



ORIGINAL PAPER

**Signalling Child Trafficking and Exploitation by
Begging in Romania: on Public Traits, Victims Traffic
and Societal Reaction**

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Abstract

Begging is a social phenomenon with important moral, psychological and physical prejudices on its victims. Specialized studies indicate a predominantly child involvement, both girls and boys, in the exploitation and beggary traffic. This article gives an insight on the dimensions of begging among Romanian children, emphasizing aspects regarding the spreading of this phenomenon at a national level, favorable factors and legal regulations. Also it wants to create a profile of the victims of beggary, with the focus on the physical and social characteristics of the victims, the description of the unfolding space and the highlighting of the operational mode. By comparing information on traffic low and exploitation by beggary at an international level, a better understanding of this modern slavery is desired through the identification of both the problems and solutions necessary for the reduction in number of the minor victims of beggary.

Keywords: *beggary, human trafficking, exploitation, children, Romania*

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Introduction

After the year 1990, “the evolution of the social and economic context in Romania encouraged the emergence of social cleavages, the intensification of the migratory movements and, implicitly, the occurrence of population groups vulnerable to traffic. At the end of the 1990’s and the beginning of the 2000 geographical proximity to areas of conflict in the Former Yugoslavia led to increased incidence of trafficking in Romania” (Anima Nova, 2013: 1). In recent years, the exploitation of begging and trafficking were analyzed and addressed to as different forms. According to Charles P. Kirchofer, begging is of three types: *voluntary begging*, *exploitation through begging* and *trafficking by force into begging*. In general, beggary is described as a hierarchical structure, pyramid: those who beg on street, people who collect money from beggars and “leaders” who receive most of the revenue and organizes those involved in this activity (Kirchofer, 2010).

According to the UN Palermo Protocol, trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or hosting of persons by using threat or force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving and receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person who has control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations of Human Rights, 2000, article 3). In this respect, a child is considered to be trafficked if he is under 18 and who is recruited or moved from one place to another to be exploited, even though not appealed to coercion or deception. On the other hand, exploiting is the basic definition of trafficking, which brings interpretations as: “a woman or a child cannot be considered to be trafficked until after exploitation”. Exploitation of children involves keeping a sum of money from the winnings, without handing the entire amount to the traffickers (UNICEF & Terres des Homes, 2006: 17-18).

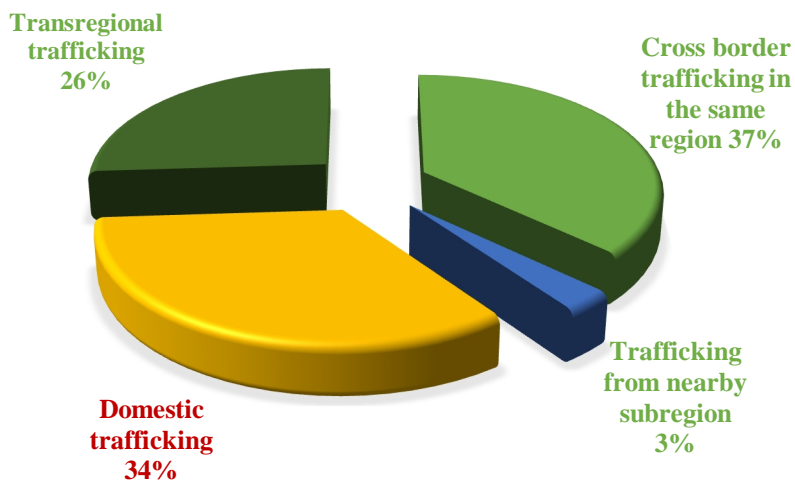
Trafficking size at an international level

Human trafficking is an abusive crime that defies the fundamental human rights and is influenced by socio- economic context of the country of origin of the victims and the “demand” in the destination countries of victims. Victims are “sold “as goods, to obtain a bigger profit. Currently, human trafficking affects over 124 countries worldwide and involves exploitation of children, women and men for any purpose, such as forced labor, forced sexual exploitations, organ trafficking.

