



Children on the Move

DOSSIER

FOREWORD

Dear Participants,

A year ago, at the height of the movement of refugees from the MENAT region into Europe, we hosted the first NOW Conference in Vienna, in July 2016 the second one in Athens. There we learned that according to Europol thousands of children and minors, many of them unaccompanied, are unaccounted for in the EU.

After the initial feelings of utter disbelief, shock and perplexity we now dedicate the 3rd NOW Conference to the „Children Under the Radar“ by providing a space where young refugees and locals, politicians, mayors and experts can convene to search for and find ways towards a better common future for all our children.

In our eyes social cohesion, security, safe spaces for discovery, personal development, spirituality, real chances for experiencing community, access to quality education and health care are basic human rights and: Children are the most vulnerable members of our societies.

Our objective is to address the most urgent needs in a comprehensive, integrated way, identify feasible interventions, share good practice solutions, and build cooperation networks facilitating their implementation.

We have compiled this Dossier for you so that we can start our meetings with the same level of information. You will find facts and figures about the huge dangers and challenges children and minors are faced with on their way: violence, sexual and labor exploitation, human trafficking, trauma, death, lack of access to education, health care and safe housing.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CHILDREN ON THE MOVE.....	1
1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 DATA, FACTS AND FIGURES	4
Global trends	4
Move to Europe.....	4
What are the routes that migrants take?	4
Main destination countries	6
Means of transport.....	7
3 GENERAL CONDITIONS	8
Legal situation	8
Definitions	8
General conditions exemplified by a forced migration from Afghanistan to Austria.....	9
4 CRIMINAL NETWORKS	17
5 DANGERS ON THE MOVE	19
Exploitation	19
Various forms of violence.....	24
6 CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION	27
Traumatisation	27
Radicalisation and criminalisation.....	27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

In the debate about migration and refugees we tend to overlook the large group of children and youth who have fled their home countries despite the fact that – often unaccompanied – they are particularly vulnerable to many dangers. It is our objective to turn the spotlight on this issue. This dossier was developed in the course of preparations for the third International Mayors' Conference NOW due to take place January 30th-31st, 2017 in Vienna.

One child out of 200 is on the move.

The current figures demonstrate the scope of challenges we are facing: worldwide, 48 million children under 18 years are on the move. Roughly half of today's child refugees are from Afghanistan and Syria. Many set out for the dangerous route to Europe on their own. According to Europol, last year, authorities lost track of 10,000 unaccompanied children and youth in Europe. Due to the European states' policy of isolationism the migration routes are becoming increasingly more expensive and dangerous. Following the closure of the Western Balkan routes, the Central Mediterranean route (Tunisia, Libya and Egypt to Italy) and the Eastern Mediterranean route (Turkey to Greece) are now among the most frequent migration routes. The main destination countries in 2016 included Germany, Italy, France and Austria.

Child migrants are at the mercy of criminal networks.

Most people on the move employ the services of smugglers. Unlike people who help refugees, smugglers are exploitative and act with commercial interests in mind. It is estimated that in 2015 alone, smugglers made profits of up to € 6 billion¹. Children who are on the move on their own are particularly at the mercy of their smugglers. The boundaries between smuggling – which focuses on the crossing of country borders – and human trafficking – which profits from exploiting humans – are becoming increasingly blurred. This is particularly true when migrants take out a loan with the smuggling organisation which they eventually must “pay back” through exploitative activities.

Displaced Children are under special threat of exploitation, violence and death.

On the move, children – particularly unaccompanied ones – are exposed to many dangers. Very often, the hopes of entire families are pinned on them, which can be easily exploited by individual criminal persons or organisations.

Child labour is continuously on the rise in countries such as Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Children must make a living for entire families under unimaginable work conditions and for drastically low pay. In addition to health-related consequences they are unable to attend a school. Under the difficult conditions in refugee camps, girls are especially at risk of exploitation and sexual abuse. In Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey girls are often married at a young age to protect them from sexual assaults or due to financial reasons. As a result, young girls – some of them below the age of 14 – often find themselves in forced and frequently violent relationships with significantly older men which are hard to escape from, if at all. Furthermore, indications have been made of the existence of markets for forced prostitution of minors both in Turkey and Lebanon. In the form of short-term marriage contracts, which can last for a few hours to a month, young migrant girls are forced into trafficking in countries such as Iraq, Jordan and

¹ Europol-Interpol, 2016, Migrant Smuggling Networks: Report on www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/ep-ip_report_executive_summary.pdf

Turkey. In 2015, 700 women and children were abducted by IS and given or sold to jihadis as slaves. In addition to human trafficking, there are growing indications of refugee organ trading. Particularly in Egypt and Lebanon, but also in Sudan, Iraq and Jordan – all places with a high migrant population – there are verified reports of organ trade. Children are among the victims as well. In addition to these exploitative dangers, children are also threatened by other various forms of violence, such as violence exerted by aid workers in asylum seekers' facilities, violence experienced during conflicts among migrants in overcrowded camps, and violence in the form of racist hate crimes.

Ultimately, children on the move risk their lives. Last year alone, 700 children drowned in the Mediterranean, and at least just as many lost their lives when crossing the Sahara. Many deaths are never registered and families fail to hear about their children's fate.

All the pain suffered by children in war zones and on the move, has consequences in the country of arrival.

In addition to the visible scars, child migrants bring with them the invisible consequences of their exposure to violence. The extent of traumatisation among child migrants can be enormous. Every fifth child migrant shows signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Nearly half of them (40%) are potentially suicidal. In particularly overcrowded camps such as in Calais – before it was cleared – the proportion of traumatised children was considerably higher.

In the countries of arrival, the children and youth are also at risk of becoming radicalised or slipping into criminal behaviour. This danger becomes even greater and more unpredictable – e.g. problems with adequate accommodation, interpreting services, psycho-social care, consistency with contact persons/transfer of custody, family reunification, disappearance from facilities/risk of exploitation, school attendance following mandatory schooling, activities and leisure facilities, support during transition after reaching maturity with 18 years, lack of cross-border cooperation between child protection authorities, etc. – if proper support is not offered to the arriving children and youth from the very start.

All the dangers and suffering experienced by children on the move, are our concerns, too. To this end, the objective of the third International Mayors' Conference NOW in Vienna is to discuss and work out solutions, share knowledge as well as establish networks and exchange ideas with regard to successful models across borders between countries and continents in a mutual dialogue.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, we have been seen a growing willingness to address the topic of “forced migration” on various political levels. Reports have been compiled, initiatives and conferences launched, all with the objective of highlighting problems and finding solutions. These examinations focus primarily on adult Syrians, Afghans or Somalis who have completed the dangerous route to Europe alone or together with their families. This seems to best reflect the image we have of forced migration and migrants. This scenario overlooks that more than half of the 60 million refugees are below the age of 18. When children are on the move they are “below radar level”, they are invisible. Many flee their countries together with their families, with friends or relatives. Some are alone, join a group or travel with smugglers whom they call “uncle”; they appear and disappear. Most of the time, they are noticed only as a “dependent” of an adult. In the shadow of the discussion on tighter border controls, mandatory migrant quotas and cuts in social benefits, the threats to the large and particularly vulnerable group of child migrants remain unnoticed. Successfully fleeing a war zone is no guarantee for protection and safety. On the way to a safe country, unaccompanied children are particularly prone to encounter many dangers such as child labour, sexual abuse, violence, hunger and death. Mostly, we are not aware of the experiences the children have made on their way to our country, our community, our schools, and the problems that will continue to bother them. Often, we look the other way because we cannot bear to imagine the suffering. Or we simply fail to notice it. Traumatization caused or enhanced by experiences in a war zone or on the move, often results in those affected shutting themselves away. The topic of “children on the move” requires our full attention in order to enable child migrants a fresh start in a safe environment.

This dossier was developed in the course of preparations for the third International Mayors’ Conference NOW in Vienna with the aim to give a compact overview of the situation of children on the move and all associated issues. The dossier starts out by taking a look at data, facts and figures and asking questions of who is on the move from where, how and where to. This is followed by an analysis of the legal and social circumstances faced by children during their move and in the host countries. An example of a forced migration from Afghanistan to Austria sheds light on various problem areas. One chapter is dedicated to the criminal networks that have been formed and professionalised in the course of the last few years. Furthermore, this dossier describes exploitative and violent dangers for children on the move. The last chapter addresses the consequences for child migrants once they have arrived in their host country.

This dossier on the topic of “children on the move”, will be forwarded to the participants of the third International Mayors’ Conference to be held January 30th-31st, 2017 in Vienna as advance information and to all parties interested as basic information on the current state of facts.

2 DATA, FACTS AND FIGURES

Global trends

31 million children and youth have fled war and violence in their home countries. Another 17 million are on the move within their own country. Worldwide, one child out of 200 is on the move. Roughly half of all child migrants are currently from Syria and Afghanistan. The majority of child migrants worldwide lives in Turkey.

Move to Europe

Between January and December 2016, just under 1.2 million people sought protection in the countries of the European Union. Nearly 300,000, roughly one quarter of persons seeking protection, had been children.² 70% were from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

A comparison shows that, in 2015, 1.7 million people sought asylum in the EU, with 29% - roughly 500,000 – being below the age of 18.

