



BREAKING FREE

Improving support services for Romanian women and girls
exploited in prostitution or sex trafficking

A Report by Talita

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Respondents from ROMANIA

The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP)
International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Romania
eLiberare
Asociatia F.R.E.E.
Asociatia Pro Refugiu
Abolishion
Adpare
Rock of Hope Ministries
FCE (Fundatia Creștină Elim)

Respondents from SWEDEN

The Romanian Embassy in Sweden
County Board in Stockholm (Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms Län)
Social Services (Socialtjänsten)
Hjärta till hjärta

Other Respondents

Pro Sentret (Norway)
Jewel Girls (Russia)
Beginning of Life (Moldova)

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FORWARD

Talita is a non-governmental organization offering acute and long-term support to women who have been exploited in prostitution, pornography or human trafficking for sexual purposes. Talita's mission is to combat the sex trade in all forms by offering its target group the possibility of experiencing inner healing and a transformed life. The organization strives to see the whole person, help her the entire way, regardless of where she has been exploited.

The purpose of this report is to identify the actions so far taken and remaining gaps and opportunities to improve support services for Talita's target group in Romania. In so doing, this report will assist Talita and other relevant actors in identifying best practices and future courses of action. Rather than implement projects and services that already exist, Talita's priority is to find ways to fill the gaps in a manner that conforms to the organization's purpose and expertise. The report will thereby help to prevent "overlap" in the services eventually offered.

Talita sincerely thanks the professionals and organizations who contributed to the development of this report.

Anna Sander

Josephine Appelqvist

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the study

In recent years, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and the Swedish police have witnessed a rise in the number of Romanian women identified in human trafficking for sexual purposes and exploited both in outdoor and indoor prostitution.¹ Stockholm Police's Prostitution Unit estimate that there are approximately 200 "apartment brothels" in Stockholm alone, and the majority of individuals exploited in these brothels are women between 18 and 23, often from Romania.² This trend has also been observed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in outreach and rehabilitation services. Talita, for instance, has witnessed an increasing number of Romanian women placed in their safe house for acute assistance by the Stockholm Police's Prostitution Unit.

The aim of this report is to provide background information and best practice recommendations for Talita and other Swedish actors supporting Romanian women exploited in prostitution or human trafficking for sexual purposes. The research is based on primary data in the form interviews with stakeholders in both Romania and Sweden conducted during September 2016 – April 2017 and secondary data including government reports, civil-society reports, and academic research.

1.2 Research question

The purpose of this research is to determine:

How can assistance and support services be improved for Romanian women in Talita's target group?

In order to answer this question, qualitative methods will be employed to identify what support services currently exist in Romania, what the standards are for these services, and the gaps and limitations in these support services. Ultimately, this research intends to identify how Talita could potentially fill the identified gaps in support services, both in the Romanian but even the Swedish context.

Best practices will be determined through an investigation of individual and societal risk factors, migratory push and pull factors, and institutional challenges. Recommendations specifically geared towards Talita's next steps will be provided, although the research and recommendations can also be employed by other actors in Sweden and other destination countries. Our goal is that this report can serve as a tool for best practices to be used internally by Talita and externally by other actors working with Talita's target group.

2. Methods

2.1 Operational definition

This research focuses on women exploited in prostitution, regardless of whether her case can be defined as trafficking in persons or not. A false distinction between prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes is often drawn. However, neither Talita nor the general Swedish discourse make a clear divide between these two categories. In fact, the Swedish law against the purchase of sex implemented in 1999 is based on this understanding—that prostitution and human trafficking are intrinsically related. As Max Waltman (2011) clarifies, “trafficking can occur when someone abuses a person’s position of vulnerability for the purpose of sexual exploitation... trafficking is more often a problem of social inequality than a problem of kidnapping and it is linked to prostitution.”³

Since the overwhelming majority of individuals enter prostitution consequence to vulnerable circumstances like childhood sexual abuse, poverty, and dysfunctional families, making a distinction between ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’ prostitution is a fallacy. Prostitution entails harm before (vulnerable circumstances), during (violence, rape, sexually transmitted infections), and after (the effects of trauma, e.g. Post-traumatic stress disorder). Moreover, Waltman (2011) argues that prostitution generally is a form of human trafficking since an individual’s typical path into prostitution involves an abuse of power and/ or an abuse of vulnerability, often on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity and poverty.⁴ As one of the interviewees in this research stated, “Many of the women in prostitution have at one time or other been forced.”⁵ This report thereby rests on the understanding that there is a connection between prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes, and that the norms in society that enable and promote sex purchase in fact drive human trafficking.

Aligned with Talita’s standpoint, this report seeks to identify and promote the support services for women exploited in prostitution, regardless of whether she was forced into prostitution by trafficking, by disadvantaged life circumstances, or a combination of both.

2.2 Methodology

Qualitative methodology in the form of in-depth interviews was conducted with a purposive sample of relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended research questions that related to the following areas related to the research purposes:

1. The organization’s vision, purpose and ongoing activities/programs
2. How the organization supports prostituted women
3. The risk factors that lead a woman into prostitution in Romania
4. Which actors the organization collaborates with
5. How the organization is funded
6. Current and future challenges and opportunities

The advantage of the semi-structured interview method is that it enables the interviewee to probe further and thereby gather more detailed information about the areas of interest, providing a more in-depth analysis. Participants were asked to participate and were informed that they could refuse to answer any of the questions. Interviews were audio recorded unless the interviewee preferred note-taking (transcribing). All audio recordings were then transcribed.

2.3 Data

The primary data used in this report were interviews with 4 governmental organizations, 1 inter-governmental organization and 11 non-governmental organizations. The secondary data consisted of desk research analysing relevant legislation, national and international reports, and other relevant documents.

3. Background

3.1 Trafficking for sexual purposes

Despite Romania's accession into the European Union in 2007, human trafficking for sexual purposes continues to be a serious problem in Europe. Unlike other countries that enjoyed substantial economic improvements as a result of their succession, Romania and its neighbour Bulgaria "continue to struggle with corruption, declining economic circumstances and shortcomings in the judicial system."⁶ As a strategically positioned transit zone in the Balkans together with Moldova, Romania is one of the main sources of trafficking victims in Europe, and has even become a transit and destination country, although to a slightly lesser extent.⁷ From 2010-2012, Romania represented the top EU citizenship for registered human trafficking victims within the EU⁸, and among the most likely to come into contact with authorities in both Romania and in other EU countries.⁹ When it comes to sex trafficking in particular, the majority of victims are young women age 18 to 26 years old.¹⁰ Internal sex trafficking is predominantly comprised of female minor victims, since their underage status poses challenges to transporting them across borders.¹¹

3.2 Prostitution in Romania

While there are numerous studies and reports on the nature of human trafficking for sexual and other purposes in Romania, little research exists on the extent and nature of *prostitution* in Romania. This can likely be traced to the false dichotomization of prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes — namely that the two are perceived as completely separate phenomena, where prostitution constitutes 'voluntary' prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes 'involuntary' as discussed in section 2.1. This dichotomization is reflected in the current legal framework.

3.3 The Legislative framework

Romania prohibits all forms of trafficking according to Article 210 in the Criminal Code, with the minimum penalty of 3 years and maximum of 10 years imprisonment (see Appendix 2 for Romanian laws related to trafficking for sexual purposes). Article 329 of the Criminal code incriminates procuring.

Prior to 2014, Romania was the only European country that criminalized the selling of sex and decriminalized the buying of sex.¹² The penalty for selling sex was either receiving fines or imprisonment up to 3 years. In the face of European standards and the rampant sexual exploitation of Romanian women in Europe, the legalization of prostitution was one of the most heavily disputed topics in the Romanian Parliament prior to 2014. Gavriș (2013) reports how a variety of different politicians from different sides of the political spectrum argued for and against legalization. Those in favour of legalization argued that the legal framework would protect the women, because the “job” is extremely dangerous. It was also suggested as a way to eliminate pimping. Another argument was “it’s normal to have a legal framework for prostitution in Europe.” Those that were against legalization spoke of prostitution as “demeaning to women” or linked prostitution with human trafficking, referring to Romania’s part in the United Nations Convention combating trafficking and prostitution.

This fierce debate led to a sort of semi-legalization of prostitution in Romania in the updated Criminal Code in 2014 with high hopes of tackling trafficking. The prostitution law reform made the selling of sex no longer a criminal offence, although it was still considered an administrative offence. Romania has thus been coined as taking the “decriminalization route.”¹³

However, the fact that selling sexual services is still considered a contravention (“administrative offence”) means that when women are caught prostituting themselves they are punished with a fine.¹⁴ Fines for selling sexual services are anywhere between 500-1500 lei (approximately 1100-3200 SEK)—an undeniably exorbitant price for someone trying desperately to make ends meet, especially in a country like Romania.¹⁵ And, many prostituted women receive at least one fine a day, while some receive up to 5-6 fines a day.¹⁶ A study among women in street prostitution in Bucharest found that the majority of women are fined by different police divisions almost every night, and many suffer further abuse by police, such as rape, physical abuse, confiscation of money or goods without legal basis, detentions at police stations, etc.¹⁷ An earlier study from 2005 further confirms this abuse: out of the 395 women interviewed in 12 different counties in Romania, almost a third said they had been abused on some level by the police.¹⁸

If individuals are unable to pay the fines, they are required to perform community service.¹⁹ In many cases, however, the prostituted person neither pays the fine nor performs the required community service.²⁰ Consequently, the interest on the fines accumulates, leading to an enormous amount of money being owed—money that will take months, even years to pay off. If a woman facing fines from prostitution decides to exit and find a different job, her income will forcibly be removed until the fines are paid off. This option is simply not feasible for many, particularly women who provide for their children. The only way these fines can potentially be cancelled is upon receiving the status of human trafficking victim²¹; but this process is very difficult with only a small likelihood for success. Gaining the status of human trafficking victim is extremely difficult in Sweden, let alone Romania! This situation thereby seriously prevents many women from seeking formal jobs in the workforce.²²

By continuing to penalize the individual that sells sexual services, at least in some capacity, the prostitution reforms thereby still create a situation where prostituted women are perceived and

treated as criminals. ECPAT says that this is also the reality for children exploited in prostitution.²³ Naturally, this in turn affects the availability of and their access to recovery and reintegration services. There are no budgets for women exiting prostitution, which leaves very few NGOs (see below) with the option to extend their support services to this target group.²⁴ In this sense, exiting prostitution and finding alternative sources of income is difficult, if not impossible.