Europol studies indicate trafficking among the most profitable organized crime in the EU. Depending on income, it is located, “in the third place in the world, surpassed only by drug trafficking and arms, with illicit profits between 6 and 9 billion dollars. However, according to UNODC, traffickers obtain an annual illicit profit of about 8 billion dollars, comparable to profit from drug trafficking. Increased demand for sexual services, cheap labor, the desire to make profits with minimal investment, are all factors that directly influence the intensification of the network traffic activity” (ANITP, 2013: 5). Human trafficking is strongly influenced by the level of economic development of the countries of destination.

The research in this area indicates an increase in the number of victims in rich countries and a reduced one in the least economically developed ones. Thus, in developed countries, victims of trafficking come from other countries, including other continents, while victims of trafficking from less developed countries come from national or sub regional traffic.

Chart 1. Geographical movements of trafficking (2014)



Source: UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2014)

Most of traffic flows are intra regional and the victims' movements tend to be limited to same sub region. Therefore, in most cases, the place of departure and destination of the victim fall in the same geographical limit, meaning between neighboring countries. The human traffic trend is from poor countries to neighboring countries but with a high economic level.

The victims of “global south” as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia are trafficked by the richest countries in the Middle East, Western Europe and North America (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes [UNODC], 2014: 7).

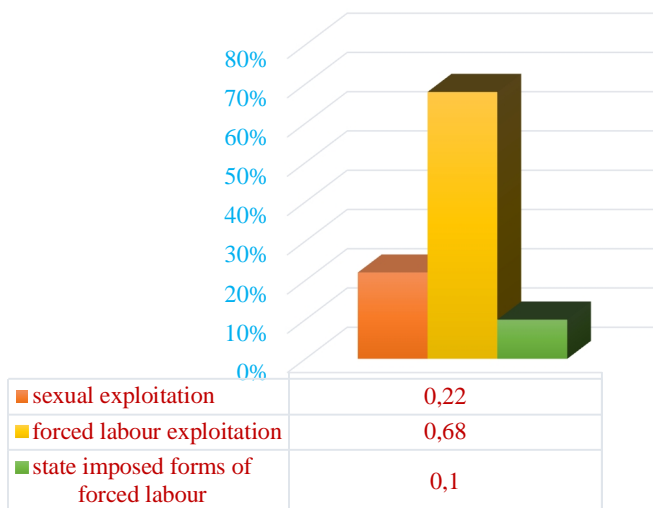
Also domestic traffic is in constant growth.

In a quarter of the identified cases, the exploitation takes place in the country of origin of the victim their exploiters being most of the time citizens of the same country.

In the period between 2010-2012, there were identified approximately 21 million people subjected to forced labor (human trafficking is performed through labor and sexual exploitation or living in poor conditions like a form of slavery), 90% of them (meaning 18.7 million) being exploited in the private sector (International Labor Office, 2014: 7). According to the results provided by the International Labor Office (ILO), people exploited through forced labor imposed by the private agents are distributed as follows: 4.5 million forced or fraud to maintain sexual activities, including pornographic; 2.2 million people find themselves in a forced labor imposed by the state (prisons, forms of work imposed by the government, military or paramilitary); 14.2 million exploited into forced labor: forced labor at home, forced labor for immigrants in various economic sectors, including forced illicit activities such as begging.

