State Ombudsman	-	07.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-34	Anonymous, Centre for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking	-	13.06.2018	Belgrade	-
RS-K-35	Anonymous	Taxi Driver	01.07.2018	-	-
RS-K-36	Anonymous, SCRM	-	31.08.2018	-	-
RS-K-37	Anonymous, SCRM	-	01.09.2018	-	-
RS-K-38	Anonymous	Arabic Translator/ Interpreter	01.10.2018	-	By phone

Hungary

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
HU-M-01	35-year-old Iranian man	16.05.2018	Tompa	-
HU-M-02	19-year-old Afghan man	16.05.2018	Tompa	-
HU-M-03	27-year-old Iranian woman	16.05.2018	Tompa	-
HU-M-04	19-year-old Afghan man	13.06.2018	Budapest	-
HU-M-05	18-year-old Afghan man	17.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-M-06	19-year-old East African woman	04.09.2018	Budapest	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
HU-K-01	Anonymous	Asylum Coordinator	08.02.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-02	Anonymous	Psychologist	21.03.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-03	Child Protection Services (TEGYESZ)	Child Protection Expert	05.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-04	Anonymous	Asylum Expert	05.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-05	Agnes De Coll	Trafficking Expert	05.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-06	Anonymous	Social Worker	09.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-07	National Crisis Information Hotline (OKIT)	Crisis Centre Officer	10.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-08	Anonymous, national authority	Asylum Expert	17.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-09	András Siewert, Migration Aid	Director	17.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-10	Anonymous, NGO	Asylum Expert	17.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-11	Balázs Lehel, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Head of Office	13.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-12	Ministry of Interior's Deputy State Secretary for EU and International Affairs	Ministry Officer	13.04.2018	Budapest	In writing
HU-K-13	Regional Directorate (National Level) of the Immigration and Asylum Office	Immigration Officer	13.04.2018	Budapest	In writing
HU-K-14	National Police and Riot Police National Bureau of Investigation	Police Officer	13.04.2018	Budapest	In writing
HU-K-15	Hungarian Helsinki Foundation	Asylum Expert	03.05.2018	-	-
HU-K-16	Márk Kékesi	Asylum Expert	14.05.2018	-	-

HU-K-17	Hungarian Helsinki Foundation	Asylum Expert	14.05.2018	-	-
HU-K-18	Child Protection Services (TEGYESZ)	Officer	15.05.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-19	Anonymous, national authority	Child Protection Expert	17.05.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-20	Anonymous	Psychologist	24.05.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-21	Szilárd Kalmár	Social Worker and Activist	24.04.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-22	Anonymous	Social Worker	26.06.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-23	Anonymous	Psychologist	13.07.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-24	Non-governmental refugee support organisation	Intercultural Mediator	26.07.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-25	Anonymous, religious organisation	Former head of refugee assistance project	27.07.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-26	Anonymous, national authority	Programme Manager	19.07.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-27	Anonymous, international organisation	Migration Field Expert	01.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-28	Anonymous, international organisation	Refugee Expert	13.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-29	Borbála Csekeő Reményiné, Blue Line Child Crisis Foundation	Psychologist and Senior Advisor	14.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-30	Anonymous	Child Protection Expert	16.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-31	Anonymous	Child Protection Expert	17.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-32	Anonymous, international organisation	Advocacy Specialist	21.08.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-33	Anonymous, hospital	Psychiatrist	27.08.2018	-	-

HU-K-34	Anonymous, international organisation	Asylum Expert	27.08.2018	-	-
HU-K-35	Anonymous, refugee organisation	Migrant Volunteer	04.09.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-36	Anonymous	Asylum Professional	07.09.2018	Budapest	-
HU-K-37	Nick Thorpe, BBC	Journalist	17.09.2018	Budapest	-

Germany

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
DE-M-01	26-year-old Senegalese man	24.05.2018	Genoa, Italy	-
DE-M-02	28-year-old Kenyan woman	07.06.2018	Berlin	-
DE-M-03	43-year-old Cameroonian man	17.05.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-04	38-year-old Nigerian man	21.07.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-05	42-year-old Ghanaian man	21.07.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-06	28-year-old Ghanaian man	21.07.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-07	29-year-old Nigerian woman	24.07.2018	Munich	-
DE-M-08	35-year-old Senegalese man	26.07.2018	Nuremberg	-
DE-M-09	27-year-old Ivorian woman	29.07.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-10	32-year-old Cameroonian man	26.07.2018	Nuremberg	-
DE-M-11	30-year-old Malian man	26.07.2018	Nuremberg	-
DE-M-12	25-year-old Syrian man	01.08.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-13	26-year-old Syrian man	01.08.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-14	42-year-old Eritrean man	27.08.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-15	25-year-old Syrian man	28.08.2018	Bamberg	-
DE-M-16	25-year-old Cameroonian woman	30.08.2018	Berlin	-
DE-M-17	28-year-old Cameroonian woman	30.08.2018	Berlin	-
DE-M-18	42-year-old Senegalese man	18.09.2018	-	-
DE-M-19	21-year-old Afghan man	06.09.2018	Bamberg	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
DE-K-01	Dr. Dorothea Czarnecki, End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) Germany	Responsible for THB and Child Protection	11.04.2018	Berlin	-
DE-K-02	Dr. Philipp Schwertmann, German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)	Coordinator	11.04.2018	Berlin	-
DE-K-03	Dr. Annette Niederfranke, International Labour Organization (ILO)	Director	12.04.2018	Berlin	-
DE-K-04	Anonymous, Terres des Femmes	-	12.04.2018	Berlin	-
DE-K-05	Anonymous, Save the Children	-	18.05.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-06	Helga Gayer, Federal Criminal Office (BKA)	Department for THB, Procuring and Trafficking of Children	07.05.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-07	Anonymous, Jadwiga Munich	-	15.05.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-08	Sister Lea, Solwodi	Founder	15.05.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-09	Anonymous, accommodation centre	Counsellor	17.05.2018	-	-
DE-K-10	Anonymous, Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Menschenhandel (K.O.K., e.v.)	-	19.06.2018	-	By email
DE-K-11	Anonymous, Fraueninformationszentrum (Information Centre for Women) Stuttgart	-	20.06.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-12	Dr. Jürgen Thomas, Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs	Responsible for Labour Exploitation	30.05.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-13	Anonymous, Caritas Schwarzwald	-	13.07.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-14	Anonymous, Solwodi Bad Kissingen	-	16.07.2018	-	By phone

