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# **TOOL ON EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF CHILD AT RISK OR VICTIMS OF EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING**



**Salvați Copiii**  
Save the Children Romania



Any child care worker should be aware of the child exploitation and trafficking issues and engage in preventing and fighting against this phenomenon.

Law 272 of 2004 on the protection and promotion of the rights of children expressly mentions the professionals **in charge of identifying risk situations for children and families, including child exploitation and trafficking situations and communicating them to the authorities:**

- **Any person working for institutions that are in contact with children**
- **Social workers**
- **Medical professionals**
- **Educators**
- **Police officers**
- **Lawyers**
- **Priests**
- **Any person that suspects violence is used against a child or exploitation.**

**The child himself can contact the authorities in such cases.**

You are a professional working with children and you suspect that among them there may be children at risk of exploitation or trafficking or who are already victims thereof.

**You are required by law to notice and to warn if you suspect a child is at risk or victim of exploitation or trafficking.**

The definitions and explanations in this brochure concern you and aim at helping you to identify child victims or at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

By reading and remembering this information, you may recognize some of the signs and indicators of exploitation and trafficking and should contact the authorities that can help children in such situations.

## **What are child and human trafficking and exploitation?**

Human trafficking means recruiting, transporting, transferring, hosting or harbouring people. It can be done under threat, in a forced way or through other forms of constraint, by kidnapping, fraud, deceit, abuse of power.

It is often done by taking advantage of the vulnerability of a child or adult or by providing or receiving money and other advantages in order to get the acceptance of a person that is in control of another, in view of **exploitation**.

**Exploitation** means the use of children in activities that compromise their education and harm their physical, psychological, moral and social development.

Exploitation can take various forms: sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, and other illegal activities such as begging and theft.

3 important elements are included in the definition of trafficking: an **ACTION** carried out through various **MEANS** with a specific **AIM**.

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**IMPORTANT! an adult is always in a power position as to a child. However the child's acceptance may be obtained, they are still victims.**

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# I. ACTION

## RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is done when presenting a job offer, through the promise of providing better conditions for earning money inside or outside the country.

The recruiter is usually a person that victims know already but there are situations when it may be a stranger.

### In case of sexual trafficking

The main method is that of the “boyfriend” – boys or men seduce girls, promise to marry them, to provide them with a better life; men pretend to have serious and sincere intentions to start a family with the girl and then bring the topic of providing for the family into discussion.

Men use lures such as gifts or dates in restaurants and places that are examples of a “better life” for girls coming from poor families.

After one of the boys meets a girl, very often he will meet her friends too (creating real contact lists) that he will introduce to his own friends thus setting up a group.

Other recruitment methods:

- through other girls already in the traffic chain
- through procurers – when minors have practiced prostitution before being trafficked
- online recruitment (chat, social networks)
- recruitment by a stranger - through a newspaper, with a well paid job offer that doesn't need qualifications (sometimes providing all the details related to transportation, travel documents, etc.)

### In case of labour trafficking

The recruitment offer can be made directly to the child or through the family that “pressures” the child to go and work abroad in order to improve the family's financial situation.

The job offer can be made by a friend or an acquaintance of the child or family.

There are situations when children enter various groups where they find “role models” in the person of recruiters.

Recruitment is seldom carried out by strangers through false promises and job offers in larger cities in Romania or abroad.

### In case of trafficking for illegal activities – begging, theft

Recruitment can be carried out through the provision of goods that leads to accepting the traffickers' offer of a “better life”.

Recruitment is often done by members of the family or strangers through false promise or job offers.

Children are seldom taken from the foster care centre by parents, sent to beg and then brought back.

Children and young people in foster care often refuse help and protection and through their tendency to escape the care and supervision of the institution, become easy targets for traffickers.

**Transport and transfer:** anything that is related to the organization and movement of the child from one place to the other, either in the country or abroad.

In Romania, children are moved from one city to another without any approval.

In order to get them out of the country, recruiters influence the parents into giving their notarized agreement or forge their approval and manage to legally cross the border together with their victims.

The child can cross the border in the recruiter's car by providing an ID.

There are situations when there are no border checks of children.

There are situations when children are given false IDs or if they have a valid ID, especially if under-aged, they are provided with another false one in order to show they are over 18.

**Hosting and harbouring people:** hosting, limiting free movement, confiscating documents, organizing accommodation for trafficked persons.

In many cases, children do not have access to their own papers, they are locked in their rooms and permanently watched.

## 2. MEANS AND AIM OF TRAFFICKING

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**IMPORTANT! Information below will help you understand and recognize exploitation and trafficking situations.**

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**AIM of trafficking:** earning money through the exploitation of children.

Main forms of exploitation: **sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, exploitation for begging and theft.**

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**In case of children, the combination between an action and the aim of any form of exploitation is enough to suspect trafficking. It is no need to check if any of the means below has also been used.**

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**Although exploitation is the main element in the definition of trafficking, it needn't take place for a child to be considered victim of trafficking.**

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### SEXUAL TRAFFICKING

**Sexual trafficking** includes among other forms forced prostitution, pornography, sexual services in bars, hotels, massage parlours.

It is the main form of child exploitation and is especially present in Romania.

In most cases, children are sexually exploited inside the country. Then many of them are taken to other European countries where gains are higher.

Sexual exploitation occurs mainly in the street, in parks, forests, parking lots, but also in private or rented apartments, clubs, brothels, hotels and private homes.

