

The Global Observatory of Transnational Criminal Networks

# **Human Trafficking for Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation in Bulgaria II**

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## **Disclaimer**

The facts and the analysis presented herein are sustained in documents and interviews exposed in mass media and judicial records related to the criminal networks analyzed. No primary information uncovering facts has been gathered, which means that only secondary sources were consulted, from legal to media documents. In the case of the names mentioned, quoted or referenced on indictments—with the exception of those specifically mentioned, quoted or referenced in the text as definitively condemned-, the presumption of innocence, in observance of individual rights is always preserved.

The judicial truth is the jurisdiction of the courts, which by law will decide whether the defendants are innocent or guilty.<sup>1</sup> It is stated that belonging to, participating in, being connected to, or appearing on a network, as analyzed herein, does not imply having committed a criminal act or being engaged in a criminal enterprise. It is always possible to belong, participate, be connected, or appear on a network as an agent promoting interests that are socially and institutionally beneficial, or as a result of coercion, among other reasons unrelated to criminal acts committed by the agent.

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The purpose of this document is to inform about the operation of criminal networks involved in human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Bulgaria. This operation also affects Western European countries where trafficked women sometimes face violence and situations that can be defined as slavery. As a result of the capacity to pay high prices for sexual services, Western European countries are the usual destination for women recruited in specific regions of Bulgaria.

The present document has four parts. The first part is an introduction to the characteristics of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Bulgaria. The second part is a description of the main “types” or “categories” of actors that are usually involved in the criminal structures related to human trafficking. The third part is a description of the most relevant criminal hotspots inside Bulgaria, where women for sexual exploitation are recruited. The recurrent destinations are also discussed and described. The fourth part is a description of the most recent, and sometimes ongoing, cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. As it is discussed, human trafficking affects native Bulgarian women and Roma population. It is also observed the involvement of actors operating within the lawful economic elite of Bulgaria.

## Introduction

Bulgarian criminals discovered the opportunity to make profits on trafficking of humans for prostitution and sexual exploitation since the beginning of the 1990s. At that time an increasing number of people, among them felons, began to travel abroad. Organized criminal groups not only entered the existing market of sex services, but also monopolized it. Studies<sup>1</sup> show that sexual exploitation of women, and not so often of men, became one of the basic activities of the Bulgarian mafia: 95% of the Bulgarian prostitutes worked with a pimp.

The interest of the organized crime in the trafficking of humans for sexual exploitation is influenced by several key factors. First, it yields rapid and generous profits that, according to some authors<sup>2</sup>, exceed 1 billion EUR per year for the Bulgarian traffickers only. Organized crime would not leave in the hands of solo players such a lucrative business as the trafficking of victims and their subsequent exploitation. Second, the profit margin is close to that of the narcotics smuggling, but the risks are considerably lower.

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<sup>1</sup> Arsova, T. 2000. *Prostitution and sex workers in Bulgaria: Analysis of the situation and the risk with regards to HIV/AIDS/STDs*. Health and Social Development Foundation, Sofia.

<sup>2</sup> Bezlov, T. et al., 2007. *Organized crime in Bulgaria: Markets and Trends*. CSD, Sofia; *Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment*. 2012. CSD, Sofia; Petrunov, G. 2009. *Money Laundering from Human Trafficking*. RiskMonitor, Sofia.

The initial investment is also low, in comparison to drugs or arms trade. Third, from the point of view of the “black entrepreneurs”, the process of recruitment, facilitation and subsistence of sex workers is highly cost - effective. On one hand, there is a constant flow of “candidates” to be induced in prostitution, on the other, the detection levels are low. Such factors influence the strong relation between this type of trafficking and the organized crime, which makes trafficking in human beings not an accidental act against a single victim, but a well arranged, large-scale criminal enterprise. Also, the profits of this activity encourage the growth of mafia-like structures in the country. Profits are therefore one of the reasons for the existence of multi-functional gangs, registered by the Police after 2009, which are engaged not only in trafficking of humans, but also in drugs dealing, racketeering and professional murders.

This text will present a general description of the process of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Bulgaria. First it will describe the main criminal agents involved in this criminal market. Second, it will focus on the criminal hotspots (regions of origin and destinations of the victims). Finally, we will present some cases of prostitution and sexual exploitation, made public by the local media in the recent years.



