



TINY INVISIBLE SLAVES



Save the Children

CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING
AND EXPLOITATION:
WHO THEY ARE,
WHERE THEY COME FROM
AND WHO IS TAKING PROFIT FROM THEM

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SUMMARY

It has been estimated that the number of child victims of trafficking and the serious exploitation around the world stands at 1.2 million. **One human trafficking victim out of five is a child or an adolescent.** Such a harsh reality remains largely underground. In fact, going beyond estimates and projections, the number of recorded cases is far lower: according to the latest official data, the number of registered victims (the victims and the alleged ones identified by the authorities), of trafficking in Europe is 15,846¹ and 15 per cent of them are children. In Italy, 7 per cent of the 1,125 people included in protection programmes is under 18.

The most affected children are Nigerian and Romanian girls, forced, increasingly younger, into street or indoor prostitution, and Egyptian, Bengali and Albanian adolescents, subject to labour exploitation and black market, forced into drug dealing and other illegal activities. Arousing particular concern are children in transit, particularly Eritreans and Somalis, who, once they have reached our coast, in the absence of a legal and protected migration system, move away from reception centres in order to reach Northern Europe, rendering themselves invisible to institutions and becoming easy prey for exploiters.

Unaccompanied children remain the most vulnerable: in the first six months of this year, the number coming to Italy by sea doubled (10,524 compared to 4,410 during the same period in 2015). If, on the one hand, it is hard to provide a numeric framework to the victims of exploitation, on the other hand it is much more difficult to quantify the number of exploiters. In Italy, human trafficking is the third source of income for organised crime, after arms and drug trafficking².



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NOTES

¹ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, 2016.

² Osservatorio Interventi Tratta – Department of Equal Opportunities, Presidency of Council of Ministers.

1. ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON OF SMUGGLING, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

Common definitions for trafficking and smuggling were settled by the Palermo Convention in 2000³.

Trafficking

The crime of trafficking in persons consists of three typical elements⁴:

- **conduct** – the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons;
- **means** – the use of force or coercion, the abuse of power or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve a “consent”;
- **purpose** – the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

A **child victim of trafficking** is each person under 18 **recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation**, both inside and outside the country, even without coercion, deceit, abuse of power or other forms of abuse. The use of coercive and misleading conduct by traffickers against the victims makes even an initial **consent irrelevant**.

Smuggling

The above elements distinguish trafficking from **smuggling, which is the illegal entry of a person into a State where the person is not a citizen, in order to obtain a financial or material benefit**. In actual fact, it is more and more common that children who have consented to travel are then turned into victims of trafficking. Even during the journey, migrants are often subject to violence and other forms of coercion both by traffickers and by other individuals involved in the irregular migration network (such as corrupt cross-border police officers or criminal gangs).

Exploitation

Exploitation consists of **taking unfair advantage of another person’s activity by means of “imposition”**, which is based on conduct affecting someone else’s will and that deliberately leverages the lack of self-determination in young victims.

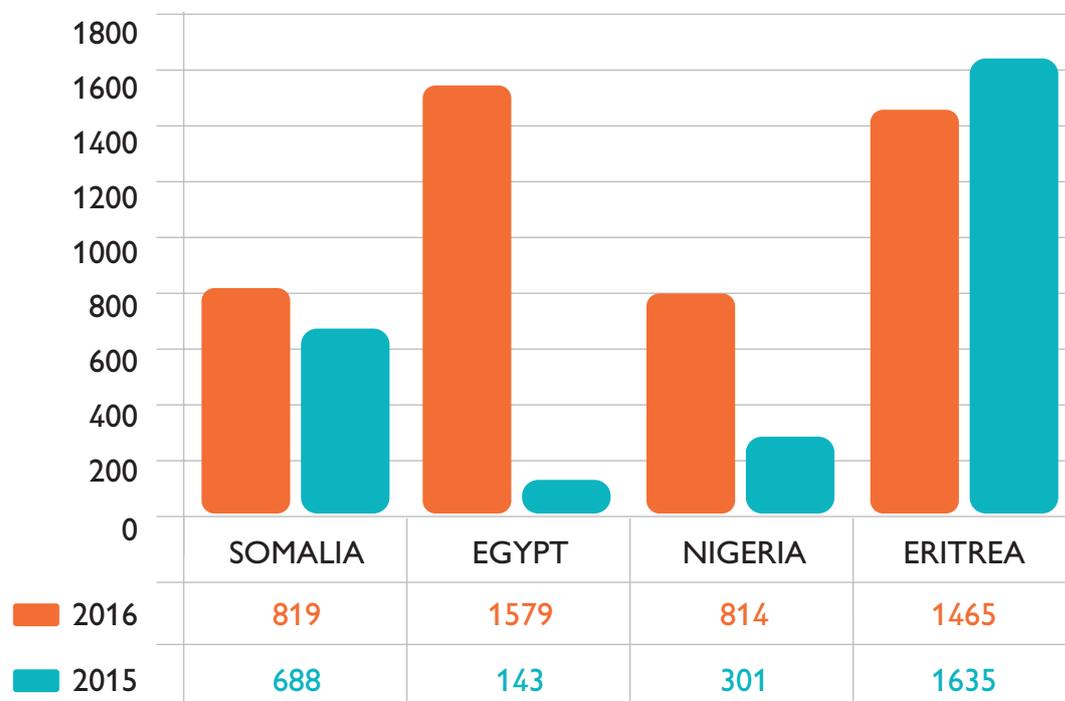
A comprehensive list of all forms of exploitation does not exist, because it arises from a wide range of behaviour and conduct.