The newly arrived migrants in 2016 included a large number of unaccompanied children out of which roughly 23,000 arrived in Italy alone and roughly 1,400 in Greece. 93% of these unaccompanied minors were male. They were mainly from Eritrea, Gambia, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Not all of the children and youth that are on the move alone or separate from their parents, get themselves registered. Therefore, it is safe to assume that their numbers are higher in each case.

Roughly 10,000 of unaccompanied minors were reported missing in January 2016 by Europol, the European Police Office. Many left the detention camps to reach their relatives on their own. Many leave the detention centres to escape the partly inhuman conditions and the long hours of waiting; others are listed as missing due to multiple registrations under various names.

The large majority of people fleeing their home country – 94% in total – reaches Europe across the sea in danger of death. Many fail to survive the crossing.

In 2016, just under 5,000 people lost their lives, among them 700 children.

What are the routes that migrants take?

The European Union continues to shut itself off by using military ships and planes to patrol the Mediterranean and by setting up fences within the European Union. This denies persons seeking protection their basic right to asylum and earns smugglers higher profits who continue to smuggle people to Europe on increasingly dangerous routes.

² Eurostat, 25 October 2016/UNHCR Humanitarian Situation Report # 17

OVERVIEW: MIGRANT FLOWS TO EUROPE

Registered and reported arrivals to Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy and Bulgaria (📍) From 01 January 2016 to 30 November, 2016

Disclaimer: Base Map Source: ESRI. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

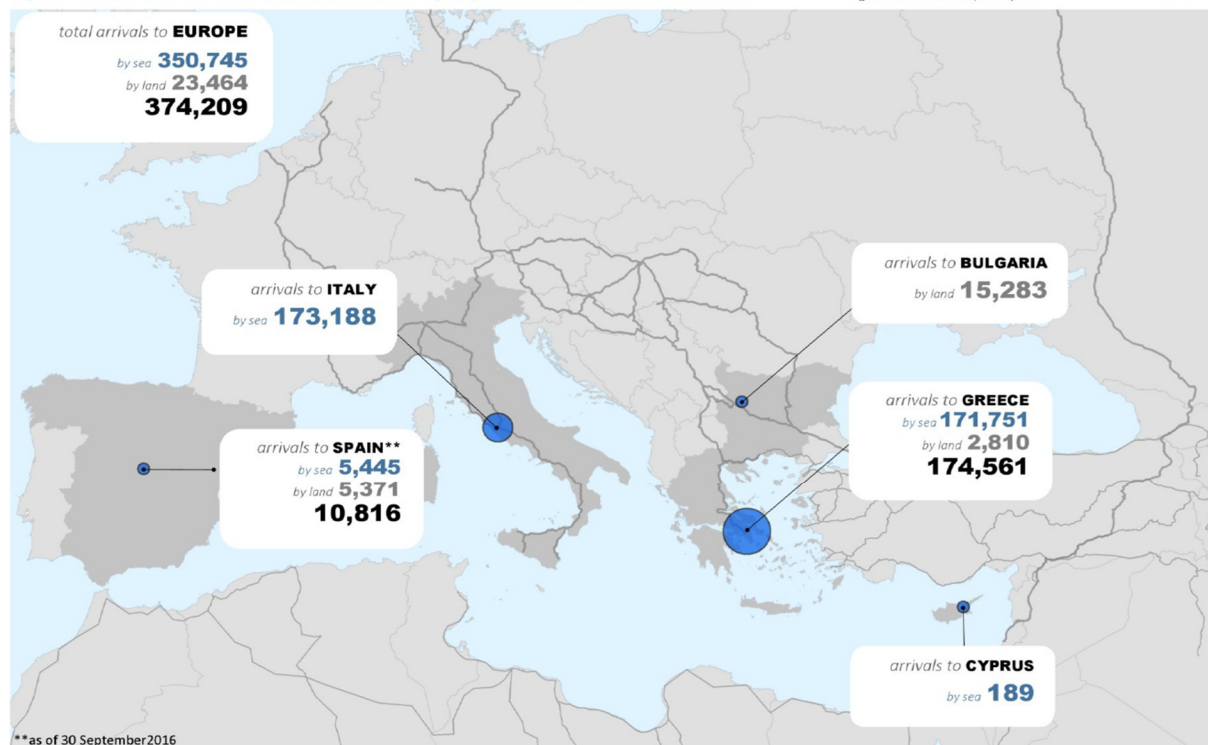


Figure 1: Overview: Migrant flows to Europe - Source: IOM 2016

Central Mediterranean route

The Central Mediterranean route marks the sea passage from Tunisia, Libya and Egypt to Italy. In 2015, 154,000 refugees took this path. Between January and December 2016, 173,000 people – from Western Africa as well as Somalia and Eritrea – had already taken this route. This route becomes particularly dangerous after reaching Libya which is ruled by civil war, violence and lawlessness. Whoever comes on this route has experienced severe abuse. However, it is precisely this route that is used by large numbers of unaccompanied minors. Nine out of ten children that have arrived in Italy in 2016 are unaccompanied. Since the reception centres are completely overcrowded, these children are often accommodated in camps for adults or simply locked away. According to Amnesty International, these children are often exposed to sexual violence and abuse.

Eastern Mediterranean route

In 2015, the sea passage from Turkey to Greece was one of the most frequented routes: Roughly 885,000 refugees came to the EU on this route. 2016 saw a drastic decline in numbers due to the closure of this path. In total, 180,260 people (as of December) – largely Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis and Africans³ from the sub-Saharan region – managed to reach Greece on this route.

The majority of refugees – among them roughly 60,000 children in 2016 – were stranded on the islands Lesbos, Khios, Cos and Leros.

³ Due to visa facilitation negotiations between Turkey and some African states, many Africans arrive in Istanbul by plane to start the dangerous crossing to Greece from there.

Western Balkan route

Following the EU-Turkey Statement⁴ and the sealing of the borders between Hungary and Serbia, this route is used significantly less frequently. Between January and December 2016, a total of roughly 122,000 people used this route to reach Western Europe from Greece via Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Croatia, respectively. Currently, more than 57,000 people sit tight on this route, most of them in Greece. According to UNHCR reports, 5,000 people – who want to go to Germany and other EU countries via Hungary – are stuck in Serbia alone, with 37% of them being children. Refugees find themselves at the mercy of authorities, in particular at the Serbian-Hungarian border. According to Amnesty International, children frequently fall victim to beatings and abuse on the part of border guards.

Western Mediterranean route

This route is also known as the Morocco-Spain route. Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa try to enter the EU via Algeria and Morocco through Spanish enclave Melilla which is guarded by a six-meter-tall double fence, motion detectors and night vision devices. According to European border control agency FRONTEX, a growing number of Africans hides in trucks and ship containers together with their children to reach mainland Europe through the Spanish ports of Almeria and Algeciras on ferries. In 2016, more than 7,800 people took this route.

Hidden routes

In 2016, 384,500 migrants managed to reach Europa. 94% by sea, and only roughly 6% by land through Bulgaria.

In the same period, 990,632 migrants sought for asylum. The number of newly arrived migrants and those seeking for asylum varies greatly. This is partly due to the fact that thousands of asylum applications wait to be processed, but – according to the Overseas Development Institute, a UK-based political research agency, – also because, due to the closed Balkan route, many migrants come to Europe on other, often far more dangerous routes, such as hidden in trucks or ship containers, but also by using fake visas sold to them by smugglers for horrific sums of money.⁵

Main destination countries

In 2016, the majority of asylum applications were submitted in Germany – with 702,725 applications as of December – followed by Italy with 71,500 asylum applications, France (56,000) and Austria (39,618).

With more than 700,000 asylum applications between January and December 2016, Germany recorded an increase of application figures by more than 100% against the previous year.⁶

37% of asylum applications have been submitted by children and youth.

Currently, roughly 51,000 unaccompanied minor refugees (UMRs) live in Germany – this many were registered in September 2016 in German care and youth welfare facilities.

⁴ The EU-Turkey Statement came into force on March 20, 2016, providing that refugees who reach Greece illegally across the Aegean Sea, will be taken back by Turkey. In exchange for every refugee Turkey takes back the EU will grant one refugee, who already lives in Turkey, legal entry to Europe.

⁵ Overseas Development Institute, Europe's refugees and migrants - Hidden flows, tightened borders and spiralling costs, September 2016, www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10870.pdf

⁶ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, current asylum data (11/2016), http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2001.212.01.0012.01.DEU

In Austria, 39,618 persons had submitted an asylum application by November 2016. 4,315 were lodged by unaccompanied minors among which just under 4,000 were above 14 while 382 were below 14. The majority – 2,643 – were from Afghanistan.

Means of transport

Children come to Europe in fishing boats, rubber dinghies and on ghost ships as well as airplanes.

By boat

Refugees are stuffed into often old, unseaworthy fishing boats and rubber dinghies, the majority of which are equipped with weak engines and poor navigation systems and fail to carry sufficient fuel on board. Smugglers have increasingly been jamming hundreds of people into decommissioned “ghost ships”, sending them off to Italy on autopilot. The refugees are left to their fate on disabled ships without any extra fuel. The smugglers often factor in the seizure of the refugees by European patrols – and hence the destruction of the ships.