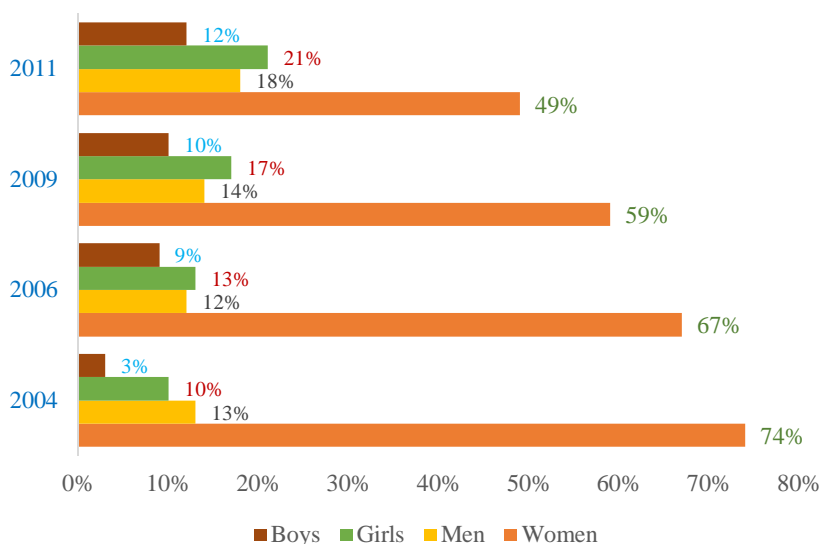
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Chart 2. Distribution of persons exploited in the private economy (2014)



According to United Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) studies, in 2011, worldwide, 49% of trafficking victims are adult women. Although during the period 2004-2011 their number decreased significantly it still accounts for half of the victims. This indicates a change in the profile of detected victims, a growth in the number of casualties among adult men, girls and minor boys. The share of adult men from the total of victims is increasing globally, reaching 18% in 2011. Minors represent 30% of the total number of victims detected. The report shows an increasing trend in the number of victims among children which entails a decrease in the average age among them.

Chart 3. Evolution of trafficked persons by gender and age



Source: UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2014)

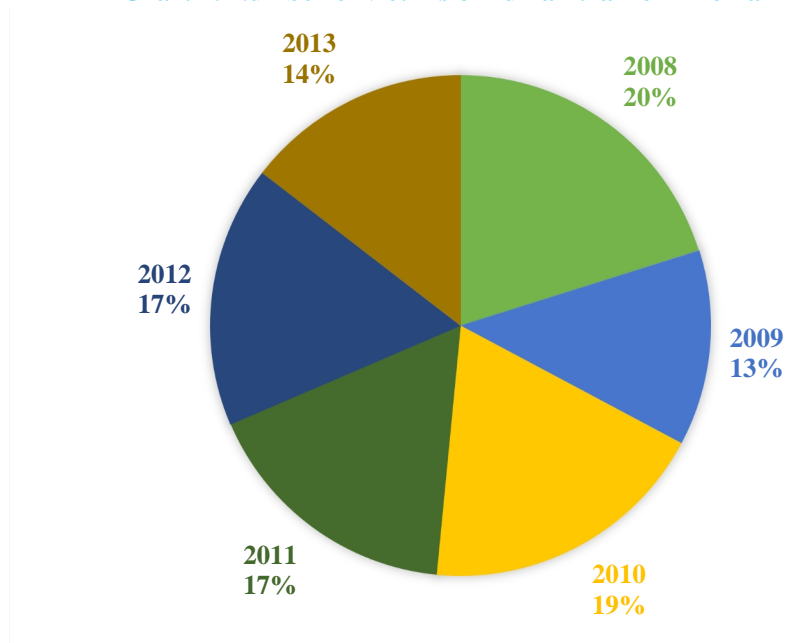
“Other” forms of exploitation traffic (trafficking children for fights, for petty crimes or forced begging) is increasing, reaching in 2011, at 7% of all victims of trafficking. There is a notable regional difference regarding “other forms of exploitation”. In Europe and Central Asia dominates begging and human traffic to commit different delinquent acts, in Sub-Saharan Africa dominates child-soldier traffic, and the Asian continent stands for forced marriages (UNODC, 2014).

Regarding Europe, the exploited victims in “other” forms of trafficking represent 9% of the victims in Central and Western Europe. In 2014, among persons trafficked for purposes other than sexual exploitation or forced labor, 1.5% of the victims detected were trafficked for begging (UNODC, 2014). In contrast, in Western Europe and Central Asia, only 2% of the victims are included in other forms of exploitation.