The problematic legislation surrounding prostitution is further revealed in the comparison between procurement and trafficking. Even though trafficking in human beings and procuring are crimes under the Criminal Code, while the former case involves a woman who is a victim and therefore not subject to punishment, in the latter case the woman is liable to receiving fines for practicing prostitution. Dragomirescu et al. (2009) argue that the only way to differentiate between the two legal concepts in Romania is the notion of *consent*, which in practice makes the distinction not easy to ascertain. Of course, these same legal challenges arise in Sweden and elsewhere, but the difference here is that while prostituted women in, say, Sweden have the possibility of receiving damage awards if a case is awarded procurement, the prostituted woman in Romania risks being penalized with fines. Understandably, women involved in prostitution refrain from seeking help from authorities for fear of not being considered victims of trafficking and thereby risking being liable to sanctions (fines).²⁵

The legislation surrounding prostitution in Romania thereby contributes to the perpetuation of vulnerability for prostituted persons. Rather than addressing the demand for prostitution (by penalizing sex purchasers), and recognizing the vulnerabilities that lead people into prostitution, the already marginalized individuals in prostitution are criminalized. Ultimately, Romania's legislative stance fails to consider the realities of prostitution demonstrated in international research: namely, that the overwhelming majority of women who are sexually exploited enter into prostitution because of vulnerable circumstances, are exploited by a pimp, and stay in prostitution because of a lack of alternatives.²⁶

4. Risk Factors

The following chapter presents an analysis of the main risk factors associated with the target group's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Understanding the risk factors will give insight into the target group's backgrounds and thereby help Talita determine best practices when it comes to support services not only in the Romanian context, but even in the Swedish context where the organization also assists Romanian women. A more thorough understanding of the risk factors facing Romanian women within Talita's target group can be helpful in initiating outreach services, building rapport with victims, and designing effective and appropriate support services.

The risk factors are divided into three main categories: (i) individual and familial, (ii) socioeconomic and (iii) structural.²⁷ However, each factor does not generally stand in isolation, and thereby the interplay between them will also be noted. Prostitution is, after all, "an intersectional form of oppression where multiple disadvantages converge."²⁸

4.1 Individual and familial risk factors

At the individual level, factors that increase a person's vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking include: a dysfunctional family, exposure to violence and abuse (sexual, psychological or physical), neglect (physical or psychological), being placed in state-care and experiencing homelessness. The most commonly identified type of risk identified in the data was being exposed to a dysfunctional home, with interviewees reporting that the overwhelming majority of women and girls they assist come from homes where they have already suffered physical, psychological and sexual abuse.²⁹ As Iana Matei from *Reaching out Romania* says,

*In my shelter I've seen a lot of different personalities. Girls from all ages, some of them from very developed environments. What they all have in common is a dysfunctional family.*³⁰

In interviews conducted with Romanian individuals who had been trafficked under 18 years of age, UNICEF found that the majority had experienced a change that had precipitated a crisis, pushing the children into situations that increased their risk of being trafficked.³¹ Often, a series of events occurred, which added to already difficult circumstances. These included: a divorce, a relocation from an urban to a rural area, a parent or parents migrating to work abroad, sickness or death of a parent, abuse (sexual, physical or emotional) or neglect (physical or emotional). Abuse was particularly common among the interviewees in the UNICEF study, with 71 percent reporting that they had come from families where they had experienced domestic violence and abuse. "Without support or safe alternatives, many of the children responded to family violence and other problems by leaving home," and either ended up in state-care and/or on the streets.³²

It is estimated that over 2,000 children are homeless in Romania.³³ Children living on the streets in Romania are among the most vulnerable groups of children to child trafficking and child prostitution.³⁴ An estimated 5 percent of the homeless children in Romania are forced into prostitution.³⁵

Growing up in state-care has also been identified as a high vulnerability factor for ending up in prostitution or trafficking for sexual purposes.³⁶ Rock of Hope ministries says:

*Most of the girls [we work with] come from the orphanage system - from dysfunctional families - and end up on the streets. Most have been abused in the orphanage system or have witnessed the abuse of other girls [there].*³⁷

Indeed, children living in state-care and/or come from dysfunctional families often face a cruel blend of abuse (physical, mental and/or sexual), neglect and a lack of affection. A nationally representative study by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) comparing Romanian girls aged 15-25 vulnerable to sex trafficking³⁸ with a control group found that vulnerable girls were much more likely to report feeling abandoned by the people around them (50% compared to 38%) and that their life was not worth living (50% compared to 30%).³⁹ Adpare also noted low self-esteem as a common thread among the women they work with:

*We once met a girl in Switzerland during a prostitution outreach program who had gone through law school. Despite the law degree, she remained in prostitution because she doubted her own abilities. It was low self-esteem, more than limited opportunities, that kept her there.*⁴⁰

Another source of vulnerability is when a parent immigrates abroad in search of work and leaves the child behind:

*A really big problem in Romania at the moment is that a lot of parents leave their children at home to live abroad, leaving children more at risk of being trafficked. A lot of the women who went to work abroad did it because they have children to support, and yet, it becomes a vicious cycle whereby children are constantly at risk of being trafficked.*⁴¹

Traffickers can then exploit this situation by telling the girl whose parents have left her behind that she will be able to visit her parents if she travels with them.⁴² Indeed, “victims’ social isolation and remoteness from their community and family reinforce the personal initiative to leave the country, which can be the starting point of a trafficking process.”⁴³ Traffickers may even manage to access the permission of the parent, which facilitates an easier transport of the child across borders.⁴⁴

Both Asociata F.R.E.E. and Rock of Hope Ministries report how young people become especially vulnerable once they reach the age of 18 in state-care: they are kicked out at 18 (or earlier) and most often find themselves on the streets, making them particularly vulnerable.⁴⁵

4.2 Socioeconomic risk factors

Access to education and formal employment

Lack of education is also a significant risk factor.⁴⁶ According to the Romanian Ministry of Labour (2012), the majority of women exploited in sex trafficking have at the most a high-school diploma, which does not provide the qualifications for a position in a skilled profession in the labour market.⁴⁷ The study by IOM likewise found that vulnerable girls are more likely to have quit school before their high school graduation compared to their counterparts.⁴⁸ This particular risk factor has also been identified among women already in prostitution. Research in Bucharest by Caraboi and Fierbinteanu (2014) found that of the 51 interviewed women in street prostitution, only half of the respondents were literate, while only 14% had graduated high school.⁴⁹ Likewise, in a study conducted by the Romanian NGO Asociata F.R.E.E., the 36 interviews with individuals in street prostitution in Bucharest revealed that the highest and second highest proportion of respondents had only reached Grade 8 and never attended any sort of school respectively.⁵⁰ In other words, vulnerability to sexual exploitation is inversely proportional to educational achievement.

The lack of educational achievement among girls and women is in part related to the widespread belief that studying is not a means for achieving higher status in Romania—education is often perceived as a useless or valueless strategy for succeeding in life by the particularly vulnerable women.⁵¹ The IOM study found that the vulnerable women predominantly held the belief that

employers viewed past experience, compared to education, as the most important employment criterion. Parents also generally held a pessimistic view of education, creating further incentives for young women to drop out from school in order to seek opportunities abroad.⁵²

Moreover, due to discrimination in the job market, girls and women—especially from Roma communities—have less access to official channels or formal job opportunities. They are the last to receive jobs, and the first to be fired, pushing them towards unofficial work channels and unconventional jobs to make a living.⁵³ According to the Romanian Ministry of Labour (2012), the serious job deficit on the Romanian labour market, in part due to corruption, is one of the factors causing women to fall prey to human trafficking.⁵⁴ Even if salaries are present, they are unsatisfying and do not cover the bare minimum such as utilities alone.⁵⁵

Poverty

Romania is a country known for widespread poverty. According to Eurostat, 25.4% of Romania's total population is at risk of poverty, which is the highest percent among EU countries.⁵⁶ If social exclusion is included in the analysis, the percent becomes 37.3%. Romania also holds 5 of the poorest 21 regions in the EU. What is more, according to Eurostat, the poverty threshold for Romania expressed in purchasing power parity standards (PPP) is the lowest threshold for EU member states. So poverty levels truly encompass the absolute minimum *subsistence*, and are certainly no proxy for minimum decent living standards.⁵⁷

The majority (93.7%) of Romania's territory is rural and hosts approximately half of its citizens.⁵⁸ The rural population is much more endangered to poverty and social exclusion, consequence to a range of factors including low levels of education, a lack of access to job opportunities and infrastructure, and on average a higher number of children. Not surprisingly, a larger percent of trafficking victims (57%) identified in 2011 were from rural areas.⁵⁹

The Romanian Ministry of Labour (2012) says that the majority of Romanian women exploited in trafficking grew up with unemployed parents who struggled to make ends meet.⁶⁰ In many cases, the women were abandoned by their husbands and had to resort to risk-taking in the hopes of being able to provide for their kids.⁶¹ At the same time, while poverty is a factor of vulnerability, it typically does not stand in isolation. For instance, the IOM study found no significant difference in family income.⁶² Their “data [suggest] that families of vulnerable girls are not extremely poor, but may have a difficult time maintaining a decent standard of living.”⁶³ These findings are further supported by the data. In Adpare's experience:

There are poor girls who do not get involved in prostitution, and there are rich girls who get involved, so although poverty is a factor, it is a small one. It has a lot to do with affection and the way they cope with that lack - for instance they fall in love with the wrong guy or feel empowered to take control. Although there may be some who actually need the money for their family, a lot has to do with self-esteem.⁶⁴

Asociatia F.R.E.E.'s (hereafter FREE) reflections further pinpoint the intersectionality of vulnerabilities—how poverty is most often combined with other circumstances that make a person vulnerable to sexual exploitation:

*Money factor is a big thing in a country that has a lot of poverty, but people still have access to TVs, and see western culture, nice clothes, etc. This wouldn't necessarily be the reason to enter prostitution, but maybe keeps them there - making money and having access to those things. But poverty is always surely combined with [other risk factors].*⁶⁵

4.3 Structural risk factors

The remnants of communism

A comprehensive understanding of the current reality of human trafficking and prostitution in Romania requires an investigation into the country's history. Until 1989, Romania was under communist rule by a man named Ceaușescu for over four decades. Coinciding with other communist regimes, people's freedoms were suppressed and their views indoctrinated.⁶⁶ A lack of access to basic staples (food, electricity, heating, transportation, hot water, etc.) and free information were some of the problems faced by Romanians during the Communist regime.⁶⁷ For instance, the only two hours of broadcasted television consisted of 1,5 hours about Ceaușescu's (the dictator) speech, whereabouts and activities, and 0,5 hours of Russian cartoons.

Yet the “greatest and most rampant source of fear was the one for the informants of Securitatea”, the secret police.⁶⁸ It is estimated that one in three Romanians was an informant for the secret police. According to Caramello (2013), informants were believed over the accused person with “no exception”, contributing to a strong climate of fear and distrust. eLiberare says:

*Romanians are very sceptical and cynical as a result of communism, where they were ruled by fear. They lived alongside the secret police - you couldn't even trust your neighbour.*⁶⁹

Indeed, research has confirmed that post-communist countries, and especially individuals who lived during communist times, generally hold lower levels of trust and participate less in society.⁷⁰ What is more, it is argued that communism contributed to a general lack of self-esteem:

One of the main characteristics of communism in Romania was the manufacturing in bulk of citizens that lacked self-esteem since they did not feel in control and experienced a severe inferiority complex, compared to the majority of the world outside the national borders: that of being hundreds of years behind in terms of culture, civilization, and technology.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, and thus the transition towards market economy, the envisioned ideal of a free market economy “took a very long time to concertize as a result of the race and fight for power after the 1989 Revolution, which left an entire society captive in the meshes of a very corrupt, newly formed government.”⁷¹ Despite dreams of a better life marked by the eradication of communism, in the years following 1989 the availability of work reduced dramatically—and this disproportionately affected women.