In containers

Children and youth also come in ship containers, trucks, juggernauts or refrigerated vehicles. Against a fee, smugglers provide refugees with information on when and where they can best board a long-distance truck or a ferry in ports aboard a container or trailer. When freight port workers in Tilbury, UK found 35 people in a ship container they were shocked to spot seven children among the completely worn out, dehydrated and hypothermic migrants.

By plane

Since 2013, 44,208 displaced Syrians have been directly flown out of the crisis zone by EU countries as part of the UNHCR Resettlement Programme. 35,000 were received by Germany, followed by Sweden with 2,700 migrants. Austria took on 1,500, Finland 1,150 and France 1,000 migrants. The non-EU countries Norway and Switzerland received 9,000 and 3,500 migrants, respectively, by air. The selection of migrants was largely taken by the UNHCR, with the major criteria being special need for protection – therefore, priority was given to persons who were sick, unaccompanied children and pregnant women.

3 GENERAL CONDITIONS

Legal situation

The following legal policies are instrumental for adults as well as children and youth who are on the move or seek asylum:

- the international law on refugees, in particular the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also referred to as the 1951 Refugee Convention⁷
- the EU asylum law⁸
- the UN declarations of human rights⁹
- the Council of Europe conventions, such as in particular the European Convention of Rights¹⁰ and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings¹¹

Due to their special needs – related to age and development – children have additional and specific rights that are laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹². It should be noted that this convention gives priority to the wellbeing of the child in all child-related decisions, to respecting the views of the child and to ensuring the right for the child's best possible development. The CRC has also established standards on the right of equal treatment. This means that children's rights apply to all children irrespective of their residence status. In Austria, some of the rights laid down in the CRC have been incorporated in the Austrian federal constitutional law on the rights of children¹³.

Definitions

According to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a **refugee** is a person who – owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion – is outside the country of his or her

⁷ 1951 Refugee Convention (Convention of Geneva), <http://www.unhcr.at/mandat/genfer-fluechtlingskonvention.html>

⁸ At the EU summit held in May 1999 in Tampere, Finland the European Council argued for the development of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The adopted regulations and directives are essentially based on the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the European Convention on Human Rights. The regulations are binding for all EU member states. The guidelines must be transposed into national law.

The major directives are:

- [Qualification Directive](#): regulates the recognition and legal status of persons requiring international protection.
- [Procedure Directive](#): sets the minimum standards for the carrying out of the asylum procedure.
- [Reception Directive](#) for the stipulation of standards for receiving persons who apply for international protection.
- [Dublin III Regulation](#) regulates which EU member state is responsible for the examination of an asylum application.
- [Eurodac Regulation](#) for the comparison of fingerprints for the application of the Dublin Regulation.
- [Family Reunification Directive](#) regulates the right of family reunification.
- [Temporary protection Directive](#) sets standards for the granting of temporary protection in the event of a mass influx.

⁹ UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

¹⁰ European Convention of Human Rights http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

¹¹ Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/ger/treaties/html/197.htm>

¹² Convention of Rights of the Child www.unicef.org/crc/

¹³ Austrian federal constitutional law on the rights of children
<http://ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20007136>

nationality, and is unable to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country. Most of the “rights” an asylum seeker has, however, depend on whether asylum is granted to them.

Asylum seekers are persons that seek protection outside of their home countries and whose asylum procedure has yet to be concluded. A positive outcome of the asylum procedure bestows the status of a **person entitled to political asylum** and **recognised refugee**, respectively. Recognised refugees enjoy largely the same rights as Austrians. Asylum seekers have the right of residence for the duration of their asylum procedure.

Persons granted subsidiary protection are people whose life and health is threatened in their country of origin, but have not been granted asylum because they fail to meet the requirements of the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Persons granted subsidiary protection are given limited protection from deportation, which can be extended several times in some circumstances. Also with regard to family reunification, persons granted subsidiary protection have fewer rights than persons entitled to political asylum.

Unaccompanied minor refugees (UMRs) are, based on the definition of UNHCR and UNICEF¹⁴, *“persons below the age of 18 who are outside of their country of origin or country of residence and who are separated from both parents and other relatives and are not cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so”*.

A [glossary](#)¹⁵ compiled by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior lists all other terms relevant to the topic of asylum and aliens legislation.

General conditions exemplified by a forced migration from Afghanistan to Austria

In 2016 (until November), 4,315 unaccompanied children and youth sought asylum in Austria. Far more than half of them were from Afghanistan. Just under 300 were as young as below 14.

Reasons, decision to flee

Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world. The average gross annual income is 500 USD per capita.

Half of the population lives below the poverty line. Many children are malnourished and live in slums. They contribute to the family income as beggars, shoe polishers or cardboard collectors. According to UNICEF, 6.5 million Afghan children do not attend school. Two thirds of the adult population in Afghanistan are illiterate.

Every year, hundreds of Afghan children fall victim to terrorist attacks and landmines that are scattered all over the country. Many children are married off against their will or often exposed to sexual abuse, which is rarely prosecuted.

In the majority of cases, the parents or the extended family decide whether the child should leave the country. It is a “patriarchal” decision that girls are sent away only in very rare cases, also due to the many dangers. And if they are, the girls leave only in the company of an elder brother. Parents want to save their children from the Taliban and extreme material hardship, and enable them to go to school. Moreover, boys are pushed into the role of the bread-earner

¹⁴ UNHCR/UNICEF, Safe & Sound: What states can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe, October 2014, www.refworld.org/docid/5423da264.html

¹⁵ Glossary of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, www.bfa.gv.at/glossar/start.aspx

very early in life (due to lost or injured older male family members). The families have great hopes that these boys will send money from Europe to their country of origin.

Destination

Children and youth very rarely have a specific destination in mind. The children's route is also decided by the parents depending on their economic situation and information obtained by smugglers as well as the Internet. If the family already has relatives with a right of residence in a European country, they try to join them.

Costs

Depending on whether or how much money a family can raise, minors flee their country in smaller or bigger steps. A start-to-destination "migration package" from Afghanistan to Austria, Germany or Scandinavia costs around USD 15,000. For USD 8,000, migrants can reach Greece through Iran via Turkey, for USD 5,000 only until Turkey. In order to raise this amount, families sell a piece of land, their car or take up a loan (directly with the smuggler) which will be paid back by the minor from Europe, or so they hope. The majority of minor Afghan refugees, however, is forced to make their way from one stage of the route to the next and from checkpoint to checkpoint by taking up work. For each stage, they pay several hundreds of dollars.

Migration route

The majority takes the route via Iran, through Turkey and from there via the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece where they often wait for months in order to go north with the help of smugglers either through gaps in the Balkan route or via Albania, Kosovo or Montenegro. Many also use the Apulia and Calabria route to reach Italy from Greece. Time and again, however, migrants try to reach Italy from Albania, too.

Dangers

Before they reach the first border with Iran, very often, children have already completed more than ten days of walking. Some have valid visas, and if not, this is the first time they have to seek help from smugglers. In order to finance the next stages of their journey, many children expose themselves to many months of hard, degrading work in agriculture or road construction. In Iran, migrants are faced with the aggravating factor that Afghans – with a population of approx. 2.4 million in Iran – are treated like second-class human beings. Nearly 1 million of Afghans living in Iran lack a valid residence permit and therefore have no access to the labour market or school education. They are exposed to any kind of mistreatment.

The mountainous Turkish-Iranian border is a critical passage which many refugees reach in quite a weak state after days of walking. If arrested, it is not uncommon for refugees to be mistreated (electroshocks) by border officials.

Meanwhile, many expert reports have been drawn up on the forced migration of Afghan children to Europe based on in-depth interviews¹⁶. Some minors have described their migration not only as a horrible experience but also as an "adventure".

¹⁶ See i.a.:

- **Trees only move in the Wind**, A study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe, 2010;
- **Neither Safe nor Sound**, Unaccompanied children on the coastline of the English Channel and the North Sea, 2016;
- **We Knew They Have No Future in Kabul**, Why and How Afghan Families Decide to Leave, 2016

Arrival in Europe

In 2016 (as of December 1), just under 43,000 Afghans took the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece. Among them there were several hundreds of unaccompanied minors. After the, in most cases, very difficult and dangerous passage by boat – some have to take up to four attempts because their boats either capsize or they are seized by the Turkish coast guard and sent back multiple times – many migrants try to leave Greece as fast as possible. Since the EU member states have failed to adhere to the agreement of receiving a certain annual quota of asylum seekers from Italy and Greece, the detention and care centres in the two countries are bursting at the seams, and the chances of a “legal” transfer to the desired EU member state have become close to zero. In view of this lack of prospects, people try to move ahead illegally by employing the services of smugglers, either through the few existing gaps via Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, or directly from Greece across the sea to Calabria or Apulia, and from there by land towards the Brenner Pass.

However, Afghan children are still stuck in Serbia, too. They are part of a group of 6,400 migrants that failed to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border. According to rumours, smugglers – of which there are many in Belgrade – are offering a route to Austria for € 1,500.