Dynamics of trafficking forced into begging in Romania

In this context, Romania is considered “an area of origin or transit, being identified a number of factors that favored the emergence and development of traffic: geographic location, presence of a large number of social groups at risk or poor standard of living for a considerable part of population” (Arpinte, Crețu, 2007: 6). In 2013, in Romania, were identified 898 victims of trafficking. It appears that their number decreased by 14% compared to 2012 and increased by 13% compared to 2009. In terms of gender distribution, in 2013, 77% of the victims are female and 33% are male (National Agency against Human Trafficking [ANITP], 2014a).

Chart 4. Number of victims of human traffic in Romania



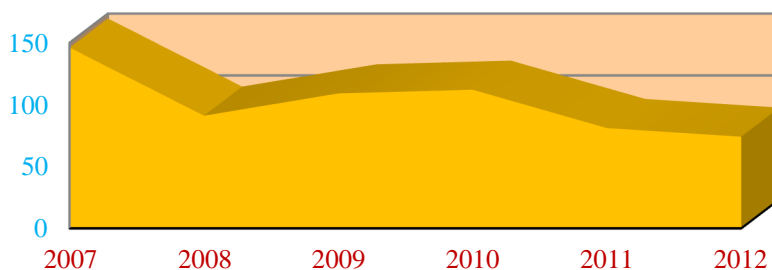
Source: National Agency against Human Trafficking, Report on the situation of human traffic in 2012 and 2013

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Most of the victims (66%) were recruited to be sexually exploited, 24% were exploited through labor in different economic sectors, while the rest were recorded as victims exploited through forced begging, pornographic representations or forced to commit thefts (ANITP, 2014a). In Romania, annually, 10% of trafficking victims are used in begging. Therefore, after forced labor and sexual exploitation, forced into begging becomes one of the main ways of exploitation. Authorities' mechanisms of intervention and the directives issued to combat criminal tendencies, reduced, during 2007-2014, the number of people trafficked for begging. Between 2007-2012 there was a decrease in the number of people trafficked for begging by about 51%.

The most significant difference was noted between the years 2007-2011, the number of identified victims of trafficking being less than 65% (Ungureanu, Tamaş, Moise, Preduţ and Medvichi, 2013). Instead, in 2012, 7.1% of all victims of trafficking were forced into begging (ANITP, 2013: 14).

Chart 5. Dynamics regarding exploitation through begging in Romania



In 2013, there were registered 896 victims of trafficking, with 145 fewer cases than those mentioned in the previous year (ANITP, 2014a). Also, we observed a decrease in the number of victims exploited into forced begging or committing theft (or other irregularities such as extortion) or pornographic representations, from 10.5% in 2012 to 6% in 2013 (ANITP, 2014b).

In the first half of 2014 a number of 448 victims were identified, of which 64% adult victims and 36% underage victims. Of these 4% were identified as victims of begging. Thus, in addition to the 19 persons forced to beg, 281 victims were reported to be exploited into sex industry and pornography, 141 victims were exploited through labor and 3 victims were exploited by requiring thefts (ANITP, 2014).

Theoretical perspectives on begging

Tackling begging can be explained from various theoretical perspectives: interactionist perspective, functionalist perspective, social labeling perspective, role theory and the theory of seduction. The *interactionist perspective*, whose foundations were laid by George Herbert Mead in his “Mind, Self and Society”, is a sociological approach that focuses on the social behavior of individuals interacting with those around him (Constantinescu, Ungureanu, 1985).

This perspective focuses on how social structures impact on people and on the interaction between them, the mutual impact between individuals and the way people perceive and define the elements that affect their lives. Thus, the perception of them as poor beggars strengthens their existence in poverty. At the level of those who beg the interaction develops in two directions: within groups, referring to the interaction between beggars, within their group, and interaction with people outside their group. For beggars, the main point of reference is the environment full of symbols with which they can come in contact and can influence the way they choose to build their lives. For example, if you live in an environment characterized by unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, there are few positive role models for you to relate to.