# 1. Main Criminal Agents

Trafficking in humans for sexual exploitation from Bulgaria has become part of the routine of large criminal networks. Behind the simple mechanic of the transaction “sex-for-money” a complex black market is hidden. It is inhabited by different actors, operating at different levels of the underground world, aided by figures that belong to the “legitimate” spheres of society. To understand the complexity of this universe we will outline its main players:

**The solo prostitute.** This category consists of women, rarely men, who seek for customers on their own. The solo prostitute is not tied to a pimp and keeps the right to decide whether, when and where to search for clients. Sex work is not their usual occupation – for instance sometimes these are students trying to complement their income. The “workplaces” are in restaurants, bars or on-line social networks. They normally avoid “territories” where organized criminals are active.

**The solo pimp.** This type is represented by a pimp supporting and working for a few, usually a between two or five women. The solo pimps usually begin their business with a close friend or a relative and then attract other women, arranging a trip abroad to the destination country. In most cases such actors cannot access profitable areas.

**The group of traffickers** consists of partnering members who share the expenses. Each pimp is responsible for his women, but some activities are performed collectively. For instance, they can travel together or share rented living spaces in the destination country. These agents have the resources to enter more lucrative segments of the market in comparison to the solo players. The profits are bigger respectively.

**The large organizations.** These are extensive organized criminal groups, engaged in trafficking for sexual exploitation as part of a larger criminal portfolio. They have a distinguishable leader and numerous members with distributed functions, arranged as networks. The large organizations strive to monopolize the market and to bring the other players under control, usually forcing them to pay “fees” and extortion. Bulgarian criminal networks have established good contacts with the foreign owners of the premises where the victims are being exploited. They also cooperate successfully with other westerners who are well placed in the local markets for sex services. These types of organizations are the big players on the market. They receive the largest share of the profits generated by trafficking and have a significant influence upon the criminogenic environment. Individual actors cannot exert the same influence on the criminal economy.

Within the complex organization different levels and players could be outlined:

**Level 1 – prostitutes** account for the money earned to a pimp, who in turn transfers it to the senior members. In some structures this level includes more than a hundred female, rarely male, sex workers.

**Level 2 – recruiter.** A person, who “hunts” for new employees, convinces them that they will earn good money and explains them about the working conditions. The recruiter often accompanies the girl on her travel to the destination country or takes care for the tickets if she is about to travel alone.

**Level 3 – controller.** Supervises the business in the destination country. This function is often entrusted to the so-called “senior girl” – a prostitute who has earned the confidence of the traffickers and who enjoys certain privileges. She is tasked with meeting the arriving girls, introducing them to work, recording the turnover and directly supervising the sex work.

**Level 4 - key position of the money collector.** He is responsible for gathering the turnover and its transfer to Bulgaria. He is in direct contact with the person dealing with the overall accounting of the money earned through sexual exploitation.

**Level 5 - country supervisor.** He usually lives in Bulgaria, but when needed he also travels to the destination countries. In some cases, one supervisor is in charge of the operations in more than one country. Often, the same person acts as a country supervisor, money collector and controller.

**Level 6 - deputy leader of the organization.** He performs the overall management of the activities related to sexual exploitation and exerts control over the other members of the structure. The deputy leader works from Bulgaria. He is a close and trusted associate of the leader and is directly responsible to him. It is not the occasional situation when the deputy leader running the business with sex services is in charge for other activities of the criminal network too. This is a key node function, because it controls relations that are vital for the functioning of the organization.

**Level 7 - leader.** This is the person who runs the organization in Bulgaria. He often keeps in the shadows and does not manifest his relations with the criminal structure; therefore, this agent can be defined as a “gray” actor. In practice he is the decision maker, having the last word on issues like operational matters, employment of new members and organizational development. Publicly the leader usually enjoys the image

of a respectable member of the business elite in Bulgaria, hidden behind the alibi of a legitimate business as an official source of his income. In several cases such leaders entered the politics. Others sponsor football clubs, trying to improve their reputation and to mobilize public support through the fan clubs. The biographies of the leaders show that they are: 1) former sportsmen who practiced heavyweight or martial disciplines, and/or 2) officers from the secret service. The experience in the secret police granted them good contacts with their colleagues, who continued working for the law enforcement. They also know the methods for an investigation that could be used against their criminal structures.

Most of the criminal organizations dealing with human trafficking in Bulgaria are supported by groups of bodyguards. They provide security for the leader and his aides, maintain discipline among the members of the group, prosecute those who break the rules and intimidate the competitors. Some organizations even send abroad their hit-men in order to punish the guilty members of the gang or the prostitutes who work for them.