According to article 3 of the United Nations Protocol⁵, exploitation can include:

- exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation;
- forced labour or services;
- slavery or comparable practices;
- servitude;
- removal of organs.

In order to react to the huge violations of human rights committed through trafficking, the Italian Government has established regulatory instruments for assistance and protection⁶ of victims, which allow the victim to escape from a violent situation and to stay in Italy with a residence permit for social protection, without the obligation to denounce exploiters and traffickers, as is the case in other countries.

TREND OF THE ARRIVALS OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN BY NATIONALITY



NOTES

³ United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, resolution 55/25, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 November 2000.

⁴ The definition of the United Nations was lately absorbed by the European conventions and European legislation.

⁵ Art. 3, lett. a) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

⁶ With art. 13 of law 228/2003 a special programme of assistance was established for victims of trafficking (art. 600 and 601) and art.18 Legislative Decree 286/98 introduced social protection.

2. DATA AND TRENDS ON VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION IN THE WORLD, IN EUROPE AND IN ITALY

At present, we do not have accurate statistics on the real number of victims of trafficking and exploitation. The available data is just an outcome of estimates and projections, giving an underestimated picture of the dimension and the impact of the phenomenon.

Around the world, **children and adolescents forced into child labour are 168 million, 85 million** of whom are involved in jobs highly dangerous to their health and safety, for example in agriculture, in mining, in the construction industry or in factories⁷. At the same time, about **5.5 million**⁸ children are victims forced labour and **2 million**⁹ are sexually exploited. In Europe, **the number of trafficked and seriously exploited victims is estimated to be 1,243,400**¹⁰. At present, this number stands at around **129,600** in Italy¹¹.

The latest available figure we have regarding registered victims of trafficking – both the victims and the alleged victims identified by competent authorities – is **15,846** and is dated 2013-2014¹². Among them, **76 per cent are women, 67 per cent are victims of forced prostitution**, with a predominance of Nigerians and Romanians, and **21 per cent** are victims of labour exploitation (especially in agriculture, manufacture, construction industry, housekeeping and food service)¹³. Based upon Save the Children evidence, victims are brought illegally into Europe through the Mediterranean, the Balkans, Eastern European countries and Turkey and are destined to Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Greece or the Netherlands¹⁴. Thus, the presence of illegal and unregulated markets facilitate undeclared work and serious exploitation, out of which criminal gangs make profit.

Therefore, unaccompanied children on the move are at particular risk of exploitation; in this regard, Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, signalled the disappearance of 10 thousand children that arrived in Europe in 2015.

Between January and June 2016, out of 70,222 people that arrived in Italy by sea to flee from wars, hunger and violence (70,329 in 2015), 11,608 were children, mostly unaccompanied (90 per cent), a number that more than doubled in a year. These children in particular represent a potential source of exploitation for those who want to take profit from the migratory flow, speculating in various ways on the most vulnerable.