The environment of action and interaction of beggars is defined symbolically. They use symbols found in their interactions and use these symbols to communicate. Regarding interaction of beggars with people outside the group, with passers or potential benefactors, most often they come into contact with them in order to ask them for help or to satisfy certain needs. Everything passers perceive about beggars is part of a range of transmitted symbols which acquires a certain signification for the passer.

Functionalist perspective. The one that puts the foundation of the sociological functionalism is the anthropologist of Polish origin settled in England, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). To understand the institutions of a society and the behavior of its members, one must study the culture as a whole, analysis which allows explaining the way in which an institution exists in relation to other institutions. He defined culture through its functions to satisfy human needs (Mihu, 1992).

The functionalist perspective does not understand social phenomena as social problems, but rather as some parts needed in a society. In view of begging we analyze a particular type of begging that involves an activity that is not necessarily required by the society, as the act of begging.

This type of action has the role to ensure a material comfort to the person who undertakes such an activity, for example washing windshields. This perspective emphasizes the importance of beggary at a macro-social level because the society needs highly valued work but also less valued and less rewarded work. Their existence leads to the functioning of the whole social system, “bottom” works, in which individuals earn less money, have to be performed also by a person.

The theory of social labeling may occur at all levels in society, labeling others being performed voluntarily or involuntarily by individuals, depending on many factors including social norms which project the behavior in a certain context. According to the law of W.I. Thomas, a situation is real in its description consequences as being real, also having important consequences in the individuals life.

The role theory is applied involuntarily in everyday life, emphasizing the roles taken by individuals in different situations. The role of beggar is very important for the act of begging, its pursuit assuming the interaction between a beggar and a potential donor.

Seduction theory is based on a typology of signs, which in most cases can be deceiving. Seduction is a phenomenon which operates in all areas and at all levels of society. In begging, individuals who beg appeal clearly to the “seduction” of people using a particular system of signs. They can adopt different ways to pursue passers to help them. They can seduce through mere presence or by interacting with them.

The label assigned to a person can alter its feeling of identity, the individual reaching to have a negative image of him and to accept the description required by others. Therefore deviant behaviors are formed as compensatory elements as begging,

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alcoholism, violence, etc. For example, by labeling a beggar as being poor, the society contributes to the perpetuation of poverty, and if beggars are seen as lazy, apathetic, immoral and incompetent people they tend to believe that these are real attributes, and adopt specific behaviors and attitudes of their label.

Profile and characteristics of victims exploited and trafficked into begging

We can identify several categories of beggars depending on the motivation of the act of begging: 1. people who practice begging “for fun”-those who have the ability to work though prefer to beg because it is an easier way to get money; 2. people who practice begging because they believe that this is the only way to survive; 3. people who are forced by other people to beg-for example trafficked persons or children obliged by their parents to beg; 4. In general begging involves using a wide range of methods to attract attention and eventually the public’s “generosity”: using a strong emotional message to influence others to be generous.

For example cards that are written messages such as “Help me, I’m blind!”, “I’m hungry” are used; extend of hand when approaching a person; exposing their own physical disabilities or suggesting them; providing services in exchange of financial gain. For example cleaning the windscreen at traffic lights or in various public places, reserving a parking space in locations where parking is free, playing a musical instrument, selling flowers or various objects in public spaces, inappropriate activities; use of children as a way to impress passers.

The typical profile of a beggar is shaped by the image of a person who wears damaged and broken clothes and shoes, with a general uncared appearance. In terms of how to approach passersby, most beggars adopt a direct attitude that allows them to interact with passers by sending an oral message.

Transmitted messages can be diverse, so there are beggars who limit themselves to the request itself, but most of them adopt a strategy to sensitize passers, by justifying its request using reasons as poverty, excuse raising a child, old age, health or religion. The action of begging takes place in public, crowded spaces, where there is heavy foot traffic. This phenomenon depends directly on the mercy of passers and the generosity of the civil society.

