

[BELGIUM] COUNTRY PROGRESS CARD



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PROGRESS TOWARDS STOPPING SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BELGIUM	p.3
2. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF STATES' EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING	p.4
3. THE SITUATION OF BELGIUM	p.6
4. DETAILS OF PROGRESS TO COMBAT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM	p.9
A. Community-Based Prevention Measures on Child Trafficking	p.9
B. National Legal Framework Harmonisation with International Standards	p.11
C. Specialised Support Services for Child Victims of Trafficking	p.14
5. CAMPAIGN PETITION IN BELGIUM	p.16
6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	p.17
7. ENDNOTES	p.18

1. PROGRESS TOWARDS STOPPING SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BELGIUM

The Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People campaign conducted in partnership between The Body Shop and ECPAT seeks to inspire long-term change to strengthen the protection offered to children and young people and guarantee their rights to be protected from all forms of exploitation, including trafficking for sexual purposes.

Through this campaign, The Body Shop and ECPAT are mobilising the public of countries around the world to engage actively to improve child protection against sex trafficking and join in calling on governments to take action to fulfil three specific goals related to the prevention and protection of children against child sex trafficking and for the care of child victims. The goals identified are deemed crucial for the protection of children everywhere. Progress made by the states towards fulfilling these goals is being assessed through an innovative tool which provides information for each country using a 'Progress Card' that summarises the level of achievement on four specific actions that significantly contributes to realisation of the main goals identified in the campaign.

In many countries around the world, civil society and other actors have made significant contributions in combating child sexual exploitation. However, the protection of children from sex trafficking is primarily a state's responsibility. The information provided in this card describes the situation of child trafficking in Belgium and presents the key measures implemented by the government to address the problem. Colour coding is used to differentiate the level of action to combat child sex trafficking taken such as: notable efforts (**GREEN** colour representing adequate specialised policy or services for child victims of trafficking); some progress (**YELLOW** colour usually representing some level of activity to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in general with limited focus on children as a specific target group, or services that are not adequately protecting child victims of trafficking); or a low level of progress (**RED** colour, highlighting inexistent or largely inadequate policy or services for child victims of trafficking).¹ The information presented is followed by relevant recommendations assessed as essential to Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People.

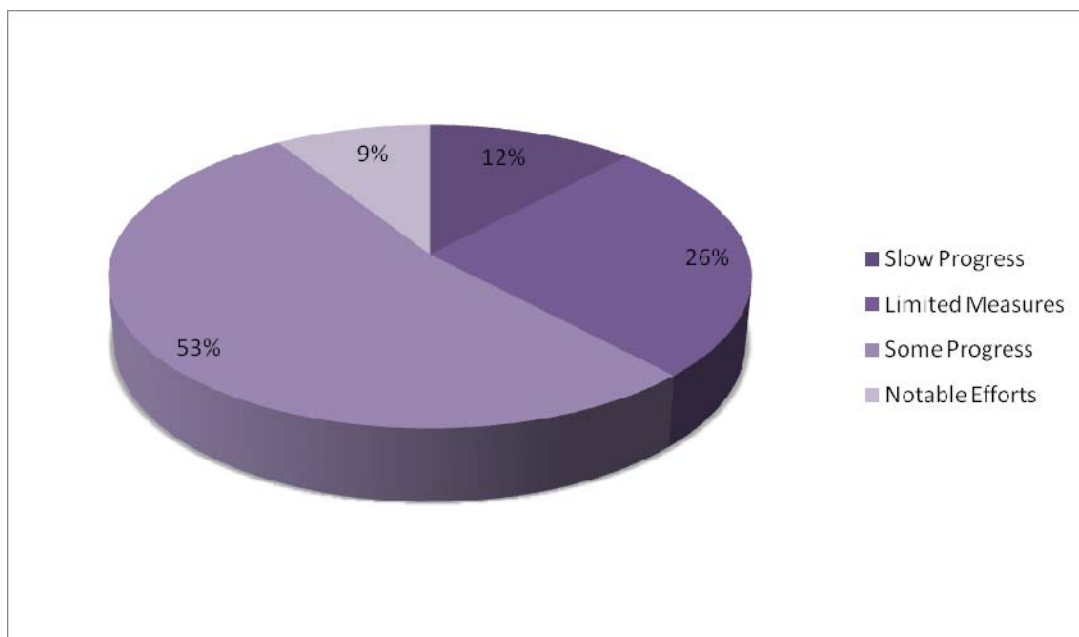
¹ A star indicates the work undertaken by NGOs in the related field.

2. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF STATES' EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING

Whilst the progress towards stopping sex trafficking of children and young people is monitored and assessed on a country by country basis against specific indicators², this is contributing to the global call to action addressed to all states of the world to uphold the child's right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation, as reiterated by over 3,000 participants and 137 States at the World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents held in late 2008 in Brazil. ECPAT International and The Body Shop are calling globally for all states to ensure more accelerated and concerted action on their existing commitments, by 2012, to prevent and stop child trafficking for sexual purposes.

In order to present a general overview of states' efforts to combat child trafficking, figure one shows the percentage of countries for each of the four categories: 'notable efforts,' 'some progress,' 'limited measures' and 'slow progress.' 'Notable efforts' correspond to adequate measures taken by the state to combat child trafficking. 'Some progress' represents that states have taken measures and initiatives against human trafficking in general but these may not adequately protect child victims of trafficking. 'Limited measures' signifies that there is an inadequate effort by the state to combat human trafficking and little or no efforts to combat child trafficking. 'Slow progress' is for states with minimal or no initiatives against human trafficking or child trafficking. Figure two lists the countries that fall into each of the four categories previously mentioned; they are ranked according to the state's actions for each indicator.

FIGURE 1. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF STATES' EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING¹



² More information on the research methodology can be found on page 17.

FIGURE 2. STATES' EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING³

SLOW PROGRESS	LIMITED MEASURES	SOME PROGRESS	NOTABLE EFFORTS
CAMBODIA MEXICO PAKISTAN MALAYSIA SINGAPORE	CYPRUS GREECE INDONESIA SWEDEN INDIA TURKEY CZECH REPUBLIC HONG KONG RUSSIA USA	BELGIUM NORWAY AUSTRALIA CANADA ESTONIA SPAIN THAILAND SOUTH AFRICA FRANCE ITALY JAPAN NETHERLANDS PHILIPPINES SWITZERLAND AUSTRIA FINLAND GERMANY IRELAND LUXEMBOURG NEW ZEALAND POLAND PORTUGAL SOUTH KOREA	ROMANIA TAIWAN DENMARK UK

³ This publication provides an updated grading and ranking of states' efforts to combat child trafficking as of June 2010.

3. THE SITUATION OF BELGIUM

Belgium is among the 53% of countries reviewed which have made some progress to stop sex trafficking of children and young people.

Belgium has taken important steps in combating child trafficking, particularly through the adoption of the 2008 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking and its related provisions. Belgium has also strengthened its legal framework against child trafficking although harsh restrictive conditions exist in order to obtain 'trafficking victim' status that can leave children vulnerable to re-trafficking. More housing options and shelters are needed to safely accommodate child trafficking victims.

Child Sex Trafficking in Belgium

Belgium is considered as both a destination and a transit point for children trafficked onwards to other destinations in Europe, such as the UK and especially Flanders². Most of the girls trafficked for sexual exploitation to and through Belgium originate from Balkan and CIS countries (mainly Russia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania) as well as from West Africa (particularly Nigeria). Cases of girls trafficked from China have also been identified, but they were mostly trafficked for labour exploitation and illegal adoption³. Despite the vast majority of child victims being females, young foreign boys exploited in prostitution can also be found in the main Belgian cities, such as Brussels, Antwerp and Gant⁴.

According to the Immigration Office, 160 victims of trafficking and smuggling in migrants were identified in 2006. From 160 people, 73 of whom were males and 87 females, 22 were identified as being smuggled. The total number of minors involved was 14. In 2007, the total of minors was nine and from January to June 2008, the number of minors was eight⁵. With regard to the type of exploitation, the majority of victims were trafficked for forced labour (65 cases) and sexual exploitation (57 cases)⁶. During 2007, the specialised shelter centres providing assistance to trafficked people registered 619 victims⁷. Official data recorded a total of nine trafficked children in 2007; two of them were exploited in prostitution. From January to June 2008, eight trafficked children were identified and two of them were also exploited in prostitution⁸.