DE-K-15	Anonymous, NGO	Counsellor	24.07.2018	-	-
DE-K-16	Anonymous, Frauenhauskoordination (umbrella organisation for women shelters)	-	31.07.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-17	Anonymous, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)	-	29.08.2018	-	By email
DE-K-18	Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Serbia	-	25.09.2018	-	By phone
DE-K-19	Stephan Strehlow, Berlin Police	-	22.10.2018	-	By phone
DE-O-1	Demonstration against AnKER centres in Bamberg, Germany	-	22.10.2018	Bamberg	Observation

Italy

A. People who travelled the route

Code	Profile	Date	Location	Comments
IT-M-01	23-year-old Malian man	31.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-M-02	28-year-old Palestinian man	31.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-M-03	27-year-old Sudanese man	31.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-M-04	45-year-old Ghanaian man	02.08.2018	Rome	-
IT-M-05	22-year-old Nigerian woman	18.08.2018	Palermo	-
IT-M-06	22-year-old Ivoirian man	24.08.2018	Rome	-
IT-M-07	28-year-old Senegalese man	06.10.2018	Rome	-
IT-M-08	24-year-old Malian man	06.10.2018	Rome	-

B. Key Informants

Code	Name & Organisation	Position	Date	Location	Comments
IT-K-01	Enza Roberta Petrillo, Save the Children	-	14.03.2018	Rome	-

IT-K-02	Maria Concetta Segneri, Istituto Nazionale per la promozione della salute delle popolazioni Migranti e il contrasto alle malattie della Povertà (National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty, INMP)	-	13.04.2018	Rome	-
IT-K-03	Francesca Nicodemi, UNHCR	-	22.03.2018	-	Skype
IT-K-04	Francesco Mason, NAVE Project	Lawyer and Legal Operator	23.03.2018	Venice	-
IT-K-05	Gianfranco Della Valle, Anti-Trafficking Hotline	Director	26.03.2018	Mestre, VE	-
IT-K-06	Cinzia Bragagnolo, NAVE Project	Director	26.03.2018	Mestre, VE	-
IT-K-07	Anonymous, Social Services	-	27.03.2018	Mestre, VE	-
IT-K-08	Franco Tasinato, Anti-Trafficking Hotline	Operator	27.03.2018	Mestre, VE	-
IT-K-09	Cassandra Koch, Ministry of Labour	-	28.03.2018	Rome	-
IT-K-10	Anonymous, International Organization for Migration (IOM)	-	29.03.2018	Rome	-
IT-K-11	Susanna Zanfrini, International Rescue Committee (IRC)	-	10.04.2018	Rome	-
IT-K-12	Enrica Di Nanni, Dedalus	-	16.04.2018	Naples	-
IT-K-13	Luca Oliviero, Dedalus	-	16.04.2018	Naples	-
IT-K-14	Diego Pandiscia, INTERSOS	-	26.04.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-15	Fausto Melluso, Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana (ARCI)	-	26.04.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-16	Alexander Kwame Osei Minkah, Ghanaian community	-	27.04.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-17	Fabio Massimo Lo Verde, University of Palermo	-	27.04.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-18	Valerio Landri, Caritas	Regional Director	30.04.2018	Agrigento	-
IT-K-19	Anonymous, Caritas	-	30.04.2018	Agrigento	-

IT-K-20	Anonymous, NGO	Experts in Protection of Victims of Trafficking	02.05.2018	-	Focus group with 3 ppl.
IT-K-21	Oriana Cannavò, Penelope Association	-	03.05.2018	Catania	-
IT-K-22	Lucia Borghi, Borderline Sicilia	-	03.05.2018	Catania	-
IT-K-23	Lina Trovato, Catania Tribunal	Assistant Prosecutor	03.05.2018	Catania	-
IT-K-24	Silvia Dizzia, Red Cross Italy	-	03.05.2018	Catania	-
IT-K-25	Gianpiero di Fiore, Pellegrino della Terra, Waldesians	-	04.05.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-26	Sergio Cipolla, Cooperazione Sud-Sud (CISS)	-	04.05.2018	Palermo	-
IT-K-27	Anonymous, NGO	Expert in Protection of Victims of Trafficking	04.05.2018	Bagheria	-
IT-K-28	Anonymous, Caritas	-	30.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-K-29	Simone Alterisio, Oxfam-Waldesians	-	30.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-K-30	Anonymous, Collettivo 20k	Activist	31.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-K-31	Anonymous	Owner of a Public Service	31.07.2018	Ventimiglia	-
IT-K-32	Anonymous, Palermo Court, Anti-Trafficking Section	-	18.08.2018	-	-

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Annex: Potential Trafficking Cases and Related Abuses Identified in the Research

In addition to the 29 cases included in Chapter 4 of this study, indications were also obtained of the following cases.

a) Sexual Exploitation

Case 4.30 – Syrian girl trafficked for sexual exploitation in the context of migrant smuggling in Turkey

According to ECPAT, trafficking for sexual exploitation of children does not happen frequently among those traveling along the Balkan route. The interviewee is only aware of one case where a family from Syria was on their way to Germany. In Turkey, smugglers of unknown nationalities told them that they would only take them for the rest of the journey if they left their daughter, who was then 16 years old, with them. After the family left without the daughter, she was sexually exploited for a few months and was later sent to her family in Germany. In Germany, she fell victim again to a man who sexually exploited her (DE-K-01).

