The partnership between the state and the church against trafficking in persons

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Abstract. Trafficking in persons is a multi-sided phenomenon accompanying the current migration flows, therefore, the actions that must be undertaken in order to prevent, combat the phenomenon as well as to assist the victims of trafficking require a large partnership between all the actors involved: international organisations, governmental institutions and representatives of civil society. The special psychological, ethical issues raised especially by trafficking prevention and assistance to victims make the church and various religious organisations play a very important role in the corresponding networks at both international and national level. Even if the integration of the church in the networks fighting against TP has been quite largely addressed worldwide, there are but few studies undertaken in Romania in this area. Our paper opens the room for dialogue among the researchers interested in this topic from an interdisciplinary perspective to discuss the possibilities to establish sustainable partnerships between the state and the church against trafficking in persons. With this aim in view, we have first carried out a quantitative analysis of the scope and dynamics of trafficking in persons in Romania focusing on the victims' profile by exploitation type. The main socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, schooling, area of origin) have been considered in order to identify the vulnerability factors related to the risk involved by trafficking, both at national and regional level. We have also examined the responses in legislative and institutional terms, with a special emphasis on the collaboration between the state and the church in preventing and combating trafficking in persons. Of special relevance are the conclusions resulted from the field research undertaken in the area covered by the Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare.

Key words: trafficking in persons, exploitation, gender differentiation, governmental policy, civil society, church, partnership, prevention, combating, assistance to victims

Introduction

In the current globalisation context, the financial and commercial information flows are accompanied by a growing number of people who cross national borders, which makes migration represent a major feature of contemporary society. In fact, as acknowledged by the 2003 Report of the International Organisation for Migration, "none of the countries of the world is excluded from the international migration flows"[1]. They are either countries of origin, transit or destination for migrants, or they present these three characteristics simultaneously. The last decades have shown important changes in migration mechanisms as well as the emergence of new forms of migration[2]. Among them, trafficking in persons is considered a side-effect of migration, and a serious concern for many countries and international organisations.

According to Article 3 of the 'Palermo Protocol'[3], **_trafficking in persons (TP)_**[4] refers to "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs".

TP runs through _several stages_, starting with recruitment and continuing with transport, sale, sequestration and exploitation, resale, escape and repatriation. Various sociological studies[5] have identified a series of _risk factors_ that can be grouped into three categories, namely:

(i) _macro-social factors_ (drastic decrease of the standard of living, high unemployment rates, lack of relevant educational programmes, a socio-cultural environment characterised by intolerance and discrimination based on gender and ethnicity favourable to domestic violence, development of international migration for work, disasters, natural catastrophes);

(ii) _micro-social factors_ (household poverty, lack of access to jobs, to social assistance programmes, low level of education, lack of professional training, family dismemberment, deficient relationships between adults and children, disordered behaviours such as alcoholism, domestic violence, criminal history);

(iii) _individual factors_ (e.g.: gap between expectations and the resources of the individual/household in satisfying them, propensity to violate the law in order to find a job abroad, lack of information on the assumed risks, wish of adventure, failed sentimental relationships, psychic instability, alienation, etc.).

TP is a phenomenon of _multiple dimensions_: it is a major violation of human rights, an economic and social phenomenon with negative consequences for the entire society, an aspect of public

health and a phenomenon of criminal nature, where traffickers are the criminals. TP is one of the most serious crimes, as victims are treated as goods and sold for a profit. In most cases, it is regarded as a controlled organised crime business[6].

The *ethical dimension* of TP is also of critical importance in the globalization era. The integration of the issues regarding TP, globalization and ethics points out that "slavery is as odious today as at any time, though perhaps the term "trafficking" obscures what is really happening"[7]. People tend to think of slavery as a practice of the past and "are not aware that there are actually more slaves today than at any earlier time"[8].

An international perspective

In order to deal with the various sides of TP (prevention, punishment of traffickers, protection of victims, etc.) many international organisations have developed specific frameworks and have implemented corresponding plans and programmes in partnership with governmental institutions and civil society actors.

For example, **the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** has elaborated the Legislative Guide for the Implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In addition, **the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations** has designed a framework of activity that builds on and supports the existing efforts in three programmes, focusing on (i) Awareness and Training, (ii) Discipline, Accountability and Community Relations, and (iii) Support to Anti-trafficking Activities, all of them accompanied by detailed work plans[9].

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has addressed the issue of TP for purposes of labour exploitation, in particular forced and compulsory labour and other slavery-like practices, covering it by a series of ILO conventions. Of a special significance are ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the ILO International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour[10].

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has elaborated a comprehensive approach to TP within the wider context of managing migration. The envisaged activities are implemented in partnership with other international organisations, governmental institutions and civil society, thus strengthening the capacity of its partners so as to provide protection and empower trafficked women, men and children, to raise the awareness and understand the issue and to bring justice to trafficked persons. The IOM has implemented almost 500 projects in 85 countries and provided assistance to approximately 15,000 trafficked persons[11].

Aware of the importance of comprehensive networking in combating TP, all the above mentioned organisations have initiated **the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking**, under the co-ordination of the United Nations **(UN.GIFT).** The Global Initiative aims to mobilise both state and non-state actors to eradicate TP by (i) reducing vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; (ii) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who fall victims and (iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved. UN.GIFT is a part of a wide partnership between the UN system and other international and regional organisations (ILO, IOM, OSCE, etc.). In February 2008, on the occasion of the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, the UN.GIFT put a major emphasis on **the role of religious community in the fight against TP**, laying the foundations of a large network including not only the representatives of the most important world's religions but also government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of the private sector, academia and international organisations. Members of different religious communities who have been active in advocating against TP and providing support to victims have contributed to creating a comprehensive, strategic view on several basic issues, such as: (i) the basis in each religion for fighting TP; (ii) why and how members and representatives of religious communities can be in a privileged position for contributing to the prevention of TP and assist the trafficked individuals; (iii) identification of useful experiences that can help to understand the elements that may positively or negatively influence the collaboration between diverse religious organisations and between religions and lay organisations[12].