There is a lack of specific data on the number of children trafficked for sexual purposes in Belgium. This is due not only to the illegal and criminal aspect of trafficking, but also the lack of coordination between the different services responsible for the reception of victims⁹. Several sources have stressed that the phenomenon of trafficking in minors is strictly connected to the problem of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and asylum seekers, and their inadequate protection and assistance¹⁰. The 'Office des étrangers', (Foreign Office), registers 1,000 UAMs every year. Instances where migrant children have disappeared from reception centres due to a lack of effective supervision have been reported¹¹ and according to NGOs, the involvement of this particular vulnerable group in trafficking has seen an alarming increase in recent years¹². A study conducted by a Belgian University, published in 2007, also pointed to the ineffective support available for trafficked victims and the consequent risk for those not receiving protection from further re-trafficking. More

specifically, the research found that most of the 619 trafficking victims (including minors) referred to the three trafficking shelters between 1999 and 2005 disappeared after registering, with only 176 accepting assistance and 2.2 percent ultimately qualifying for victim status¹³.

The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally while poverty, domestic violence and abuse, discrimination and the desire for a better life makes children vulnerable. As in other countries around the world, children are being trafficked to Belgium because they often lack proper livelihood opportunities, are less educated, easier to overpower or can be coerced by an adult. Children may also feel obliged to help support their families or be running away from difficult family situations and may be sold or travel abroad in search of livelihood opportunities. Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived.

Case Studies:

Girl Trafficked from Bulgaria

A young Bulgarian girl was enticed by a man, later proven to be a pimp, to leave Bulgaria with the promise of a better life. The young waitress from Sliven was taken out of the country, on a bus to Brussels, along with two other girls. The bus driver was an accomplice of the man. In Brussels, the girl was met by another pimp and was forced into prostitution the very next day. She was eventually returned back to Bulgaria only to be resold as a prostitute and sent to the Netherlands. On her next trip to Sliven, she managed to escape and to get in touch with her mother. Both filed a complaint with the police and the girl was placed under police protection. The people involved in the girl's trafficking, including the bus driver, have been tried and sentenced. In 2008, Brussels police officers dealing with human trafficking investigated 70 cases from Sliven, with a total of 2,000 prostitutes identified from the city in the last few years. Often they are in Brussels temporarily, and are sent on to other countries.

Source: "Every Other Prostitute in Brussels Is from Bulgaria's City of Sliven". Sofia News Agency. 25 November 2008. Available at: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=99230

Trafficked to Belgium through Italy

A 15-year-old Albanian girl arrived in Belgium in 2000. Through the mediation of her aunt's sister-in-law, a husband had been suggested for her and money was paid to her parents to take her to Italy to be 'married'. However, once in Italy, the sister-in-law explained that the intended husband was already married, and the girl was taken to Brussels, where she was forced into prostitution.

Source: Osborne, Andrew. "Squalid Road that Leads to Belgium". The Observer. 24 June 2001. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/jun/24/andrewosborn.theobserver>

Trafficked to the UK through Belgium

In 2005, the British Minister of State highlighted a case prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service in London. The case involved a 17-year-old Russian girl who had replied to an ad in a local paper offering work abroad. She was persuaded to leave home in Russia to work, she believed, as a waitress in Spain. She was provided with a false Lithuanian passport, taken first to Germany, then to Belgium where she was forced to work as a prostitute. Later she was sold to a man named Dimitrov (an Albanian) who brought her to London. She was rescued when one of the cleaners of the building where she was being housed tipped off the police.

Source: Speech of Hon Harriet Harman, Minister of State, for a roundtable on trafficking in Prague. 25 May 2005. Available at: www.iiea.com/images/managed/events_attachments/HT%20Speech%20Dublin%2025-05-2005%20As%20delivere

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or an acquaintance. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that ‘recruits’ children and supplies them with fake identification. Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of people who pay for sex and any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married or single; they come from all types of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life. Belgium is also a source country for tourists seeking sex with children, traveling to destinations such as the Dominican Republic, Morocco, the Gambia¹⁴, Thailand and Cambodia¹⁵.