Case 4.31 – Sexual exploitation in prostitution of a Syrian woman in the context of migrant smuggling in Turkey and Greece

A young Syrian woman was sexually exploited by a group of a group of men of different nationalities. The young woman explained that she had used a migrant smuggler get from Syria to Turkey. After she lost her money, her smuggler organised employment in domestic work in Turkey, a position in which she was sexually exploited in prostitution by different people, including the smuggler. The smuggler then blackmailed her, threatening to tell the Turkish family she worked for what 'she was doing' (being sexually exploited).

The woman forfeited her salary as payment to the smuggler, both to pay off the debt for her journey, and as a fee for his arranging her employment. After a year, the smuggler arranged for her to travel to Greece, where similar employment was arranged for her in domestic work, with the smuggler's 'help', for a family of unknown nationality. In this situation she was again sexually exploited.

She escaped with the help of two Syrian men and they went to Serbia. The woman stayed with these two men for a month, as they proceeded to sexually abuse her and perpetrate severe physical violence against her.

While travelling from Serbia to Hungary, she was identified by the organisations involved in the system of protection, IOM and the NGO ATINA, as a victim of human trafficking, in the form of sexual exploitation and debt bondage by smugglers. She found her way to a new (EU) country with the aid of legal and humanitarian institutions (RS-K-34).

Case 4.32 - Trafficking of two Afghan girls for sexual exploitation or sale of children in Turkey and Greece

An interviewee from the Centre for Social Work in Skopje, North Macedonia, shared a case of *“suspected possible sexual exploitation of two sisters from Afghanistan, aged 15 and five. [The girls] were considered as potential victims of trafficking, because they allegedly travelled with a neighbour who lost their money on the boat while travelling by sea. We suspected that they might have been sold and sexually abused by the neighbour, so they were accommodated here in the Safe House”* (MK-K-29).

Case 4.33 – Sexual exploitation of young Iraqi woman in Greece

A young Iraqi woman was abused by her stepfather and subject to a forced marriage. When she arrived in Greece, she did not have the money to continue her journey. She was approached by a man who proposed that she get involved in prostitution in order to earn money and continue the journey. She accepted. He arranged the appointments. She eventually earned enough money to travel onwards to a Western EU country (EL-K-28).

Case 4.34 – Sexual exploitation of women in the context of migrant smuggling in Greece

According to an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia: *“there was information that in a wagon there in Evzonoi [in Greece, close to Gevgelija in North Macedonia], women [nationalities not specified] had to provide sexual services to ‘earn’ a certain amount so they could pay the onward journey [...]. The organisers were selling them [...]. They requested money and the women did not have it, so this guy [smuggler] told them, ‘if not, then you have to give sexual services, I will find you a client here, either among the migrants, or among the local population, so you will get the money to continue travelling”* (MK-K-31).

Case 4.35 – Sexual exploitation of a Sudanese women by a Greek shop-owner in Greece

According to the NGO Baptist Aid, a 25-year-old Sudanese woman became pregnant in Sudan. She gave birth to her baby, but was excluded by her family, so she escaped and managed to get to Greece. In Athens, she was offered work at a vegetable shop by a Greek shop-owner. She accepted the job in order to pay for her onward travel. Instead of the vegetable shop, she was forced into prostitution at a brothel for a year. She managed to escape from there and travel to Hungary (HU-K-25).

Case 4.36 – Sexual exploitation of an Afghan woman in Greece and Serbia

According to a refugee expert from a migrant community in Hungary: *“An Afghan woman came alone with her two smaller children. She was about 26-27 years old. A Pakistani smuggler took them from Athens to Horgoš [border town in Serbia, in the border of Hungary] The woman couldn’t pay, she had said it at the beginning to the man, who said that he could still take her and later they would agree on the payment. The man lied and actually sold the woman to his friends during the trip. She was raped multiple times during the trip. She was asked by the authorities in the Transit Zone in Hungary about what happened to her, but she was too frightened, she was afraid to talk about it to them”* (HU-K-28).

Case 4.37 – Nigerian woman sexually exploited in Libya

A young Nigerian woman described her experience in Libya: *“men were coming, they were having sex with us. They said it was to pay for our trip. I wanted to go away, I wanted to escape, it was impossible. Some of us were crying all the time. I don’t know how long I stayed. It was terrible, and I sometimes felt I was going to die”* (IT-M-05).

Case 4.38 – Nigerian man trafficked for sexual exploitation by a Greek woman in Greece

“A Nigerian man was sold in Greece by a Greek woman whom he met in a bar. The woman told him that she would bring people who would pay money for sex. The man had wanted to leave Greece for a while, but he didn’t have money. He agreed. He collected the money for the smuggler. He had to work at night and he received €300 per night. He was not aware how much the woman received from the clients.

She organised the clients and the place. He finally managed to pay the smuggler who brought him to Serbia. His 'clients' were men and women" (HU-K-28).