The theological view on TP is based on the so-called "golden rule", namely "*Do to others as you would have them do to you*"[13]. From this rule several perspectives emerge, such as[14]:

- Treating people as a commodity is an affront to the human dignity and the worth of a person, and a sin before the eyes of God;
- The abuse of other human beings for profit and personal enjoyment is deplorable;
- When one is abused, whether financially, sexually, emotionally, physically or otherwise, even God cries out at the injustice;
- The inequality of personhood is offensive to most faiths.

They create the religious basis for fighting against TP, offering religious communities a privileged position in prevention and protection. For example, various studies have suggested developing and strengthening networking and communication skills among religious women while promoting best-practices. As women have a natural capacity to address the spiritual and pastoral needs of TP victims, they need training to effectively deal with victims' security and day-to-day practical

needs (e.g. housing, personal security, restoration of documents, programs of reintegration, healing process)[15].

At **the European Union level** a legal framework concerning the TP and forced labour has been also adopted, mainly in line with the 'Palermo Protocol' of the UN. Subsequently, the protection and assistance to TP victims has been the focus of a EU Council Directive[16]. A series of responsibilities belong to the competent authorities of the Member States, especially with regard to the identification of the TP victims that could be granted residence permits in the destination Member State, victims' counselling and access to the labour market, vocational training and education, assistance to child victims of trafficking[17].

It results that each **Member State** has to ensure an appropriate legal and institutional framework for managing the TP phenomenon in all its stages. Besides **governmental institutions**, **civil society** plays a very important role in relation with the necessary social and psychological support for reintegration. According to the definition provided by Civil Society International[18], "civil society refers essentially to the so-called "intermediary institutions" such as professional associations, religious groups, labour unions, citizen advocacy organisations that give voice to various sectors of society and enrich public participation in democracies", thus stressing the need of inter-institutional capacity building in order to ensure a strong response to the complex problems raised by TP. The successful stories provided by various countries have emphasized that the co-operation between governmental institutions and civil society actors – non-governmental organisations, mass-media, the church and related religious organisations, education system, etc. is crucial in this respect.

An open, tolerant attitude of the whole society, as opposed to discrimination, and other forms of rejection is highly required. For example, as regards *the public opinion*, in many cases the phenomenon is not known in its essence, in its real light, since its perception is distorted by *severe stereotypes*. Most frequently, young girls – victims of trafficking are being morally condemned by the society that makes no difference between *trafficking* and *prostitution*. This fact results in a very difficult repatriation and reintegration process.

The most sensitive aspect before initiating the reintegration as such is the treatment of so called "*post-traumatic shock disorder*" suffered by most of the trafficking victims, requiring the enforcement of a complex plan of psychological counselling[19]. It has been noticed that only after the victims are accommodated in a welcoming environment, where they are treated with due respect and they benefit from different care services, they prove an increasing will to receive more information and to participate in the reintegration activities. But since few of them have ever had access to social or

psychological support, it is vital to enforce a gradual, careful approach to the counselling sessions, so that the victims become open and accept the mid and long term support[20].

Based on these overall considerations, our paper proposes a case study in Romania, with a particular focus on the role of the church in preventing and healing the wounds of TP. The rich documentation sources have enabled us to combine the quantitative analysis of the TP phenomenon in Romania with the qualitative considerations on the noteworthy co-operation between the governmental institutions and the church. Of a special relevance are the conclusions resulted from the field research undertaken in the area covered by the Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare, which is well-known for the large scope of labour migration, with the entailed risks in terms of TP. We would mention that up to the present most studies have concentrated on the sociological aspects of TP, mainly sexual exploitation, so that the novelty of our paper consists in offering an overall quantitative analysis, covering all forms of TP, combined with a qualitative one which concentrates on the currently most frequent form – labour migration, addressed from the perspective of the church contribution to preventing and combating the phenomenon.

Structural aspects of trafficking in persons regarding Romanian citizens

Trafficking in human beings or trafficking in persons is a complex phenomenon existing in various forms: sequestration, sexual exploitation, exploitation for work, forcing to commit crimes (theft, deceit), pornography, beggary, etc. It is a violation of the human rights, an economic and a social phenomenon with negative consequences for the entire society.

According to the official Romanian statistics managed by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons - ANITP, the size of the phenomenon is still at alarming rates, although *in the last years it was on a downward trend*, visible since 2006. Thus, the total number of victims identified in 2008 was of 1375, lower than in the years 2007 (1780 victims), 2006 (2285 victims) and 2005 (2551 victims). The TP phenomenon at national level has to consider both the persons trafficked outside and inside the national borders. Out of a total of 1375 victims, throughout the year 2008 and the first two months of 2009, a number of 183 persons were trafficked inside and 1192 outside Romania[21].

The existence and implications of this phenomenon led to the necessity of designing and developing a centralised national data system on trafficking including statistical data on both anti-trafficking measures and prevention of and assistance to victims for their social reintegration. The ANITP created a **centralised national database** for law enforcement personnel to input data on individual trafficking victims. This database became fully operational in January 2007 and is an

effective tool for identifying and quickly responding to emerging trends in trafficking[22] and also for monitoring the assistance provided to victims.

Based on the statistical data issued by ANITP we performed an analysis of the scope and dynamics of the TP phenomenon focusing on the situation of the victims identified during 2007, 2008 and the first two months of 2009 in terms of the victims' profile by exploitation type. Some socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, schooling, area of origin) are considered in order to identify the vulnerability factors related to the risk involved by trafficking both at the national and regional level.

