

# **Trafficking in children for sexual purposes**

## **Update Country report**

### **Norway**

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## **Introduction**

Children have been trafficked to Norway without national measures in place to prevent trafficking or to protect those arriving in the country. The government has, however, made a coordinated effort to have an emergency plan ready by spring 2004 and more measures by 2005. ECPAT Norway/Save the Children Norway is advocating that any action towards trafficking of children must be based on an understanding of children's rights. Children have different development needs and requirements than adults, and these are recognised as human rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Trafficking in women and children has caught the attention of the government, the media and the public in recent years. The Minister of Justice has even taken a personal interest in the fight against the organised crime of trafficking of children. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is one of the most terrible examples of violations of human rights in the world today, according to the Ministry. The Ministry of Justice, which is the lead agency in the multi-ministerial work against trafficking, underlines that trafficking in women and children contains five main elements: organized crime, gender inequality, sexual exploitation, lack of social welfare and the need to escape poverty, and migration. ECPAT Norway has argued that trafficking for sexual purposes must also be defined in relation to the many victims that are children.

## **Trafficking to Norway**

There are no accurate figures on the extent of trafficking of children to Norway. The Prostitution Centre in Oslo has noticed that trafficking in women and prostitution by women of foreign origin is increasing dramatically. In 2002/3 they estimated that more than 1,250 foreign women (including some men) from 48 different countries were in prostitution in Norway. It is difficult to know how many of these are below the age of 18, as some of the women have forged passports. Quite a few of the women are just over 18 and in their early twenties. The Oslo police report that they come across a couple of cases of trafficking of children each year. The children originate mostly from the Baltic States but also from South East Europe.

Norwegian men do travel across the northern border to Murmansk to buy sex from Russian women and children. We have no evidence however of children being trafficked from Murmansk to Norway, although there are rumours of this happening. Children are invited to Norway for holidays and sports events, and this way of gaining access to children has been known as a method of exploiting them. Sometimes children are also exploited by the Norwegian partner of a foreign woman, or by other Norwegians when a woman comes to Norway and brings her children with her. Children may also be adopted for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The reception centres for refugees are known as places where women and men are recruited into prostitution. Quite a few children disappear without trace each year from these reception centres. In Dec. 2003, 71 children disappeared. It is assumed that some were trafficked for sexual purposes.

One problem with estimating the numbers of trafficked children is, of course, its clandestine nature. Children are seldom exploited on the streets, but in indoor facilities. The police may find the girls and deport them as illegal immigrants. However, there has been no follow-up service to ensure the child's safety once he/she has been repatriated, and no coordination among existing services in Norway in relation to these children. The emergency plan may contain concrete measures on these issues.

Extraterritorial laws are rarely applied to prosecute Norwegians who travel abroad to exploit children. There appears to be only a small risk of such offenders being detected.

ECPAT Norway/Save the Children Norway is working to get the child protection services to take responsibility in relation to trafficked children. It is necessary that they play a central role in defining the services to be made available to the individual child. Safe accommodation, psychosocial support, health measures, and education services that can be put in place immediately when a trafficked child is discovered, must be secured for children. Services have also to be provided in relation to the police and the court system.

### **The efforts of the authorities**

The law has strengthened the protections for the victims of sexual crimes. It is forbidden to advertise sexual services in magazines and newspapers. The law against child pornography is strengthened: It is now also a crime to buy child pornography over the Internet, and it is not a condition that the material be downloaded. Mere possession is enough for the crime to be committed. It is also a crime to mislead a person under the age of 18 for the purpose of taking pornographic pictures for commercial use, or to produce such material using a minor

It is a crime in Norway to buy sex from persons under 18 years of age and it is a crime to organise prostitution, or to rent out a house or accommodation for prostitution. Norway has signed both the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the protocols thereto.

With the ratification of the Trafficking Protocol new legislation against trafficking in persons was presented to Parliament by the Ministry of Justice. A new article in the Penal Code that prohibits trafficking, and allows for the prosecution of persons involved in such crimes, was adopted in July 2003.