Arrival in Austria

According to the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, an average of 150 migrants are captured in Austria or at Austria’s borders every day. Those seized by police at the border, are not allowed to enter the country; only those captured within the country can try to apply for asylum.

In 2016 (January-November), a total of 11,289 Afghans lodged an asylum application, including 2,643 unaccompanied minors.¹⁷

Identification

When children arrive in an EU member state on their own or unaccompanied by an adult, the first contact with authorities (mostly police) should assess as fast as possible whether the child is in any danger. If children are accompanied by a person that is not entitled to custody, international children’s rights experts point to the duty of authorities to examine the respective child-adult relationship for potential human trafficking. If there are any doubts the child should be referred to an adequate facility for the protection of children. The European Fundamental Rights Agency FRA indicates, however, that many European countries lack the adequate provisions for an initial assessment of a child’s wellbeing. These include specially trained officials, social workers and interpreters, and – in particular – special protection facilities. Similarly, the European Council Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, (GRETA) has assessed that all across Europe there are not enough protection mechanisms for children affected by human trafficking. Austria’s protection system also has many gaps, or it could be said that a country-wide protection system concept for these children is missing. However, there is one facility – which is in charge only of the City of Vienna – the so-called “Drehscheibe”, initiated by the municipality of Vienna. Many other measures that can be carried out by states in an effort to safeguard the wellbeing of unaccompanied children in Europe can be found in the working paper Safe&Sound¹⁸ jointly compiled by the UNHCR and UNICEF:

¹⁷ See Austrian asylum statistics on unaccompanied minors: p.10

www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asylwesen/statistik/files/2016/Asylstatistik_November_2016.pdf

¹⁸ UNHCR/UNICEF, Safe & Sound: What states can do to ensure respect for the best interests of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe, October 2014, www.refworld.org/docid/5423da264.html

- Profiling/screening of the persons arriving in order to immediately identify unaccompanied children.
- Separating minors from adults that are not their relatives in order to minimise the risk of (continued) human trafficking and other forms of abuse.
- Redirecting migrants to a temporary accommodation offering basic healthcare and other forms of care and support.
- Providing fundamental information and advice on asylum procedures.
- Registration of basic data of children and their family members or relatives.
- If required, referring migrants to tracing services, guaranteeing a referral to regular child protection services as well as specialized services and psycho-social counselling, if required.
- Guaranteeing access to education as soon as it becomes feasible.

Initiating an asylum procedure

If children apply for asylum in Austria (the granting of asylum or subsidiary protection) the procedure basically follows the same procedures as for adults.

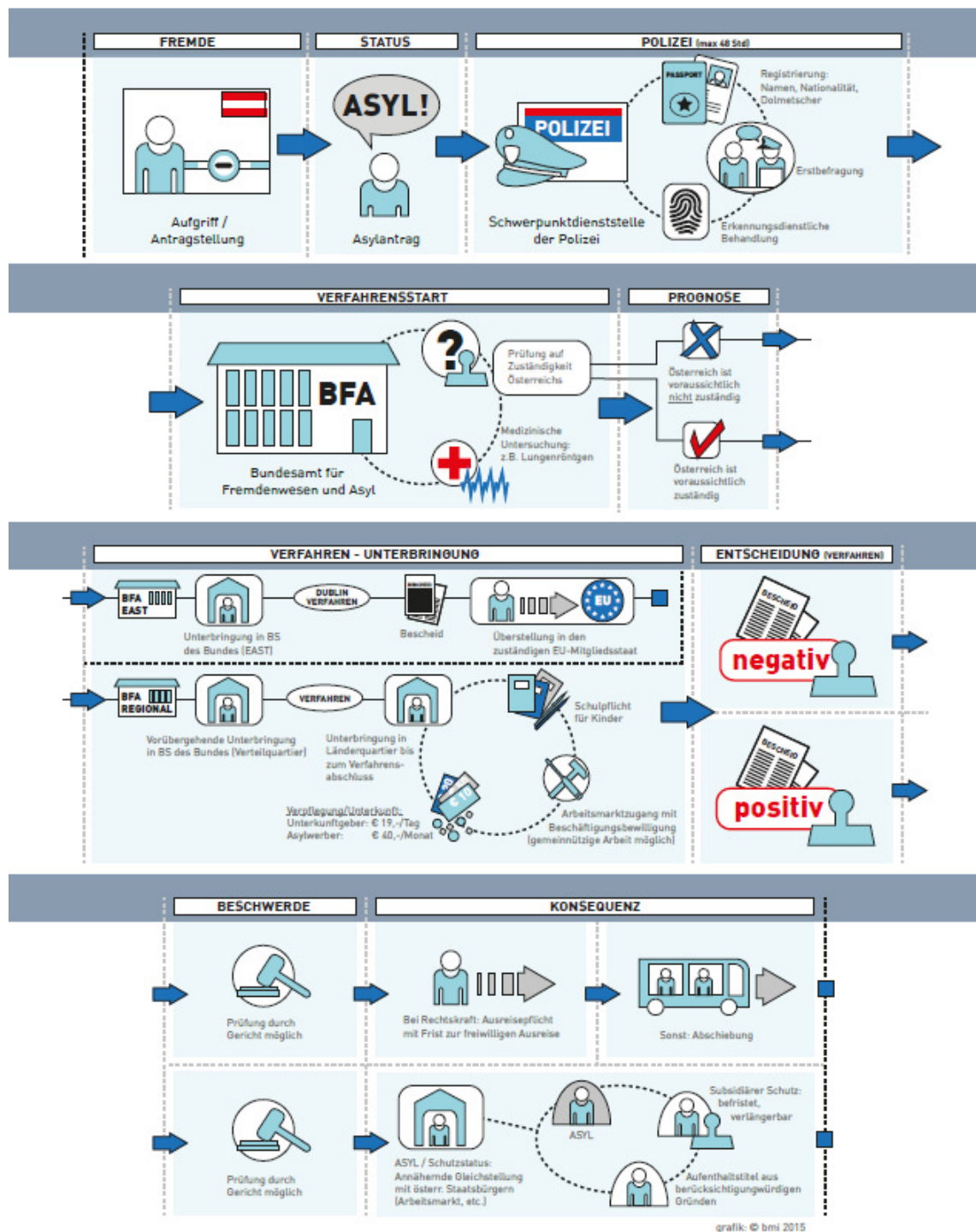


Figure 2: Infographics "Asylverfahren in Österreich" ("Asylum procedure in Austria") – Source: Austrian Ministry of the Interior BMI 2015

The only significant difference to the procedure for adults is that children are given a legal representative in asylum and immigration authorities procedures, and that it is not allowed to take fingerprints from children below 14.

If a child below 14 lodges an asylum application with the police, the child is brought to a shelter facility (Vienna has a socio-pedagogical facility provided by the municipality of Vienna called the "Drehscheibe") where an initial assessment on the condition and the escape story of the child is made in the presence of social workers. The child is then informed about the next steps and accompanied by a legal adviser during the initial interview by the police. An asylum application lodged by a child below 14 must be

confirmed by a legal representative. Children above 14 can submit an asylum application on their own; they are granted legal assistance by the time the asylum procedure is initiated.

Accompanied children are usually represented by their parents in all matters related to the asylum procedure.

Determination of age

As a general rule – following the judgement of the European Court of Justice – the country where unaccompanied children and minors apply for asylum must also examine their application. Even if an application has already been lodged with other countries – possibly unknowingly or unintentionally. (The general rule for adults is that the country where a refugee has entered Europe or given his/her fingerprints is also responsible for examining the asylum application.)

If during the initial interview, before the initiation of the asylum procedure, the minority of a young person cannot be clearly assessed due to lost documents, an age determination procedure is applied, which is a multi-factor diagnosis that starts with an X-ray of the carpal bones of the left hand. Closed carpal bones are considered an indication of maturity. If this examination provides no clear result an expert report is ordered. To this end, the young person must go to either Graz, Linz or Vienna and submit to a physical examination, a dental panorama X-ray (to examine mineralisation and eruption of wisdom teeth) and possibly a computer tomography of the collar bone.

In theory, the youth can refuse these examinations, “which the majority doesn’t do for fear of negative consequences,¹⁹ due to the existence of the so-called ‘duty to cooperate’ in asylum procedures”. Children’s rights experts and NGOs question these laborious, expensive examinations which are partly experienced as degrading.

In Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) does not involve medical reports in their age determination methods. In most of the federal states social workers evaluate the level of development – and therefore age – through conversations with the youth. However, media have revealed that radiologic procedures as well as physical examinations are practiced for the purpose of age determination in Berlin and Hamburg. The German Association for Child and Youth Psychiatry (DGKJP) has clearly rejected such practices, arguing that in addition to ethical concerns, there was also a lack of scientific evidence that these examinations (partially conducted on genitalia) are sufficiently valid.²⁰

Sweden, which up until now had applied a very liberal practice and simply believed the age statement of young refugees, has introduced age determination methods for unaccompanied minor refugees in 2017. In the process, forensic doctors are to determine the respective age on the basis of an X-ray of the wisdom teeth and the knee joint.