Case 4.39 – Sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and labour exploitation of two Pakistani boys by Pakistani men in Greece and Serbia

In a Transit Zone in Hungary, one of the interviewees met: "two 16-year-old boys who had both been sexually exploited. They didn't talk much about it, but they had lived in a room with other Pakistanis in Athens. They were in a big room, and the smugglers told them to wait until they could continue the journey. They had to beg and work in farms. They waited there for six months. They were raped by other men in the room and later they were given money by people in the room.

They collected the money: €600-800 to cross to [North] Macedonia. They waited there in a camp, and they came to Serbia. They were from the same village in Pakistan and were friends. In Serbia, in Subotica, in the 'factory' [informal squat], the same thing happened: they were raped there by other men" (HU-K-27).

Case 4.40 – Sexual exploitation of an Afghan boy by Afghan men in North Macedonia

One interviewee had heard about this practice among Afghans. An Afghan boy who was residing for two months at the Tabanovce Transit Centre was assumed to have been subjected to this practice. When social workers tried to talk to the child about it, they did not succeed, because whenever they tried to approach him he was immediately surrounded by the people from the Afghan group staying at the centre (MK-K-03).

Case 4.41 – Sexual exploitation (bacha bāzī) and domestic servitude of an Afghan boy

In Hungary, a female police officer conducted an interview with a young man, and it had an impact on the story: "The young man had arrived in Hungary at the age of 16-17 and he had been forced to dance [bacha bāzī] while he was aged 10-13. The abuse started with domestic work for an older man in Afghanistan. The boy had to wash the dishes, feed the animals, clean the house and move in with the family as a slave.

The man took the boy to the dancing events and the family did not know about it. The boy managed to escape one day, he knew where the man kept his money, so he took it and paid a smuggler to take him far away. He travelled through Iran, Turkey, Greece, [North] Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. It is not known what happened to him [as he left Hungary], but he got status” (HU-K-17).

b) Forced Marriage

Case 4.42 – Girl subjected to forced marriage in Greece

“Another case was a girl who was living in the Eleonas Accommodation Centre in Athens. Her family back home was putting pressure on her to move to a country in Northern Europe, because they had already made arrangements for her to be married to a much older man, more than 50 years old. She did not want to move and was asking for assistance from the organisations in the camp. After some time, and since she did not move on, that marriage never took place. Yet her parents made arrangements for her to be married to another man, in another EU country, also much older (over 50 years old). She also resisted moving, but after some time, she left the camp and was not seen again” (EL-K-27).

Case 4.43 – Forced marriage of a Syrian girl to a Syrian man in Syria

“We had a case of a 13-year-old Syrian girl who was married to a 32-year-old Syrian man. The girl gave birth at a hospital in Skopje. Her mother was 32 or 33 years old, the same age as her daughter’s husband. So there was a complication with the baby, and he did not want to sign to authorise a medical procedure, so we intervened. He [the husband] was chief there, he had financed the trip for the whole family, there were a dozen people. The marriage had taken place in Syria and the girl was paid. It was obvious that he had the last word. The mother and father of the girl were with her in the hospital when she gave birth. They had a document, they showed a family card, and we couldn’t treat her as an unaccompanied child” (MK-K-29).

Case 4.44 – Forced marriage and sexual exploitation of an Algerian woman in Algeria and Greece

“I met a girl [woman] from Algeria, she said that she was a victim of attempted sexual exploitation in Greece. She didn’t provide further details because of the stigma. In Algeria she had already been sexually exploited, which was why she had left.

The family sold her into a forced marriage and she was continuously raped, but she managed to escape. She didn't give her age, but she was around 23-28. She was in the Transit Zone" (HU-K-27).

c) Labour Exploitation

Case 4.45 – Boy subjected to labour exploitation in the context of migrant smuggling in North Macedonia

A young boy was exploited by smugglers in North Macedonia, who forced him to collect humanitarian supplies: *"in Lojane, a child [nationality not specified] came to our office to receive humanitarian aid. For a week, the child, a young child, was coming, getting supplies, taking them to other refugees. He was taking the goods to a smugglers' house where other refugees were staying. And when we asked him why he was doing this, he said that he had to earn money for his trip" (MK-K-05).*

Case 4.46 – Labour exploitation of a man in sheep farming in North Macedonia

One interviewee shared a case involving a man who had previously been a biology professor (nationality not specified), and who accepted work on a sheep farm in North Macedonia. He was left alone on the sheepfold to take care of the sheep, feeding and milking them and maintaining hygiene: *"He stayed in the same area with the sheep, nourished himself from the products he himself made. They [the exploiters] came for a few days, they checked his work, and he was told that he was very far away from the settlement, that he could not leave. He was promised a certain amount of money that he never received. He stayed two months at the farm and said that when he left, he was not prevented from leaving. He left the place and continued the journey. But at that time, he was terribly afraid, with a terrible feeling of powerlessness" (MK-K-03).*

Case 4.47 – Labour exploitation of adults and children in the context of migrant smuggling in factories and on plantations in Turkey

A group of people were exploited in Turkey in factories and on plantations, both adults and accompanied children, while residing there, because they needed money to pay the smuggler for the onward journey. According to a key informant in North Macedonia, they worked for 2-3 months, handing all of the money over to the smuggler, and then the smuggler facilitated their trip to North Macedonia (MK-K-29).

Case 4.48 - Labour exploitation of men and boys in the context of migrant smuggling on poultry farms in Serbia

Men and boys were being exploited close to Obrenovac Transit and Reception Centre, outside Belgrade. According to a key informant, *“they work on poultry farms.[...] Many of the migrants share a portion of their pay directly with their smugglers, some of them give them all of it. This is human trafficking”* (RS-K-16).