*The political social, and cultural changes exacerbated the poverty gap, aggravated the unemployment rate, and built hyperinflation to its climax while completely annihilating the middle class and creating unequal division of labour between men and women.*⁷²

And this is why many individuals — particularly women — began to look outside the national borders for opportunities to gain a better life. Caramello (2013) describes how mass media, friends, family, and acquaintances play an important role in creating and perpetuating the image of the West as some sort of Utopia. The media was heavily sanctioned during the dictatorship, so the sudden exposure to Western society at the fall of the communist regime coupled with the lack of education left many unequipped to decipher between real and false promises when it came to job advertisements, with salary offerings that most could never dream of having. Not surprisingly, several of the interviewees noted how exposure to migration success stories—like hearing about girls who come back from Europe with a lot of money and fancy clothes—affects an individual’s willingness to take risks and seek opportunities abroad.⁷³

Another noteworthy by-product of the communist regime was the pervasive establishment of State-run children’s homes throughout the country. The regime’s ‘pro-natalist’ policies were a response to the declining birth rate and high rate of abortion and divorce seen in Europe during the 1960s. In the name of “procreation”, Ceaușescu banned abortion, restricted divorce, instituted a ‘childlessness tax’ and provided incentives for working mothers.⁷⁴ There was even a team of gynaecologists who visited schools and workplaces investigating non-pregnant women and miscarriages.

A discourse that the state could do a better job of raising children than parents also took force during the communist regime, exacerbated by the fact that parents had little means to care for their children in the face of dire economic circumstances.

The consequences of these policies were significant: thousands of children were abandoned to state care each year. And Romanian orphanages from the Communist regime are infamous for the widespread maltreatment, abuse, lack of stimulation, inadequate basic needs, and neglect the children suffered from.⁷⁵

One of the respondents from FCE’s (Fundăția Creștină Elim) children’s home says that the idea that the state will be able take better care of children still persists today, especially among the poor.⁷⁶ This mentality is also noted in a report by ECPAT.⁷⁷ Thus despite child welfare reforms and changes in legislation, it is estimated that the number of children in state-care is in fact nearly the same as it was in 1989: over 70,000 children.⁷⁸

Discrimination against Roma people

The Roma minority is particularly at risk to sexual exploitation. A 2005 IOM report highlighted the overrepresentation of Roma individuals among those trafficked for sexual exploitation in Romania.

Push factors are often particularly acute in the case of Roma. There is a striking overlap of the most significant factors that contribute to human trafficking and those that contribute to

*the marginalization of Roma in general...Vulnerability factors are significantly worsened in the case of Roma due to the failure of national social systems to reduce and eliminate the vulnerable situation in Romani communities and barriers preventing Roma from accessing public services such as schools, health services, employment services and other social services.*⁷⁹

The structural discrimination faced by Roma people affect their educational achievement, to the extent that “discrimination in the form of school segregation of Romani children is systematic.”⁸⁰ The European Commission’s report on discrimination of Roma children in education reveals that at least 10 % of Roma children aged 7 to 15 in Romania and in other countries do not attend school, while those that attend school often face segregation and harassment from their peers, teachers and non-Romani parents.⁸¹ Very few Roma children attend secondary or tertiary school. Their low educational achievement, combined with further discrimination in the labour market, perpetuates difficult life-circumstances in adulthood, for instance making it extremely difficult to access employment in income generating activities.⁸² According to the World Bank, an estimated 44% of Roma individuals are unemployed, 67% live below the poverty line.⁸³ This inability to access formal employment leads to involvement in informal, risky employment alternatives, which in turn increases their vulnerability to trafficking and sexual exploitation. FCE also report how many workplaces now require employees to have a diploma—and is used as a reason to not hire Roma people.

Furthermore, FCE reports that many of the children that end up at their orphanage come from Roma communities—confirming their vulnerability to the risk factors mentioned in the previous sections. A respondent from FCE said that there is a very poor view of Roma’s from the rest of the population in Romania, and that they are still the lowest in society.

As a group facing particularly many disadvantages, Roma women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, with girls often dropping out of school earlier than boys, and only a quarter or less of Roma women, compared to half of Roma men, being able to find jobs.⁸⁴ Rock of Hope Ministries says that:

*Most of the girls (we work with) are Roma, which makes it extremely difficult to find jobs...They are simply not qualified for many jobs.*⁸⁵

Certain cultural practices, like forced and child marriages, further increase the vulnerability of these Roma women to human trafficking.⁸⁶ In fact, an estimated 11% of Roma girls do not attend school because they are married.⁸⁷ FREE reports:

*A large proportion of Roma women often get married very young, and then separate - for instance because their husband no longer wants to be with them - and then they become very vulnerable, they are less accepted in the community, they are alone and have kids. They become ‘second class women.’ A lot of them end up in prostitution because of this.*⁸⁸

Moreover, “at the root of these unequal outcomes lies a fundamentally unfair playing field, starting at birth and continuing throughout the lives of most Roma individuals. This spurs a self-perpetuating cycle of unequal opportunities, ethnic discrimination and stifled aspirations.”⁸⁹

‘Loverboy’ method of recruitment

All of the above factors heighten a woman’s risk of falling into the hands of the “wrong people.” Most often, pimps and traffickers profiting from the sexual exploitation of Romanian women also originate from Romania who have gained the victim’s trust.⁹⁰ Indeed, rather than forcing victims into prostitution through physical violence, traffickers have moved towards methods of recruitment that lead to a docile acceptance of the trafficking operations.

The most frequently used method of recruitment today is to obtain victim’s ‘consent’ through emotional blackmail: the so-called ‘lover-boy’ method. This involves a man “intentionally exploiting a woman’s emotional attachment to him with the goal of making her prostitute herself.”⁹¹ The wide prevalence of the lover-boy method was reported by all of the NGO interviewees, and young women and girls leaving orphanages were identified as particularly vulnerable to this trap.⁹²

Traffickers are very much aware of the vulnerability that young girls face when exiting the orphanage system.⁹³ A study found that “traffickers were waiting outside these institutions because they knew these girls had no one else to turn to. They approached them and made them offers that seemed fantastic in the absence of something else.”⁹⁴ Typically, the ‘lover-boy’ uses expensive gifts to seduce the victim, “[providing her] with access to a world that was previously inaccessible.”⁹⁵

It is not difficult to imagine why a young girl would see the life promised by the ‘lover-boy’ as her escape route.⁹⁶ “Impoverished, abused, and without education or family guidance that would foster intelligent decision-making, these young women become easy prey to savvy traffickers who befriend them and tempt them with offers they can hardly refuse.”⁹⁷

Once the lover-boy has established dependency, he often begins to fabricate financial problems. He may ask her to have sex with one of his friends whom he owes money or someone else in order to earn money. “By accepting to do this, she believes she is saving him, but for the lover-boy, this is just business.”⁹⁸ Victims of ‘lover-boys’ are sometimes drugged by their pimp in order “to maintain their complete physical and psychological dependence.”⁹⁹ By creating a dependency disguised as ‘love’, the ‘lover-boy’ is able to exert complete control over the victim without her even realizing she is being exploited. Some pimps may even give the woman or her family a small percentage of the earnings, which helps to disguise the exploitation:¹⁰⁰

*The women do not identify themselves as victims - even when faced with violence and manipulation. They do not even realize they are being exploited. They claim, ‘I’m not like the other girls, I don’t have a pimp’ even when their boyfriend is in fact their pimp.*¹⁰¹

The presence of ‘lover-boys’ thereby not only increases a woman’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation (combined with the other risk factors mentioned above), but the ‘lover-boy’ also effectively deters women from exiting prostitution and reduces their willingness to receive help.

5. Support Services in Romania

The following section describes relevant actors involved in support services initiatives, including governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations. For Talita, this information will facilitate the identification of shortcomings and potential gaps that the organization could help to fill.

5.1 Governmental Institutions

According to Eurostat, the Romanian government has made significant efforts in recent years in the fight to eliminate human trafficking and enforce anti-trafficking laws.¹⁰² With the adoption of United Nations, Council of Europe and EU standards and norms in addressing trafficking in human beings, Romania's institutional framework has been structured to address the areas of Prevention, Prosecution, and Protection. For the aims of this report, the focus will be limited to the actors and actions concerning *protection* and *victim support*.

Table 1 lists the Romanian governmental institutions involved in the assistance of victims of human trafficking.

Table 1: National governmental institutions involved in assistance of human trafficking victims

Ministry	Department
Ministry of Interior and Administration	The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP) Directorate for Combating Organised Criminality (DCCO) Romanian Police
Ministry of Health	Departments of Public Health
Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport:	District Inspectorates Casa Corpului Didactic
Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection	General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDSACP) The National Agency for Work Force Occupancy
Ministry of Justice	Probation services
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	

See UNICEF’s report *Evaluation of Anti-trafficking policies in Romania*¹⁰³ for a detailed description of the different public authorities and their functions in the combatting of trafficking for human beings.

National Identification and Referral Mechanism

The National Identification and Referral Mechanism developed in 2008 is aimed at establishing a consistent and coordinated response for anti-trafficking institutions and organizations. Essentially, the document offers guidance on methods of identification and the steps to be followed after identification.¹⁰⁴ These directives have resulted in increased numbers of registered victims (both adults and minors) and a doubling of trafficking convictions over the period 2010-2012.¹⁰⁵ Practically, all international and national actors are supposed to notify the ANITP about a trafficking victim. Once the victim is identified, the ANITP steps in and informs them about their rights,¹⁰⁶ provides the victim a case manager, and refers the victim to an NGO or the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDSACP) based on the availability of the service providers and the needs of the victim. If a victim is referred by an NGO, the ANITP is supposed to be notified so that they can maintain contact with the victim. The actors involved in the mechanism are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: Actors involved in the National Identification and Referral Mechanism¹⁰⁷

Identification	Referral	Coordination of assistance
DIPLOMATIC MISSION	ANITP - receives victim - informs about rights - conducts early evaluation - referral to social service providers - monitor victim’s assistance - informs relevant institutions in Romania, upon consent of the victim	POLICE
CONSULAR OFFICE		BORDER POLICE
IOM		IOM ROMANIA - receives victim - informs about rights
NGO ABROAD		GDASPC - comprehensive assessment - individualized intervention services - specialized services
		NGO - receives victim - provides assistance/referral to specialized services - Informs regional ANITP center for monitoring

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The IOM is an inter-governmental organization facilitating voluntary return and reintegration of trafficking persons through their Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program. The IOM Romania repatriates victims through NGOs and GDSACPs (when it involves a minor). In the case of Sweden, it is the County Board (Länsstyrelsen) in Stockholm who partners up with IOM in Helsinki, Finland¹⁰⁸ to offer the AVRR program.¹⁰⁹ Note that women exploited in prostitution also have the right to this support, although it only extends to the end of the return program; after, they are not eligible for continued national support in Romania.¹¹⁰ The AVRR program includes:

- Pre-departure information, preparation and support in Sweden (needs assessment, a risk and threat analysis, organising travel documentation, etc.)
- Travel arrangements (bookings and transit visa waivers, departure and transit assistance at airports, escorts as necessary)
- Post-arrival (reception assistance, onward transportation, referral to partners, reintegration assistance, monitoring and follow-up)

The IOM in the destination country (in this case the IOM office in Helsinki who is responsible for the Nordic countries) organizes and is responsible for the first two parts of the program, the pre-departure and travel assistance. Once the victim arrives in the country of origin, the IOM in Romania takes over the case and arranges the post-arrival support interventions.