Distribution by age indicates the category between 18-25 years of age as being the main group of victimised population (41% of the total victims in 2007), followed by the 26 – 40 age group (31%). The minors accounted for 16% of the victims, their great majority (92%) being in the 14 - 17 age category. At the same time, a connection was found between the age category and the exploitation type, as most of the victims exploited for work belong to the age category 25+ and most of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation belong to the age category 18-25.

Distribution by gender indicates the prevalence of women (56% in 2007). This weight is however decreasing compared to 2006 (77%), trend which can be explained by the increase in the number of victims exploited for work, among whom most of the trafficked persons are men. The trend was maintained in the year 2008.

The education level is negatively correlated with the trafficking risk. The majority of the victims (63% in 2008 and 60% in 2007) had only 8 years of schooling or less and 18% did not receive any formal education or had only primary school studies. Only 0.87% of the trafficked persons attained college education. The low level of education seems to be a vulnerability factor especially for the male population: the weight of the men victims without any formal education was twofold as compared to the women in the same category. The low level of education acts as a risk factor only if it is associated with other factors related to job placement and family income. Regardless of their education level, most of the trafficking victims were unmarried (55% in 2008).

Combined with the low level of education, the **area of origin** can also be considered as a major vulnerability factor, since most of the victims (61% in 2008) originated from rural areas, where there are fewer employment and vocational training opportunities. Consequently, the perspective of a better-paid job offer (without qualified skills requirements) outside the country is extremely attractive, particularly when coming from an acquaintance.

TP, as a crime and a social phenomenon, is based on a victim-recruiter relationship, the first taking advantage of the naivety of their potential victims and speculating their social and economic

difficulties. One should not overlook the fact that the trafficker is unknown in only 49% of the cases, the other 51% representing acquaintances, friends and even relatives (5.7% in 2008).

The historical **regions** where the highest number of victims originates from are the Southern Muntenia (22% of the total number of victims identified in 2007), the North-Eastern Region (19%), the Central Region (16%) and the South-Eastern Region (14%). As regards the distribution of victims by the county of residence, Mures, Teleorman and Botosani are the main counties of origin (Figure 1), although the trafficking in persons is present throughout all the counties.
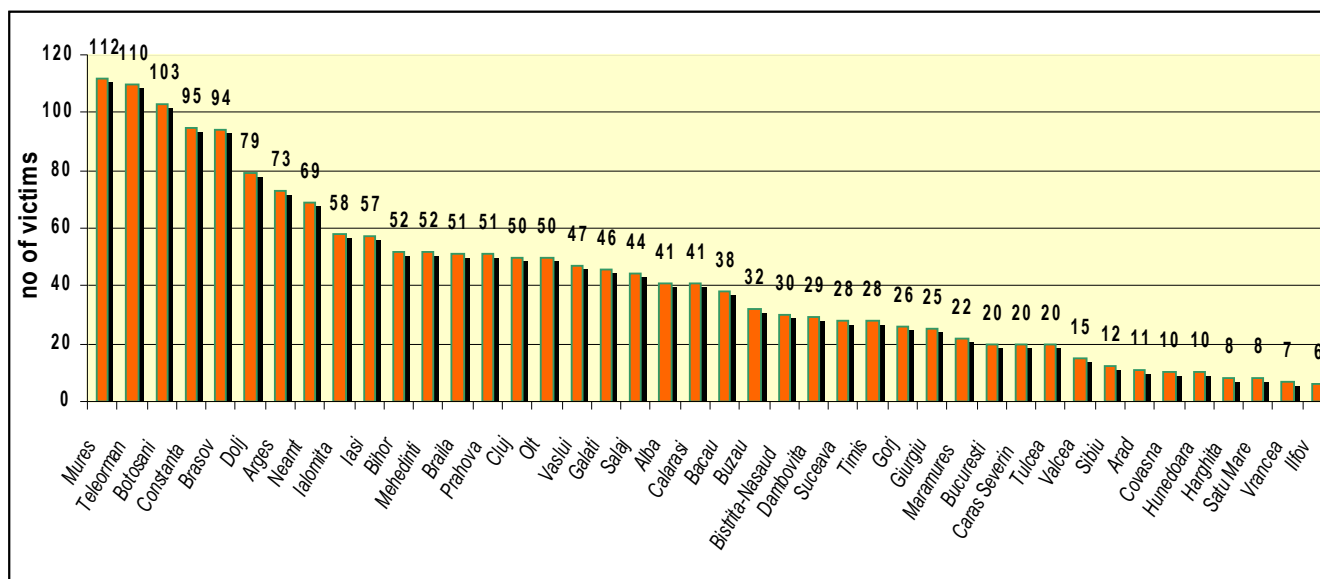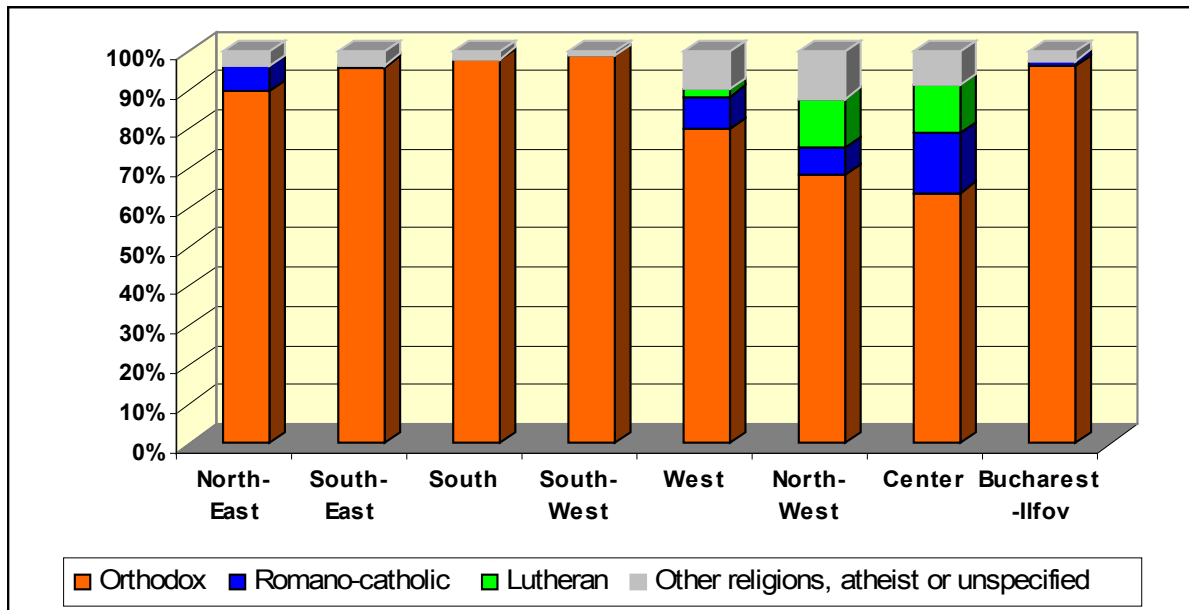