Custody regulations

Only after an unaccompanied minor migrant is admitted to the asylum procedure – which can take up to several months due to the described age determination methods – a legal custody

¹⁹ Interview with Katharina Glawischnig, head of the UMR working group at *Asylkoordination Österreich* (www.asyl.at); coordinator of the network of assistance centres for unaccompanied minor refugees (UMRs)

²⁰ German Association for Child and Youth Psychiatry (DGKJP), www.dgkjp.de/stellungnahmen-positionspapiere/stellungnahme-2015/339-altersfeststellung

regulation takes place which also involves the admission to a care facility. In the process, the legal representation is transferred to the responsible local youth welfare provider (youth welfare office). The youth welfare office files a custody application with the guardianship court (which is just a formality) following which all custody-related matters are outsourced again, with *legal representation* in the asylum application being transferred to an NGO and *care and education* to the facility in which the minors are taken care of (the third custody area, *fund management* is very rarely relevant in connection with refugees). During the period in which the children and youth have no legal custodians, decisions related to care, education or schooling may not be taken. In asylum procedures for minors, which can last between six months to several years, in addition to the individual circumstances and the verification that the reasons for migration correspond to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, the *wellbeing of the child*, claimed by the CRC, should have priority.

Securing basic needs

In Austria, the securing of basic needs of minors seeking asylum is carried out through a system called “Grundversorgung”. This includes accommodation in quarters and provision money. Unaccompanied minor refugees below 14 are accommodated in children’s and youth aid facilities; older UMRs are accommodated in facilities offered by the “Grundversorgung” system. These can vary according to age and maturity and include residential groups, residential homes or assisted accommodation. The contribution to costs provided to these facilities by the federal government is, however, significantly below the daily rates of facilities funded by child and youth services. According to a legal opinion commissioned by SOS Children’s Villages (October 2016)²¹, the care standards should comply with those of child and youth services. However, accommodation standards of unaccompanied minor refugees vary greatly in Austria and are much too low for those with special needs. In addition to this, many young people are left to themselves and – especially if they don’t attend school – find it hard to integrate themselves.

Education, labour market access

Children of school age seeking asylum in Austria may attend school immediately if custody matters are in place. No additional schooling measures are provided for children above 15 since they are no longer of school age. If accommodated in the countryside, the children are often unable to visit a German course on a private tuition basis. Only unaccompanied minor refugees are entitled to extra-school education offers such as German courses.

The municipality of Vienna is the only facility offering asylum seekers above 15 basic courses in German, English and computers in a college. Owing to the general limitations, there are practically no employment permits for asylum seekers on the labour market. Therefore, youth between 15 and 18 are losing valuable lifetime during the asylum procedure and end up without any education or training.

Healthcare

Asylum seekers who come to Austria receive an initial medical examination as part of their incorporation into the “Grundversorgung” system, once it is clear that the asylum procedure has been initiated in Austria. Prior to that, they receive primary care only “if required”. According to the Austrian Ministry of Health, the most frequent health issues of newly arrived

²¹ Legal opinion of SOS Children’s Villages (October 2016, www.sos-kinderdorf.at/unsere-kompetenz:paedagogik:gleiche-chancen)

migrants in Austria include foot injuries, hypothermia, low blood sugar levels and dehydration. Due to the deprivation children are particularly prone to infections such as respiratory and diarrheal diseases. Owing to a lack of hygiene they often suffer from skin infections as well.

For the initial examination, no child-specific competencies are envisaged, even though 30%-40% of persons seeking asylum in Austria are children and youth.

People who are entitled to the provision of basic needs as part of the “Grundversorgung” system have access to health care by using their e-card. However, no documentation will be handed out for their initial examination. Consequently, doctors who give a follow-up treatment will not be provided with the results of this examination. Moreover, for examinations and treatments doctors would need a readily available community interpreting system as well as a 24-hour hotline for medical and psychological crisis intervention that can be used especially by caretakers in refugee facilities.²²

Even though minor refugees are insured within the “Grundversorgung” system, they don’t receive psychological or psychotherapeutic support through the Austrian healthcare system despite the known fact that at least half of the refugees arriving in Europe are traumatised. They suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorders. The Vienna-based Hemayat association provides support to survivors of torture and war by offering intercultural trauma therapies, but the demand exceeds the offer by far. Currently, affected persons must often wait up to one year to receive therapy at Hemayat. Psychosomatic symptoms are a frequent occurrence in schools (such as, for example, in the form of increased aggression levels). Therefore, an interdisciplinary network is required which should consist of school and nursery pedagogues, social workers and psychotherapists.

Asylum coordination association Asylkoordination Österreich has recently raised the need to expand the care and therapy services for unaccompanied minor refugees (UMRs). According to Asylkoordination Österreich, Austria currently fails to provide therapy to 900 UMRs who are in urgent need thereof. Also, there are no living quarters for children and youth diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder.

²² Press conference of the Austrian League for the Health of Children and Youth on 17th November, 2016 in Vienna; further information at:
www.kinderjugendgesundheit.at/publikationen_wissenswertes.php?id=337

4 CRIMINAL NETWORKS

90% of all refugees entering the EU use the services of smugglers at some point in their journey. This group of people consists of gangs and networks that exploit the misery of others and smuggle them across borders with as much profit as possible, as opposed to socially motivated so-called “escape helpers” who aid refugees, at most, for a compensation of (fuel) costs. In 2015, a number of private individuals transported refugees in cars, busses and taxis from Hungary to Austria and from there to Germany (see German refugee aid initiative fluchthelfer.in²³).

Purely commercial and exploitative refugee aid consists of large criminal networks, often operating across several continents, as well as small gangs and “family enterprises”. Instead of a “boss” there are several operational levels. The first level coordinates the entire route, the second is responsible for regional logistics and the recruitment of local smugglers. The drivers, couriers and accompanying persons of the third level are constantly interchanged. The members of smuggling organisations operate relatively autonomously.

The more branched out the logistical structures are – including means of transport, forgery workshops, corrupt authorities and local helpers – the larger the profits.

According to Europol and Interpol estimates, the turnover of smugglers in the EU in 2015 alone came to €3-6 billion.²⁴ If the migration flow continues in the same intensity and if the borders become even tighter, the revenues are expected to double.

The costs of fleeing to Europe vary considerably, depending on numerous factors such as route, weather conditions, individual circumstances of refugees and many other factors. As part of a study of the German Institute for Employment Research IAB, refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan reported that they paid an average of €12,000 for the journey to Germany while Syrians stated an amount of roughly €5,500. However, there are also other “packages” inclusive of forged passports and visas, transport and accommodation for €30,000 per person.

According to a UNICEF study²⁵ on unaccompanied minor refugees, in 2015, Afghan boys travelling on their own paid €8,000-€10,000 for a passage “with guaranteed success”. The persons surveyed have described the process as such that the coordinators in Afghanistan contact the local smugglers at the respective “hubs” via telephone. The refugees never get to see them. The so-called “guides” serve as their contact persons who accompany them from one border to the other and whom the youth call “uncle”.

Many minors travel the route on their own account by using the Internet and tips from social media. In such a scenario, they negotiate a deal with the smugglers prior to each stage of the journey. This is the longer and more dangerous but also much cheaper way. There are reports of smugglers granting a “discount” to those that risk a boat crossing despite bad weather conditions.

²³ German refugee aid initiative www.fluchthelfer.in

²⁴ EUROPOL, Migrant smuggling in the EU (February 2016)
www.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/migrant_smuggling_europol_report_2016.pdf

²⁵ UNICEF France/ UNICEF UK/ Fondazione EDF (June 2016), Neither safe nor sound: Unaccompanied children on the coastline of the English Channel and the North Sea,
[www.unicef.org/media/files/Unicef_NeitherSafeNorSound_\(003\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Unicef_NeitherSafeNorSound_(003).pdf)

The transition from smuggling to human trafficking is a fluid one, and it happens all the time, for example, when smugglers have their services paid “in kind”, in the form of opium fields (e.g. in Afghanistan and Pakistan) or by forcing adults – and treating them like children who are in their debt – to do compulsory labour, peddle drugs, go begging and pickpocketing or work as prostitutes. This happens not only on the migration routes but also in Europe’s reception centres.

According to UNICEF, in the “jungle” of Calais as well as in other English Channel camps, girls were forced into prostitution by smugglers in order to afford the 4,000 GBP for crossing the Channel into the UK.

British newspaper “The Guardian” reported about similar conditions in the refugee camp Idomeni at the Greek-Macedonian border before it was cleared in 2016. The camp, which was overcrowded with 10,000 refugees, was ruled by extortion and terror. Smugglers were able to terrorise people without any checks. Only after hundreds of unaccompanied minors disappeared from the camp, the authorities pricked up their ears.