In February 2003 the Norwegian government released an action plan to prevent trafficking of women and children. In accordance with the plan, the Government will launch measures to protect and assist the victims, prevent human trafficking and prosecute the organisers. The plan will be implemented over a three-year period, and will have a total budget of some NOK 100 million (approximately EUR 1.3 million).

Some of the measures under consideration by the government in its multi-ministerial approach are listed below. ECPAT/Save the Children Norway has stressed in a comment on these plans that the authorities have to work out concrete measures to follow up the promises made, that children must be given a stay permit if it is not in their best interest to return, that court procedures involving children must be voluntary and not expose children to further danger, and that instructions must be given to the police, the embassies, the customs officials, etc. on how to assist trafficked children.

## Proposals by the government:

- Criteria will be developed whereby victims of human trafficking may be granted refugee status.
- Safe places where victims of trafficking can stay, and where they have access to necessary assistance and information, will be provided. This is to be done through dialogue and co-operation with the public services, crisis centres and NGOs. Ways to meet the special needs of children are necessary and will be examined in more detail.
- A reflection period will be introduced, during which expulsion decisions concerning victims of trafficking may be suspended for up to 45 days, with a view to providing practical assistance and counselling to the individual concerned.
- Procedures for co-ordinating the follow-up, return and rehabilitation of women and children through networking between NGOs and the authorities in Norway and the country of origin will be developed and implemented.
- The need for further protection, beyond that provided for under the general witness protection programme, for women and children who choose to assist the authorities in investigating and prosecuting traffickers, will be assessed.
- The establishment of an outreach team to work with adult prostitutes and disseminate information to them in a language they understand will be supported. The team will help them make contact with the police and agencies that can provide protection and assistance.
- The responsibility of the child welfare authorities and other relevant services for minors who are victims of human trafficking will be emphasised.
- The Government will prevent trafficking in human beings by working to prevent the recruitment of women and children, by promoting education and a better standard of living in the country of origin.
- Greater emphasis will be given to the rights of women and children, including the right and actual access to education, land and property, and access to capital in Norwegian development cooperation projects.
- Projects will be initiated, or support increased to existing ones, that are targeted at vulnerable groups likely to be recruited by traffickers in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central and South Asia.
- Information about trafficking in human beings and the criteria for migrating legally to Norway will be developed and disseminated to women in risk areas, in co-operation with NGOs, international organisations and foreign service missions.
- Norwegian policy on commercial activities and investment abroad will be assessed for the extent to which it reflects a gender perspective, among other things by examining the guidelines for the various government schemes for the internationalisation of the Norwegian private sector, and for support to co-operation projects in partner countries.
- Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region on vulnerable children and young people will be further developed and intensified. New bilateral and multilateral co-

operation measures for combating trafficking in children will be drawn up and implemented with a number of countries.

- The Government will prevent trafficking in women and children by working to curtail the demand that creates a market for such trade, by disseminating information to various target groups, such as men, young people, the business sector and other actors, and by stimulating public debate in connection with the introduction of ethical rules prohibiting the purchase and acceptance of sexual services.
- Information about trafficking in women and children will be included in the training of Norwegian military personnel. As from spring 2003, this topic will be included in the training of personnel to be employed in international operations. It will also be incorporated into the curriculum of basic military training and officer candidate schools.
- Priority will be given to the efforts of the police and the prosecuting authorities to combat trafficking in human beings by supporting the development of a national project to identify the extent of this activity throughout the country. The findings from this project will form the basis for conducting strategic analyses and targeting the investigation and prosecution of criminal networks.
- Measures will be taken to ensure that the involvement of the local police is tailored to local conditions. This will be achieved by implementing competence-building measures for the police in relation to national and international legislation and procedures, and by increasing participation and intensifying efforts in connection with bilateral and multilateral projects in the field of justice and home affairs, including support for police training and regional police co-operation in this area. Particular focus will be given to co-operation with Russia, Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
- A forum for the authorities and NGOs will be established where they can share their experience and expertise.

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