It is difficult to quantify the number of exploiters and victims of trafficking and exploitation. The procedures that can be used against exploiters are scarce, because of criminal gangs' capacity to adjust their strategies in order to bypass the legislative actions of each country. Human trafficking is highly characterised by gender and **the number of children consumed by it is growing**: between 2004 and 2011, the total number of cases identified as human trafficking increased, from 10 per cent to 21 per cent for young girls and from 3 per cent to 12 per cent for young boys¹⁶.

NOTES

⁷ ILO, World Report on Child Labour, 2015.

⁸ ILO, Global estimate of forced labour Executive summary, Forced labour, human trafficking and slavery, 2012.

⁹ UNICEF, Bambini da proteggere: alcuni dati.

¹⁰ Walk Free Foundation, Global Slavery Index Report, 2016.

¹¹ Idem.

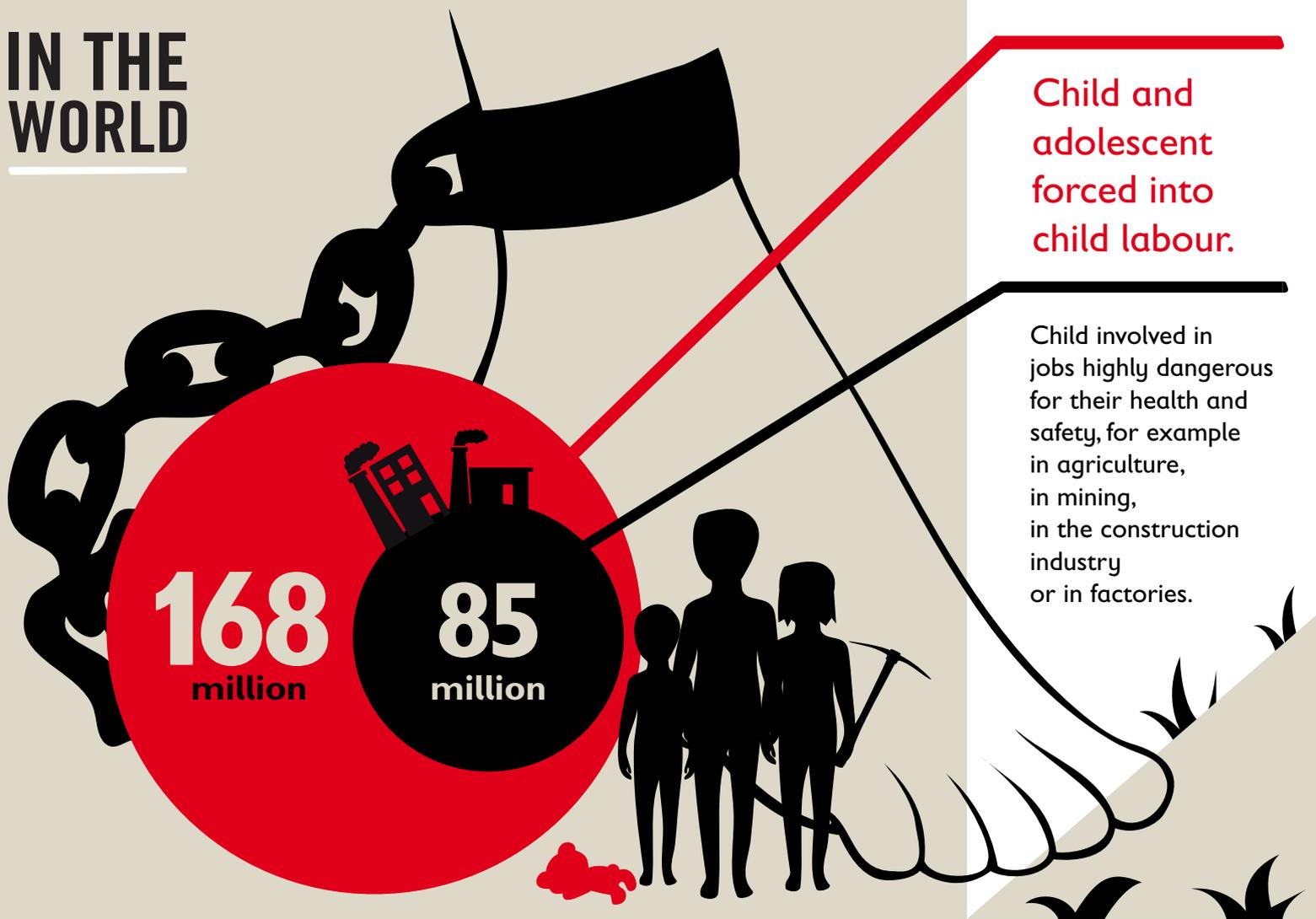
¹² European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, 2016.