The post-arrival support intervention spans for a period of 6 months.¹¹¹ The goal of this period is twofold: to promote reintegration and prevent re-trafficking.¹¹² As the County Board in Stockholm highlights, this third step is often the most important for long-term success.¹¹³ The post-arrival support consists of the following financial contributions and aims:

Amount	Type of Support
\$150 USD per month	Daily expenses (food, clothing, local transportation, etc.)
\$300 USD total	Medical and psychological support (doctor appointments, counselling, support groups, tests, medicine or rehabilitation costs, such as addictions treatment)
\$300 USD total	Safe housing (rent payments, electricity and other costs)
\$3000 USD total	Income-generating efforts (help to finish elementary school, start further education or participate in vocational training, find an internship or start a small company)

Within post-arrival framework, the AVRR also provides civil rights support for divorce or custody disputes. These areas of support are meant to create a sustainable life situation for the victim.

National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP)

For the purpose of enforcing anti-trafficking laws in Romania, the Romanian Government established a national anti-trafficking agency in 2006, called the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP).¹¹⁴ Throughout its history, the agency has undergone several tumultuous transitions, from being an independent agency in its onset to becoming a service under the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (in 2009) and then being re-upgraded once again to an autonomous position as a governmental agency under the Ministry of Interior and Administration (in 2011). These transitional episodes have been pinpointed as a cause of some of the delays in the agency accomplishing its mission.¹¹⁵

The agency's mandate is to coordinate and monitor anti-trafficking bodies within Romania. It brings together the efforts of governmental institutions synergizes with civil society actors involved in the assistance of human trafficking victims, and synergizes the common action of these actors.¹¹⁶ Their main activities include: monitoring and evaluating national policies, raising awareness, registering and monitoring assistance for trafficked persons, and coordinating victims with other Romanian institutions.¹¹⁷ The agency cooperates with Romanian and foreign non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, and is the national contact point for transnational referral of victims. The ANITP has 15 regional centres with a role of conduction early evaluation to identify the victim's needs and ensure referral to support services.¹¹⁸ Once referred, they monitor the victim's assistance and maintain contact.

Directorate General for Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDASPC)

The GDASP exists at every county level with the purpose of implementing social assistance and protection policies and measures at the local level. Specialized personnel appointed as case managers coordinate activities developed for the victim's recuperation and reintegration, according to a needs assessment and the victim's willingness to participate. There are 14 counties with GDSCAP centres that offer specialized. Table 3 shows the services GDSCAP offered to victims:

Table 3: assistance services provided to victims of human trafficking at GDSCAP centres

Adults	Minors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- social assistance- healthcare- psychological counselling- reintegration into work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- social counselling- healthcare- psychological counselling- financial assistance- material assistance- reintegration into family- school reintegration- professional counselling- retraining

	- legal advice
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Government-run shelters

Local governments finance and operate assistance shelters, with some being trafficking-specific. The government also provides non-specialized care for child victims at emergency reception centres for abused, neglected, exploited or trafficked children, managed by each county authority. These centres host trafficked children when specialized centres are not available; however, they lack the training and the personnel to recognize and support child victims of sexual exploitation.¹¹⁹

5.2 Governmental institutions: challenges and shortcomings

Victim referral

Despite the increased number of victims trafficking being identified, there appears to be a discrepancy between identification and assistance. For instance, a US embassy report says that despite the Romanian Government’s significant efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it has “demonstrated weak efforts to protect and assist victims of trafficking during the report period, although victim identification remained high.”¹²⁰ Likewise, a report by NGOs Pro Refugiu and Pro Sentret shows the discrepancy between the number of identified victims and those assisted by GDSACPs and NGOs.¹²¹ Table 4 shows that in 2012, 675 women and girls were identified while only 255 were assisted, and in 2013, 577 were identified while only 308. Particularly alarming is the discrepancy between female minors identified and assisted.

Table 4: Number of victims identified by the ANITP and those that received assistance from GDSACP and NGOs

Year	Institutions/NGOs	Women	Girls	TOTAL
2012	Identification by ANITP	348	327	675
	Received assistance from GDSACP	38	82	120
	Received assistance from NGO	94	41	135
2013	Identification by ANITP	299	278	577

	Received assistance from GDSACP	38	107	145
	Received assistance from NGO	134	29	163

Pro Refugiu and Pro Sentret attribute the discrepancy to weaknesses in the referral system in providing support services that victims generally need.¹²² On the other hand, the ANITP argues that there are a large number of victims who simply refuse referral and inclusion in assistance programs for a variety of reasons, including: decision to leave the country, reduced capacity to assess the need for accessing such services, receiving support from the family, desire to forget the experience of trafficking, and so on.¹²³

Pro Refugiu and Pro Sentret further claim that one of the main challenges lies in the lack of collaboration between institutions and NGOs within Romania, and those in destination countries--a challenge confirmed by the ANITP themselves.¹²⁴ The ANITP says that there is a general lack of cooperation and communication among stakeholders both nationally and transnationally.¹²⁵ Often, when the ANITP receives a victim from foreign authorities, there is a lack of needs assessment and information about the victim's process in their repatriation.¹²⁶ Generally, the information they get from the foreign authorities is scarce and does little to help them in evaluating the victim's situation in order to determine the most appropriate support services for the victim, including the first contact-person the victim receives.¹²⁷

To their defence, from the perspective of some of the NGOs interviewed, the ANITP is "doing a great job", albeit limited resources, in achieving their mission, and several of the NGOs were positive about collaborating with the agency. Similarly, a report by the European Commission says that the ANITP has had "very positive results", although the main challenge of the national anti-trafficking mechanism remains the assistance provided for victims.¹²⁸

State-run shelters

There have been reports of problems facing state-run assistance shelters. The US Government Trafficking in Persons Report (2014) says that there was little freedom of movement¹²⁹, since of these state shelters are either semi-closed or closed. In practice, this means that the individuals living in these shelters have few options for work and cannot go outside unless accompanied, potentially undermining client self-determination.

The state-run assistance shelters "have only absorbed less than one third of the victims who entered assistance programs," have high personnel turnover rates (CITE). Further, there is a scarcity of psychologists for victims, and "victims had difficulty qualifying for medical coverage because they were not previously part of the formal labour market."¹³⁰

Another worrying factor is that victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes are required to register in a county to be accommodated by state-run shelters (GDSACP). Understandably, this is "something many of them do not want to do because they fear the traffickers will get hold of this information (note that this fear is not unjustified because of the corruption)."¹³¹ Victims are in fact

often registered in the county where they were trafficked from in the first place, evoking not only fear of being re-trafficked but also fear of the shame they may face.¹³² The social stigma surrounding prostitution makes it also challenging to reintegrate victims into their original social environment.

In a self-assessment survey among some of the GDSACPs in Pro Refugiu's and Pro Sentret's report, 23 of 29 respondents said that funding is inadequate, especially when it comes to budgets to cover the needs of minors.

*Currently, the GDSACPs are underfunded, both in terms of facilities of these centres and from the point of view of the staff; thereby, employed university graduates do not receive even the minimum wage equivalent.*¹³³

Likewise, one of the organizations spoke of how the IOM repatriates a victim via the GDSACP when it involves a minor, but otherwise they try to avoid them as much as possible because “they do not have funds for basically anything”, and that “there have been a lot of trafficking cases within their minor shelters and what happens there is sinister.”¹³⁴

Other difficulties the self-assessment among GDSCAPs highlighted include:

- not having specialized services for human trafficking victims
- lack of psychologists and social workers trained in the field
- lack of funds to cover the costs of health care interventions
- lack of retraining programs/professional reintegration for victims of human trafficking *despite* the law stipulating it
- lack of staff to facilitate the reintegration of clients into society

5.3 Non-Governmental Organizations and support services

With the limited resources allocated to the ANITP and state-run shelters, NGOs are seen as *crucial* in the efforts of victim assistance and support services. In other words, it is up to the NGOs to fill in the gaps where the governmental institutions are not able to fill. What is more, the perceptions around prostitution, and the ensuing laws that fundamentally criminalize women in prostitution, eliminate any assistance opportunities for women wanting to exit prostitution—with the exception of a handful of NGOs.

The existing NGOs focusing on trafficking for sexual purposes and/or prostitution work in the areas of (1) awareness and prevention in the form of education and training¹³⁵, (2) networking and advocacy¹³⁶ and/or (3) protection and rehabilitation. Below, I describe the organizations focusing specifically on the area of protection and rehabilitation.