Every day social workers at Italy’s reception centres meet women and girls who are in very poor psychological and physical state. The smugglers had offered them to pay off the money for the passage in the form of “household chores”. In fact, they landed in forced prostitution. Women and girls, however, fall victim not “only” to smugglers and human traffickers. As reported by the IOM, nearly all female refugees who have arrived in Italy are victims of sexualised violence which can lead up to rape, experienced on the move. This does not require organised crime. It becomes very evident that this kind of violence is a result of power imbalance and dependency structures between genders.²⁶

²⁶ Interview with Helmut Sax, children’s rights expert at the Ludwig-Boltzmann Institute in Vienna

5 DANGERS ON THE MOVE

Exploitation

The warlike conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan have caused one of the largest migrant flows within Asia, particularly in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, but also in Europe.

At the same time, migrant flows from Central Africa towards Libya and, in further consequence, to Europe have also been on the rise. In the past few months, the number of people fleeing from Nigeria has increased. In 2016, the majority of newly arriving refugees in Italy were Nigerians.

For many, migration is often just a continuation of the violence and exploitation they tried to escape. Dangers are lurking practically everywhere. Unaccompanied minor refugees and women and girls are particularly at risk. Amnesty International has reported of sub-Saharan female refugees who use contraception on a regular basis because of the high frequency of incidences of rape along the migration routes.

Child labour and sexual exploitation are the most common forms of exploitation children on the move are exposed to. Moreover, organ trading is increasingly moving into the spotlight of the migration debate.

Child labour

Child labour exists in all countries with particularly high refugee numbers. In view of the great poverty minor refugees and their families are faced with, child labour is often the only survival strategy. In Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey children work on construction sites, in agriculture, on orange and tobacco fields, markets, as street vendors, in dry fruit production, as shoe polishers, in beauty salons, textile factories and private households.

Child labour is a sign that people have used up their last reserves. Child refugees often have to become the breadwinners of the family, either because they lost a parent or because it is more difficult for adults to find work in the often desolate economies of the host countries. Children are “cheaper”. Among children there are also various gradations: girls are paid less than boys, which is why some preferably employ girls. But that’s not the only reason. Girls are also objects of constant sexual assaults.

Sometimes, refugees even work for free. In Jordan, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur in Trafficking in Persons, met a Syrian family that worked in agriculture together with their children, the youngest of which was three years old. The parents and their children waited in vain for the agreed salary. However, for fear of losing the accommodation provided to them by their “employer”, they continued to work without getting paid.

The children are either hired by employers or intermediaries, or sent by their parents who see no other option to escape their misery.

Not only local exploiters profit from child refugee labour. An undercover report of BBC’s “Panorama” programme on Turkish textile factories revealed that child refugees from Syria worked for renowned European fashion labels. The children earn roughly €1 an hour and have to iron, carry bags or sew for up to 12 hours a day. With tears in his eyes, a 15-year-old boy explained he would rather go to school but couldn’t afford the “luxury” because his family depended on him.²⁷

²⁷ BBC, Undercover: The Refugees Who Make Our Clothes, www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0813kpg

Currently, 700,000 children of school age live in Turkey; two thirds do not attend school.

In Jordan, more than one third of 226,000 Syrian child refugees of school age did not attend a formal education facility in 2015.

In Lebanon, roughly half of the 500,000 Syrians of school age do not attend school, i.e. because their families live in extreme poverty and cannot afford the teaching materials or the school bus.

Short-term marriages

In Iraq, Turkey and Jordan short-term marriages are massively on the rise. The affected women and girls are between 15 and 18 years old, and they are treated like a commodity. During his investigations²⁸ French sociologist Olivier Peyroux found a Turkish Facebook page entitled “Syrian refugees for marriage”.

Certain Islamic traditions (especially in Shia Islam) practice a special form of marriage which is defined as short-term marriage. While this form of marriage actually follows certain rules, it is instrumentalised and abused in the context of war and migration. In the name of such a “marriage” young women are violated, sold off, abused and enslaved.

The economic plight of Syrian refugee families in Turkey and Lebanon has created a market that shares many traits of prostitution. Feminist Lebanese organisation ABAAD²⁹ told Peyroux about the existence of an office in Tripoli where men can select a young bride.

Members of human rights organisation MAZLUMDER, who conducted interviews with Syrian women in the refugee camps of border town Kilis, found out about a 13-year-old girl who was sold off for only one night of marriage.

The Jordan report of Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur in Trafficking in Persons, describes the case of a 17-year-old Syrian girl who – over the course of two years – was forced into marriage with 13 different men from Jordan and the Gulf states. For each “marriage” – which lasted between one day and up to one month – the girl had to undergo a hymen reconstruction in a private clinic. A doctor, a friend of the girl’s family and her single mom all profited from this classic child trafficking business.³⁰

Early marriages

In Jordan, Lebanon as well as in Turkey, Syrian girls are increasingly more often forced into early marriages.³¹ The extreme poverty of Syrian refugee families is cited as the main reason. To them the “dowry” is a material lifeline to help them stay afloat for some time. Furthermore, the marriage leaves one person less to take care of. Due to the fact that girls in and around camps are constantly exposed to sexual assaults and rape, parents also think that marriage provides more safety for their daughters.

²⁸ See Trafficking in Human Beings in Conflict and post-conflict Situation: www.caritas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/RESEARCH-ACTION-Trafficking-in-human-beings-and-conflicts-EN-10-juin-2015.pdf

²⁹ ABAAD www.abaadmena.org

³⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur trafficking in persons, especially women and children, on her mission to Jordan

³¹ UNICEF (2014): A study on early marriage in Jordan, www.unicef.org/jordan/UNICEFJordan_EarlyMarriageStudy2014-E_COPY_.pdf

The international Caritas study “Trafficking in Human Beings in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations”³² describes the early marriages procedure in Turkey: An older, Turkish man looking for an obedient young woman approaches an intermediary who provides the “produce” at the Turkish-Syrian border under false pretenses by describing the client as a childless widow with a big house. Once the young woman arrives at the suitor’s house the situation is an entirely different one: The young woman is faced with a married man with children; she must perform the lowest household chores, is sexually exploited and pestered by the rest of the family – especially the wives.

Polygamy is officially illegal in Turkey. However, it is becoming more common due to the high supply of women and girls.

According to reports from CARE Turkey, there is a large number of non-registered early marriages. As a result, girls are unable to defend themselves against violence and unlawfulness. Furthermore, children from such marriages are hardly registered and therefore have no protection, no rights and no access to education and healthcare either. Currently, a growing number of reports addresses the phenomenon of marriages among minor refugees. In Germany, 1,475 minor foreign citizens were recorded as married in the central foreign registrar, the majority of which (1,152) is girls. 361 children are below 14, the rest is between 14 and 18 years old. A working group is currently examining whether marriages concluded according to foreign law may be disallowed if marriageable age is not in place according to German law. In November, for the first time, cases of marriages of minors have emerged in Austria, too. Among them a 13-year-old Syrian girl who is married to a 25-year-old man.³³

Prostitution

The children’s rights organisation ECPAT Turkey (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) conducted interviews with social workers, taxi drivers and tradesmen in Sanliurfa (a Turkish city with a population of 2 million, located 40 km from the Syrian border). The interviews provided clues as to active trafficking in girls. Girls between 12 and 15 are offered as “pistachios” while 17 to 20 year old girls are called “cherries” by pimps and suitors. Officially, the city has no brothels; the Syrian girls are offered in flats and in the streets – often by Syrians aided by local middlemen and authorities.

In Lebanon, indications point to forced organised prostitution in the Beqaa Valley. Even if “officially” there are very few identified victims of human trafficking in Lebanon, 75 minor Syrian girls were rescued from the clutches of a human trafficking ring in March 2016. The girls were forced to prostitute themselves under the threat of torture.

There is a growing number of Syrian women and girls, together with women from Eastern Europe, Russia and Ukraine, who enter a host country with a so-called “dancer” visa.

It is very common that Syrian women are forced to prostitute themselves for food, accommodation or when looking for a job: “In order to get the job she must demonstrate sexual willingness. In order to keep the job she must come back with her 13-year-old girl,” a Lebanese administrative officer has stated.³⁴

³² Caritas (June 2015) Trafficking in Human Beings in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations www.caritas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/RESEARCH-ACTION-Trafficking-in-human-beings-and-conflicts-EN-10-juin-2015.pdf

³³ ORF Steiermark, <http://steiermark.orf.at/news/stories/2808650/>

³⁴ Freedomfund.org <http://freedomfund.org/wp-content/uploads/FF-Lebanon-Report-Arabic-Translation-FINAL-11April16.pdf>

Sexual enslavement

In Iraq, more than 2 million Iraqi women were driven out due to the presence of Islamic State IS.

Many have fallen into the hands of the Islamist terrorists. According to an IOM report, in 2014, up to 7,000 girls and women were kidnapped by IS terrorists in Iraq and Syria for the purpose of sexual enslavement. They were partly married off to fighters, given to supporters as a reward or sold as house and/or sex slaves. Revenues from the auctioning off of women and girls on slave markets are an important source of income for the IS. Iraqi and Syrian border regions are very dangerous terrain for female refugees. Armed groups lie in ambush at border crossings to enslave and sell off women.³⁵

Organ trade

IOM (International Organisation for Migration) surveyed more than 3,000 refugees in southern Italian camps for clues about “exploitation” during their passage.³⁶ In the process, several refugees stated that they were offered money in exchange of blood and organs. Some were even taken blood from against their will while others were aware that organs are a means of payment to finance their passage. The incidents took place mainly in Libya and Egypt, some in Sudan and Algeria.