¹³ Idem.

¹⁴ No Tratta, Vittime di Tratta e Richiedenti / Titolari Protezione Internazionale – Research report, June 2014, Rome.

¹⁵ Central Directorate for Immigration and Border Police of the Department of Public Security, Summary based on the nationality of people landed, updated data as at 30 June 2015 and at 30 June 2016.

¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014.



TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

5,5

MILLION of children are victims of forced labour.

2

MILLION of children are sexually exploited.

The number of trafficked and seriously exploited victims:

1,243,400

IN EUROPE

129,600

IN ITALY

3. CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN ITALY: THEIR FACES

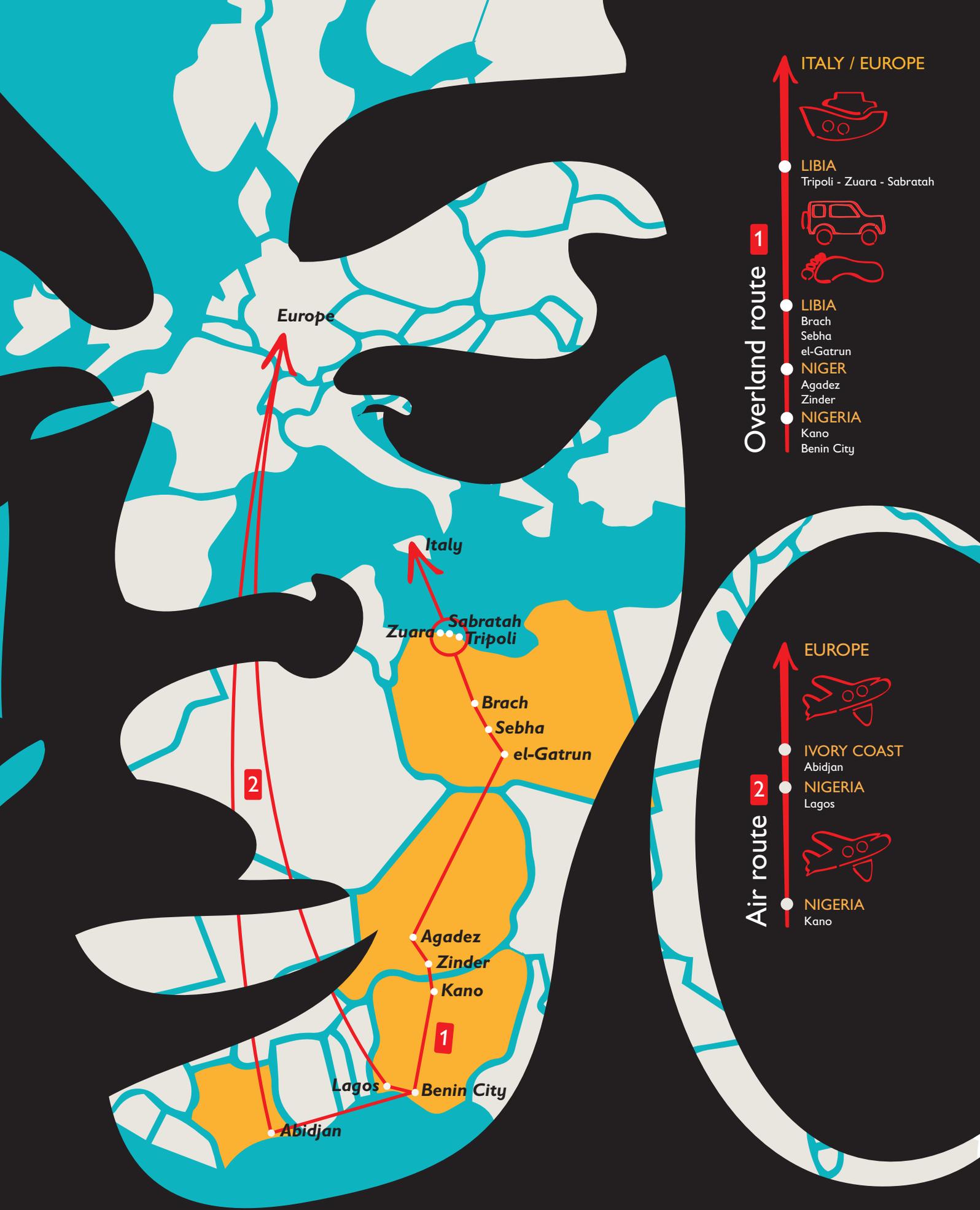
Young Nigerian girls

The number of girls and young women at high risk of exploitation arriving in Italy is constantly increasing: in the first six months of 2016, 3,529¹⁷ Nigerian women, all of them very young, and 814 unaccompanied Nigerian children, with a significant presence of young girls, arrived on our coast. This clearly shows a growing trend of Nigerian girl arrivals in our country, which reached 300 per cent between 2014 and 2015¹⁸. Most of them are adolescents aged 15-17 years, with an increasing number of 13-year-old girls. According to Save the Children evidence, girls are lured into the path of people engaged in trafficking by acquaintances, neighbours, school friends or even older sisters already in Italy. Once recruited, they are forced to swear a **juju** or a **voodoo** oath, which binds them to repay the trafficker a debt of around 20,000 and 50,000 euros.

Often, they are forced into prostitution already while en-route to Italy, as they cross the Niger and during the following stop in Libya, and they arrive in our country under the traffickers' command. Many girls are thus led into forced prostitution in the area surrounding the Reception and Identification Centres, or when they are moved by traffickers to Campania (a region of southern Italy), where they are sorted and allocated to other cities.

Trafficked victims are forced into prostitution in order to pay the debt to the exploiter, but the amount increases yet further because girls are compelled to pay a rent both for their housing and for the street location where they are forced to work. The latter costs around 100 and 250 euros per month. Moreover, exploiters set up their own sanction mechanism, by "fining" girls when they break their rules, thereby increasing the debt.