In 2007, the government reported over 500 trafficking investigations but official data on the number of cases prosecuted has not yet been released. In 2006, the most recent year for which comprehensive prosecution statistics are available, the government prosecuted 451 trafficking cases¹⁶. Despite persons convicted for trafficking offences mainly being males, cases of female traffickers have also been reported (there were 44 in 2005)¹⁷. Furthermore, it has been noted that criminal networks organising trafficking to France have moved to operate outside of the country, mainly in Germany, due to increasing prosecution of traffickers¹⁸. Common nationalities for traffickers are Albanian, Belgian, Nigerian, Russian, Bulgarian, Ecuadorean and Brazilian. Albanian trafficking networks traffic women and children from Albania as well as from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine and from Bulgaria to Belgium. Chinese syndicates, which are traditionally engaged in drug trafficking, money laundering and extortion, have become involved in trafficking in persons in Belgium¹⁹.

4. DETAILS OF PROGRESS TO COMBAT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM

A. Community-Based Prevention Measures on Child Trafficking

Preventing children from falling prey to sex traffickers is the first step that must be taken in the range of comprehensive measures needed to guarantee the protection of children. Prevention encompasses a broad range of multi-dimensional interventions from mobilisation and awareness building among families and the general public to more targeted and specific interventions that reach children at risk and vulnerable due to specific conditions in their lives.

Comprehensive prevention programmes to combat child trafficking have to encompass measures at different levels to address the specific vulnerabilities of children and reinforce the families' abilities to care for and protect their children; to mobilize all stakeholders in the community and at the State level to establish strong protection systems for children, including social welfare and justice systems, but also to target the traffickers and curb the financial profits they are making through these criminal activities.

The adoption of strategies and policies to address the issue of trafficking in children is essential to ensure that measures are developed in an integrated way, based on the national priorities identified and to provide directives for action to the relevant stakeholders involved in the prevention of child trafficking in the country. The adoption of a National Policy also demonstrates the State's commitment to prioritize the issue and allocate efforts and resources to guarantee the rights of the child to be protected from sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Community-based prevention programmes in Belgium			
1.1. Provision for prevention programs on child trafficking	1.2. Wide multi-stakeholder collaboration	1.3. Implementation of awareness raising programs	1.4. Provision for teacher training curriculum on CSEC
Belgium has adopted a National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking (2008 – 2011) which includes specific measures addressing child trafficking.	The National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking has specific provisions encouraging multi-stakeholder cooperation addressing child trafficking for sexual purposes	Nation-wide awareness raising programs on child trafficking for sexual purposes implemented or fully supported by the State are limited.	Belgium has not yet adopted a policy to integrate child trafficking and CSEC in the school curriculum for teachers.

Having a current national policy on child trafficking outlining key community-based prevention measures (*indicator 1.1*) signals a state's prioritization of this specific agenda and provides clear and comprehensive directives for action to the relevant implementing bodies to be transformed into fully resourced and accountable national programs or projects. A collaborative approach in designing and implementing these programs specifically addressing child trafficking (*indicator 1.2*) is essential to ensure a greater relevance and wider reach of the prevention measures and would imply that, at a minimum, partnership is established between two ministerial agencies with at least two other partners (including NGOs, inter-governmental organizations, private sector, children, academia or others). Comprehensive public education and awareness

about the existence of child trafficking (*indicator 1.3*) is crucial to engage the public in counteraction and should encompass a multi-media approach using audio-visual products (via various communication channels) to effectively and sustainably reach the largest possible section of the target population. As school is one of the most direct channels to educate children and inform them of the risks of child trafficking, prevention activities in schools need to be integrated through the systematic capacity-building of teachers as part of their training curriculum (*indicator 1.4*). A policy provision ensures that all new teachers have received all essential information for facilitating the implementation of preventive activities to school children.²⁰

In 2008 the Belgian Federal government launched a three year National Action Plan to combat trafficking in human beings. This National Action Plan contains a full range of preventive and repressive measures to fight against trafficking. The Action Plan is not specific for children but contains measures aimed at preventing child trafficking for sexual purposes (awareness-raising campaigns) as well as measures aimed at reducing children's vulnerability to trafficking, especially unaccompanied minors.²¹ The 2008 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking provisions on child trafficking prevention foresees multi-stakeholder collaboration. According to this Action Plan, awareness raising programmes on human trafficking (including trafficking of children for sexual purposes) should be organized by a working group composed of different actors active in this field, under the Interdepartmental Coordination Unit for the Fight against Human Trafficking and Smuggling.²²