Despite the division of functions, these criminal networks are flexible structures and are able to react to the changes in the environment. Actors, especially from the lower levels, are replaceable/expandable without further consequences for the “company” –network- and its activities. This division of functions proposed herein reflects the distribution of operational tasks – it makes the structure of the criminal market more visible and could help the fight against the phenomenon, hinting the law enforcement where to concentrate their efforts. However, some criminal networks could rely on more types of specialized agents than the enumerated here, or on one person who combines the performance of various functions.

### **“Legitimate”, “lawful” or “gray” players who facilitate the trafficking of human beings**

Besides the main agents who can be classified as representatives of the underworld, there are actors from the public sphere taking part in the trafficking of humans for sexual exploitation. They are not members of criminal organizations or groups in a traditional sense, but they also provide services to facilitate the criminal activities. Moreover, without this form of corrupted cooperation, the criminals could not achieve the scale of their criminal enterprises to such dimensions. These are:

**Officers from the borders’ and customs’ administrations.** They are mobilized whenever there is a risk of exposing the criminal activity. For instance, when the documents of the travelers are not valid, when the victim is under the legal age or has been abducted against her will.

**Representatives of the Bulgarian embassies.** They are used when an entrance or residence permit for the destination country is required. The amount of the bribe is fixed and the money is given to the administrator who takes care for a fast, smooth and successful procedure for the visa applicant.

**Policemen.** The traffickers contact and bribe not only Bulgarian police officers; they also pay local policemen in the destination countries. It is needed in order to avoid inspections or to cover irregularities in the personal documents of the prostitutes. Corrupted senior police ranks are used to provide protection against the investigation, to give early warnings for planned police operations, to create better conditions in the prison or even to facilitate management of the criminal business from the prison cell. Payments for the police officers are fixed in advance and are paid on a regular basis, especially for persons in higher positions.

**Magistrates.** Their services are needed to influence the outcome of court proceedings against members of a criminal organization. The interaction with them usually takes the form of huge bribes or luxury presents. In some cases, the relatives of the magistrates are supported by the criminal organizations to launch their own business.

**Representatives of political parties.** This group includes both regional and national politicians. The relations between the criminal leaders and the political power are twofold. First, there are cases of bribery of politicians and sponsorship for political parties. In this case although the criminal sponsor could influence the decisions of the corrupted politician, he remains hidden in the shady underworld. Notorious is the case when the National Assembly voted an amendment in the law, which resulted in a significant reduction in the sentence of a certain leader of a traffickers' ring. Thus he almost immediately served his term and left the prison. The amendment was named after the trafficker, famous also as a popular rap singer: "Vanko 1". The second type of interaction relates to cases when the criminal leader or his subordinate enters the political class as representative of the business elite. There is the case of the boss of a large criminal organization, running trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation, who became municipal councilor in the city where his gang was active.

By "cross-breeding" with different public structures, these criminal networks are not only able to perform undisturbed its activities, to generate wealth and accumulate economic power, but also to enter politics at local and national level.

## 2. Key Criminal Hotspots

A survey held in 2008<sup>3</sup> ranks Bulgaria among the top 3 countries of origin of victims within the EU, together with Romania and Russia, which is a very high score, considering the disparities in the population between the countries. Eurostat data for 2010, 2011 and 2012 indicates that Bulgaria is an established source of trafficked humans. It is among the top five members of the EU, in terms of absolute numbers of registered victims.

**Origin.** The sexual exploitation usually begins in Bulgaria and after a certain time the prostitutes have transferred abroad where the profits are higher in comparison to the generated in the country. A study on the sex market in Bulgaria shows that the northern part of the country (towns like: Pleven, Vratsa, Montana, Dobrich etc) is functioning as a pool for “call girls”.<sup>4</sup> The phenomenon is related to the high levels of unemployment in the region and the lack of opportunities for the youth to develop long-term life projects. The same is valid for small towns in other districts, like Botevgrad, Dolni Chiflik, Pazardzhik, Sliven, Shoumen etc. where young people are economically forced to move to the large cities in search of a job. Usually they lack qualification and skills in order to find another employment and consequently turn into “working poor” or drop out of the labor market. These factors, as well as the eagerness for quality or even luxury life, makes this particular group vulnerable to the promises of the traffickers who offer big and easy money abroad. The available research also refutes the common understanding that the victims are only of Roma origin. In a significant number of cases the persons trafficked for prostitution and sexual exploitation are ethnic Bulgarians.<sup>5</sup>

**Destinations.** The major destination countries for sex trafficking are the western European countries and especially those with a legal sex market and liberal attitudes towards prostitution (e.g. Belgium, Germany, France). In the recent years victims have identified also in countries outside the EU, especially the USA, RSA, UAE, etc.