However, media also report that, for example, Syrian refugees in Lebanon financed their survival by “selling” a kidney. Supply seems to be so abundant by now that “donors” are unable to manage with the money for a longer period.³⁷ Along the Balkan route indications also point to organ trade boosted by the migration flow. The IOM report surveyed refugees in Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia as well, who stated that they were offered money for blood and organs on the route.

French sociologist Olivier Peyroux has mentioned reports of wounded Syrian fighters who were treated in the Turkish border town Kilis for “security reasons” while being robbed of their organs.³⁸

Child organ trading was considered an urban legend for a long time, distributed by sensational media. In fact, for a long time, there was not sufficient evidence for the existence of child organ trading. However, since the rapid growth of the migration flow in Central and Northern Africa, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan and the increasingly more state-of-the-art equipment of illegal organ dealers, we can definitely assume that child organ trading has become a global reality.

- On December 7, 2016 the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior announced that Egyptian authorities had managed to smash the world’s largest organ trading ring, arresting 26 persons in doctors’ offices and private clinics, among them medical staff, middlemen

³⁵ Tagesanzeiger www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/naher-osten-und-afrika/Das-Kalifat-handelt-mit-Frauen/story/12451736

Süddeutsche Zeitung, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/terrormiliz-im-nahen-osten-so-finanziert-der-islamische-staat-sein-kalifat-1.2104658

³⁶ International Organisation for Migration (IOM), http://migration.iom.int/docs/Analysis_Flow_Monitoring_and_Human_Trafficking_Surveys_in_the_Mediterranean_and_Beyond_8_DECEMBER_2016.pdf

³⁷ Der Spiegel www.spiegel.de/international/world/organ-trade-thrives-among-desperate-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-a-933228.html

³⁸ Caritas www.caritas.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/RESEARCH-ACTION-Trafficking-in-human-beings-and-conflicts-EN-10-juin-2015.pdf

and organ buyers. A statement said that the network procured the organs at a ridiculously low price among the poorest of the poor to make a fortune. The arrests were no surprise since Egypt has long been considered a hub for organ trafficking and transplantation tourism.

- In 2010, the UN World Health Organisation listed Egypt among the top five countries for organ trafficking.
- In 2011, a case of 57 Sudanese emerged whose kidneys were removed in Egypt. According to the report “Sudanese Victims of Organ Trafficking in Egypt”,³⁹ the victims included 26 women and 5 children. The women and children were exploited in multiple ways: At least ten of the younger women and girls stated that they were previously forced into prostitution.
- In 2012, the then High Commissioner for Refugees and incumbent UN Secretary General, António Guterres, reported of refugees found dead on the Sinai Peninsula, among them children whose bodies were robbed of organs. Clearly, the refugees had debts with smugglers and were therefore directly sold to organ dealers.
- In April 2016, nine Somalis, who were thrown into the sea, were found off the coast of Alexandria, among them a woman with both of her children from whom all organs had been removed before their bodies were discarded in the sea.

Fired by the war in Syria, refugees try to make a living by selling organs. Due to the fact that the gap between rich and poor has always been wide in Lebanon, the country has a “long-standing tradition” of transplantation tourism. “Organ dealers need not fear governmental controls,” Luc Noel, WHO transplantation expert, is cited as having said in a “Spiegel” report.⁴⁰

The former chairwoman of the Democratic Lebanese Women’s Association, Joumane Merhe, is cited in an interview with the German parish office “Pfarramt für Ausländerarbeit” that there are reports of women in the Beqaa Valley refugee camps who sell their newborns for 200 USD to organ trafficking rings because they do not know how to feed their children.⁴¹

There are verified reports of organ trafficking also from Sudan, Iraq, Jordan, and from all countries with a large number of refugees, in which children are reported as victims, too.

- In 2014 it became known that, for months, radical Islamic terrorist groups recruited foreign doctors for the removal of organs. And not only the organs of their own fighters but also those of their hostages, among them many children from ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq (Daily Mail. 2014/12/19. www.dailymail.co.uk).

Internationally renowned expert for medical ethics at the University of Tehran and coordinator of the Asian Task Force in Organ Trafficking, Alireza Bagheri⁴², considers child organ trafficking as the “worst of the worst exploitation methods” the poorest of the poor and the weakest fall victim to, pointing out that the criminal networks cannot act without the participation of doctors, clinics and health systems.

³⁹ Coalition for Organ-Failure Solution, COFS www.cofs.org

⁴⁰ Syrian Refugees Sell Organs to Survive, SPIEGEL ONLINE v. 11/12/2013, www.spiegel.de/international/world/organ-trade-thrives-among-desperate-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-a-933228.html

⁴¹ <http://auslaenderpfarramt.de/gesichter-des-libanon/>

⁴² Bagheri Alireza (2/2016), Child organ trafficking: global reality and inadequate international response, Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, www.springermedizin.de/child-organ-trafficking-global-reality-and-inadequate-internatio/8940750

Various forms of violence

The violence experienced by children on the move is unfathomable. They suffer torture inflicted on their own bodies and must watch how others become victims of violence. They lose their parents, are threatened, beaten and raped while seeing how other people are humiliated, abused and killed. And the violence does not stop when they reach the continent of their dreams: Europe (GRETA 5th General Report 2016).⁴³

Violence in asylum facilities

There are various reports compiled by children's rights organisations and Amnesty International on violence in Italian and Greek reception centres – the so-called “hotspots” of the EU.

Between 2015 and 2016, Amnesty International investigated the Italian “hotspot” facilities, uncovering partly severe human rights violations.⁴⁴ An example: Every newly arriving migrant is to be fingerprinted. However, those who plan to apply for asylum in other European states (e.g. because their family lives there), have good reason to refuse fingerprinting in order to escape being returned to Italy due to the Dublin Regulation. In this connection, Amnesty International has documented 24 cases of partly severe mistreatment of refugees. A 16-year-old boy from Darfur recounts: “They gave me electric shocks using an electric shock baton on my left and then on my right leg, my chest and my belly. I was too weak to defend myself, and in that moment they took both my hands and placed them on the machine.”

Violence among refugees

An atmosphere of aggression can easily crop up in overcrowded camps with barbed wire fences and often disastrous hygienic conditions. Therefore, it was no surprise that in May violence broke out at the Greek hotspot Vathi on Samos, which is overpopulated by 380%, in which several hundreds of refugees – among them many youth – took part and were wounded. In Vathi on Samos as well as the completely overcrowded “hotspots” Morio on Lesbos and Vial on Khios, women and girls complain about sexual assaults by male camp inhabitants. In a government-run camp in an abandoned hygienic article factory in the outskirts of Thessaloniki, aid organisations have raised an alarm since sexual violence was so prevalent that girls and women did not dare use the washrooms alone.⁴⁵ In some cases, girls are said to be attacked by entire groups of men. There are reports of families sleeping outside the camp to protect their daughters.

In Denmark, a care centre for unaccompanied minor refugees had to be shut down owing to repeated, severely violent attacks among the inhabitants but also due to sexual assaults on the part of aid personnel.

Both adult and minor refugees face brutal violence on the Balkan route as well: “People who enter Hungary illegally – both women and children – are brutally beaten up and forced to return across the border,” reports a Human Rights Watch expert on Balkan and Eastern

⁴³ GRETA 5th General Report 2016, www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/general-reports

⁴⁴ In 2015, the European Commission called for “hotspots” to alleviate the pressure of the migrant flow on countries such as Greece and Italy. In combination with a relocation system, asylum seekers were to be distributed to other EU member states from there. Effectively, only 1,200 people were taken over by other EU countries from Italy. The country is unable to cope with the number of refugees.

⁴⁵ The Guardian, www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/13/child-refugees-sexually-assaulted-at-official-greek-camps

Europe⁴⁶, pointing out that children had been among the refugees, too. Not only were officers striking out at them; they also used pepper sprays and dogs. The people were kicked, beaten with batons, handcuffed and forced to crawl through small openings in barbed wire fences.

In Serbia, violence against children has also been committed by the police: HRW has reported, amongst other things, about an incident in which 20 asylum seekers, including seven children, were attacked by the police and forced to hand over money and their mobile phones, the “survival compass” of refugees.

Racist violence and hate crimes

Private individuals, private militias and vigilante groups that are very popular especially in Eastern Europe, commit hate crimes all over Europe on a daily basis, often tolerated by governmental authorities. Children also fall victim to such racist acts.

Only few EU member states document racist violence against migrants – among them Germany, Greece, Finland and the Netherlands.

Hate crimes against migrants range from racist remarks to physical violence and arson attacks on refugee accommodation.

The latter are registered by all member states. But only Germany and Finland also publish these cases. Germany has recorded a virtually dramatic increase from 203 (2014) to 1,031 (2015) attacks on asylum centres, out of which 138 were arson attacks, which means that every third day an attack was carried out. In 2016, more than 700 attacks were recorded until October. In Finland, with the growing number of refugees, the number of attacks on asylum centres has increased as well, reports FRA.⁴⁷

Furthermore, German federal association of counselling centres for persons affected by right-wing, racist and antisemitic violence – the “Bundesverband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt” (VBRG) – has also reported incidents directed explicitly against young refugees. Aggressive, right-wing groups are said to attack children close to schools and their residential environment.