In 2004 and 2007, ECPAT Belgium together with the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, Federal Police, Child Focus and partners from the private sector launched two awareness-raising campaigns against child prostitution (see the campaign website: www.stopchildprostitution.be). These campaigns were meant to inform the public about the reality of child sexual exploitation in Belgium and abroad and to encourage Belgian tourists to report child prostitution cases they may notice. However, despite several initiatives such as the 'stop child prostitution' campaigns, nation-wide awareness raising programs addressing child trafficking and sexual exploitation implemented or fully supported by the State remain limited. The 2008 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking mentions that awareness raising activities is one of the weakest areas in anti-trafficking work in Belgium.²³

Article 5 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, ratified by the Belgian Government in May 2009, stipulates that to prevent human beings, "Each Party (to) establish and/or strengthen effective policies and programmes to prevent trafficking in human beings, by such means as: research, information, awareness raising and education campaigns." Thus, to prevent child trafficking, the Belgian Government should develop and support more awareness-raising campaigns against child trafficking and should ensure that such activities are sustained and comprehensive while reaching out to potentially vulnerable populations through a combination of various media.

School is one of the main loci where education and prevention can reach children at an early stage. It is therefore essential that teachers are adequately trained to deliver to children systematic and accurate information on child trafficking. Belgium has not yet adopted a policy to integrate child trafficking and CSEC in the school curriculum for teachers and students, nor has it developed any capacity building activities for teachers on the same issues.

CALL TO ACCELERATED ACTION TO PREVENT CHILD TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM

- The Belgian Federal Government should implement or support more awareness raising programmes regarding domestic demand for commercial sex with children and its links to child trafficking, taking as a model, campaigns already implemented successfully.
- To develop a specific policy to integrate the issue of child trafficking into the training curricula of school teachers.

B. National Legal Framework Harmonisation with International Standards

Strong laws in line with international instruments, together with effective enforcement procedures which are child sensitive, are of crucial importance to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation including child trafficking for sexual purposes. Progress made towards this goal is assessed through a tripartite framework of international/national standards and their enforcement through a child and gender sensitive process which avoids any possible re-traumatisation or re-victimisation of the child.

International and Regional Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by Belgium
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1995
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (to the CRC; Optional Protocol)	2006
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	2004
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Child Labour	2002
Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	2009
Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse	Signed in 2007 and not yet ratified

Legal Framework in Belgium			
2.1. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children	2.2. Ratification of the Trafficking Protocol	2.3. Harmonisation of the national legislation	2.4. Special Police Units to combat crimes against children
Belgium ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children in 2006.	Belgium ratified the Trafficking Protocol in 2004.	Although provisions in the Belgian legislation are generally in line with the international standards relating to human trafficking, Belgian legislation has no <u>specific</u> criminal offence of child trafficking	Anti-trafficking units do exist in both the Federal and local police forces but there is an urgent need for police units specializing on identification of unaccompanied minors. ²⁴ Furthermore, the multiple-interview procedure for children victims of trafficking should be reviewed.

Once an international convention has been ratified by a state, it becomes a legally-binding instrument for that state. When a state has ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (*indicator 2.1*) it is required to fully cover under its criminal or penal law the necessary obligations set forth in the Optional Protocol and to submit within 2 years a comprehensive report detailing its implementation reviewed by the independent UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which publishes its recommendations and suggestions on how to improve the condition of children within the country. Once a state has ratified the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (*indicator 2.2*) it is obliged by its provisions to criminalize all acts related to the trafficking process (*indicator 2.3*). This creates a common ground for counter-trafficking activities among ratifying states and provides an essential international framework to guide national action on the issue. In order to support adequate enforcement of the national legislation, states are obliged to establish special police units with trained officers (*indicator 2.4*) to investigate and prosecute sexual and trafficking crimes against children with a child-sensitive approach which will minimize the traumatic experience of judicial proceedings for the child victim.²⁵

The Government of Belgium has ratified all relevant international and regional legal instruments related to child trafficking and the Belgian legal framework against trafficking in human beings is in line with these international and regional standards. However Belgian legislation does not contain any specific law addressing trafficking of children as there are only general provisions in the Criminal Code addressing human trafficking. Under Criminal Code (Art. 433 quinquies §1) recruiting, transporting or transferring, harbouring or receiving of persons, including children, for the purpose of exploitation constitute the offense of trafficking in human beings, regardless of the means used (coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability), which is in line with article 3 (c) of the Trafficking Protocol. According to the Criminal Code (Art. 433 septies), the fact that the victim of trafficking is a minor constitutes an aggravating circumstance of the offence of trafficking in human beings²⁶.