Most children who beg come from bi-parental families with a higher number of members (from 3 to 16 persons). Most of the time, children came from families where minors live with one of their parents and with one of his concubine. In this type of family accentuated failures are found: increased aggression, strained relations, high alcohol consumption, violent behavior, lack of affective support and a parental model, negligence, criminal history, etc. On the other hand children who beg come also from specialized institutions or were abandoned and actually live on streets. For minors begging becomes a lifestyle, influenced entirely by parents. Depending on local or regional particularities most of the children belong to a ethnical minority, especially Roma (gypsy).

In itself, ethnicity is not considered vulnerability but it becomes a cause by association with economic and social shortcomings (Ungureanu et al., 2013). Recruitment of minors, in some cases, may be mediated by the child’s parents, traffickers addressing those from disadvantaged backgrounds who face economic shortcomings and a low level of education. Because parents are not able to evaluate the potential hazards, persuading them takes a short period of time and thus the involvement of children in begging activity occurs within days of receiving the offer.

Legislative references relevant to compelling children into begging

Under the law “trafficked person obliged to beg is entitled and receives the same forms of assistance as all victims of trafficking. Moreover, through national mechanisms for the protection and applicable steps to protect children, Romania recognizes and falls all situations of child begging in systems of care and protection, including in situation where children are forced to beg by their own parents” (Ungureanu et al., 2013: 9). The current Penal Code regulates trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerable persons, incrimination offence of begging in the case of minor use.

The person who causes a minor or a person with physical or mental disabilities to call “the public charity for help or benefit from material heritage from this activity shall be punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years or a fine. If the offence is committed by a parent, guardian, trustee, or the person who has in care the person which begs, and by coercion, punishment is imprisonment from 1 to 5 years” (The New Penal Code, Law 286/2009, article 214, Begging Exploitation. Trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable persons).

The current legislation introduces two regulations which correspond to the new social context. Article 326 of the Old Penal Code which sanctioned the action of begging itself and accused human trafficking into forced begging, is renounced at. Therefore it is punished by law any person who causes a minor or an adult with physical or mental disabilities to beg or facilitates begging throughout the two vulnerable groups.

Also, “the adult with the ability to work, which constantly seeks money to survive by using in this purpose the presence of a minor, shall be punished with imprisonment from 3 months to 2 years or a fine” (The New Penal Code, Law 286/2009, article 215, Using a minor for begging. Trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable persons).

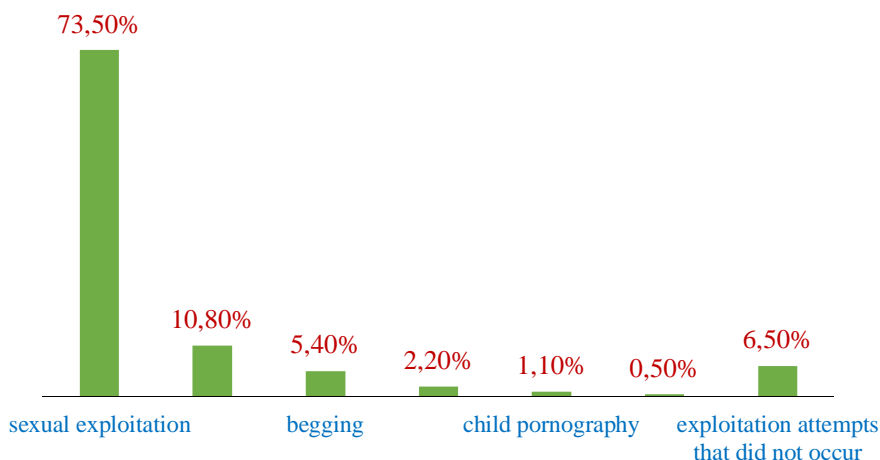
Thus, according to the New Penal Code the financial gain, by exploiting minors through begging, by healthy adults able to perform paid work becomes a crime. For example “a woman who goes begging, and to inspire public charity keeps a child sometimes under the age of one in her arms- presents an obvious danger, not only because she seriously violates human dignity, the child being used as an object, but endangers the health or even life of the minor given the conditions in which he is held during begging (low or high temperature, rain, snow etc.)” (Organization “Save the Children Romania”, 2014: 24).