In Hungary, NGOs repeatedly registered cases of right-wing violence against refugees – including children and women – who were beaten, threatened and publicly humiliated by members of private militias.

Aggressive vigilante groups chasing refugees have been observed in Serbia, Poland, Finland and Sweden (“Soldiers of Odin”) as well.

In Austria, anti-racism organisation ZARA documents racist incidents.

Similar to Germany, the number of racist incidents recorded by ZARA in Austria, has increased from 133 (2014) to 927. Racist postings and hate messages on the Internet have seen particularly strong growth.

There are cases of children being directly threatened. ZARA has reported an incident in which a couple set both of their dogs on a Muslim woman, her daughter and two-year-old granddaughter, and kicked the grandmother in the shin. Passers-by, who were observing the incident, did not intervene.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org/de/news/2016/07/13/ungarn-migranten-grenze-misshandelt

⁴⁷ European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-november-monthly-focus-hate-crime_en.pdf

Children disappear on the move

In January 2016, for the first time, it was reported that 10,000 unaccompanied minor refugees (UMR) seeking protection in the EU had disappeared. The majority were reported missing in reception camps and care facilities in Italy (5,000) and Sweden (1,000), with the youngest being 8 years old. There are many explanations for the disappearance of the children:

- Distrust of authorities and long waiting periods in the asylum procedure make minors impatient. They leave their quarters to take their fate into their own hands.
- Many minors are under great pressure to earn money for their family (back home) and leave their care facilities to find work.
- Many try to escape the often disastrous accommodation conditions.
- In the registration process, children often state false names and dates of birth, etc. while translators and interpreters may also mishear, or write down something incorrectly. Since it is not permitted to take fingerprints of minors below 14, proper identification becomes difficult when different data exist about one and the same person.

Europol has expressed the fear that the missing children could have partially fallen into the hands of human traffickers. In some English Channel camps smugglers and human traffickers had had easy access. In these camps, cases of forced prostitution have been documented. Unaccompanied minor refugees are considered at high risk.

According to Europol, many UMRs are on the move in Europe without having registered themselves anywhere yet, partly due to lack of knowledge or for fear of authorities, or because smugglers or parents – against their better judgement – told them to not get registered. These children are outside of any kind of protection system, which makes them easy prey for human traffickers.

Children die on the move

In 2016, 4,600 people drowned in the Mediterranean, including 700 children. It has long become a mass grave.

At least just as many people are dying in the Sahara, sub-Saharan refugees must cross if they want to reach Europe through Libya. On the way, accidents happen, tyres get punctured, etc. – which is a death warrant for refugees. According to estimates, several thousands of people are buried in the sand every year. The rescue of four boys from the Ivory Coast by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) bears testimony that this route is used by children as well. It turned out that they were the only survivors of an 18-member group that lost their lives in a truck accident in the Sahara.

Children also get shot. In mid-April 2016, Human Rights Watch documented a number of incidents at the Turkish-Syrian border in which Turkish border soldiers shot at Syrian refugees wanting to cross the border. As a result, they also killed several children, including 3 and 5-year-olds.⁴⁸

In May, two children drowned in the Danube in an attempt to swim across the river.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/10/turkey-border-guards-kill-and-injure-asylum-seekers

6 CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

Traumatisation

Burst window panes, torn up human bodies, burning houses, people screaming in pain; all of which are experiences that adults and children in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan have been exposed to on a regular basis and which they brought with them to Europe. On the move, they might have added a few more terrible events. The arrival at the destination country often poses great stress to migrants, too: They feel exposed and excluded, and they are faced with a language they don't understand – all of which are emotional stress factors. Already traumatized by war, in such situations, migrants often experience enhanced feelings of depression and fear.

A year ago, the public was shocked when Germany's federal chamber of psychotherapists published that at least half of the migrants in Germany suffered from a psychological or post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, despite the fact that the atrocities described in the media should have been enough to imagine the shattered souls of these people. According to the diagnoses made by the German psychotherapists, 40% of migrants are suicidal. This many had at least already tried to kill themselves. Psychological disorders are prevalent among child migrants, too. Accordingly, every fifth child migrant suffers from a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Persons suffering from PTSD experience the horror scenarios over and over again in nightmares or in so-called flashbacks.

Therapists at the Hemayat centre for the treatment of survivors of torture and war in Vienna, amongst others, take care of children whose first childhood memories include wounded and dead people. Due to their nightmares, children with such experiences often find it hard to focus on their studies or are afraid of falling asleep.

A British psychiatrist, who examined children at the Calais "jungle camp" over a long period of time, reported similar findings as her German and Austrian colleagues: 90% of children showed clear signs of PTSD and suffered from depression. 40% had already thought of committing suicide several times.

As a matter of fact, traumatised children should undergo treatment as early as possible. Plenty of expert reports say that traumas may become irreversible and chronic if left untreated for a long period of time.

Radicalisation and criminalisation

The axe attack of a 17-year-old Afghan migrant on passengers of a train close to Würzburg in Germany in April 2016, triggered a debate on the radicalisation of unaccompanied minor male migrants as the youth – who was shot dead by police on site – had travelled to Germany as an unaccompanied minor.

Even if there are no systematic examinations on the danger of radicalisation of young migrants, experts who work with unaccompanied minor refugees are certain that most EU member states invest too little into the expansion of adequate, pedagogic, school-related, vocational and therapeutic services. Youth who must live in large facilities with little assistance, instead of being able to grow up in a safe environment of an assisted living group, "have a much harder time to cope with their experiences and to get the necessary help for their arrival and future development," says the German Federal Association of Unaccompanied Minor Refugees

(BumF), highlighting the necessity for improved care services. Moreover, the dangers of radicalisation are more difficult to notice if support services are poor. Many European countries tend to invest large sums of money in the sealing of borders and in saving costs of caring for minor refugees. This approach can have fatal consequences: “When frustration and boredom meet a lack of perspective, youth and young adults are particularly at risk of becoming radicalized,” UNICEF has assessed and consequently launched the several countries spanning project “No Lost Generation” two years ago, with the aim to offer 4.1 million child migrants (in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Syria) access to school education, psycho-social help and professional education, and to prevent the growing up of a lost generation without prospects.

In the EU, the growing up of a lost generation is also imminent if experts are not heard.

A study⁴⁹ that was compiled on the radicalisation potential of youth in 30 Viennese youth centres by the municipality of Vienna in 2014/2015, but not published until November 2016, could provide insight as to which direction the development will take. The study concluded that Muslim male migrants were especially prone to becoming radicalized: One third of these 15 to 17-year-olds sympathises with the jihad, is hostile towards the West and willing to resort to violence. 60% have stated they had a right to hit someone if their religion or honour were insulted.

Many actions are legitimised under the pretext of “religion and honour”: Misogyny, antisemitism, hatred of the West, contempt for persons of another religion and disregard for democracy and humanistic values. Migrants and refugees create their own value system: In Vienna’s youth culture and classrooms a new buzzword has established itself: haram. It is derived from Arabic and means forbidden, not allowed. In the Islamic context, this word is primarily used in connection with religious laws (such as dietary rules, alcohol, tax, etc.). The youth have expanded the term to include rules for clothing, which is how the word “haram” is now used by some Muslim youth.

Violence against women often is not rated as an offence or criminal act. This thought is shared by some migrants, too. Often, migrant youth also lack the necessary knowledge on gender roles, traditional roles, sexuality, harassment and other relevant topics. Cultural exchange or conversations are still very rare in this area.

Young migrants and refugees commit criminal offences not only due to a lack of prospects (no educational or professional opportunities) or because they refuse to accept the fundamental values of others: They are also forced; by human traffickers that exploit the vulnerability and misery of children and youth and encourage them to deal drugs and pickpocket. In March 2015, the Vienna criminal court sentenced a Bosnian girl⁵⁰ to 1.5 years of imprisonment without probation for 134 pickpocketing offences in Austria even though the 17-year-old was forced to steal and hand over the entire amount. The girl had to go to prison even though international human trafficking standards and children’s rights experts recommended to impose no penalty for forced offences. Such cases are not rare but are hardly ever subsumed as a “human trafficking” offence because victims are afraid to name their employers. Since unaccompanied minor refugees are often under the pressure of sending money back home, they are very prone to the “offers” of human traffickers. NGO representatives have reported

⁴⁹ The sample consisted of 400 youth, among them 85% migrants, primarily boys. 53% described themselves as Muslim, the rest Serbian-Orthodox and Catholic.

⁵⁰ Der Standard <http://derstandard.at/2000012794547/Zum-Stehlen-gezwungen-Maedchen-fuer-134-Taschendiebstaehle-verurteilt>

cases of young migrants who repeatedly find access to “work” through “informal channels”, which includes selling drugs or stealing credit cards. When caught by police – despite applicable agreements on human trafficking ratified by Austria – they are usually treated like offenders, even though they are the victims. Instead of forward-looking care services they face prison.

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