Case 4.49 – Labour exploitation on raspberry plantations in Serbia

According to an Egyptian man who assisted with the research in Serbia as a translator, residents of the Vranje Reception Centre were being exploited on raspberry plantations. Frozen raspberries are exported to the EU from these plantations. The wages that people receive are 50 Serbian dinars (€0.42) per kilogram (compared to the daily fee received by Serbian citizens, which is a good wage, slightly more than average). Refugees and other migrants work without papers and permits, from time to time, usually for daily fee of around 2,000 dinars or €17 (RS-K-38).

Case 4.50 – Senegalese men exploited in agriculture in Italy

A 26-year-old Senegalese man was returned from Germany to Italy under the Dublin Regulation. At the time that an interview was conducted with him for this research (mid-2018), he was living in an old factory in Italy with 500-1,000 other people, all of them from Senegal, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. There was no running water and no electricity at the factory, so they were drawing water from a borehole and going to petrol stations to beg for drinking water. When work was available, people of the same nationalities – labour intermediaries –, who had been in Italy for a longer time and had regular status came to offer work for Italian farmers, for a few hours or days. The working conditions were very poor and the payment was very low – €2.50-3.00 per hour. He described this life as: *“Like in Africa or worse”* (DE-M-01).

Case 4.51 – Labour exploitation in the potato harvest in Italy

In Siracusa province (Cassibile, Sicily), there are ghettos where around 200 people reside in slum dwellings, for seasonal work in the potato harvest. These people were often inside the reception system and have a residence permit, and this is the only way they can earn some money.

Living conditions are very poor, with no running water, no electricity and no sanitation, according to an interviewee from an NGO in Ragusa (IT-K-20).

Case 4.52 – Labour exploitation in harvests in Italy

Similar exploitative conditions were reported in Trapani province in Western Sicily, where sub-Saharan African and North African people work seasonally to harvest tomatoes, olives and grapes and live in the 'ghetto', earning a very low daily wage (around €3) (IT-K-19; IT-K-21; IT-K-25).

Case 4.53 – Labour exploitation of North African men in greenhouse agriculture in Italy

North African men, particularly Tunisians, work with Romanian men and women in greenhouse agriculture in Ragusa province, Sicily, or they become owners/managers of some greenhouses and employ Romanians. They often do not have a regular status and are often victims of deception, in terms of fake contracts or fake possibilities to regularise their status, offered by the bosses they work for (IT-K-20; IT-K-21). According to an interviewee from Waldesians in Palermo: *“Also Vittoria [Ragusa area] is another critical place, where people are exploited and trafficked to work inside greenhouses. The working conditions are terrible”* (IT-K-25).

Case 4.54 – Pakistani and Bangladeshi men exploited in the livestock industry

Pakistani and Bangladeshi Sikh men are also frequently victims of labour exploitation in the livestock industry, according to an interviewee from the NGO Dedalus in Naples. Exploited workers live in the same place where they work, in conditions below the minimum standards. They are underpaid and threatened with being reported to the police because of their irregular status. In some cases their documents are seized. This happens in a condition of spatial isolation, as the livestock industries are located in very remote places (IT-K-13).

Case 4.55 – Labour exploitation of a man by a catering company

A man whose nationality cannot be specified received 150,000 forints (around €450) per month, considered to be a higher salary, because he worked night shifts. He was then required to pay the catering company 130,000 forints for accommodation, leaving him and his family of five with only 20,000 forints to live on. The accommodation conditions were poor, with his entire family living in a 30-square-metre flat (HU-K-09).

Case 4.56 – Exploitation of a Nigerian woman at a bar in Brandenburg, Germany

An interviewee from the umbrella organisation of anti-trafficking NGOs in Germany, K.O.K., described the case of a Nigerian woman who was living at an accommodation centre in Brandenburg in Northeast Germany. At the accommodation centre she was approached by other Nigerians who offered her a job at a bar. She accepted the job but the payment was very low. When she wanted to stop working there, she was forced to continue. Eventually, she sought help from the police and was referred to a counselling organisation (DE-K-10).

Case 4.57 – Boy exploited at a textile factory in Turkey

An unaccompanied boy aged 17 (nationality not specified) spoke to a key informant in North Macedonia about how he had been exploited in Turkey: *“A few of them were locked up in a small space, they had to not lift their heads from the sewing machine, because if they raised their heads they would be whipped because they were not working. They could not go to the bathroom - that was allowed only twice during a shift of 12-14 hours. They did not receive food, they were starved, they did not have air”* (MK-K-03).

Case 4.58 – Ghanaian man exploited in the context of migrant smuggling in textiles in Libya

A Ghanaian man interviewed for this research in Italy spoke of his experience of exploitative conditions in the textile industry (carpets), while he was in transit in Libya: *“In Tripoli I met a Libyan, a good man, who looked for Africans who wanted to cross the sea and helped them. I worked for him for seven months making carpets.*

He didn't pay me, but he organised the trip for me and one day he put me on the boat. There were three of us, all Ghanaians, working for him" (IT-M-01).