Figure 1. The county distribution of TP victims identified in 2007

Source: processed by the authors according to the data issued by ANITP, 2008.

The territorial intensities of TP are depending mainly on the destination country and on the exploitation type. For instance, victims originating from the South-West Region are trafficked mostly in Italy, where they are sexually exploited by street prostitution, while victims coming from the South Region are mainly trafficked in Spain (for sexual exploitation in night clubs) and Greece (for forced work). Victims trafficked for work in the Czech Republic mostly originate from the North-West region, most of them being males. A special remark must be made in the case of Bucharest municipality which, although it is the main departure point in the transport of victims to the destination countries and an important recruitment area, has a small number of trafficked inhabitants, which confirms the importance of the training level, of the employment opportunities and of the access to information in preventing the trafficking in persons.

Comparing *the territorial intensity of trafficking in persons* (Figure 1) with *the regional distribution of the religions* in Romania (Figure 2) one can note a smaller incidence of the TP phenomenon in the regions having higher proportions of Roman Catholic and Lutheran believers.

Figure 2. Regional distribution of the religions in Romania

Source: processed by the authors according to the data issued by INSSE, 2003.

The main countries where Romanian citizenship victims are trafficked are Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Greece and Germany (Figure 3). In Italy and Spain, sexual exploitation has approximately the same weight as the exploitation by forced work, in Greece exploitation by forced work is predominant, and in Germany the beggary exploitation prevails. Recently, the top destinations also include the Czech Republic, with a large number of male victims exploited in construction work. Romanian citizens were also trafficked inside Romania. Figure 3 outlines the number of Romanian citizen victims of trafficking in 2007, by main destination country, while the comparison between the distributions of the number of victims of TP by form of exploitation in 2008 and 2007 is shown in Table 1. The position of Italy and Spain as the main destination countries for the trafficking of Romanian nationals is largely correlated with their top position in Romanian out-migration flows, mostly because of the similarity of languages and large Romanian communities already established in these two countries. Traffickers also benefit from these opportunities which enable them to better dissimulate their criminal enterprises**.**
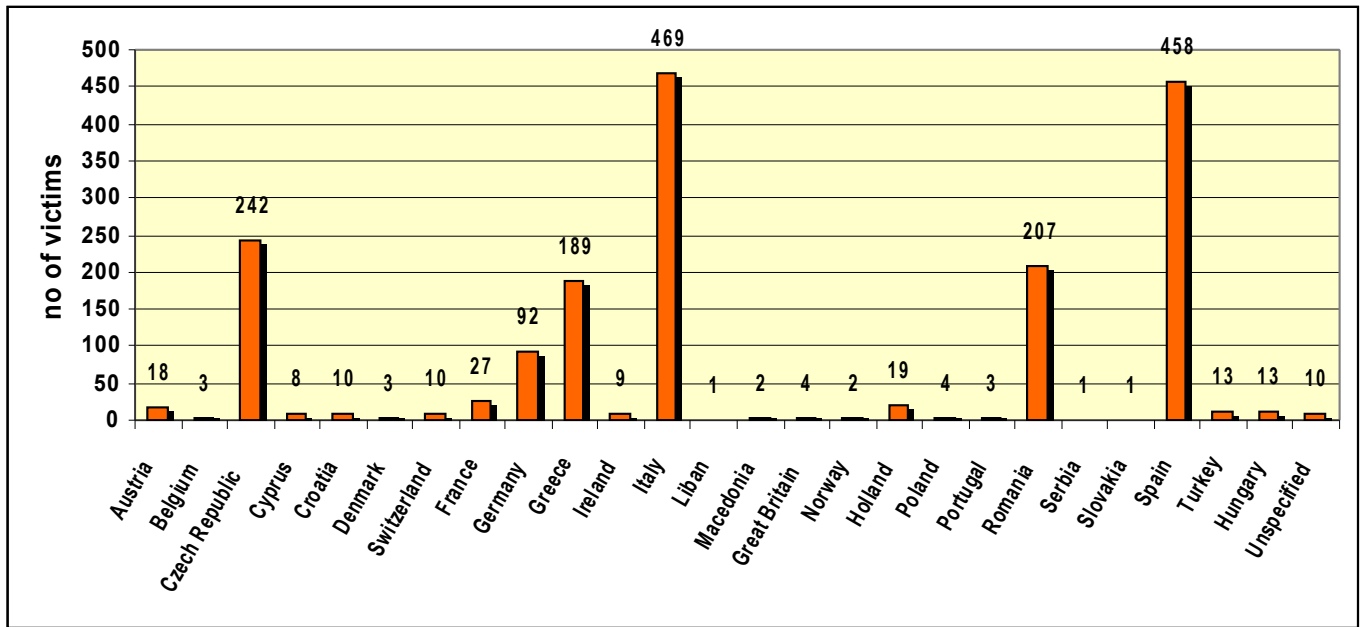
Figure 3. Distribution of TP victims identified in 2007 by country of destination.