Therefore, girls are forced into prostitution, at very low prices, and to even accept unprotected sexual activity in order to earn more, with the consequence that they often have to resort to the voluntary termination of a pregnancy, often illegally, and to risk sexually transmitted diseases. In order to endure this life, many young girls start using narcotics and psychotropic substances, induced by their traffickers.



- Overland route 1**
- ITALY / EUROPE
 - LIBIA
Tripoli - Zuara - Sabratah
 - LIBIA
Brach
Sebha
el-Gatrun
 - NIGER
Agadez
Zinder
 - NIGERIA
Kano
Benin City

- Air route 2**
- EUROPE
 - IVORY COAST
Abidjan
 - NIGERIA
Lagos
 - NIGERIA
Kano

TRAFFICKING ROUTES of young Nigerian girls towards Europe

Romanian and Eastern European young girls

Young Romanian girls are one of the national groups most exposed to forced prostitution, registering an alarming increase of girls aged 15-17 years. They often come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds and they have been victims of domestic violence and alcoholism since their childhood.

They arrive in Italy by land at an affordable price, hoping to find work as barmaids or waitresses, supported by their exploiter, often pretending to be their “fiancé” and establishing a submissive relationship from which it is hard to escape. In addition to sexual exploitation, Romanian girls are often victims of labour exploitation, particularly in agriculture, and are subjugated by their employers – including Italian citizens – who exploit their vulnerability to force them into sexual relations.

Young Egyptian boys

According to Save the Children evidence, the average age of Egyptian children that arrived in Italy in 2016 is lower (14-16 years old) than that of the year before and the number of very young (12-13 years old) is increasing.

The trip to Italy is organised by a network of people well-known to the local community. They stipulate contracts for sums of 2,000 to 4,000 euros, depending on the point of departure. The duration of an average trip to Italy ranges between 7 and 15 days and, shortly after landing on our shores, the children move away from the Initial Reception Centres in order to reach Central and Northern Italy (mainly Rome, Milan and Turin) and a small percentage of them go on to other European Countries.

Once arrived in those cities, often at the suggestion of an adult, they get in contact with the authorities in order to be included in a Residential Child Care Institution and this often results in new opportunities for inclusion. However, some adolescents are not able to join the protection system – mainly the ones who have just turned 18 – these are at risk of exploitation and life on the street.