Some prostitutes have been exploited in different periods in more than one country. Whether the woman will be transferred to another country is up to the managerial decisions of the criminal organization. There are registered cases when victims have worked in 4 countries. The mobility is influenced by factors as changes in the working environment, opportunities for more money, fear of arrest, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> TAMPEP (2009) *Sex work in Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> Petrunov, G (2010) Organized Prostitution in Bulgaria. In: Petrunov, G. ed. *Prostitution and Sex exploitation*. RiskMonitor, Sofia.

<sup>5</sup> Petrunov, G (2010) Organized Prostitution in Bulgaria.

**Table 1: Countries where victims of sexual exploitation have been identified**

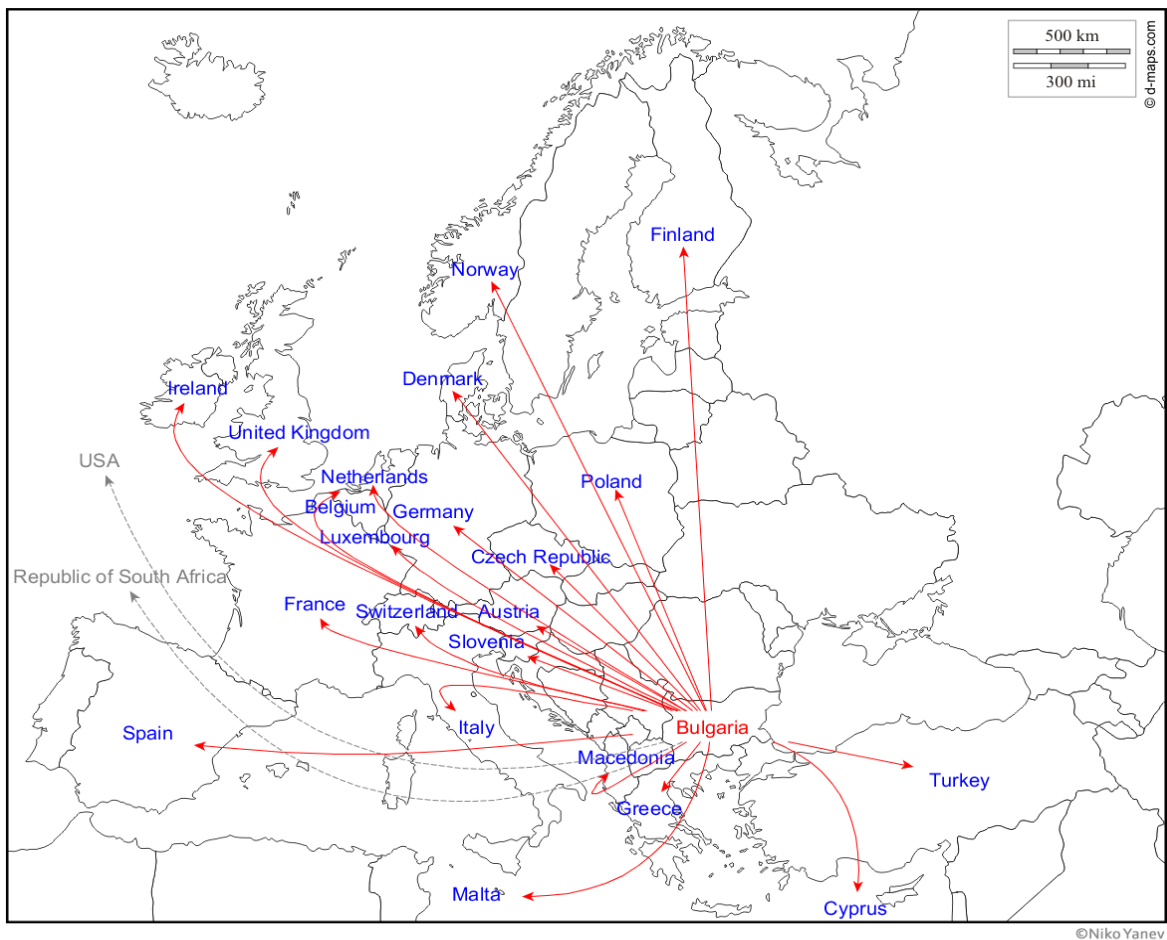
Source country	2010 Victims, identified in 13 countries	2011 Victims identified in 15 countries	2012 <sup>6</sup> Victims identified in 17 countries	2013 <sup>7</sup> Victims identified in 18 countries	2014 <sup>8</sup> Victims identified in 17 countries
Bulgaria	1. Belgium 2. Bulgaria 3. Cyprus 4. Czech Republic 5. Denmark 6. France 7. Germany 8. Greece 9. Italy 10. Luxembourg 11. Netherlands 12. Poland 13. Slovenia	1. Belgium 2. Bulgaria 3. Cyprus 4. Czech Republic 5. France 6. Germany 7. Greece 8. Ireland 9. Italy 10. Netherlands 11. Poland, 12. Slovenia 13. Spain 14. Switzerland 15. United Kingdom	1. Belgium 2. Bulgaria 3. Cyprus 4. Czech Republic 5. France 6. Germany 7. Greece 8. Ireland, 9. Italy 10. Malta 11. Netherlands 12. Poland 13. Serbia 14. Slovakia 15. Spain 16. Switzerland 17. United Kingdom	1. Austria 2. Belgium 3. Cyprus 4. Czech Republic 5. Finland 6. France 7. Germany 8. Greece 9. Italy 10. Macedonia 11. Netherlands 12. Norway 13. Poland 14. Spain 15. South Africa 16. Switzerland 17. Turkey 18. USA	1. Austria 2. Belgium 3. Cyprus 4. France 5. Germany 6. Greece 7. Italy 8. Macedonia 9. Netherlands 10. Norway 11. Poland 12. Spain 13. Sweden 14. Switzerland 15. Turkey 16. United Kingdom 17. USA