Source: processed by the authors according to the data issued by ANITP, 2008.

As the structural aspects of the TP vary in relation with the form of exploitation, we considered further the characteristics of the three main types of trafficking**:** exploitation for work, sexual exploitation and beggary exploitation which jointly accounted for over 95% of TP in the last years.

Table 1. Number of victims of trafficking in persons by form of exploitation in 2007 and 2008

Exploitation type	2007		2008	
	Number of victims	**Percent**	**Number of victims**	**Percent**
Exploitation for work	877	49	782	57
Sexual exploitation	724	41	426	31
Exploitation for beggary	146	8	110	8
Other	33	2	57	4
Total	**1780**	**100**	**1375**	**100**

Source: processed by the authors according to the data issued by ANITP, 2008 and Tamas, 2009.

Trafficking for labour is declining in absolute terms, although it is expanding its weight in the total number of victims (Table 1). Starting with the first semester of 2007 the number of victims exploited for work (425) exceeded the number of sexually exploited victims (406) and the trend has been maintained through 2008.

Most of the victims trafficked for labour were exploited in agriculture (68% of the total victims identified in 2007) followed by constructions (28%). Offers for well-paid jobs are the main method of recruiting victims of this form of exploitation.

The most affected counties as regards trafficking for labour in the year 2008 were Teleorman (102 victims), Olt (63) and Iasi (58). The high incidence of cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation noticeable in some regions across the country, although the are not significant differences in terms of area of origin and level of education, might be an indication of a high criminal activity carried out by traffickers in these areas[23].
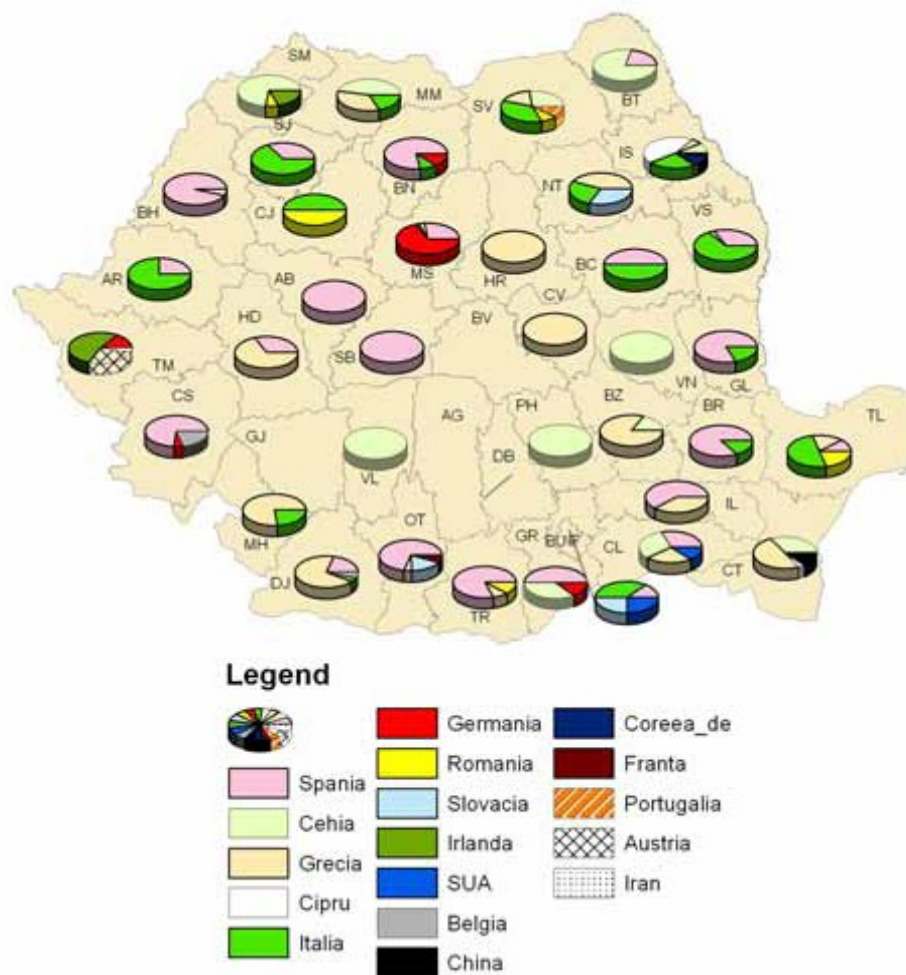
Figure 4. Destination countries by source county in trafficking for labour.

Source: Ana-Maria Tamaş, *Fenomenul social al traficului de persoane. Analiză cantitativă pentru anul 2008 şi primele două luni ale anului 2009* (Bucharest: ANITP, 2009), p.7.

The main destination countries for the victims of forced labour (Figure 4) were Spain (28%, mainly in agriculture), the Czech Republic (27%, mainly in constructions), Italy (21%, agriculture), 18% to Greece (18%, agriculture), and Romania (3 %, constructions).

The significant part of the persons exploited for labour are males (81% in 2007 and 70% in 2008) and the high majority of them are adults (98%). Most of the victims (59%) are residing in the rural areas and have a low level of education. Both the rural area of origin and the low level of education are vulnerability factors when related to the risk involved by trafficking for labour.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains an important form of victimization, the second after labour exploitation, although the incidence of the total number of victims identified has dropped from 1451 (64% of the total) in 2006 to 724 victims (41%) in 2007 and 426 (31%) in 2008.

