Multiple factors of vulnerability to trafficking of Roma children

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Structure

• Why a focus on Roma?

• Factors of vulnerability and multiple vulnerabilities

• Link between vulnerability factors and trafficking recruitment strategies
Why focus on Roma?

- Roma constitute about 90% of the victims of trafficking for begging, pick-pocketing and sexual exploitation of boys

- The vulnerability factors are reinforced among the poorest and most marginalized members of the Roma community
Vulnerability factors - Poverty

“I have no bed, electricity and water. At night I cover myself with linoleum to keep warm”

- Persons living in households at-risk-of-poverty
  Hungary and Romania around – 80% among Roma and 40% among non-Roma, Greece – 90% and 50%, Italy – 95% and 40%
- Households living in severe material deprivation
  Bulgaria 82% among Roma compared to 37% among non-Roma, Slovakia – 80% and 45%
- Living in households in which somebody went to bed hungry at least once in the last month
  Greece – 60% of Roma and 5% of non-Roma, Italy-50% and 4%, Romania – 60% and 10%, Slovakia 35% and 15%
- Poverty is also not only material and monetary but it involves access to social services, health and education, for children it also means care, support, security, encouragement
Social exclusion

- Marginalised Roma often live in segregated communities/remote rural areas/ghettos
- Have no access to healthcare and other social services
- Have no perspective
Education, segregation and risk of dropping-out

“We have six children, they all go to school, but the girls are ashamed to go with the same clothes every day.”

- Very low educational status among the Roma and high illiteracy rates, especially among women, which influences the educational level of their children (in Bulgaria 87% of Roma and 44% of non-Roma are not attending school; 21% are illiterate, 0.9% among non-Roma)
- Segregation in schools – very low quality of the education provided, high drop-out rates and practically no re-integration
Unemployment

- Roma have overall very high unemployment rates
  56% in Bulgaria; 26.2% in Hungary, 61.8% in Slovakia, 52.6% in Romania
- Even when they have work it is usually low paid and precarious
- Lack of perspectives - determined by low education levels
Poverty migration

• In Austria poverty travellers from Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary beg, sell small items, play instrument on the streets, accompanied by their children
• In recent years the numbers are increasing
• They have no access to support infrastructure, shelter, education for the children and are vulnerable to exploitation from traffickers
Migration

- Parents leaving children at home to take care of themselves or by older relatives increases their vulnerability to early school leaving and trafficking.
- In its worse form this equals parental neglect and has severe consequences for the child.
- In Hungary, such children are often referred to foster care and risk becoming part of youth gangs.
Risk of criminalisation

• Risk for all children living in ghettos, where they are exposed to criminality on a daily basis (Slovakia)
• Youth gangs of school-drop outs or children still at school formally, commit petty crime and bullying (Hungary and Slovakia)
• Multiplication of criminal activity among members of the extended family and them being or having been in prison (Hungary, Italy)
• Exploitation of families by other families (Hungary)
Other factors

- **Gender discrimination** – women, and especially single women are exposed to abuse by males in the neighbourhood, their children are also at greater risk of abuse and exploitation (Slovakia, Romania)

- **Disabilities** - victims of trafficking often suffer from physical or mental disabilities with no access to treatment and increased vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking (Bulgaria)

- **Lack of civil registration** – due to living in remote areas, illegal settlements, without access to social and healthcare support makes children particularly vulnerable to trafficking (Greece)
Other factors - continued

• Experience of abuse in early childhood often present among boys victims of sexual exploitation (Bulgaria, Hungary)

• Loan sharks and family indebtedness (often due to alcoholism and drug addictions)

• Foster homes (Hungary)
Traditional practices

• Early marriages, child labour and mobility – parents and care givers are less aware of the possible exploitation when they give their children away to relatives or in early marriages
• The low level of education of parents and children make them especially vulnerable to deception
• The occurrence of such practices should not lead to acceptance of popular stereotypes but rather prompt deeper investigation into how they underpin essential survival strategies for families
Links to forms of exploitation:

- Children with physical disabilities have traditionally been exploited in begging, also in sexual exploitation.
- Early childhood physical and sexual abuse, is often linked to prostitution.
- Low education and literacy rates – linked to ignorance about the rights, low employment outcomes and general vulnerability to deceit, strategies employed in trafficking for child begging and sexual exploitation.
- Early marriages sometimes linked to trafficking for pick-pocketing.
Key conclusions

• Roma across the EU suffer from social exclusion and marginalisation
• No identified specific “Roma factor”, rather multiple vulnerabilities due to the inter-play of socio economic factors described
• Different vulnerabilities are linked to different recruitment strategies and forms of exploitation and trafficking
• More empirical data is needed on socio-economic background of victims of trafficking
Thank you!