Case 4.59 – Exploitation in begging of West African men in Italy

As described by an interviewee from UNHCR in Italy, there are indications of exploitative begging involving young West African men in Rome: *"in considering young men (18-20 years of age), especially Nigerians exploited for begging, it seems very clear that they have to hand the money over to someone else, so it is possible that this is a form of debt. It is difficult to determine whether they came autonomously, but they are in debt to someone who paid for their trip, or whether they are recruited here. [...Some of] these men are recruited in their country of origin by a criminal network with the aim of exploiting them, which is definitely trafficking" (IT-K-03).*

According to an interviewee from Save the Children: *"The reception system to which they are allocated does not provide for cash, so they are often in need of money. This vulnerability is exploited by people who are often in the reception system themselves, maybe they are in the process of regularisation (residing in SPRAR or CAS), or they already have refugee status or subsidiary protection. This is a very new phenomenon. They don't show any evident sign of vulnerability (physical), but they beg showing a sign (always the same for everybody) with a phrase in perfect Italian" (IT-K-01).*

Case 4.60 – Afghan boy exploited in domestic work in Turkey

A case of domestic servitude was described by a human rights lawyer interviewed for this research in Serbia: *"There was an unaccompanied boy from Afghanistan who was a domestic servant in Turkey for four months. He wasn't deprived of his liberty in that time, though if he interrupted his period of service, he could not continue his journey, that's how he described it to me. It's a system of coercion. He had no money and had to continue his journey" (RS-K-16).*

Case 4.61 – West African woman exploited in domestic work in Bulgaria

A woman from a West African country went to Bulgaria for domestic work, and was abused by her employers, who withheld her personal identification documents, did not pay her for her work, and limited her freedom of mobility within the country.

The woman left the house and sought shelter at one of the Refugee Registration and Reception centres in Sofia, where she applied for asylum. She then sought assistance with her asylum application from the NGO FAR, a legal aid organisation, and the lawyer advised her that she could also be considered a victim of trafficking. The lawyer used the formal indicators developed by the National Commission to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) to identify a victim, and referred her case to the NCCTHB and to the NGO Animus, which provided detailed information about the woman's case to the State Agency for Refugees.

Lawyers from FAR discussed the case with the NCCTHB in order to determine how the woman could be identified as a victim of trafficking, given that her former employers had withheld her personal identification documents, including a passport, which she needed in order to receive the status of a victim of trafficking. During this time, the lawyer also discovered that the woman was hesitant about the prospect of being granted the status of victim of trafficking. She was concerned about the additional procedures that she would have to undertake (BG-K-10).

Case 4.62 – West African woman exploited in domestic work in Bulgaria

In 2017, a West African woman was hired by a diplomat's family living in Bulgaria. The woman had a valid work visa and was employed as a domestic worker. She alleged that the father in the family sexually abused her and raped her. She left the house, and was found by a foreign journalist on a remote village road. The journalist submitted a signal to the NCCTHB.

While the woman was accommodated at a shelter for victims of trafficking, the regional prosecutor was mobilised by the NCCTHB. The prosecutor opened an investigation into the case, but witnesses came forward to testify in support of the diplomat's family. The prosecutor swiftly determined that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegations of human trafficking. The woman was returned to her country of origin (BG-K-01).

Case 4.63 – Ghanaian man exploited in domestic servitude in Libya

A young Ghanaian man interviewed in Italy had been exploited in domestic servitude in Libya. He described: *"Then the situation in Libya got bad [2011], it wasn't a safe place to be. One day a Libyan man took me to his house to work there and I went. I was working in the house for him. I couldn't go out because it was dangerous. He didn't pay me but he gave me a place to sleep and food"* (IT-M-04).

Case 4.64 – Exploitation of West African women in care work in Italy

A number of cases of exploitation in care work were identified by an interviewee from the Palermo court: *“badanti, especially West African women [often Nigerian women who are no longer considered young enough to be exploited in prostitution], are kept in private houses where they take care of elderly people. They have just a place to sleep and food to eat, they cannot go out ‘for their own safety’. They themselves have difficulties in identifying their condition of exploitation, because it is almost like the job the traffickers promised them before leaving their home country. They normally start realising their condition when sexual violence also occurs”* (IT-K-32).

d) Exploitation in Forced Criminal Activities

Case 4.65 – Exploitation of children in migrant smuggling in Greece

“There are cases recorded of children who were victims of trafficking and became smugglers. In the Guardianship Network for Unaccompanied Children we have come across Syrians who smuggle unaccompanied minors. They reach the Reception and Identification Centre [RIC, in Greece] and they are fully aware of the procedures. Once they leave the RIC, they confide to their escort that ‘you know, I get paid to transfer children from Turkey to Greece, and then I return to Turkey in order to do so again’. When asked about why they do it, they reply that in this way they make money in order to repay their debts” (EL-K-11).

Case 4.66 – Suspected exploitation in migrant smuggling of an Algerian girl by a Tunisian man in North Macedonia

An unconfirmed suspicion was shared by an interviewee in relation to a Tunisian man who was accommodated at a centre in North Macedonia for some time: *“After several days we saw him in Lojane, and we saw him frequently there for a long time. All the time in Lojane, he was accompanied by an [Algerian] girl who was also at the centre and was a refugee. [...] After that, we noticed them residing in the villages together for a month or more. But whatever exactly happened between them, it did not seem that there were any signs of any abuse. They claimed to be married [...].*

Whether they were both smugglers and worked together or not, we never got information. They looked clean, dressed with new shoes and good clothes, which raised doubts, but no proof. Still, we were quite suspicious that they were, perhaps not exactly smugglers, but guides” (MK-K-11).

Case 4.67 – Pakistani boy exploited in migrant smuggling in Serbia

According to one social worker: *“We met one guy [a Pakistani boy], he was underage, and he worked as a smuggler. He had bigger bosses that he worked for [...]. We don’t know the nationality of the big boss, but he was based in France [...]. He is probably no longer working for him, but he was forced to work for him and pay money, as he said, pay his way out [...]. He was 16, but he started at 13 or 14. When he wanted to get out of it, he feared he would be killed for something, and he had to pay quite a huge amount of money”* (RS-K-20).