Table 5: NGOs offering assistance and support to Talita's target group

FREE

www.asociatiafree.org

<p>About</p>	<p>Type: Christian Location: Bucharest Year founded: 2014 Target group: women exploited in prostitution or trafficking for sexual purposes</p> <p>Employees: Two full-time missionaries (one foreign, one Romanian) who receive full financial support. Each year they have 1-2 French interns. They also have a volunteer coordinator who coordinates the prevention activities. They are currently searching for a social worker to hire for their upcoming transitional apartment.</p>
<p>Vision/mission</p>	<p>to reduce sexual exploitation. Understanding the links between trafficking and prostitution, FREE extend their services to all women who have been sexually exploited, regardless of whether she has been trafficked or not. FREE even notes that “many of the women in prostitution have at one time or other point been forced.”</p>
<p>Support services offered</p>	<p>Outreach - street and strip club outreach 3x a week. They offer hot drinks and snacks, access to social and medical care, and invite them to their drop-in centre</p> <p>Drop-in centre - located near one of the main prostitution areas in Bucharest, close to a subway. They hold Bible studies and creative groups. Not very many women who come regularly because of desperate situations.</p> <p>Mentorship and group support - at the Drop-in centre, they offer mentorship and group support on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Transition apartment - have recently opened (Oct 1 2016) a transition apartment for women exiting prostitution. Aimed for short term living from 1-6 months (with possibility of extension). The idea is that the women will have independent living while they look for a job, begin to save money for an apartment, receive counselling and complete other practical details.</p>

About	<p>Type: Non-religious Location: Bucharest Year founded: 2003 Target group: men, women and minors* who have been subject to human trafficking (all forms). *Note: minors are accepted with their parental consent.</p>
Vision/mission	<p>to implement comprehensive assistance programmes with the purpose of reducing client’s vulnerability and increasing their social inclusion</p>
Support services offered	<p>Transition apartment/safe house that can house up to 6 women at a time. They create individual integration plans together with the client once they arrive. (Note: apartment usually has 1-3 women at a time, and people can stay as long as they want. Earlier, Adpare had apartments for transitory, crisis and long-term situations. They had to terminate some of these services because of limited financial resources). The shelter is for those for whom it is too dangerous, or infeasible to return to their home.</p> <p>Assistance program/individual integration plan - flexible, catered to victim’s needs and determine by case manager. Victim is actively involved in designing their own social reintegration intervention. Goal is to build independent life skills, improve self-sustainability. Victims offered material, psychological, medical, social, educational and juridical assistance. They focus on what made the individuals vulnerable in the first place.</p> <p>Case manager - assesses needs to determine services to be implemented, appoints implementation team for assistance program and maintains constant communication, evaluates and reintegration plan and quality of services, is a mediator between beneficiaries and institutions (authorities, doctors, employers). Assistance last for 1-3 years</p>
Collaboration	<p>Police - many cases referred through the police, both locally and in destination countries</p> <p>ANITP - otherwise receive referrals through the ANITP.</p> <p>NGOs - they work with NGOs that deal with gender equality, one organization that works with disabled, and People 2 People in the West (Oradea). They also receive referrals from other NGOs</p>

Funding	Receive funding from Switzerland, from EU commission (projects and workshops), assistance programs from the US, IOM or directly from the destination government for damage awards (this budget then managed by IOM).
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Rock of Hope Ministries www.rockofhopeministries.org	
About	Type: Christian Target group: young women who have come out of the orphanage system or come from disadvantaged families and who have been or are at-risk for being exploited in prostitution
Vision/mission	To rekindle hope in the hearts of at-risk teenage Romanian girls by providing transitional living that is safe and secure, family-centred environment where they can feel love and gain skills.
Support services offered	Transitional home - where girls can learn the critical skills of daily living that are not routinely taught in Romanian orphanages. It is common for young women who come from an institutional setting to have no ability to cook, clean, budget money or interact appropriately with the opposite sex, let alone know how to make wise decisions, to have any job skills or have any notions of how to get and keep a job. Without such skills the prospects for these young women are desperately bleak with prostitution and drug abuse being the primary options. These rehabilitation goals are lofty and it is expected that this process could take anywhere from 2-4 years per young woman. Our goal is to provide the girls with an apartment while they are in school. Once they are in the work-force, we work with them to learn to live on their own and not to rely on us for financial support. We will always try to be there for spiritual, social, and emotional guidance even after they leave the ministry.
Collaboration	They access the young women through various contacts
Funding	Several individuals and churches from the U.S.

Abolishion www.abolishion.org	
About	Type: Christian Location: Oradea Year founded: 2013 Target group: women and girls exploited in trafficking for sexual

	<p>purposes</p> <p>Partner organization: People to People</p> <p>Staff: a few staff working closely with a team of trained volunteers</p>
Vision/mission	To see a world where no one's basic rights to freedom is sold for the highest bid. They seek to break the systems that keep people in sexual slavery, by supporting women who have been trafficked to live empowered lives, among other things.
Support services offered	<p>“Restore” care services - A community care program geared towards both adult and minor victims who have returned home to their families but are in need of support. The program is open two days a week and offers activities like: painting, counselling, life skills training (e.g. reading and writing). Children are under supervision by social workers at all times.</p> <p>“Restore home” - a shelter that accommodates up to 6 women at a time, opened in the beginning of the Fall, 2017. Note that they rely on volunteers to run the shelter.</p>
Collaboration	Collaborate with the police , the ANITP , and partner with the organization Asociatia People to People , which is an organization focused on a broad range of issues, including special courses for children with autism, anti-AIDS campaigns, and English course. People to People have e.g. a counsellor and psychologist, allowing each of the organizations to distribute their tasks depending on what resources they have.
Funding	<p>Rely on private donations.</p> <p>Their collaboration with People to People allows them to save money by sharing resources.</p>

Other NGOs that did not participate in this study:

Generație Tânără www.generatietanara.ro/en
Association
(Generatie Tanara)

About	<p>Type: Non-religious Location: Timisoara Year founded: 2001 Target group: women and girls exploited in trafficking for sexual and other purposes, but also work with other vulnerable groups (Roma, refugees, etc.)</p> <p>Partner organization: UNHCR Staff: 31 staff and 150 volunteers</p>
Vision/mission	to promote and to implement the Children Rights according to the international agreements signed by Romania in the field of Children and Family Protection.
Support services offered	<p>In partnership with schools, rural communities, government agencies and NGOs, GTR provides psychological and medical assistance to the victims and also we are developing program for reintegration and re-socialization of victims of trafficking in human beings.</p> <p>GTR handmade jewellery: GTR has a jewellery program to financially support individuals in their program.</p>

Betania Association http://www.asociatiabetania.ro/ro/	
About	<p>Type: Non-religious Location: Bacau Year founded: 1995 Target group: women (over 18) exploited in trafficking</p> <p>Partner organization: Staff: Centre coordinator, social worker, psychologist, reintegration coordinator.</p>
Vision/mission	To support all disadvantaged categories in the community, accomplished by social, health and education projects.
Support services offered	<p>Asociatia Betania maintains a shelter as well as a separate reintegration program. The shelter began in 2005 along with protocol with the department of Organized Crime through the Bacau Police.</p> <p>Beneficiaries who still need to finish school are enrolled in the 2nd chance program. Betania collaborates with AJOFM for professional reintegration. Beneficiaries are enrolled in a variety of job-training programs. Counselling is provided as well.</p> <p>Beneficiaries can stay up to 1 year in the centre/shelter and up to 2 years</p>

	in the reintegration program. Beneficiaries receive up to 6 months of monitoring after leaving the program (after care). They have 8 beds in the assistance centre (have not had problems with over-crowding). Note the costs for beneficiaries are 10,000 lei/person/year. Beneficiaries receive 8 lei 'pocket' money/day.
Funding	Through a PIN project

Not for Sale	www.notforsalecampaign.org/romania/
About	Type: Non-religious Location: Timisoara Year founded: 2001 Target group: women and children exploited in trafficking Staff: Staff and volunteers
Vision	To assist survivors in rehabilitation and repatriation
Support services offered	Provide short and long-term housing, extensive medical care and counselling. Also provide legal support to help survivors obtain identification documents or immigration status and assistance taking action against traffickers in court. Have a children home where they work to prevent up to 100 children from poor, marginalized and at-risk communities from being recruited and trafficking, offering them a stable, supportive and transitional environment. Operates an organic farm where survivors of human trafficking can grow fruits, vegetables, produce, and make jams sold to local restaurants and catering companies, creating immediate opportunities for survivors to earn an income in a supportive environment. Also offer technical and vocational training courses and works with the local community to find dignified employment opportunities for survivors.
Funding	Through a variety of organizations and companies

Open Door Foundation www.usadeschisa.ro/

About	Type: Christian Location: Bucharest Year founded: 2002 Target group: Children, women and men – victims of human trafficking, exploited through forced sex, labour, begging and committing crimes. Staff: Psychologist, social worker, legal service provider, administrator, executive manager, protection and security services provider, life skills coordinator, as well as volunteers.
Vision	to give full assistance and protected shelter in emergency situations to victims of human trafficking, exploited through forced sex, labour, begging and committing crimes and to share the love of God.
Support services offered	Develops integrative system of protected assistance and services to victims of human trafficking. Program is 18 months long. Opened first emergency shelter for survivors of human trafficking in Romania. They bought a three-bedroom house in December 2012, equipped with 9 beds and offer medical care, counselling, spiritual guidance and other help to transition girls and women back into society. Also offer judicial assistance, vocational training, family counselling

Another inspiration source is also Beginning of Life, an organization in Moldova who has a well-established and successful rehabilitation and reintegration program for vulnerable women, with more than 100 women having passed through their 6-18 month program. They also have connections in 24 different countries worldwide in which other organizations have been inspired by and learned from Beginning of Life's work.

Beginning of Life Moldova¹³⁷ www.bol.md	
About	Type: Christian Location: Moldova Year founded: 2000 Target group: vulnerable women and children in Moldova
Vision/mission	To restore God's original intent for holistic and harmonious development of a person and to bring back social justice, reaching community transformation.

<p>Support services offered</p>	<p>Reintegration program and center – BoL run a reintegration program that runs between 6-18 months for vulnerable women (including victims of human trafficking). The program takes a holistic approach and is aimed at meeting their needs within five tiers of life and the corresponding needs: mental/intellectual, emotional, social, physical or material and spiritual. When the woman first arrives, she has two weeks to test the program and see whether it aligns with her needs and ambitions. Once she begins the program, the staff monitor the situation and every three months they assess how the client is doing in the 5 tiers of life using graphics so the client can see what changes she has made, which helps their motivation to grow. Each client receives an individualized plan.</p> <p>Psychological Art Studio – this is BoLs business branch of the organization. “Art House” is a workshop where clients receive art therapy in the form of painting and drawing, handiwork, pottery or sewing, and are also provided with the opportunity gain income-generating skills and earn a small wage. BoL has made around 300 different products with the help of talented staff who can design patterns, come up with new ideas for products, and then teach the clients how to make the products. Because there is not enough demand for products within the national market, BoL has created international partnerships and platforms to sell their products abroad.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Collaborate with organizations and churches in 24 different countries. BoL frequently offer and take part in learning and knowledge-exchanges with organizations from abroad.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>Rely on private donations and their business branch.</p>

5.4 NGOs and support services: current shortcomings and challenges

This section describes the main challenges NGOs face when striving to reach their goals.

Lack of funding

All of the NGOs interviewed confirmed the difficulty of accessing funding. FREE says that the biggest challenge the organizations faces when it comes to accomplishing their goals are human and financial resources.

There are a lot of organizations that know how to write applications for grants, but they don't actually work with the victims. If we didn't have to apply for grants and worry about finances, we could do more of what we actually want to do—to be with the girls.'