<sup>6</sup> Data for 2010-2012 Source: Eurostat (2015) Trafficking in Human Beings

<sup>7</sup> Internet Journal of Criminology (2013) Available in: <http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com>

<sup>8</sup> Source: US Department of State. 2014. Trafficking in Persons Report – Country reports, Bulgaria

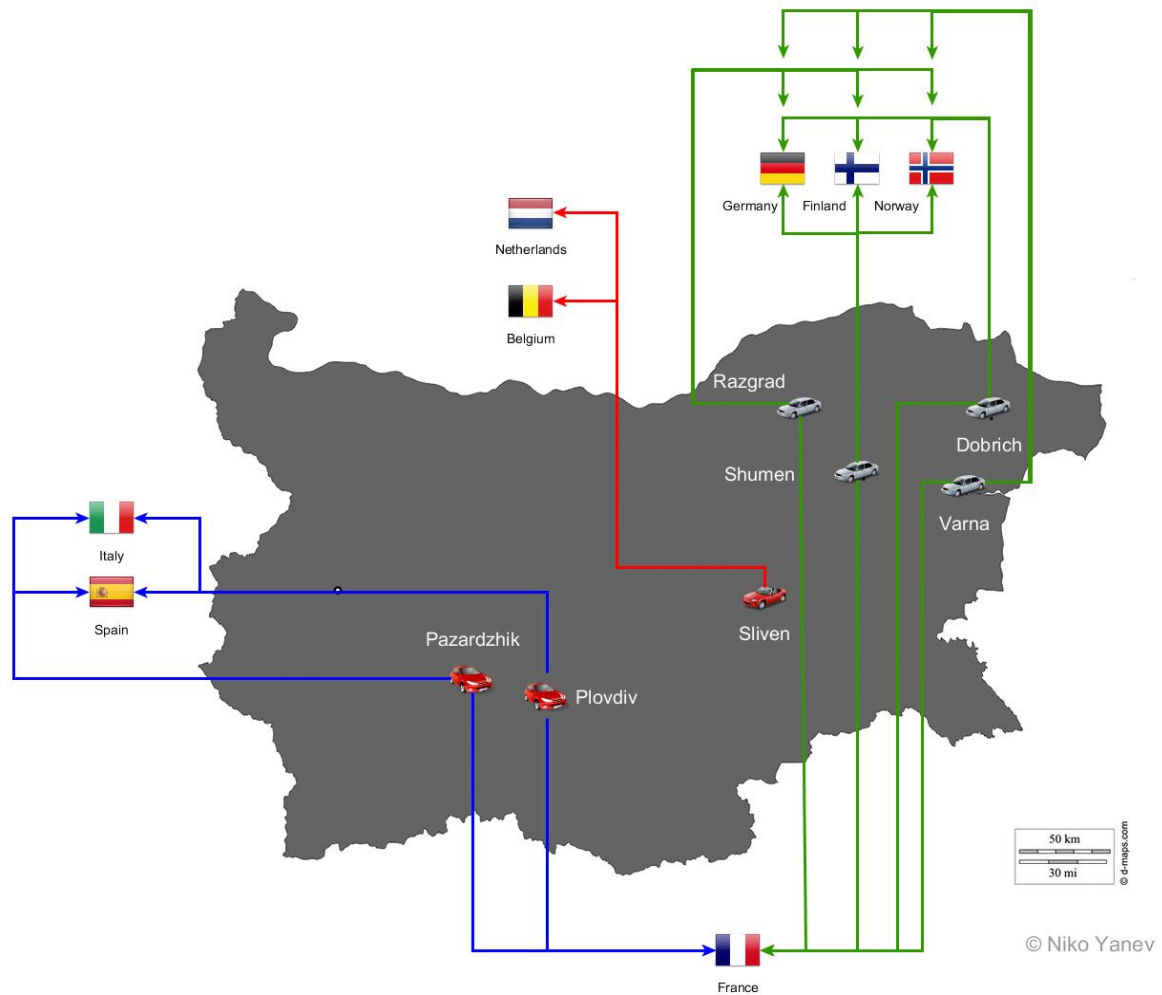
**Figure 1: Destination Countries**



**Connections between source and destination countries.** The traffickers make the decisions about the country where the woman will be working. Once established, the channels are reused multiple times. The trend is confirmed by the observations of the law enforcement, which has noticed that victims of certain regions are usually brought to same destination countries:

- From the town of Sliven to the Netherlands and Belgium.
- From the cities of Plovdiv and Pazardzhik to France, Italy and Spain.
- From the cities of Varna, Dobrich, Shoumen and Razgrad, to Germany, France and the Scandinavian countries.

**Figure 2: From City to Country**



As previously stated, the combination of suitable legal environment and liberal attitudes towards prostitution on one hand, and established channels for trafficking, opportunities for higher profits and access to more clients, on the other, are the leading factors behind the choice of destination.



### 3. Case Studies (based on media information)

#### Case 1: “Cholata”

##### Summary

In November 2011 the president of the Bulgarian Rugby Federation, Rossen Cholov (nicknamed “Cholata”) was arrested by the Specialized Unit to Combat Organized crime on charges of pimping and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. Cholov, then 41 years old, was accused together with his accomplices Ralitza Lubenova (23 years old) and Plamen Kirilov (25 years old). Cholov was released under an amnesty after the first arrest in 2012. In 2014 he has arrested again (to be released on bail shortly).