Case 4.68 – Attempted exploitation of an Afghan man in migrant smuggling in Hungary

“A social worker spoke of an Afghan family living in Hungary with their children. They integrated well, had a small restaurant and spoke good Hungarian. There was a problem in the family. The social workers realised that something had changed. They asked the parents to talk. They realised that the father, who had left Afghanistan first, had been taken by smugglers, who were arrested by the police in Turkey. The man was a witness in the trial and he had faced them in court in Turkey. The smugglers were sentenced to prison.

After five years in prison, the smugglers appeared in Budapest and found the man. He realised that there were always two men at his restaurant. He didn’t think too much about it, but then he received an email that said that ‘we know who you are and what you did. We will let you live, but only if you help us to smuggle people to Hungary.’ The man wrote back that he had no idea what they were talking about.

Then he received photos of his children and details of their previous residence at an accommodation centre in Hungary. The message said ‘if you are not the man in the picture, then it won’t cause you a headache if something happens to them.’ After this message, the children couldn’t leave the child protection institute.” The family eventually left Hungary and were granted status in another EU country, as they were able to prove that the state could not provide for their safety (HU-K-25).

e) Sale of a Child

Case 4.69 – Suspicions of sale of a child involving a Syrian baby in North Macedonia

“We had a case of two brothers [Syrians], one 12 years old, the other a 13-month-old baby, who were travelling alone. We suspected that perhaps the parents were not economically stable, so they were ready to sacrifice one child, sell them to someone to pay for their travel, provide them with documents in Germany. The social workers suspected that the family might have wanted to sell the baby, because [...the baby] was beautiful and they had seven children. And maybe a lot of people who sent phone messages to the Safe House were interested in the baby” (MK-K-29).

f) Trafficking for Removal of Organs

Case 4.70 – Trafficking for removal of organs in Turkey

A man (nationality not specified) shared his experience with frontline workers: *“he was probably sick and admitted to a hospital in Turkey. He recalled that he was sleeping, and in hospital they gave him a sedative to sleep and he woke up with some pain in his body. He said he had no idea what happened. Afterwards, when he went to Greece, it turned out that one kidney was missing. Such case happened in legal hospitals. It was at the beginning of 2016” (MK-K-15).*

Case 4.71 – Two young Eritrean men trafficked for removal of organs

Sindani (2018) describes the case of two young Eritrean men, who wanted to leave the country in order to escape forced conscription into the Eritrean military. Before their departure, people who they later found out were traffickers promised them good jobs in Egypt in the tourism industry. They paid US\$700 each to be taken to Egypt. Upon arrival in Egypt, instead of getting jobs in the tourism industry, they were taken to a hospital for check-ups. They said: *“When we woke up from the anaesthesia, we didn’t know what had happened to us. We felt unwell and we had pain in our backs. It was only after a few days that we discovered that they had taken a kidney from each of us”* (quoted in: Sindani, 2018: 53, own translation).

Afterwards, they had to pay for their medical treatment themselves. With the help of Eritreans who had been living in Egypt for a longer time, they managed to cover the medical costs. However, others were not able to recover and died (Sindani, 2018).

Case 4.72 – Suspected trafficking for removal of organs in Serbia

A case of potential trafficking for removal of organs was identified in the research in Hungary, which took place in Serbia. One of the interviewees had met a young man (nationality unknown) who had a wound on his body. He asked about the scar, which seemed to be fresh. The young man said that he had to sell his kidney during the journey. The interviewee assumed that this happened in Preševo, in Serbia (HU-K-09).

g) Deprivation of Liberty for Extortion

Case 4.73 – Deprivation of liberty for extortion by migrant smugglers in Serbia

An Afghan man interviewed in Serbia described how migrant smugglers transport their ‘customers’ to ‘safe houses’ in rural areas and keep them locked in there for days at a time. The clients are taken hostage and are forced to call their families and friends and arrange payments for the smugglers. The man mentioned that on the first day, people are fed nice food, given plenty of water, and they are not threatened. Then the smugglers gradually begin to apply pressure. His friend was severely beaten after a week inside the house. This activity is systematic and is, according to the Afghan man, present everywhere along the route – in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece: *“The same situation, the smuggler and the refugee”* (RS-M-30).

Case 4.74 – Deprivation of liberty for extortion of Afghan women by migrant smugglers in Serbia

Afghan women were held in captivity in Serbia by migrant smugglers who threatened to abduct their children if they did not hand over a large amount of money, even though these women had already paid them. The Serbian police intervened, and they were released and transferred to an Asylum Centre. Their husbands were detained by the same smuggling network in Bulgaria, so they were afraid to talk to the authorities and report the abuses. After some time, they decided to leave Serbia, again using smuggling services (Oxfam, 2016).

Case 4.75 – Deprivation of liberty for extortion of two Syrian families in North Macedonia

According to an interviewee from the JRS Safe House in North Macedonia: “We had a case of two families who were held hostage in Lojane, a mother with four children and a father with two children, Syrian Kurdish people. They had paid a certain amount of money to get to Germany, because their spouses were there. They were harassed by the smuggler, held hostage in Lojane and requested to pay the smugglers another €7-8,000 - extortion. The woman was very resourceful, before going on the journey she had agreed with her husband on a code in the Kurdish language if she was threatened or in danger, and there was a large police operation after the husband reported their situation in Germany to the police” (MK-K-32). Both families were accommodated in the Safe House following a police operation. The woman with four children departed afterwards to Germany for family reunification. The father and his two children went back to Greece.