Unsurprisingly, the lack of funding has real consequences to the length and quality of support NGOs can offer. Until 2009, NGOs working with the victims of human trafficking could obtain funding from the ANITP.¹³⁸ However, the restructuring of ANITP in 2009 had a negative impact on the victim support system, cutting the funding to victim services and anti-trafficking initiatives. “This resulted in approximately 30 NGOs closing or switching focus to issues other than human trafficking in order to keep federal funding.”¹³⁹ Nowadays, Pro Sentret reports that most safe houses in Romania can only offer shorter periods of assistance (less than 1 year).¹⁴⁰ Moreover, despite the high number of trafficking victims identified and in need of assistance, shelters are generally never full — eLiberare attributes this to the lack of resources to keep the target group busy and occupied.¹⁴¹

Some NGOs apply for European or private funds, often launched by international programs. However, these funding amounts do not typically exceed 15,000€. ¹⁴² Furthermore, organizations must have been operating for at least 2 years, and most of the funding is project-oriented, lasting for only a couple of years, which presents a hindrance to sustainability.¹⁴³ There are also significant administrative and technical requirements—a challenge for a small, grassroots organization. Moreover, many of the private grants do not offer the possibility of funding administrative costs (salaries, fees, etc.), leading to organizations needing to rely on voluntary labour rather than staff. As such, all of the NGOs interviewed — apart from Adpare who also receives funding from the EU Commission¹⁴⁴ — must rely on fundraising and private donors.

Obtaining funding from companies and private donors for work with victims of human trafficking, let alone work with women exiting prostitution, is nevertheless difficult. Adpare reports how few actors are willing to be associated with these issues. Moreover, the generally low earnings makes it difficult to save and give to charities and the lack of trust in Romania contributes to taxpayers not believing the money will be used efficiently.¹⁴⁵ On top of this, the current Romanian legal framework does not make giving money to NGOs advantageous for companies, with the law of sponsorship stating that companies can donate up to 20% of tax income for sponsorships.¹⁴⁶ One respondent from FCE says that it is simply impossible to rely on funds solely from Romania.¹⁴⁷

High administrative requirements

Running a non-governmental organization demands considerable administrative work in Romania. According to a number of the interviewees, the requirements have increased considerably over the past number of years.¹⁴⁸ With the adoption of regulations related to EU standards, organizations are required to fill out complicated and demanding paperwork each month, and must pay considerable fees associated with the administrative standards.¹⁴⁹ A respondent from FCE says:

*It takes a lot of time to get the paperwork in your hands. For example, for approval for buildings — there is department approval, legal approval. It takes a lot of time and money and energy and nerves.*¹⁵⁰

The same respondent spoke of the discrepancy between EU standards and the conditions of the country. With such little access to resources — both financial and human — it is extremely challenging to meet the EU standards.

Abolition notes that there are no special standards defined for a shelter for victims of human trafficking, although the standards that exist for shelters in general are complicated and involve a lot of paperwork, and even more complicated for organizations wanting to offer services to minors. Since 2014, every social project, those involving minors, requires accreditation from the state.¹⁵¹ Even when it comes to staff, there are strict requirements regarding education and experience. For FCE, project leaders for their different social activities at the children's home must have a university education, which obviously limits an organization's the ability to access human resources.¹⁵²

Challenge to collaborate

Several organizations have noted the difficulty in collaborating with other organizations. For instance, despite eLiberare's dream facilitating collaboration and building a network in Romania, eLiberare reports that this has proven to be a challenge. Both eLiberare and FREE attribute the difficulty to collaborate to limited resources.¹⁵³ Since all of the organizations are fighting for the same limited resources, and with each organization having its own approach, it can be difficult to be willing to, or find ways to, collaborate.¹⁵⁴ Rock of Hope Ministries says that "not many of the NGOs want to collaborate. They want to keep 'their own girls and not share them.'"¹⁵⁵ FCE also notes how the fight for resources leaves little time left to even attempt to collaborate with other organizations.¹⁵⁶ Collaboration - whether with local or international organizations - always demands time and entails the risk of cultural barriers and misunderstandings.

The need to provide education, training and income-generating activities

Another shared challenge among the NGOs interviewed was the need to provide training, education and/or income generating activities with a decent salary. The challenge for NGOs is that many of the clients have empty CVs, little to no education, and lack the budgeting skills to even have the chance to live off of a minimum salary. This makes it particularly challenging to access a job, let alone job training, since most vocational training courses (e.g. manicure courses) organized require high school education,¹⁵⁷ and most jobs require an academic or vocational diploma.¹⁵⁸ Victims of trafficking for sexual purposes are eligible for free vocational training courses in various trades by CEA.¹⁵⁹ However, it is seldom that these agencies are informed of the victim's status, and victims can only receive this assistance if their level of education is at least 8 years. "Because of this legal provision, the range of trades in which adult victims, who dropped out of school, can be trained becomes very narrow, making them particularly vulnerable to re-trafficking."¹⁶⁰

Reintegration into the labour market is accomplished, in conformity with the special law, with the help of CEA. However, it is seldom that these agencies are informed of the victim's status, and even when they are, they lack the methodological standards to meet the conditions required for the employment contract. As such, most victims find employment due to the personal efforts of the social workers who manage their case.

In FREE's experience, the vocational training courses organized by CEA often lack contextual relevance to facilitate permanent solutions:

*Women were often not able to keep up with the training because she had to care for her children. Otherwise, the course was hours away from her home, making it simply impossible to attend on a regular basis.*¹⁶¹

Moreover, jobs with a minimum salary are often inadequate:

*A mother with three children will be unable to sustain herself on a 200€ minimum salary unless she has a support network helping her.*¹⁶²

And this has very real implications for a woman's ability to exit prostitution. In their local study among prostituted women in Bucharest, FREE found that low educational achievement, and therefore the difficulty in accessing formal employment opportunities were the main reasons for staying in prostitution.

Legislative framework surrounding prostitution

As discussed above, several of the NGOs working with the target group note the challenge of addressing the fines women may have received in prostitution (see Section 3.2). This has implications not only for a woman's ability to access income-generating activities after rehabilitation, but even her ability to access other social benefits like medical insurance.¹⁶³ The only way to cancel the fines is with a statement proving the woman's victim of trafficking status, but this is a lengthy process requiring finances and a lawyer. Moreover, even if the individual pays off the fines and can eventually prove her victim status, this does not guarantee she will be recompensed. The gaps in the legal system make room for the state to claim that they simply lack the funds to be able to compensate the woman.¹⁶⁴

Complications in assisting minors

As research and anecdotal evidence has found, the majority of Romanian women exploited in prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes are relatively young, often ages 18-25. Not surprisingly, Abolition finds that many of the victims are below the age of 18. However, it is difficult to become licensed to be able to offer services to minors, with very strict standards organizations are required to meet. At the same time, the alternative to NGO support services—state shelters for minors—appear to gravely lack the resources and specialized victim services necessary for long-term rehabilitation.

Cultural barriers

Interviewees report a general resistance to “the West” and western mentality entering into Romania—attributed to the remnants of communism. “In general, there is a resistance to change: ‘the newer it is, the worse it is.’”¹⁶⁵ This attitude is especially prevalent in traditional, more rural communities. Several of the NGOs say that the certain degree of scepticism towards people coming from the West has posed some challenges, with people being less willing to collaborate, or certain individuals being “pushed to the side-line.”¹⁶⁶

Another cultural challenge interviewees report, likely stemming from the country's history of communism, is a widespread lack of confidentiality.¹⁶⁷ For instance, one of the interviewees

mention how physicians ignore their legal duty to patient confidentiality—a finding confirmed by research.¹⁶⁸ In FCE’s experience, not even non-disclosure agreements proved adequate in overcoming this cultural tendency.¹⁶⁹ This reality could pose problems for organizations running safe houses with a secret location.

Problematic societal perceptions of prostitution

As mentioned, the legal framework surrounding prostitution makes it difficult to offer services to women in prostitution who lack the victim of human trafficking status. Accessing financial and human resources is challenging enough for organizations focusing solely on trafficking. For several organizations, despite their willingness and desire to also help women exit prostitution, this simply is not an option in the current state of things. Those, like FREE, who include prostituted women in their mandate, must overcome a legal framework that ultimately criminalizes the target group.

Research in Sweden and Norway has shown how laws affect people’s attitudes and mentalities when it comes to prostitution.¹⁷⁰ FCE highlight the way people’s attitudes reflect the current legal framework in Romania. They recalled a meeting they had with Simon Häggström, chief detective of Stockholm Police’s Prostitution Group, and a team from Sweden with different actors from their municipality. The attitude they witnessed by those community members who attended the meeting was that prostituted women “of course” sell sex to dozens of men per day, and that receiving an income from selling sex was “only natural”.¹⁷¹ Pro Refugiu also argue that the societal perceptions are problematic when it comes to reintegrating prostituted women into society:

Prostituted women are stigmatized, leading to a difficult social reintegration. In rural areas, in small villages, trafficking victims sexual exploited are considered to be responsible of their situation, so they receive low or no community support for recovery. In urban areas there is a more understanding and supportive attitude prostituted women and trafficking survivors.

FCE says that especially when it comes to Roma women, “no one cares” that they are exploited in prostitution. In summary, organizations who are focusing on both groups must be willing to “go the extra mile” to secure resources to offer support services and to design effective reintegration programs.

6. Talita: ways forward

6.1 Best Practices and general recommendations

Here, best practices and general recommendations for Talita’s future courses of action are given. Recommendations are given based on the premise that Talita will start operations in Romania.

Collaboration

In the face of limited human and financial resources, collaboration will prove invaluable in the provision of support services to Talita's target group. Despite challenges to collaboration as mentioned in Section 5.4, there are several examples of successful smaller networks that can serve as a prototype for Talita's future endeavours.

Abolition's challenge with finances and resources have been more or less overcome through teaming up with People 2 people, a larger organization who has focused on a broad range of social issues including human trafficking. Through this collaboration, the organizations can distribute their tasks depending on who is more specialized and on what each organization can offer. For instance, Abolition is able to save money by accessing People to People's already employed counsellors and psychologists.

Abolition, Adpare, eLiberare and FREE all try to collaborate with the ANITP and the police as much as possible. This helps facilitate victim identification translating into referrals to NGOs and the creation of a stronger anti-trafficking network.

Recommendation:

Just as Talita collaborates with a variety of different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in their current operations, Talita aims to form sustainable partnerships with stakeholders in the Romanian context. Through this research project, Talita has already begun to form contact with key collaboration partners, including the IOM, the ANITP, and NGOs working with these issues. Continuing to develop this cooperation is strongly encouraged!

Collaboration with IOM (Finland and Romania)

Through partnership with the IOM, Talita can increase their chances of receiving referrals in their target group from not only Sweden but even other European and non-European countries. The IOM office in Romania has expressed a keen interest in supporting Talita in their efforts and establishing collaboration.¹⁷² Since Adpare's launch, IOM in Romania have had a tight cooperation with the NGO. Prior to 2007, IOM in Romania reports that they had the possibility of having a network of NGOs they were able to refer cases to country-wide. However, with the budget cuts in 2007, many organizations were forced to either shut down operations or switch focus. Adpare, however, was able to maintain enough financial support, and in combination with their high-quality services, IOM in Romania has chosen to continue to cooperate with them. Based on the risk and needs assessments completed in the destination country (e.g. IOM in Helsinki), IOM in Romania may place a victim in Adpare's transition home. In this case, Adpare provides counselling, case management and individualized integration plan while IOM in Romania takes care of the administrative work required for the support services, such as the payments to the service providers.