##### FH1 Agency

**Recruitment.** Cholov and his associates used the fashion agency FH1 to engage young women, offering contracts as models, and then lured them to provide sex services. In total, 16 women were employed, and 7 of them were under 18 years old. They were promised fashion shows, visibility on magazine covers and in film productions, and participation in beauty contests around the world. FH1 had a contract for casting and small roles with the National Film Center in Boyana. After initial photo-sessions and footage for video spots, the models were forced (cheated) to provide sex services for wealthy clients.

**Business Process.** Ralitza Lubenova started as a “model” and subsequently was promoted to Agency’s manager. Formally, she acted as the official executive director of the company. Lubenova was responsible for the “head hunting” process. Cholov took care to provide the clients. There were no formal links between him and FH1, but his “United Sports” company was registered at the same address. Prices varied between 500 - 1000 BGN (approx. USD \$300-600). Half of the fee remained for the girl, half for the pimps. Sex services were provided in hotel rooms (at “Kempinski-Zografski”, Sofia), in some cases the women attended private parties outside the city. Bouriana Zlatkova, one of the victims, told the court that Cholov drove her and her colleagues in Kosovo. Tsvetelina Borisova legally owned “FH1”. She is a veteran in the Bulgarian model business and denies all allegations. Usually, Plamen Kirilov was the driver of the group. Clients included top politicians, among them MPs, a former minister of education, and high-ranking magistrates. Rates for some special services reached as high as 6000-7000 EUR.

