

# 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!