

# **"Trafficking Human Being" why, where and what are we doing about it?**

by Catalina Constantinescu, Romania

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**This international conference is for all who care passionately about improving women's position in the world, who demand justice and full human rights for women everywhere and who believe that a feminist analysis is essential to defining a fairer globalised world.**

## “Trafficking Human Being” why, where and what are we doing about it?

**Author: Catalina Constantinescu from Romania**

(first language is not English)

Let's start with a definition of trafficking: Trafficking of “flash meat” - represents the action of one person who gives to the other (for money) one or more prostitutes or persons who are later forced to prostitute themselves. This phenomenon can be national or international.

Trafficking of human beings is the open door for violence, abuses, sadism and human degradation. It's an underground truth in two ways: first because it is functioning in international networks and second because it is true hidden and deformed by a phenomenon more visible and sensational, prostitution.

“**Why does it happen?**” my first question for today.

It seems to be a nonsense, that in era of cosmic flights there exists trafficking of human beings **but the reality is more sorrowful**. Socio-economical causes are complex, interdependent and hard to disassociate. Tied by a power rapport: traffickers, procurers, trafficked persons and clients are included in an arc of reciprocal violence. Each person is a subject or an object of violence.

Money represents the main cause of trafficking in human beings. This is the most visible answer to the “WHY” question but the main truth is lack of involvement and concern of civil society. If poverty is pushing a woman to try any chance even this is unsafe, our human duty is to inform her about risks, to turn on an alarm signal. The money offers an initial feeling of power, of victory against poverty, but prostitution becomes a game, a sinister joke, the last compensation of humility. Most victims don't want to tell their story because of the shame, and truth therefore is remaining untold.

In a report made by US State Department, annually there are over 700 000 victims of trafficking in the world. The authors identified 3 categories of states:

Category 1. those which fit the criteria for stopping trafficking

Category 2. those which fit the criteria, but are making significant efforts to lower the rate of trafficking.

Category 3. those which have not made any significant effort to stop trafficking in women. In this category in the year 2000 were: Romania, Albania, Bahrein, Belarus, Bosnia-Hertegovina, Birmania, R.D. Congo, Gabon, Grecia, Indonezia, Israel, Kazahstan, Liban, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Rusia, Arabia Saudita, South Coreea, Sudan, Turcia, Emiratele Arabe Unite and Iugoslavia. Recently some countries have moved from Category 3 to Category 2, one of which is Romania.

**“Where does it happen?”** Was our second question.

In Europe, mostly in the east (why is this?): Inequalities between West & East, and the consequent population migration; economic and political crises shatter moral values and trust in institutions, thus encourage trafficking and prostitution. Or put more simply: where the poverty is the state of most people and where hope doesn't exist anymore.

Let me say a few words about my country: Romania is situated in Central Europe, in the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula and its territory is marked by the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube and the Black Sea. With its temperate climate and varied natural environment, which is favourable to life, the Romanian territory has been inhabited since time immemorial. Research has led to the discovery of traces of human presence dating back as early as the Lower Palaeolithic (approximately two million years BC). These vestiges are among the oldest in Europe. Romanian history is very long but I'll underline just the last period for understanding the economic and political context.

After the World War II, on the territory of Romania Soviet troops were stationed and the country was abandoned by the Western powers, so the next stage was similar to that of the other satellites of the Soviet Empire. The whole government was forcibly taken over by the communists, political parties were banned and their members were persecuted and arrested; King Michael I was forced to abdicate and the same day the People's Republic was proclaimed (December 30, 1947). A single-party dictatorship was established, based on an omnipotent and omnipresent surveillance and repression force. The industrial enterprises, the banks and the transportation means were nationalised (1948), agriculture was forcibly collectivised (1949-1962), the whole economy was developed according to five-year plans, the main goal being a Stalinist-type industrialisation.

At the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1965), the communist leader of the after-war epoch, the party leadership, which was later identified with that of the state as well, was monopolised by Nicolae Ceausescu. In a short period of time he managed to concentrate into his own hands (and those of a clan headed by his wife, Elena Ceausescu) all the power structures of the communist party and of the state system.

The dictatorship of the Ceausescu family, one of the most absurd forms of totalitarian government in the 20th century Europe, with a personality cult that actually bordered on mental illness, had as a result, among other things, distortions in the economy, the degradation of the social and moral life, the country's isolation from the international community. The country's resources were abusively used to build absurdly giant projects devised by the dictator's megalomania; this also contributed to a dramatic decline of the population's living standard and the deepening of the regime's crisis.