## In the internet

In 2014 Rossen Cholov re-launched his business, this time on-line. A student from the New Bulgarian University, Paulina Ivanova (21), helped him with the recruitment. A team of 20 girls was gathered, some of them under 18. The investigation also revealed that Ivanova kept drugs in her house. The new enterprise was of a modest scale and ran for a couple of months only.

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*Girls from smaller and poorer towns are often trafficked in rich western cities. Mafia rings from Sliven are major suppliers for Brussels - one of the richest markets in Europe and capital of the European administration. Trafficking sometimes is accompanied with brutal violence.*

## Case 2: Atanas Mundev and THB to Brussels

### Summary

Atanas Mundev, a former boss of the company “Club 777” from Sliven, notorious for racketeering and forced protection in the 1990s, is accused of trafficking in humans for sexual exploitation. In the beginning of the 2000 the group created channels for export of girls to the sex markets of the Netherlands and Belgium. In the recent years they shifted their business interests to the implementation of lucrative contracts with the municipality of Sliven and to “vote-buying” for local elections. Victims of trafficking told stories of torture and brutal violence. A case was started in 2006, but is still open, since the third instance court (The Supreme Court of Cassation) decided to re-launch the procedure on formal reasons.

### Management through Fear

In 2006 a prostitute from *Sliven*, Bulgaria (called with the fictitious name “Pavlina”) was arrested in Belgium. She informed to the foreign investigators that Mundev’s organization was “exporting” girls to Belgium, the Netherlands and France. “Pavlina” started working in 2000 as a window prostitute in *Groeningen*. She was directly controlled by Ivan Dimchev, aka, “the Cookie”. Every two weeks Valeri Raikov, “the Director” and Kolio Ivanov, “the Cart” collected the turnover. In 2001 Ivan Dimchev, while high on coke, stood at the window, where girls performed, and shot himself in the head. The accident gave “Pavlina” an opportunity to return to Bulgaria. However, Sliven Mundev’s group abducted, raped and tortured the victim (burning with cigarettes). Then they took her

passport and forced the girl to work for them again. Other witnesses say that the gangsters lured them to travel in the Netherlands, promising jobs in the agricultural sector. They also report being severely beaten and tell that some of their co-workers “disappeared”. The Prosecution claims that tens of women worked for Mundev, but his methods were so frightening that only a few became witnesses. In fact, in Nice, Mundev alone controlled a flock of 30 prostitutes; even the judicial administration succumbed to fear. In 2013 the accused and his accomplices behaved aggressively in the courtroom. The judge Marieta Nedelcheva subsequently resigned from the case.

Each member of the gang had specific functions: recruiting, escorting girls abroad, control on the “employees”, collection of the turnover, sending the money to Bulgaria via the Western Union or carrying it personally across borders. Brute force was not the only method for managerial control. Some women received money, cars or flats in Sliven. While abroad, they were accommodated at hotels or in window prostitution facilities. The victims had to contact the direct “supervisor” twice a day. Part of their obligations was to report if someone decided to escape. Punishments included physical violence, usually beating, and also financial fines. Daily profits per girl varied between 300-500 EUR. According to the rough calculations of a witness, for a short period she earned about 150 000 BGN (75 000 EUR). Only small part of it returned to the prostitutes, since beating was the usual response to any claims for profit shares.

### **Business Competition and State Repression**

The profitable business of Atanas Mundev faced (i) internal competition at the sex market and (ii) increased pressure on behalf of the authorities. In 1998 he was seriously wounded by a professional killer, hired by another local boss, Ivan Petrov, who was a Roma (gypsy) mobster that used to control the gypsy prostitution at the Sliven district Komluka. He wanted bigger and better shares of the Western markets (window prostitution), which was monopolized by Mundev. In the next years several unsuccessful assassination attempts followed.

Formally A. Mundev has only 3 minor sentences: for the abduction of the wife of his debtor (1 year conditional), for looting 10 tons of grapes and for beating the thieves who stole his cattle (fine of 800 BGN/400 EUR). The judicial saga for Mundev and Company in relation to THB for sexual exploitation started with a conviction by the First Instance Court. The Court of Appeal reduced their prison terms and finally the Supreme Court of Cassation had to decide. At this stage, the case took a new direction: it was returned for a renewal despite the 5 years of investigation. Mundev and his defense had asked for replacement of the judge about 20 times under various pretexts. The Supreme Court of

Cassation motivated its verdict with the complaint of the wife of one of the main suspects. She declared that a person from the jury, a 78-year-old man, had harassed her sexually. That is how the sentences for Mundev and associates were nullified – not because there was a lack of proofs for their crimes, but because the credibility of the jury was put under suspicion. The restart of the court proceedings will postpone the final decision by years, the accused will remain free and the memories of the witnesses and their willingness to collaborate will be put at stake.