Also, “the act of using services specified in article 182, provided by a person whom the beneficiary knows that it is a victim of trafficking or minor trafficking shall be punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years or a fine if the act is not a more serious offense” (The Penal Code, Law 286/2009. Article 216, Use of services of an exploited person). Article 182 also states forced begging as a form of human exploitation (The Penal Code, Law 286/2009, article 182, Exploiting a person)

Beggary among children: evolution, causes, sources of income

In 2008 children represented 15% of the total number of human traffic. Of the 186 identified children, 51% were victims of internal trafficking while 49% were exploited abroad. The main form of exploitation was the sexual one here fitting 73% of the victims. Children as victims of begging were 5.4% from the total number of victims (Gavril, Tamaș, 2009: 43-44).

Chart 6. Minor victims' arrangements of exploitation in 2008

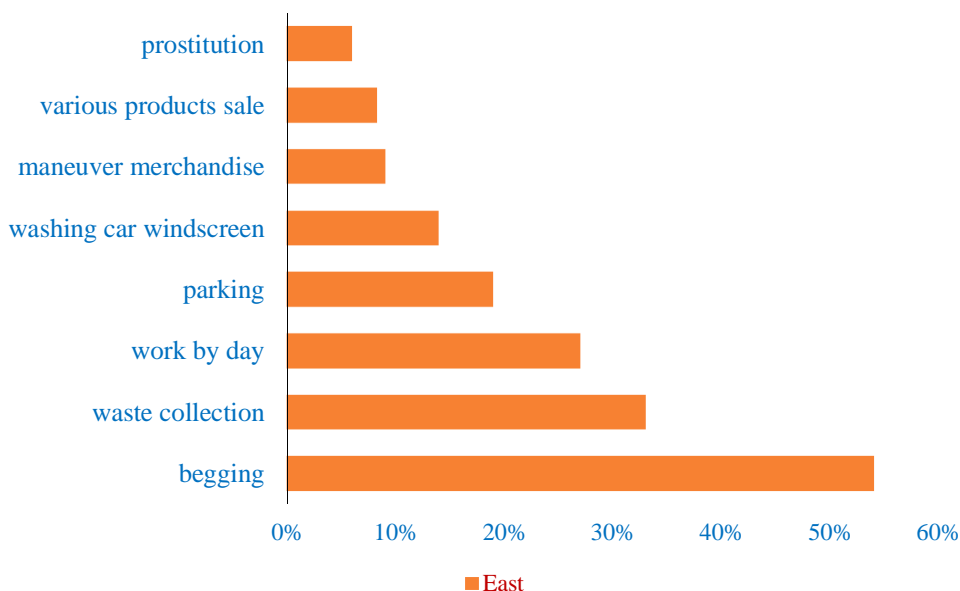


In 2009 the percentage of child victims was 176 persons, meaning 18.2% boys (32 minors) and 81.8% girls (144 minor). Most children exploited through begging were male and of early age. Instead, minor girls were forced into sexual exploitation, especially group age of 14-17 years old (General Inspectorate of Romanian Police & National Agency against Human Trafficking, 2010). At a national level, the project “Where begging starts, childhood ends” sought to identify the main causes of begging and also to raise the awareness about the negative effects associated with such practices among children. French Embassy in collaboration with Child Helpline Association, National Agency against Human Traffic, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Institute for Crime Prevention, General Inspector of Romanian Police, Romtelecom and Cosmote have applied a questionnaire to a sample composed of 110 representatives of institutions and local communities and 600 students aged between 8 and 12 years old (Child Helpline-Archive, 2015). The study results indicate poverty as a determinant of begging, 85.4% of respondents claiming that precarious economic situation underlies the decision of begging. The negative influence of the family, their lack of supervision or that minors adopt a behavior showed in the family or even do this at the request of the family have been reported as reasons from 52.1% of the respondents. Over 28% of opinions stressed the idea that the minors beg because it is an easy way to gain profit, while the last places were placed responses as “lack of local authorities (18.8%) or school (14.6%) involvement”. Over half of the respondents believe that the main beneficiaries of the money earned in this way are the parents and 38.7% believe that the beneficiaries are foreign persons that control the minors and force them to beg. Only 17.7% of the respondents believe that children choose themselves to offer various services to get some money (Alexa, 2013).