## Who is at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking?

### Anyone – boys or girls, adults and children, but mostly:

- girls aged 13 to 17 and boys under 18;
- children from foster care centres who have been abused by other children or workers;
- children from foster care centres recruited through social networks;
- children (especially girls) who have been abused in the family;
- children who run away from their home or from foster care because of physical violence and get into inappropriate environments where they are an easy prey for recruiters;
- children who missed school a lot or dropped out of school;
- adolescents wanting to be independent, who are influenced by stories presenting the success of others and who wish to have more money;
- mentally disabled children;
- street children.

In many cases, the girls have met a boy, have fallen in love, have been lured with gifts, love declarations and various promises to end up exploited as their boyfriend turns out to be the trafficker.

He told them to make money to start a family and made them practice prostitution.

Girls were threatened with the police as they had already been engaged in prostitution and were forced to go on.

In some cases, girls are abused by traffickers if they do not do what they are told and make the money that is expected.

During the exploitation, children can receive alcohol and drugs in order to respond better to clients and traffickers.

## LABOUR TRAFFICKING

In Romania, child labour has various forms: car window washing, waste collection, building entrance sweeping, in urban areas, together with one of the parents, on construction sites or in construction works, in animal farms, various farming activities or loading and unloading merchandise.

- Children are not properly fed, they do not have water or sanitary or health facilities
- They are subject to humiliation and offence
- They do physical jobs (constructions), farming and household, and work long hours.

## Who is at risk of labour exploitation and trafficking?

### Anyone – boys or girls, adults and children, but especially:

- boys and girls but mostly boys aged 9 to 17;
- children in foster care centres;
- children from families with two parents or single-parent families, both in rural and urban areas;
- children who are not enrolled in school or who have dropped out of school;
- children from poor families and communities, street children, children without parents or other persons that could take care of them.

## TRAFFICKING FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES – BEGGING, THEFT

In Romania, trafficking for begging occurs mainly in large cities: in crowded areas, stop lights, store entrances, schools, churches, parking lots, bus stations, parks, main crossroads, busy markets, touristic areas, in front of hotels, fast food stores, banks, post offices, etc.

Besides directly asking for money, other activities are frequently carried out such as car window washing at cross-roads and selling various small items (key locks, window wipers, etc) or flowers.

Many children come from the country in cities and go to churches, especially on the occasion of certain religious holidays or funerals (they are aware of the schedule) in order to beg or take the flowers from the graves and sell them.

In order to be given money they use various methods: suggesting a disability, appealing to the pity of passers-by, begging hands, street artistic performances (usually abroad).

Children may also be involved in thefts – mainly pick pocketing and store thefts.

They are controlled by traffickers, threatened and beaten.

They need to bring back a certain daily amount and spend many hours begging, often without food or water, no place to wash themselves and no assistance if they get sick.

## **Who is at risk of exploitation and trafficking for illegal activities – begging, theft?**

**Anybody – boys or girls, adults and children, but especially:**

- children aged 0 to 18 for begging;
- children aged 7 to 17 for thefts;
- children aged 10 to 18 for selling small items;
- children in foster care;
- some children beg willingly in order to have money for cigarettes or other expenses;
- children who are not enrolled in school or have dropped out of school;
- homeless and street children

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### **IMPORTANT!**

**Whether a child wished or not to engage in such activities is of no importance.**

**As long as they are children, there is no need to prove the use of luring, coercion or deceiving means.**

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### **Indicators that can raise suspicions on the risk of a child to be vulnerable to an exploitation/trafficking situation or suspicions that a child is already a victim of exploitation/trafficking:**

- The child goes rarely to school or has dropped out of school
- The child ran away from foster care or has the tendency to run away
- The child shows inappropriate sexual behaviour (speaks about sex at an early age, looks for contacts with children of opposite sex, does not respect intimacy)
- Teenage girls with a wrong understanding of adult life, stating they would make easy money out of prostitution for example
- The child has been promised a well paid job with easy money
- The child spends a lot of time in groups and with persons that he/she know only a little
- The child shows signs of physical violence
- The child has expensive clothes and other items
- The child has money he /she cannot account for
- The child seems tired, hungry and physically exhausted
- The child is in contact with known traffickers
- The child shows signs of fear (sweating, trouble answering direct questions, avoiding visual contact)
- The child is often or always surrounded by a stranger when going out
- **The child is part of a group and the head of the group has a nervous, unnatural behaviour.**

## What is your role?

1. To recognize the indicators showing that a child is at risk or victim of exploitation and trafficking.
2. To inform the psychologist, the case manager or the management of the institution in case you suspect anything – you are a team, everyone has specific roles but noticing and warning are anyone's obligation.
3. To contact the General Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection in case no measure has been taken.

## Why is it important to do so?

Identifying possible trafficking victims is important as these children are in danger and it is our duty to protect them.

- The child needs to be protected from those who threaten or exploit him/her.
- Once the possible victim has been identified, the child is referred to the relevant institution in order to be provided with assistance and protection
- Identifying possible victims may help other children in the same situation (exploiters and traffickers usually have more than one victim).

## React!

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Once you have noticed several indicators, you need first to inform the case manager or the head of the institution. If no measure is taken, call the General Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection supervising the foster care centre.

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You have the obligation to protect the child and to communicate any suspicion of abuse, exploitation, trafficking risks.

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A timely communication will help the child and you as a professional.

You will ensure his/her protection and will not be held legally responsible for not having communicated such a situation.

The case manager from the General Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection will make an assessment and establish if the child is at risk or victim of trafficking and will follow the relevant procedures.