Case 4.76 - Bangladeshi man deprived of liberty for extortion by migrant smugglers in Bulgaria

A Bangladeshi man described his experience of being locked up and extorted by migrant smugglers: *“The first time I travelled into Bulgaria, I met another Bangladeshi guy. He said that he would help me, ‘no problem’, he said, ‘I’m Bangladeshi, you’re Bangladeshi’, come to my house’.*

[I didn’t realise that] he was mafia. He took me into his home, took my passport, and I was left without food for four days. He demanded money from me. I was forced to call my friends. This situation - I could not tell my family. My father and mother would have been too upset. I called friends and together they gave me €5,000 - some 500, some 1,000. And then [he said], ‘tonight you go to Serbia’” (RS-M-27).

Case 4.77 - Afghan boy deprived of liberty for extortion by migrant smugglers in Bulgaria

An 18-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary, referring to a time when he was still a child, described his experiences: *“they took us to a prison-like place [in Bulgaria] and they told us that we would be locked up until they got the money. They closed the windows and the doors too. We were there for a week. The Bulgarian smuggler was waiting for the money from the Turkish smuggler” (HU-M-05).*

Case 4.78 – Pakistani boy deprived of liberty for extortion in North Macedonia

A 16-year-old Pakistani boy was held hostage by: *“a group of Pakistanis, who demanded that his brother who was in Europe [an EU country] send money to them. They did not let the boy out of the container, and forced him to consume alcohol and collect the money sent to him through Western Union, until he came to us [the national authorities] crying. Then he was rescued.*

In this case, the brother in Europe had paid the whole sum in advance to the smugglers, but the smugglers repeatedly requested more money while he was on the route, intimidating the boy, getting him drunk and keeping him hostage” (MK-K-08).

Case 4.79 – Nigerian family deprived of liberty for extortion in Libya

A 21-year-old Nigerian man who was living at an accommodation centre in Germany, explained his and his family's experiences in Libya for research published in 2018: *"My father was a business man [in Libya]. He was successful and many Africans were working at his company, especially Nigerians, Ghanaians, Liberians and Senegalese who were living in Libya. Many Africans and Arabs came to Libya to find work. They did not plan to come to Europe. Life in Libya was good for my family. Then the war came. Suddenly foreigners, especially Africans, were in great danger. My father, together with other Africans, was arrested by Libyan rebels; they took him to prison and later killed him"* (quoted in: Sindani, 2018: 46, own translation).

Following the death of his father, the man, his mother and his siblings decided to return to Nigeria. Before they could leave Libya, armed men broke into their home, beat them, took all their belongings, raped their mother and took them to a prison camp together with many other people, including small children. They told them they had to leave Libya. They were beaten, and girls and boys were raped multiple times. The man was forced, together with 200 others, but without his mother and siblings, to get on a boat to Europe. His mother was told that she could only leave the prison camp if she paid money. Since she had no money, she was taken to a camp for forced labour (Sindani, 2018).

Case 4.80 – Malian man deprived of liberty for extortion in Libya

A 20-year-old Malian man, interviewed for the same research, had a similar experience.

He had left Mali and travelled through Niger, and was apprehended in autumn 2014 in Libya and sent to a prison camp, because he was not able to pay the ransom money that was requested from him by the militia group that had captured him.

Later he was forced into hard labour, taken to a prison camp again and then forced to leave Libya by boat to Italy. He said: *"They [the people who ran the prison camp] gave me a telephone and said I should call my family so that they could send me money for my release. But I do not have a family anymore; I do not know where my sister is, my parents both died during the war. I was not able to call anybody. Then they beat me and did not give me any more food. They took us back to prison; from there we had to leave Libya. They threw us on a boat and sent us to Italy. I did not want to go to Italy. We came to Libya to look for work and to live but I did not know that there is war"* (quoted in: Sindani, 2018: 48-49, own translation).

Case 4.81 – Deprivation of liberty for extortion and torture of a Nigerian man in Libya

A Nigerian man who was interviewed for this research described how he was tortured by a Libyan militia group at a prison camp in Libya because he was not able to pay the ransom money that was requested from him. After extreme torture, he pretended to be dead. He was then taken on a truck and left in the Sahara desert. After a day, a Libyan Bedouin man found him, took him to his home and helped him to recover (DE-M-04).

Case 4.82 – Ivoirian woman deprived of liberty for extortion in Libya

A 27-year-old Ivoirian woman who was interviewed for this study explained: *“I had barely arrived in Tripoli and we were captured by the various militias that abound in the country. After they beat us and took all our savings, they put us in jail. They took me to a room where I found other women, and that’s where they raped us every day. We struggled and fought against them, but they were violent and did not hesitate to hit us with iron bars or wood.*

Those were the worst moments of my life and I will never forgive the Libyans for what they did to me. They asked us to pay a ransom of 200,000 CFA francs [€305] each, my friend and me. Luckily, we had been advised not to travel with all our savings. [Therefore they received money that their family sent them]. Once we were freed, we started to hide” (DE-M-09).

Case 4.83 – Malian man deprived of liberty for extortion in Libya

A young Malian man interviewed in Italy recalled his experience of extortion: *“When I entered Libya, I was caught by some Libyans who put me in a Libyan jail, outside the city of Bani Walid. I spent some months there, it was terrible. I was tortured because they wanted money from me. But I had no money. Only those who have money can exit that hell. They want like €5,000 from you to let you go. I even called my father, but he had no money to send me. My mother had surgery in her stomach at that time, and he could not give me anything”* (IT-M-01).



The Strength to Carry On

Around one and a half million people have travelled along the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Balkan route and the Central Mediterranean route since 2015, in order to enter an EU country and apply for asylum or remain without regular immigration status. This study analyses human trafficking among people making the migratory journey, as well as examining their resilience and vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses. The findings of the research indicate the urgent need to prevent and respond to trafficking and vulnerabilities to trafficking in this context, providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers and practitioners, and to people on the move.

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