



## Recommendation 1526 (2001)<sup>1</sup>

# A campaign against trafficking in children to put a stop to the east European route: the example of Moldova

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Trafficking in minors and young adults is an increasingly common phenomenon and one that it is difficult to counter; although it is first and foremost a crime to be combated, it also has implications for immigration policy, the right to asylum, freedom of movement, economic and social policies, etc.
2. It is controlled by violent, powerful international criminal networks that use modern technological methods; it is an extremely profitable market involving astronomical sums of money and paving the way for corruption, even in the industrialised countries of Europe.
3. Trafficking is becoming a complex phenomenon because it is no longer solely for the purpose of sexual exploitation; apart from the development of paedophile networks, especially through the Internet, a probable trafficking in children's organs is regularly denounced: child-bearing is also becoming a commercial activity and children are being produced through more or less voluntary childbirth to supply the illegal adoption market.
4. The number of victims, in particular minors, is of course unknown. There is no record of the number of children who disappear from institutions and the exact number of street children is also unknown. All of the observers concerned, including non-governmental organisations working in the field, report that the victims of prostitution coming from eastern Europe include an ever-larger number of increasingly young children.
5. These minors and young adults come mainly from eastern and central European countries. The origin and the number of emigrants fluctuate as the new democracies open up and become more impoverished, owing to the difficulties involved in changing to a market economy. Violence is widespread; victims are often misled and subjected to coercion and it is no longer unusual for them to be raped and beaten, locked up or deprived of their identity papers and in a state of semi-slavery.
6. All of the countries concerned – whether of origin, transit or destination – are member states of the Council of Europe. It is therefore one of the international organisations most capable of combating this type of trafficking. If there is any genuine political resolve to address the problem of trafficking in minors, the Council must strive to ensure that the issue is not treated lightly; on the contrary, concerted action must be taken to rid Europe of the problem. However, European countries must also co-operate in tackling the causes of trafficking, which means addressing the problems of poverty, social exclusion and emigration for economic reasons as well as combating the demand for trafficking, including the sex industry, sex tourism and trafficking via the Internet.
7. Moldova provides a telling example, even if it is not the only one. It has only been a member of the Council of Europe since 1995. It has been totally neglected by the main providers of international economic and financial aid and as a result is becoming increasingly impoverished. Its young people are emigrating in large numbers in search of a decent standard of living, often to find themselves on the streets and in the brothels of Europe.

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1. Assembly debate on 27 June 2001 (21st Sitting) (see [Doc. 9112](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Pozza Tasca). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 June 2001 (21st Sitting).



8. The Assembly therefore invites the Committee of Ministers and its member states to stem the process of impoverishment and economic and social disintegration in Moldova:

*by providing immediate assistance in conducting a population census;*

*by providing aid, in particular financial aid – inter alia, through the Council of Europe Development Bank – with the priority of developing education, training and employment opportunities for young people and especially young women;*

*by stepping up co-operation to help:*

- a. *re-introduce free compulsory primary education for all children;*
- b. *prevent children being abandoned, particularly by providing support for families so that abandoned children are adopted by Moldovan families and children placed in institutions can be returned to their families;*
- c. *appoint a children's ombudsman with the necessary independence and powers to ensure effective action;*
- d. *set up a system providing a minimum level of medical care and social protection which guarantees people, and in particular families, access to health care and a minimum income.*

9. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers give more support to the efforts being made by non-governmental organisations in Moldova to develop their own potential and to inform young Moldovans of the dangers of trafficking with a view to preventing it.

10. The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to make the issue of trafficking in minors a regular item on its agenda and to instruct one of its members, for example the current rapporteur on equality between women and men, who is also responsible for the issue of trafficking in women, to report to it at regular intervals.

11. The Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to systematically and regularly raise the issue of trafficking in minors at meetings with political leaders and decision makers in the countries concerned, particularly Moldova.

12. The Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to recommend that member states, including Moldova:

*make trafficking in minors an offence that is not subject to statutory limitation, punishable as such and liable to prosecution, irrespective of whether or not the injured party has lodged a complaint, and enact criminal legislation that constitutes a genuine deterrent;*

*set up a specially trained police service for the protection of minors;*

*develop concerted measures to reduce the demand for trafficking in children and young adults;*

*appoint a national advocate for victims of trafficking to give a higher profile to the commitment to fight this scourge and give victims and their families someone to turn to;*

*promote the idea of a European network of national advocates to improve the co-ordination of activities and share information and experience so as to decide on the best ways of tackling this problem;*

*enact legislation that is designed to protect the victims of trafficking and which gives them, under certain conditions, the right to stay in the country legally and receive vocational training with a view to reintegration in their country of origin;*

*compile a national list of missing minors and young adults and set up a centralised, computerised register for the whole of Europe to help police forces and families find them.*

13. Finally, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers:

*to call on member states to step up both the efforts of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe task force on trafficking in human beings and the financial support given to various organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration and Unicef, so as to strengthen concerted action in the fields of prevention and the repatriation and reintegration of victims;*

*to reply to the European Parliament's call for regular information campaigns on trafficking to be launched in conjunction with the European Union, non-governmental organisations in the different European countries and journalists from the press and other media.*