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*Lower strata on the sex market (for example street prostitution) are occupied by the Roma (gypsy) minority group. Sometimes they practice prostitution as a “family business”. Family members become victims of trafficking.*

### Case 3. Trafficking Among the Roma Group

#### A Family Business

The Roma family Gadjevi, from Peshtera, took their 14 years old son to Bordeaux, France, and forced him to prostitute for male adult clients. The international investigation revealed that it was not the only family to practice this type of trafficking. Wiretapped telephone conversations provided enough proofs to accuse the mother Zaharinka Gadjeva. The father - Petar Gadjev - managed to escape, but was caught in Bulgaria, following a European order for arrest.

#### Operation “Haskovo” in Vienna

In 2013 operation, codenamed “Haskovo”, was conducted by the Austrian Police. The authorities freed 21 women at the age 18-30. They were held and forced to prostitute against their will. The overall number of the victims of that criminal network exceeds 100. Eight men have been arrested, another five are at large. All victims and suspects come from the Bulgarian town of Haskovo. The girls come from poor families, lured in Wien by intimate friends, who later became their pimps.

Upon arrival to Austria the women were told that the “boyfriend” was in financial trouble and they could help him by doing some sex services. Once caught in the criminal web the victims hardly found their way out. A representative of the Vienna Criminal Service reports that the women have been beaten in order to obey. Pimps collected almost all of the earned money.

## Human as Merchandise

In 2014 a male Bulgarian Roma was sentenced to 8 years in Cyprus. His victim was a 30 years old woman from the same ethnic group. She “entered the market” at the age of 20 and was periodically “bought” by different “owners”, who did the pimping.

## The Nightmare of the Street Prostitution

Maria Kadrie works as a street prostitute in Bourgas. She is the mother of 12 children, but has abandoned all of them. The woman searches for clients around the Trade-Banking College in the city and, if successful, provides the sex services on an unfinished construction site nearby. She gave birth of her last child on the streets and frequently becomes a victim of violence inflicted by her husband Misho or by local skinhead gangs. Kadrie barely could speak Bulgarian with the TV crew that filmed her story.

## “Slave Trade” in Italy

In 2014 the police in Lecce, Italy, arrested a group of 3 Romas (gypsies) with Bulgarian citizenship: Tsvetan Tsvetanov (40), his wife Emilia Georgieva (38) and their accomplice Alexander Georgiev. One of their victims (under the fictitious name “Maria”) sought protection from the carabinieri. She (a mother of 2) was sold by her family to the gang for 1500 BGN (750 EUR). They broke “Maria” by beating and transported her to Italy. After “Maria” escaped and was aided by the Italian authorities the criminal trio received internal information (they threatened the interpreter) and tried to apprehend her at the bus station where she was waiting to leave for Bulgaria. That is how civil agents of the police caught them on the crime scene.

Image 3. The Roma Slave-Traders



## The “Gypsy” Gold

During July 2015 a joint operation of the UK, Irish and Bulgarian law enforcement agencies has been conducted. It targeted Bulgarian citizens, engaged in organized crimes in London: human trafficking for begging, prostitution and pickpocketing. Bank safes in Bulgaria were opened during the investigation, containing significant amounts of money in foreign currencies ( $\approx 100\,000$  EUR) as well as a large quantity of gold: 721 precious items (gold coins, brilliants and jewelry), 2 gold watches Swistar and a 14-carat GENEVE. The hoard contained, among others, a 4.5 carat diamond, coins with the image of King George V, queen Victoria, the French monarch Louis-Philippe and ironically a medallion with the Latin sentence *Labor hominem honorat* (Labor honors the man). A silver coin with the portrait of Princess Diana and 1-ounce gold coin are of special collector's interest. Rough estimates value the treasure at about 1 000 000 BGN (500 000 EUR). Four bank accounts on the name of the network's leader were blocked. It is supposed that the assets confiscated were acquired with the profits of trafficking in the UK.

Image 4: The Gypsy's Gold



## About the Authors

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