If Talita in Sweden were to have a client who wanted to be repatriated to Romania and were eligible for the AVRR program, Talita could be in contact with IOM in Romania and based on the risk assessment for the return, IOM in Romania would take care of all of the return procedures up to the final destination – for instance, Talita's shelter or the shelter of Talita's collaborative partner (see below in *Collaboration with NGOs*).¹⁷³ This would mean that the client would get the necessary support services specialized in the area of prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes while the

client would also be assisted financially for 6 months through the AVRR program. In this sense, the collaboration would be mutually beneficial to Talita and IOM in Romania.

Cooperation with ANITP

The ANITP reports that there “is especially room for improvement when it comes to cooperation with authorities and organizations from destination countries.”¹⁷⁴ Talita aims to overcome this obstacle by being both on the sending and receiving end of the support and reintegration spectrum when it comes to Romanian women in Sweden wishing return to Romania and receive support services there.

Collaboration with NGOs

Overall, the NGOs interviewed in Romania focusing on protection and assistance are doing a great job in reaching their goal of offering assistance and support to women in Talita’s target group. Despite great obstacles (limited funding, problematic legislation around prostitution, etc.), these organizations are using what little resources they have to offer services and a place for Talita’s target group to receive rehabilitation and reintegration.

The goal of this report was to survey the situation in Romania to determine shortcomings and areas for improvement, so that Talita can make efforts to “fill the gaps” when it comes support services. One option is for Talita to partners up with the organization FREE, who holds very similar values is very aligned with Talita’s vision: *to see Romania’s sexually exploited women and children set free, restored and empowered, to build the life and future they want.*¹⁷⁵ As this report has shown, no exit strategies are in place apart from a handful of NGOs—FREE being one of them. Further, the organization’s target group consists of *both* women who have been exploited in prostitution or trafficked for sexual purposes. In this sense, FREE aligns with Talita’s understanding of the parallels between prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes, and notes how the overwhelming majority of women in prostitution have at some time or other been forced.¹⁷⁶ They are based on Christian values, and conveniently located in Bucharest, which can also be assumed to be the easiest city to reach the majority of prostituted women.

FREE has recently opened a transition home, and they hope, with expanded resources, to be able to offer the women in their target group accommodation that extends longer than sixth months, and to access larger premises to be able to offer their clients their own rooms. They also dream of investing in a business strategy that could overcome two of the main obstacles that the NGOs identified: (1) employing the women in the target group, and (2) accessing funding so that FREE could be at least partially self-sustaining (i.e. not have to solely rely on donations). FREE is one of the only organizations doing outreach work in Bucharest, and together with their drop-in centre, this gives them have a unique access to women in Talita’s target group.

Talita and FREE could somehow form a partnership, this would enable overcoming the following challenges:

1. Financial challenges - Talita’s strong financial base in Sweden could help overcome FREE’s funding obstacles

2. The lack of a rehabilitation program - FREE offers support groups and bible studies at their drop-in centre. However, they could benefit from the adoption of Talita's holistic program. This would require: (1) a long-term safe house; (2) trauma counselling; (3) psycho-education; (4) planning for the future; and (5) reintegration into society.
3. Demanding administrative requirements – Having been established 3.5 years ago, and being run by a Romanian local and a French missionary (whose husband is Romanian and who has lived in Romania for many years), FREE already has the “know-how” and experience when it comes to tackling the demanding administrative standards.
4. Difficulty collaborating – FREE is already partnering with the Romanian police, the ANITP, and even local faith-based organizations and churches. Instead of having to more or less “start from scratch”, a partnership with FREE would enable Talita to already have these key partnerships, on top of the small partnership beginnings this report has brought about.
5. Cultural barriers – Again, with a Romanian employee and a foreigner who has lived in Romania for many years, the cultural barriers that eLiberare and FCE have mentioned could be avoided. Further, Pro Sentret emphasized the benefit in having staff whose own values align with Swedish values to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings and difficulties.
6. Lack of income-generating activities – Talita and FREE quite conveniently share the same goal of creating a business strategy to offer clients easier access to income-generating activities, which would in turn also help fund the operations.

Training, education and income-generating activities

Each of the interviewees agreed on the necessity of securing the target group employment, and thus, a livelihood following. Especially in a poor country like Romania, not ensuring livelihood post-rehabilitation services means that the target group may be 1) at risk of being re-trafficked or 2) may re-enter prostitution out of desperation. Offering a real alternative to prostitution is of precedence.

Clearly, education, training and job opportunities are thereby essential for the target group's willingness to exit prostitution and seek support services, let alone their long term well-being and reintegration into society after rehabilitation. As Pro Sentret points out, this is especially crucial for Roma women who by and large lack any sort of education and face discrimination in the labour market. Talita's emphasis on long-term transformation aligns with this need. The challenge then is to identify opportunities and strategies that are effective, context-appropriate and sustainable.

Recommendation:

When it comes to providing training, education and work for Talita's target group in Romania, the National Agency for Employment, an institution within the Ministry of Labour, offers programs for professional training free of charge for individuals who have graduated primary school. This could be a reasonable course of action, although collaboration and precaution would be required to avoid the irrelevant placements that were offered to the women FREE has worked with. It may very well be that in the end, the target group would only find relevant and long-term employment through personal efforts of staff in NGOs running assistance programs.

A course of action that holds far greater chances for success would be the creation of a business strategy aimed at overcoming the challenges related to 1) providing training and employment to the target group and 2) funding. This strategy has been adopted by the Safe House Foundation in Russia.¹⁷⁷ The JewelGirls¹⁷⁸ program started as a response to seeing the need to teach disadvantaged children (at risk of prostitution) life skills, and at the same time, offer a therapeutic platform for social interaction. In the beginning, the organization offered workshops to the children to learn how to make jewellery. As the initiative grew, they decided to sell the jewellery, and received their first funding that they dedicated half towards the workshops and gave the rest of participants. Corporate clients supporting the program include Tele2, Russian Post, MGT Sweden, different online shops, and partners in the US. The jewellery is made of natural, good-quality materials that they have been able to purchase cheaply in Moscow. The JewelGirl program has now expanded to 8 different regions throughout Russia with 500 clients that go through the program each year. Now, they also offer individual psychological assistance, group support, medical assistance, and they have a crisis apartment. Elena, the founder of the initiative with many years' experience working with women exploited in prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes, says that they have also been in conversation with hair salon schools in Russia, who are interested in offering education that would automatically lead to a job position at the salon. Elena says she is keen to collaborate and potentially start operations in Romania.

Another idea is to offer training in areas such as professional hairdressing or cosmetics. Adpare says that many of the victims they have worked with wanted to become hair-stylists.¹⁷⁹ There are many beauty salons in Bucharest, although fewer in rural areas. Talita has also noticed how many of the women they have met from Romania generally have an interest in working in the beauty industry. However, as mentioned in section 5.4, it is very difficult for individuals to receive vocational training if they have not completed elementary school or high school. As FREE's study showed, many of the prostituted women in Bucharest lack these educational requirements. If Talita works with these sorts of situations, perhaps there are some women who would be willing to complete school — although this would require adequate funding and potentially child-care if the woman has a child. However, in many cases this may prove difficult, for instance if the woman requires many more years of schooling or if going back to school proves complicated. In these cases, it is crucial to be able to offer the women training that does not require them attending school.

To overcome this dilemma, we suggest that some of the staff (of the safe house) attend an accredited education in Sweden that would enable them to teach and award clients diplomas within the cosmetic industry. This would also allow for time to train the Romanian staff according to essential components of Talita's program: trauma counselling, Talita's psycho-education course, and planning for the future (reintegration planning).¹⁸⁰

Funding

Funding is the most commonly mentioned obstacle that NGOs working with Talita's target group face. Although the Romanian Government could once again begin to offer funding for NGOs within this field, it is safe to assume that this will not be the case, and that even if the funds do become available, they will probably be minimal. Raising funds among businesses and private donors in

Romania also seems challenging, stemming from the socioeconomic situation in Romania, perceptions around prostitution, and the lack of trust in a Post-Soviet society. Several sources report that funding for a safe house for Talita's target group is not to be found in Romania: it must come from abroad.

Recommendation:

Thankfully, Talita is well setup to overcome this obstacle. Since its establishment in 2004, Talita has slowly built up a stable financial base over the years, which has resulted in the opening of a safe house not only in Stockholm but even in Mongolia, and most recently, in Gothenburg. This financial base, in combination with future planned fundraising activities, places the organization in a solid position to branch out their operations in Romania. Just as Talita finances their operations in Mongolia through Swedish donors, we expect the same for the Romanian case. This is similar to how the NGO FCE in Romania functions, who receive their funding for their on-the-ground operations through a fundraising foundation called EFI Fadder based in Sweden.

6.2 Proposed Approach

The sexual exploitation of Romanian women and girls within Romania's borders, and extending across the European Union, requires vast efforts on all fronts to combat this ruthless atrocity. In the interview with the County Board in Stockholm, the respondents said that *any* efforts would be a step forward from the grim reality the country currently faces. "The needs are so great that any sort of support service initiative started in Romania would be a complement, rather than something competing, with what actors are already doing."¹⁸¹ At the same time, Talita aims to be strategic and use our resources in the most effective manner to bring about make long-lasting change in the lives of Talita's target group.

Overall assessment and general recommendations

To summarize the above recommendations, there are two courses of action Talita could potentially decide to take. The first is, as highlighted in Section 6.1, collaboration with the already established organization FREE. What this partnership would exactly entail has yet to be spelled out; however, each organization's needs and areas of expertise could be balanced in a way that would allow the organizations to together, more effectively and sustainably serve their target group.

The other option is for Talita to start its own operations, although a certain amount of collaboration with another local organization (e.g. FCE) is highly recommended to avoid unnecessary obstacles and to enable a sharing of resources as exemplified in the collaboration between Abolishion and People to People. If Talita were to choose this route, an extended conversation with ANITP is warmly recommended, specifically to help identify a location that they see strategic for opening up support services. The ANITP encouraged the establishment of Abolishion's safe house in Oradea, a known human trafficking transit-area lying on the border of Hungary. There are likely other key areas that could particularly benefit from the establishment of support service operations.

Project justification

This report has demonstrated the shortcomings and areas for improvement when it comes to assistance and support for Romanian women in Talita’s target group. The most glaring shortcoming was the undeniable lack of support services and exit programs for women who have not been “trafficked” based on legal standards, but have regardless been exploited in prostitution. Societal perceptions, reflected and reinforced by the legal framework, continue to marginalize those who are most vulnerable in the first place—young women coming from backgrounds of abuse, dysfunctional homes, homelessness and poverty.

This research project suggests that there is a strong justification for an intervention in Romania by the NGO Talita. The organization’s vision, inclusive target group, effective holistic rehabilitation program, willingness to collaborate, and above all desire to bring about real change and transformation in the lives of women and girls exploited in the sex trade suggests that they are among the most suitable actors to extend support services in Romania.