In contrast to trafficking for labour that records both male and female victims, in the cases of sexual exploitation all victims are females. Another important difference, which places victims in an extremely vulnerable position is the fact that most of the sexually exploited victims were trafficked as a result of a false promise made by the victim's acquaintance or friend. Moreover, sexual exploitation entails several forms of abuse, not only physical, but emotional as well, and it is invariably accompanied by a significant psychological aggression. In order to overcome such severe traumas a long period of recovery, as well as a sustained emotional effort on behalf of the victims, are needed.

The main counties of origin of the sexually exploited victims were in 2008 the counties Brăila (36 persons), Iaşi (35 persons) and Botoşani (30 persons). Though TP for sexual exploitation is relevant throughout the country, a higher incidence is noticeable in some counties such as Braila and Galati. The situation is somehow similar to that recorded for victims of labour at the level of counties such as Teleorman, Mures and Botosani. Both situations can point out to the presence of some organised crime groups specialising in criminal enterprises related to various forms of exploitation. It is also worth mentioning that the county of Constanta, with a high number of identified victims of both sexual and labour exploitation, shall be the focus of attention of anti-trafficking specialised structures[24].

As regards the destination countries for sexual exploitation most of the victims were trafficked to Italy (32%), Spain (26%), and Romania, for internal trafficking (22%).

Trafficking for begging accounts for 8% of the total number of the victims of trafficking in persons in 2008 and the first two months of 2009. The age categories predominant in this form of exploitation are similar to the previous two types, except for the existence of children under 6 and persons aged over 61. Out of the total victims forced into begging, 65% were males and 35% were females.

As regards the counties of origin for the victims exploited for begging, in 2007 52 of the victims (36%) were residing in Brasov (mostly coming from the rural area), while in 2008 many victims originated from Alba (15 persons trafficked in Spain) and from Bucharest (12 persons). In a proportion of 62% of the identified cases, the victims of trafficking for beggary originated from the rural area.

As in the case of sexual exploitation, a person close to the victim performed recruitment: in 47% of the cases it was an acquaintance or friend.

As regards the **period of the exploitation**, there are significant variations in the number of victims involved in TP depending on the exploitation method. These differences are visible especially for labour exploitation where the busiest trafficking periods are in connexion with the timing of the seasonal activities. For instance in agriculture, construction and hotel services, the periods when the number of exploited victims reach their maximum levels are February - April and July – September, while significantly diminishing during October – December.

The periodicity is no longer that obvious for sexual exploitation, as the number of victims varies less throughout the year, although a slightly decline in the number of victims can still be observed in winter months, mostly in the November – January period.

There are more differences between the two main exploitation methods (sexual and labour) in respect to the trafficking period. The majority of labour victims (79%) were exploited for 3 months at the most (22% for even less than a month) and only 4% were trafficked for more than one year, while over half of the victims of sexual exploitation were exploited for less than 3 months (17% for less than 1 month), but almost one third of them (32%) were trafficked for 3 to 12 months and 16% for over 1 year (a higher percentage compared to labour exploitation). These differences can be explained by the exploitation method itself, as labour exploitation usually implies seasonal activities and better opportunities for forced labour victims to break out of the trafficking situation since usually larger groups of people are involved, sometimes related to each other and most of the victims are adult males with a physical and mental ability to resist, react and escape. Victims exploited for commercial sex are single women who, even when exploited in the streets, have no one from their community of origin to trust in and rely on in case they try to escape.

Legislative and institutional responses to TP phenomenon in Romania. A spotlight on the partnership between the state and the church

Considering the scope of the TP phenomenon and the growing complexity of its management, Romania, as an active, reliable partner of the international community, has signed in 2000 both the UN

Convention Against Trans-national Organised Crime and its two related protocols. It also ratified by a national act (Law 300/2006) the Council of Europe Convention with regard to the fighting against TP and adopted the EU plan concerning the best practices, standards and procedures for preventing and combating the TP, launched in 2006.

Moreover, as an EU member, Romania has met and transposed in the national legislation the multiple elements of *the acquis communautaire* in the TP field. At present, Romania has a complex, comprehensive legislation in this respect, covering all forms of TP[25]; a special emphasis is put on trafficking in children, child's rights and fighting against any form of exploitation of children.

In the same register, *the National Strategy against TP* for the period 2006-2010 was developed, with a national plan of action. Its areas of action and the strategic objectives focus on the following directions: the national integrated system for monitoring and evaluating trafficking in persons, inter-institutional coordination, prevention of human trafficking, the protection, assistance and social reintegration of victims, combating human trafficking, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, international cooperation. A particular emphasis in the strategy falls on reducing vulnerability among the groups of maximum risk, in the first place being the unaccompanied, unattended or institutionalised children, but also women, the Roma citizens, the disabled, the elderly, the asylum seekers and people who have received a form of protection in Romania. An extension of the consequences of the phenomenon, on which the empowered authorities increasingly turn their attention to, is trafficking in organs.

From an institutional viewpoint, in 2005 there was created a special governmental institution dealing with TP, namely **the National Agency against TP (ANITP)**, subordinated to the Ministry of Administration and Interior. It aims to coordinate and evaluate the activities of preventing TP and monitoring the assistance offered to the victims[26]. As TP is a multi-sided phenomenon, implying foreign policy, justice, economic, social assistance elements, ANITP has a close collaboration with many **governmental institutions**, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Administration and Interior (especially the General Police Directorate, the General Inspectorate of Border Police, the Romanian Office for Immigration, etc.), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and Research, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Authority for Child Protection, etc. ANITP also collaborates with the **international organisations** active in the field, mainly IOM, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, etc.