Indeed, studies show that in most cases, the money earned by begging are not used by those who call the mercy of people nor are their families, but other people who coordinates and profit from beggars networks (Anghel, Alexe, 2013). The study *Evaluation of “street children and youth” phenomenon. The quantitative social research*, conducted by the Organization “Save the Children”, in Bucharest, wanted to capture the evolution of the phenomenon both in terms of population volume and from the point of view of the social profile of these persons. The investigation was based on a questionnaire on a sample consisting of 701 children and youth people who: live only in the street and

have no connection with the family or institutions of protection; are temporarily in the street returning, in most cases, every day into their family; live in the street; live with parents/extended family in the street or in improvised shelters. It was found that the main sources of income for street children are: begging, collecting waste and daily work. Begging, with its various associated activities, was chosen by 54% of the respondents as the main way to earn money.

Chart 7. The main sources of income providing daily living (Multiple question)



Begging becomes the main activity generating money for 61% of the population living permanent on the streets. In contrast only 44% of those who live temporary on the streets resort to begging in order to survive. It was also found that with the decreasing age of the respondent increases the probability to be used at begging. Although the number of young people that beg reduces after they become adults (turn 18), this practice remains a gainful way also for about half of the adults.

Ways to prevent and combat begging among children

Providing specialized support for children and young people that cross times of crisis, such as traffic into begging or labor exploitation, and development of specific mechanisms to restore their capacity for recovery and normal reintegration, becomes a difficult process which is very hard to be achieved spontaneous (Zamfir, 2009). Main areas of concern for young integration can be grouped into several categories: school attendance (school dropout and motivation for training), labor market integration in the occupational system, youth participation in community life, juvenile delinquency (Zamfir, 2009). Given these problems one can draw some priority directions of action, such as: increasing the level of education for persons of disadvantaged backgrounds; inclusion on the labor market of persons belonging to vulnerable groups; economic support for families facing

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poverty; developing a system of social assistance services with a focus on access to education, employment, housing; development of specialized social assistance services to families who do not exercise their responsibility towards children and young people; implementation of information and prevention campaigns by instructing people in order to avoid dangerous situations, also offering guidance for when trafficking and exploitation have already taken place; prevention of juvenile delinquency and recovery offenders through special programs; strengthening the capacity of local authorities in diagnosing and solving community problems; implementing programs which lead to increased quality of life. As an illegal activity that threatens the security and social order, it becomes imperative in involving all national structures in combating the begging among children. Their primary goal is to identify the victims, help them and provide support for their reintegration. Therefore, at a national level, the intervention measures and the prevention of child traffic into begging are provided by different institutions such as: National Agency against Human Trafficking (ANITP), Directorate for Combating Organized Crime (DCCO), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI) General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection (DGASPC), School Inspectorate (ISJ), Child Protection Division (DPC) and various Non-Governmental organizations (NGO's).

Conclusions

Begging is defined as the action of a person to repeatedly call to mercy, asking for financial help. Today, nationally, there is insufficient information on the scale of the phenomenon of begging, especially among children. The latest report of institutions that prevent begging and assist its victims identify many factors that lead to the practice of begging by children: poverty, failure among family entourage, affiliation to a specific ethnic minority, traumatic experiences or low level of education. Minors (persons under 18) are more prone to social exclusion, that is the inability of people to participate in various aspects of social life, such as labor market activation and discrimination in various forms, up to physical isolation for one another (Zamfir, Stănescu, Briciu, 2010).

Therefore, they are the most common trafficked category of victims forced into begging because are fragile both physically and mentally, have reduced ability to anticipate the aggressors actions, immaturity in assessing people and situations, are suggestive etc. (Ungureanu et al., 2013: 32). In fact the vulnerability results from the interaction of personal, familiar and social-economic factors.

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