Under these circumstances, the spark of the revolt that was stirred in Timisoara on December 16, 1989 rapidly spread all over the country and in December 22 the dictatorship was overthrown with the sacrifice of over one thousand lives.

The victory of the revolution opened the way for a re-establishment of democracy, and of the pluralist political system, for the return to a market economy and the re-integration of the country in the European economic, political and cultural space.

Romania has been transformed to: an ex-communist country in which a lot of problems persists: the new kind of freedom and muddled socio-economical conditions, a propitious place for trafficking of women.

In Romania there is a new category of population “Disappointed persons” it’s a new category of society and is representing, in the year 2000, 1.9% from the total of population over 15 years old. From a total of 357.000 of disappointed persons the women represent 56,8%. ‘Disappointed persons’ are people who want work but don’t apply for jobs because they believe they will not succeed in the workforce market. For women in this category, the promise of job abroad ensures many victims.

**How does the phenomenon happen?** Recruiting is made via newspapers announcements for jobs or for marriage partners or directly in discos, bars, casinos, etc. To those we have to add now the internet network too. All announcements are promising a better life, a better paid job, a good marriage, etc.

In year 2000 Romania was one of the top countries in trafficking of “flash meat”. There are over 300 thousand people trafficked annually in Europe and Romania is one of the top countries of origin of victims. 84% of the victims from Romania are end up in situations of imprisoned and have no chance to escape.

Romania is the main country for the women trafficked to: Turcia, Italy, Greek and Balcans, for sexual exploitation.

What is the response of Government and NGOs?

The Romanian Government has established standards for combating this trafficking but recently has initiated a series of radical measures to further reduce it. Because of lack of resources and a high level of corruption, many officials see trafficking as something of little important and treat the victims as isolated and unusual cases.

Even Romania hasn’t specific laws for human exploitation. There are laws that relate to certain elements of trafficking: hatemongering and rape. In April 2001 the Government named a national coordinator for combating human exploitation. The Government established an inter-ministry commission to draft a law relating to trafficking. Law no. 678/2001 “Law regarding preventing and combating the trafficking of persons”.

The research made by the US State Department paints with precision a picture of the ways in which women are removed from their homes (their city or country) for the purpose of exploitation as cheap workers in other places. In last 2 years, in Romania more and more institutions and NGO's are involved in the fight against trafficking of 'flash meat'. Institutions like: Presidential Administration, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of European Integration, Ministry of Justice, etc are working together with non-governmental organisations and mass media in preventing and combating of this horrific practice.

In this context the activity of NAUWR is like a drop in a sea but we are confident that our projects and campaigns are heard by more and more women and I hope we are making a contribution to improving women's lives, especially the young ones.

Let me tell you something about NAUWR: the association was active from 1925 to 1946 and was reconstituted in 1990. It was necessary to create this new organisation because: to stimulate women and girls, to enlightening their potential and talented nature and to involve them in social and economic life. **"The woman is the carrier, preserver and transmitter of the spiritual treasure of every people"**

The main goals of our organization are education, humanitarianism, cultural, women protection, and studies and feminist research and "de facto" implementation of equal chances.

Some of our activities are:

- Organizing Women March for diminution of violence against women, poverty, etc.
- Organizing the anti-violence nucleus and affiliating the Romanian Association of University Women on National Coalition against Domestic Violence from Romania.
- Celebration of the most important days
- Strengthen the activity in community: organizing of fundraising events for helping poor families, social assistance mothers with many children.
- Organizing of national congresses with international participants and increasing of experience exchange.
- Active participation in exhibitions, seminars and workshops at international level
- Realizing of partnership programs for sustainable development of society.
- Program for the diminution of poverty: economic activities with unemployed women, conference on Curriculum Vitae and interview strategies, database of work places for women.

Specifically regarding this issue we, the National Association of University Women-Bucharest Branch, are working in 2 directions: one being "diminution of poverty" and the other an information campaign for girls and young women. The idea of educational-informational campaign has come to us from another initiative of International Organisation for Migration (OIM) and "Unica" magazine who had the first media partnership in Romania that involves a glossy magazine for women in presenting a counter-trafficking campaign. A media campaign has attracts the largest rate of audience and an information campaign in the schools, high schools and universities we hope will be a step forward.

In conclusion:

Centuries of international migration have played a crucial role in shaping the world we know today. Globalization has made migration even more complex as a growing number of people are migrating in search of better living conditions, employment, education, freedom, safety from persecution or violence. If poverty, especially in the third world, is an evident cause for prostitution, a prosperous economic society, but unbalanced, can encourage sexual exploitation.