At the same time, the activities pertaining to prevention and assistance to victims require a deep collaboration with **civil society organisations**, able to raise the awareness and increase the understanding of the phenomenon among local communities and to contribute to the re-integration of the TP victims and the treatment of the post-traumatic shock consequences. In this respect, ANITP has established successful partnerships with very active NGOs such as the Romanian Forum for Migrants and Refugees (ARCA), the Association for the Development of Alternative Practices for Re-integration and Education (ADPARE), Euro DEMOS. **The collaboration with religious NGOs** has a special significance, as they have acted in many cases as *true catalysts of the networks* created for preventing, combating and assisting the victims of TP. Relevant examples here are the Ecumenical Association of the Churches in Romania (AIDRom), which started its activity in 1991 as a partnership between the Orthodox, Lutheran and Protestant Romanian Churches and Caritas, supported by the Roman Catholic church. AIDRom has succeeded in creating, together with the ANITP and Caritas, a large network in the field, including ARCA, ADPARE as well as the Institute for Research and Prevention of Criminality[27]. The network members have succeeded in creating a database, a website and in editing and publishing materials for training sessions addressed to priests, teachers, parents and even to the state institutions staff. They have established a Centre for Preventing and Combating TP, funded by Phare and having as target groups vulnerable persons who need counselling or victims that require support for re-integration as well as various actors involved in TP management. A large information campaign was "Stop Slavery in Europe", which aimed at informing the potential victims about the TP danger.

The partnership between the Romanian state and the Romanian Orthodox Church came into force in 2003, when a collaboration protocol was signed between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry of Interior[28]. It has focused on TP prevention and the assistance to the victims of trafficking, especially women and children and has consisted in counselling and primary assistance to the victims in the established centres, information campaigns among the youth and parents, etc. The *Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church* are also actively involved in similar actions.

Given the significant role that the priests play in their communities, their co-operation is a must for effective counter-trafficking programmes. The next section addresses this issue based on a field research undertaken in the Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare.

Case study: the assistance offered by the church in the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare

Changing family structure, incessant time pressures and a plethora of social and economic problems often lead people to ask for counselling from their priest. The 21st-century priest must continue to shepherd the local church in the dual role of introducing people to Jesus as his primary evangelistic mission and saving the believer's kingdom potential as his primary pastoral mission.

Pastoral counselling is a process of psychological assistance carried out by a priest in his religious community[29]. According to some authors[30], one of the purposes of pastoral counselling is to provide assistance to discouraged persons and help people in need to overcome personal problems. Pastoral counselling, then, is the comprehensive study of human behaviour pursued under the discipline of the Bible. In the Christian context, the pastoral counselling program seems to create a synthesis between theology and psychology, putting theology in the senior position, and trying to avoid confusion or a split between both fields[31].

In this respect, we are interested in analysing the church as an institution actively participating in the social life of a community and cooperating with the authorities in preventing TP. TP is more than a social phenomenon, it is a personal drama and an individual trauma, with severe consequences at personal and family level. Therefore, it is important to understand how the priest is personally involved in counselling people affected by TP and what his role in healing the wounds is. In Romania, people continue to look at their priest as their first source of help, instead of the mental health professional, as a consequence of cultural and traditional patterns. This attitude was also noticed in countries with strong tradition in psychiatric counselling. In this respect, a study commissioned by the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors (AAPC) found that among the people seeking counselling for a serious problem, the majority said they would prefer to see a religious counsellor (29 %) than a psychiatrist (27%), psychologist (17%) or family doctor (13%)[32].

We conducted a qualitative analysis on exploring priests' views and experiences in counselling and helping persons affected by TP and in this section we briefly present the results of our research. The research stance is subjectivist, constructivist and essentially anti-positivist and a qualitative approach was thus deemed most appropriate, particularly given that the research questions require an elucidation of respondents' subjective views and experiences[33].

The analysis was recently conducted in the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare, situated in the North - Western part of Romania and seated in Baia Mare city. This area was selected due to its large number of people working abroad and more exposed to TP, compared to other Romanian regions.

Research was undertaken to explore the priests' views and experiences in this context. The overall research design is qualitative in nature and a grounded theory-type methodology was adopted. Six individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of priests from the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare. This diocese contains two counties, Maramures and Satu Mare and 8 Deaneries. Participants were randomly selected from 3 Deaneries from the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare, namely Satu Mare deanery, Baia Mare Deanery and Negresti Oas Deanery.

Following the purpose of our research, a small number of research questions were formulated in relation to the priests' experience in counselling. We preferred open-ended questions considering that truly open-ended questions do not pre-determine the answers and allow room for the informants to respond in their own terms. The respondents were free to answer and sometimes the interview resembled a chat, during which the informants forgot that they were being interviewed. Questions about experience on counselling were asked before questions about opinions or suggestions, considering that this helped to establish a context for the informants to express the latter ones.

We decided to approach four aspects regarding our purpose, and in the end selected five questions, from the general to the specific, the first one being meant to create the context for the interview and to break the ice. The five questions were concerned on:

- the views of the priest on *TP in general*;
- the perceptions and opinions about *TP becoming more painful and diverse*; we were interested in making the difference between various forms of TP;
- *the experiences* in counselling various people and offering spiritual support;
- *other types of help* and involvement of the priest and church in the context of increasing TP;
- *suggestions regarding* church involvement in the context of increasing TP.

One pilot interview took place in March 2009. Following the pilot process, the interview schedule was refined, and the pilot interview was included in the overall data-set. Six individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews of priests were conducted across the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare over the period of 19 –23 April 2009. In this time period the orthodox Christians were celebrating Easter and we assumed that priests would be more in touch with people and also with those working abroad and they will be available to answer our questions. An appointment for the interview was made. A summary overview of respondents' details is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. An overview of respondents' details

No.	Initials	Age group	Position	Deanery	Area
1	PT	60-65	Priest	Satu Mare	Urban
2	VT	50-60	Priest	Satu Mare	Urban
3	VF	50-60	Priest	Satu Mare	Urban
4	MF	50-60	Priest	Negresti Oas	Urban
5	CC	30-40	Priest	Negresti Oas	Rural
6	UL	30-40	Priest	Baia Mare	Urban

In respect of demographic characteristics, the respondents belong to different age groups and therefore their experience and the length of their career is various. Most of them are from urban area and only one is living in the rural area.