All these children share the need to send money home to pay the debt contracted by their families before leaving. This makes them vulnerable and at high risk of exploitation. In Milan and Turin, they are frequently exploited in pizzerias, bakeries, and at fruit and vegetable markets. In Rome, many young Egyptian boys work in fruit and vegetable markets, in pizzerias, car washes and fruit shops. They are extremely underpaid and sometimes they are not paid at all, on the pretext of working as an apprentice. In some cases, these children are also victims of sexual exploitation or involved in illegal activities such as drug dealing.

Young Albanian boys

By nationality, unaccompanied Albanian children are the second most represented in Italy, with 1,453 children (12.5 per cent of the total)¹⁹. This number is higher when compared with the previous year. This is probably due to the recent abolition of the entrance visa within the Schengen countries. These children come from broken and economically unstable families or those with parental problems. Their main destinations are Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany. Often as a consequence of the contact with adults, they are at risk of exploitation in illegal activities. These adults make them prey for bullies and force them into petty theft, receiving and handling of stolen goods.

Children in transit: Eritreans and Somalis

Amongst children in contact with Save the Children, one of the groups at high risk of exploitation is composed of unaccompanied children in transit through Italy to reach other countries in Northern Europe. They are children and young adolescents who, from the moment they start their journey, are subject to inhuman and degrading treatment, and sometimes to forms of actual torture. They may be traded by trafficking groups as can happen in the drugs and weapons market. The arrival in Europe does not mean the end of exploitation, but a repeat, as the journey they have to undergo to reach their destination country and the need to be “invisible” makes them even more vulnerable.

Among children in transit, the main groups are Eritreans and Somalis. They travel a long way, through very different routes, before arriving in Italy, but all of them are victims of exploitation and abuse once they have arrived in the country and while they try to plan their move to Northern Europe. This can even be as a consequence of the need to find more money to pay traffickers, who will help them to move across borders.

Young Bengali boys

Boys from Bangladesh reaching Italy are typically **16-17 years old**, and come from rural areas. Families support and finance the travel in the hope of giving them the opportunity of a better life and to guarantee a future benefit to the household. **The cost of the travel** ranges from 5,000 up to 11,000 euros. **The risk of exploitation is particularly high for Bengali boys** coming to Italy without a network of contacts or who are not located in Residential Child Care Institutions. Boys, who cannot find accommodation in institutions, sleep with their peers or with adult fellow countrymen in overcrowded flats. They are forced to work illegally up to 12 hours in a row for six days a week. The salary is minimal and sometimes this is not paid at all.

Young Afghan boys

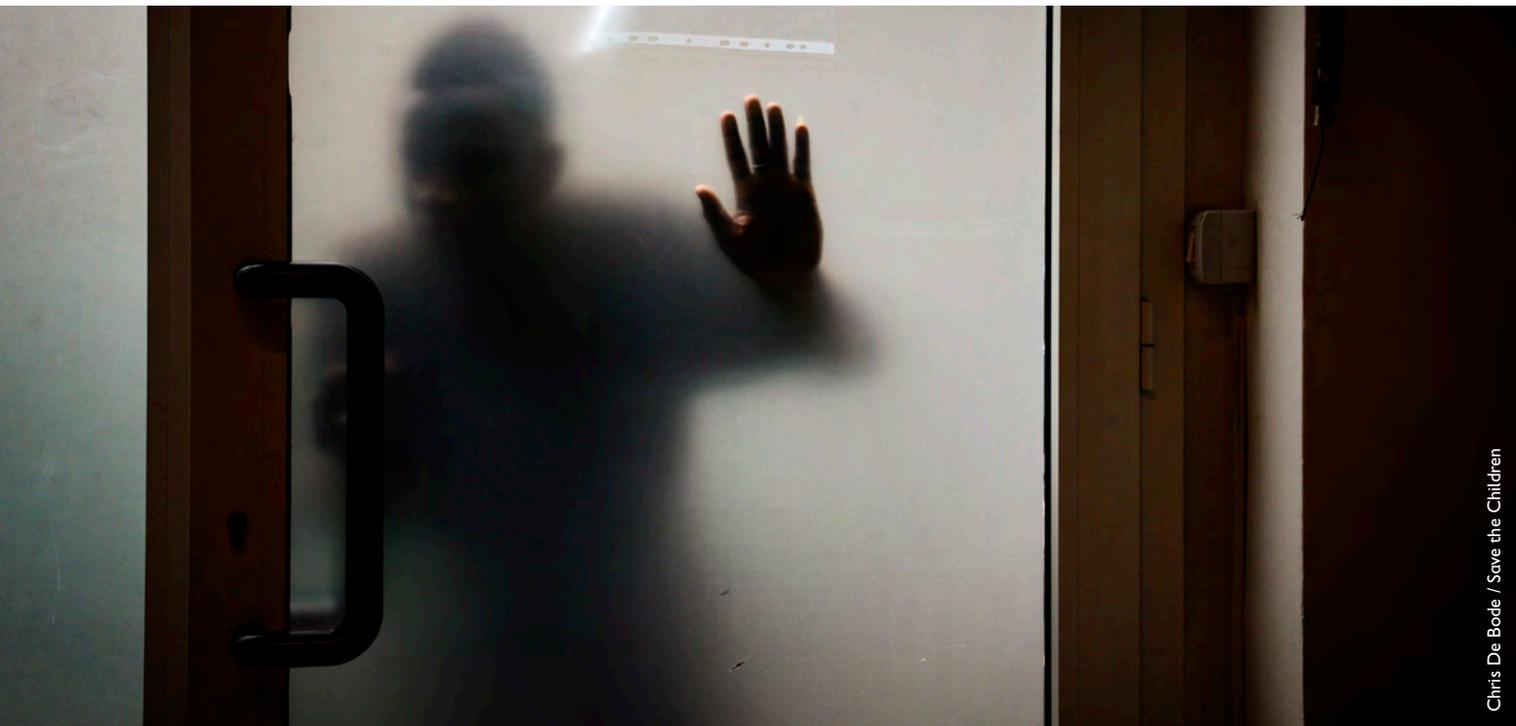
Unaccompanied Afghan children are mostly **Hazara, Pashtun and Tajik** males aged between 15 and 17. The main destination of Pashtun boys is the United Kingdom, where they hope to find a job, whereas the Hazaras prefer Scandinavian countries hoping to be admitted to reception facilities. Until the start of 2015, Rome was the focal point for Afghan migrants for a limited period (7 to 10 days), before continuing their road to Northern Europe.