7. Appendix

Appendix 1: Social Safety Net in Romania

The social safety net in Romania is relatively weak, and as such, contributes to a woman's coercion into, or difficulty leaving, prostitution.

The support received from the welfare state fails to provide the necessary resources that may empower individuals to move out of disadvantage. What happened at the bottom of the economic ladder in transition Romania can be more accurately described as a process of social segregation, when the inefficiency of state social protection allowed the deepening of social cleavages.¹⁸²

Unemployment aid

Unemployment aid is generally comparable to the minimum income, about 800 RON. However, unemployment aid can only be granted if the applicant has been previously employed and if they can prove they are actively seeking a job. For women who have been exploited in prostitution, this unemployment aid is therefore not obtainable.

Minimum wage

The minimum wage in Romania is currently 1450 RON (€320) since February 2017, representing a 33% increase since January 2014. The minimum wage appears to be growing steadily and is constantly under negotiation.¹⁸³

Minimum Guaranteed Income program

Since January 2014, social assistance, "Minimum Income Guarantee Program" (MIG) has been available to families and persons without an income or with a low income.¹⁸⁴ The two forms are Guaranteed Minimum Income (VMG), which target the poorest families, and Family Social Allowance (FSA), which target low income families with dependent children. The first, VMG, is conditional on an able-to-work family member's willingness to work, while the second, ASF, is conditional on school attendance by dependent children.

To receive these social assistance schemes, individuals must apply at their local town hall and then perform the expected community service. One complication is that individuals are only eligible if they have an official address and are legally registered. Luckily, this problem has led to many becoming registered within their municipality, but individuals from the Roma community are particularly penalized. Indeed, Roma people living in settlements was a group noted in an assessment of the group that are most frequently inadequately covered by MIG schemes, since they are unable to prove permanent residence.¹⁸⁵ The assessment also reports that Romanians perceive the costs associated with the community work requirements too high compared to the benefit received.¹⁸⁶ Social assistance take-up is thus surprisingly low, indicating the consequences of these stringent requirements.

Further, the amount of social assistance a person is eligible for is a bare minimum, with a monthly allowance of 141 lei for one person households (equivalent to 21.5€), 255 for two-person households, 357 for three person households, and so on. As seen, the allowance marginally decreases with each additional household member. To give perspective on the meagreness of the social assistance allowance, the average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment outside of a city centre lies

around 860 lei (190€), while a meal at an inexpensive restaurant (e.g. McDonalds) costs approximately 20 lei (4€). Due to the deteriorating purchasing power particularly in urban areas, for instance with rising prices for various utilities, the VMG benefit has been deemed merely a short-term, minimal safety net.

There is no family support and minimum salary for women who do not have education. The minimum salary is a little less than 200€ a month. To put this in perspective, a dilapidated, small apartment (one room, no bathroom no toilet) can cost 150/200€ a month - they are absolutely not worth this price but the owners can take advantage of vulnerable families' situation, especially if they are Roma. They can charge more. My own apartment, in comparison, is a lot bigger and nicer, and I only pay 250€ a month. The situation leaves the poor even poorer.¹⁸⁷

In sum, social assistance entails low levels of benefits, unfavourable treatment of large households, and strict eligibility conditions, which “fail to attenuate the experience of poverty and social marginalization.”¹⁸⁸

Appendix 3: A Victim's Rights in Romania

A victim of human trafficking has the following rights in Romania:

1. The right to a reflection period of up to 90 days to allow them to recover and escape from the influence of traffickers and to take an informed decision on whether to cooperate with relevant authorities
2. The right to physical, psychological and social recovery. Assistance is provided to all victims of trafficking without discrimination, regardless of the type of exploitation and their decision to participate or not in criminal proceedings
3. The right to free level assistance. Victims are entitled to receive information on the conditions and procedures for obtaining legal assistance
4. The right to financial compensation by the state. Victims are entitled information on the condition for granting financial compensation and assistance with the submission of the application for compensation and necessary documents.
5. Right to protection. Physical protection is provided to victims of trafficking. Those who offer decisive information on identifying and convicting the perpetrators may be included in the witness protection program.
6. Right to coordinated assistance during criminal proceedings. The Victims' Coordination Program was initiated by ANITP in 2006. The program aims to create a coordinated response for victims of human trafficking, who are witnesses or injured parties in the criminal trial, through an institutional coordination of those involved in the fight against human trafficking in order to encourage victims to participate in criminal proceedings. The program mandate is to maintain a permanent contact with the victims in order to provide them information about their rights and services that they are entitled to, about judicial procedures and updated information with regards to developments of the criminal case.

Appendix 4: Romania's national laws that contain provisions relevant to human trafficking and victim assistance

- ❖ The National Strategy against human trafficking for the period 2012-2016, with the general objective: accelerating the prevention works and the participation of the civil society in their implementation. Improving the quality of protection and assistance provided to victims of trafficking for social reintegration. Improving the institutional capacity to investigate human trafficking offenses, especially the trafficking cases of minors and also the pursuit of criminal profit by the prosecution. Increasing the capacity to collect and analyse data on human trafficking. The optimization and expansion of the process of interinstitutional and international cooperation to support the implementation of the national strategy against human trafficking.
- ❖ The National Plan on the implementation of the national strategy against human trafficking 2012-2014.
- ❖ Law 230/2010 amending and supplementing Law no. 678/2001 to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.
- ❖ Law No. 678/2001 to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, as amended and supplemented.
 - If victims provide data and information to the prosecution or court to identify and bring offenders to criminal liability, they may be included in the witness protection program under the law.
 - The County Agency for Employment organizes, under the law, free special short-term programs for the training of an accommodated victim.¹⁸⁹
- ❖ Order No. 335/2008 approving the national identification and referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking.
- ❖ The Government Decision no. 1238/2007 approving the national standards for specialized services to assist victims of trafficking.
- ❖ Law No. 211/2004 on certain measures to protect victims of crime.
 - Victims of human trafficking are provided free psychological counselling (whether or not crime committed in Romania or outside of its borders, and whether or not victim is Romanian citizen or legal foreigner living in Romania). Granted for a period not exceeding 3 months, and if victims are minors, over a period of no more than 6 months
 - Application for grant of free psychological counselling is submitted to the victims' protection service near the court in whose district the victim resides. Note that it can only be submitted after a previous notification of the prosecution or of the court on the committed crime
 - The NGOs can organize independently or in cooperation with public authorities, psychological counselling services, and can provide other forms of assistance. For this purpose, under the law, NGOs may receive grants from the state budget.
- ❖ Law 682/2002 on witness protection.
- ❖ Law No. 39/2003 on preventing and combating organized crime.

- ❖ Law No. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights.
- ❖ Government Decision no. 1443/2004 with regard to the methodology for repatriation of unaccompanied Romanian children outside the country and measures to ensure their special protection.
- ❖ Government Emergency Ordinance no. 194/2002 on foreigners in Romania.
- ❖ Law No. 157/2011 amending and supplementing certain acts concerning foreigners in Romania.
- ❖ Law No. 292/2011 on social assistance.
- ❖ Law No. 116/2002 on preventing and combating social exclusion.
- ❖ Law No. 95/2006 on healthcare reform.
- ❖ Law No. 161/2003, art. 51, on child pornography through computer systems.
- ❖ The New Criminal Code, in force since the 1st of February 2014, Title I - Crimes against the person, Chapter VII - Trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable persons, Article 209 – “Slavery”, Article 210 - “Trafficking in persons”, Article 211 - “Trafficking in minors”, Article 212 - “Submission to forced or compulsory labour”, Article 213 - “Pimping”, Article 214 - “Exploitation of begging”, Article 215 - “Use of a minor in begging”, Article 216 - “Using the services of an exploited person”, Article 217 - “Punishment of attempts”.
- ❖ The New Criminal Procedure Code, in force since the 1st of February 2014

Appendix 5: The repatriation of unaccompanied child victims of human trafficking

Practically, the repatriation of unaccompanied children implies taking the following steps:

1. Identify/verify the identity of the unaccompanied child and of his/her family;
2. Issue an identity document [unless the child already has such a document] and a travel document;
3. Obtain the consent for repatriation from the child’s family, legal guardian, or, in case it is not possible, from the General Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection in the county the child had resided before his/her departure;
4. Conduct a social inquiry at the child’s home and draft an individual plan of social reintegration of the child;
5. Take charge of the child at the port of entry and accompany him/her home or to a specialized shelter for unaccompanied children or child victims of trafficking.

In case the child’s family or legal guardian are not present when the child enters the country, the task to take charge of the child is incumbent on the General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection [GDSACP] of district 2, Bucharest, which supervises the pilot shelter for repatriated children. For at least 6 months from the moment of the child’s repatriation, the GDSACP in the county of residence has the obligation to monitor his/her situation and draft periodic reports.

Appendix 6: Prevention and network activities carried out by Romanian NGOs

Prevention

eLiberare reports there is a lot of activity from the NGOs when it comes to prevention. For instance, FREE visits at-risk groups, such as children living at orphanages, in order to educate them about the risks for human trafficking. They use a curriculum in the form of a comic strip book (180 pages long) containing stories of sexual exploitation and different recruitment methods and distributed to each of the young children they meet (around 10-11 years old). Although they were initially concerned with children's ability to digest the information, they have found that children can understand the message, and the comic strips have even had a ripple effect, with many of the girls sharing the content with their mothers.

eLiberare also works with prevention, although their tools are more catered to teenagers in the form of DVDs, flyers, and a curriculum comprising of two lessons on human trafficking that can be downloaded off of their website to use in schools, orphanages, etc. This curriculum is currently being approved by the Ministry of Education. eLiberare also strategically promotes their materials and curriculums during weeks where students are encouraged to do lessons on other topics.

Abolition offers a 30-day online course in 6 different languages for the purposing of educating participants about human trafficking. They also use the material when they go teach in schools or present at different conferences. Their goal is to make the resource available to as many countries as possible.

Networking

eLiberare is focused on trying to see how organizations can work better together. They have been building relationships with the ANITP, prosecutors, police, NGOs, etc. They have also held a forum with relevant stakeholders in the Dutch Embassy, the UK Embassy, and the Parliament, focusing on partnership, prosecution and protection in their advocacy work.

Abolition also seeks to network and change politics at the national level. They said, "Traffickers meet in networks, so we need to be a network also."¹⁹⁰ They are part of the *European Freedom Network*, connecting them to other organizations around Europe. This also facilitates victim referral, as NGOs in other countries can report a victim who is repatriating to Romania. Abolition also has a conference with the other European organizations every 18 month, and they are working on a campaign together called *Don't shut your eyes* on the European level.

Training

Abolition trains social workers, police, and professionals in the health care system on how to identify victims of human trafficking, and how they should respond if they have suspicions.

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¹⁹⁰ Abolishion (2016, September 30). Interview.