This section presents a brief overview of emerging findings in relation to four segments of the data: respondents' views on TP in general, their perceptions of the levels of diversity, their experiences regarding counselling people affected by TP and their suggestions on policy measures that could be taken at institutional level.

A. **Views on TP**

All the respondents agreed that TP had negative consequences for the entire society, but the most painful were those at personal level. It is an alarming injustice against humanity that persists in the 21st century.

B. **Perceptions of levels** of TP **diversity**

Most of the respondents were aware of the diversity of the forms of TP. The first that came in their mind was the sexual exploitation and pornography, followed by exploitation for work and beggary. One priest did not associate TP with other forms of traffic beside sexual exploitation. Negative implications of exploitation for work were mention by CC. He raised the problem of children left home without familial support.

C. **Experiences regarding counselling people affected by TP**

Three priests out of six were asked for counselling on working abroad. PT described situations when youngsters came to him before leaving the country to work abroad and they asked for praying and moral support.

"…*I tell them to work hard and honestly and to avoid joining the groups/gangs. These are dangerous for young people and might lead to other destructive temptations such are drugs.*"

FV described a case of a family working abroad that was paid less by their employers, compared to the native employees.

"*They claimed their rights and salaries and did not work for a day. The next day, the employer threatened them with firing if they didn't start working at once. They decided to keep their job and accept the employer's terms, although these were illegal.* "

These people wanted to discuss their situation with the priest and they needed a confirmation of the fact that their decision was correct.

UL reported that he was asked for counselling by a couple of parents working abroad, concerning their decision to take the children with them. They needed support in taking such a difficult decision and were thinking in the children's best interest.

D. **Other types of help and involvement of the priest and church in the context of increasing TP**

There were four respondents that admitted that their help was solicited in other manners besides counselling. PT was asked for money in many situations by people in need, not particularly by beggars. MF was aware of the situation existing in the rural parishes from Negresti Oas deanery and he mentioned several activities that parish priests are performing in order to serve their community. The *theme of children* left home by their parents working abroad came again into discussion. The Centre for community services "St. Demeter" from Tur parish was mentioned, which has in care 25 children in this situation. The same centre is involved in helping people from detention centres with spiritual support, but also offering financial support for some cultural activities.

Two other parishes were noted concerning help given to children, namely Talna Mare and Calinesti Oas, while Certeze parish was mentioned for help given to older persons, disadvantaged by their health condition.

E. **Suggestions regarding church involvement in the context of increasing TP**

Priests are involved in the social life of local communities and in counselling people affected by TP. It was stressed by four of the respondents, that these are private issues which are not presented in the media. Three respondents agreed that *more intervention and support at administrative level* is required in order to encourage people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to work inside the country instead of migrating abroad.

A suggestion made by CC was that *different churches should work together* and should organise common events in which they should take firm position against TP. UL noted as a good practice example the International Conference Justitia and Pax European organisation, held in February 2009 in Satu Mare, organised by the Catholic Church. This meeting on migration and TP was a forum for describing regional realities and counter-trafficking activities. Therefore, the common action of different religions appears to be a necessity in generating joint strategies on preventing TP, but also in assistance, advocacy and networking and developing strategic guidelines for creating partnerships and alliances with other entities.

Concluding remarks

Trafficking in persons is a multi-sided phenomenon accompanying the current migration flows: it is a major violation of human rights, an economic and social phenomenon with negative consequences for the entire society, an aspect of public health and of criminal nature.

The statistical analysis of the magnitude, dynamics and structural aspects of the phenomenon allowed us to assess the victim profile based on the main social, economic and demographic characteristics of the TP victims in the investigated period. The "typical" victim of the trafficking for labour is a male, aged 18-40, with a low level of education and originating from the rural area. The victims of the trafficking for sexual exploitation are only females, usually in the 18-25 age group and with a low level of education and, in contrast to the other main forms of exploitation (forced labour and especially begging), there is an increased incidence of the urban recruitment for sexual exploitation.

The major issue emerging from our case study analysis on the assistance offered by the church in the Diocese of Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Maramures and Satu Mare relates to respondents' concern about the diversity and increasing TP and their active involvement in counselling TP victims. Specifically, a number of respondents in the current study reported and expressed concerns about the situation of children with parents working abroad. They stressed their active involvement in counselling and also the activities carried out in a centre for helping children in need. It should be noted that the interviewed priests were not confronted with the victims of sexual exploitation.

Romania has made important progresses in implementing coordination programmes for the assistance granted to TP victims, in creating the centralised national database, in establishing regional centres for assistance to victims, in increasing the number of traffickers brought to trial and the measures taken in order to improve cooperation with non-governmental organisations. At the same time, there is still a series of challenges to identify the TP victims and to establish a functional system

so that the victims may be aware of and benefit from the public services and the legal assistance provided to them.

In our opinion, the institutional and technical-operational efforts should continue to combine with the efforts for sensitising the Romanian society with regard to TP. Continuing and extending the information campaigns must contribute to building the awareness of the people towards the difference between TP and various anti-social acts such as prostitution, theft, etc.

Moreover, the inter-institutional capacity should be increased, particularly in the case of returned persons who had been TP victims, with a view to their reintegration and treatment of the consequences of post-traumatic shock. In this respect the co-operation between governmental institutions and civil society actors – non-governmental organisations, the mass-media, the church and related religious organisations, the education system, etc. is crucial. Our paper has emphasized the successful results recorded when partnerships between the state institutions and NGOs, including the religious ones were implemented. The protocol and the official collaboration between the state and the Romanian Patriarchate as well as the involvement of the Catholic and the Roman Catholic Church have played a very important role. Besides large information, counselling and assistance campaigns at local community level the contribution of the priests has proved to be of an undeniable help.

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