NOTES

¹⁷ Central Directorate for Immigration and Border Police of the Department of Public Security, Summary based on the nationality of people landed, updated data as at 30 June 2015 and at 30 June 2016.

¹⁸ IOM – Rapporto sulle vittime di tratta nell'ambito dei flussi migratori misti in arrivo via mare (aprile 2014-ottobre 2015).

¹⁹ Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – Report di monitoraggio minori stranieri non accompagnati in Italia (30-04-2016).



4. THE EXPLOITERS AND OFFENDERS OF TRAFFICKING

The profile of exploiters is various and ranges from single people to organised criminal enterprises, which manage human trafficking as a part of their activity. This can serve as a side-line to more lucrative trafficking, such as drug dealing.

The most complex transnational groups have their cells spread across Europe and they can move and manage a remarkable number of people.

OFFENDERS IN EUROPE

6,324 **People** intercepted by the Police or in the criminal justice system regarding the crime of human trafficking in the EU

4,079 **Criminal** proceedings for human trafficking in Member States

3,129 **Convictions** for human trafficking in Member States²⁰

Individual offenders of trafficking

Romanian and Eastern European girls forced into prostitution are frequently exploited by individuals. Socio-cultural contexts characterised by widespread early marriage favour subservience and subjugation by private individuals with whom the victim has family bonds or a relationship.

Victims' vulnerability is intensified by age and gender. Sentimental bonds with the exploiter also assume a determining role with the victims having to face their own families – the only adult figures they have to turn to – or their **partners**, with whom they have **sentimental, emotional and economic bonds**.

Submissive relationships seem to be established not only with partners, but increasingly with **friends or relatives**.

Informal networks

The ultimate aim of informal networks is not to exploit migrants after their arrival; nevertheless, cases of serious exploitation, especially for women and children, during or after the trip, are frequent. Networks exist also because of the long-lasting migratory flow between the place of origin and the destination cities in Europe. Constant flows over time result in the consolidation of ethnic/national communities in destination countries.

Informal people smuggling networks are usually started by the very same families or by an acquaintance of the child willing to take the trip. Their task is to contact potential clients, agree upon a price and basically work as a “travel agency”. The case of Egyptian children is emblematic: their families incur a debt with traffickers which must be repaid once arrived in Italy. The need to repay the debt particularly concerns Egyptian boys, as they know that if their families are insolvent, they could face penal problems, social pressure and even violence from traffickers.

In the smuggling of young Afghans, the **mediator**, also known as the guarantor, engages with the trafficker, representing the child and his family, in order to withhold the payment until the child reaches his destination country. When travelling by sea, the **scafista**, that is the boatman, has a marginal role in smuggling networks. As testified by some children we spoke with, a **scafista** could be one of their peers, forced into the job to pay part of his trip. Eritrean children's departures to their final destination are arranged by **passeurs** (in Tigrinya “**delalai**”, people who help).

Criminal organisations

Criminal gangs managing human trafficking follow the specific purpose of exploiting and subjugating their victims, in order to benefit from economic or other advantages. These groups conduct other kind of trafficking, or they run human trafficking as a part of their activity. As verified by recent surveys and police operations²¹, there are also complex transnational groups, composed of several cells that work semi-autonomously, but always keeping a connection with the organisation in their country of origin.

NOTES

²⁰ Reference period 2013/14 - European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Report on the Progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings, 2016.

²¹ Italian State Police, Central Anticrime Direction, Servizio Centrale Operativo, Ragusa Flying Squad, “Ju-Ju” Operation; Carabinieri Roma, “Culti” Operation, 2014; public prosecutor's office of Catania; State Police, Palermo central police station, “Glauco II”, “Glauco III” Operations.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure early **identification, protection and assistance for child victims of trafficking and exploitation** and to allow full activation of their rights,

Save the Children recommends to the Italian Department of Equal Opportunities – Presidency of Council of Ministers:

- To enforce commitment to the new National Action Plan Against Trafficking and Serious Exploitation of Human Beings; provide **funding dedicated to children**, in order to assure the sustainability of services dedicated to them (cultural mediation, legal and psychological consultation, paths towards autonomy).
- To develop a **standardised and homogeneous National Protection Framework**. Its purpose being to identify, protect, safeguard, integrate, and create paths towards autonomy for victims of trafficking and exploitation, trying out a **holistic and integrated approach**. The main priority is to guarantee protection, child counselling, assistance and activation of individualised routes towards autonomy for the most vulnerable, with long-term solutions.
- To guarantee **continued protection** for victims of trafficking and exploitation through first assistance and social integration programmes, **the Freephone number and “local task groups”**. These will be arranged for an adequate number of people and including cooperation between institutions and the private social sector, in order to guarantee the immediate access of child victims of trafficking to adequate protection services. Victims should be instantly moved from the location of first identification, to reduce risk and vulnerability and to ensure protection of child victims **even when they are not ready to press charges**.



To the Italian Parliament:

- To approve protection measures for unaccompanied children at high risk of trafficking and exploitation - the bill AC 1658. This is a proposal fostered by Save the Children and endorsed by many organisations, in order to regulate procedures for reception and protection of unaccompanied children.

To the Italian Government:

- To approve the Prime Minister's Decree on age assessment of victims of trafficking and to finance the implementation of the system. In Italy, a uniform, standardised and multidimensional procedure for age assessment does not exist. This is fundamental in order to avoid children from being identified as adults and vice versa.
- To guarantee an **effective national policy** for victims of trafficking and exploitation. It is critical to adopt a **national system of coordination to prevent and counter the phenomenon, which provides constant dialogue** – or even inclusion – between parties and representatives of institutions and the private social sector, as suggested by the GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) report 2015.

To the Italian Ministry of Interior:

- To provide reception structures, highly specialised in supporting girl victims of trafficking, in which capacities and competences are developed in order to assure girl victims of continued care. The number of places available should also be in line with arrivals and the resources necessary for intervention should be provided, taking into account victims' needs.

To the European Commission and the Italian Ministry of Interior:

- To comply with the European Agenda on Migration of 13 May 2015, which envisages relocation as one of the key instruments for a European joint framework, in order to prevent the expulsion of unaccompanied children and therefore the risk of exploitation and abuse. To date, in Italy there is no procedure for the implementation of relocation for foreign unaccompanied children.

To the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- To fund programmes in the countries of origin for providing information and awareness regarding the risks of travelling, particularly concerning children, the living conditions in host countries and the exposure to exploitation with which they could become involved.

Save the Children

believes every child deserves a future.

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we work every day to give children
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the opportunity to learn
and protection from harm.

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and children are most vulnerable,
we are always among the first
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– every day and in times of crisis –
transforming their lives
and the future we share.



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