Those involved in child trafficking are liable to imprisonment of ten to fifteen years and fines between 1.000 up to 100.000 Euros (Art. 433 septies of the Criminal Code). They can be prosecuted ten years after the commission of the felony and this ten year period only starts when the minor turns eighteen (Art. 21 bis of the Preliminary Title of the Code of Criminal Procedure)²⁷.

The scope of the offense of trafficking in human beings under the Belgian criminal Code is quite broad²⁸. It goes beyond the provisions of the Trafficking Protocol and of the Council of European Union Framework Decision on combating trafficking in human beings (2002). Indeed the definition of trafficking under the Criminal Code (Art. 433 quinquies §1) encompasses cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation, for employment under circumstances that violate human dignity, for removal of organs or tissues without respect for the Act of 13.06.1986 concerning the removal or transplantation of organs, and even cases where people are forced into begging or into committing offenses against their will which are both circumstances that are not mentioned in the Trafficking Protocol (Art. 3 (a)) nor in the Council of European Union Framework Decision on combating trafficking in human beings (Art. 1 (a), (b), (c)).

With regards to the implementation of the legal framework, research did not find any specific case-law concerning child trafficking. There appears to be a gap in collecting and presenting disaggregated data on this issue within the Belgian Law enforcement system.

Law enforcement and prosecution of offenders is one crucial aspect of the fight against child trafficking. Whilst there are anti-trafficking units in both the Federal and local Belgian police forces, there is an urgent need for police units dedicated to identify unaccompanied minors, with financial resources duly allocated for this purpose²⁹. On the other hand, even though child-friendly procedures have been established³⁰, it appears though that child victims of trafficking are subject to multiple interviews, thus resulting in the likelihood of further trauma for the child. This is currently being addressed in the 2008 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking through the introduction by 2011 of a single interview of the child that can be used by all agencies involved in the case.³¹ Based on existing coordination agreements and mechanisms, collaboration on CSEC and child trafficking between police at federal and local level should be clearly defined and formalized to ensure that effective coordinated responses are implemented in the field.

CALL TO ACCELERATED ACTION TO ENSURE PROSECUTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM

- **Police units specializing on identification of unaccompanied minors and child trafficking should be established (and supported with the necessary financial resources).**
- **Procedures regarding interviewing children victims of trafficking should be modified to avoid risks of further trauma for children.**
- **Capacity building of judiciary and police in the field of child prostitution and child trafficking for sexual purposes should be carried out on a permanent basis and focus not only on the prosecution aspect but also on child victims' identification and child friendly justice procedures.**

C. Specialised Support Services for Child Victims of Trafficking

Child victims of trafficking for sexual purposes require specific rights to protection from sexual exploitation which entails receiving appropriate care and assistance to provide for their special needs and requires. States are obligated to take a systematic integrated approach for the delivery of comprehensive and specialised services to restore the rights of the victims and support a long-term and effective recovery.

Children who have been trafficked have suffered a number of abuses and violations of their rights and the State is responsible to provide them with adequate care and protection delivered in the best interest of the child, in respect of the child’s specific needs and without any discrimination based on their origin or immigration status.

States parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

-Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 39

Specialised services for child victims of trafficking			
3.1. State-established Helpline	3.2. State established Shelters	3.3. Medical Services offered to child victims of trafficking	3.4. Psychological Counseling Services
	★		
A state-established helpline providing services to children victims of trafficking for sexual purpose is active and operating throughout Belgium.	Although NGO shelters specifically for children who are victims of trafficking do exist, there is a need to create more residential options to provide specialized assistance to child victims of trafficking.	A full range of medical services are provided to child victims of trafficking within the specialized reception centres. However, access to care and assistance programmes depends on the recognition of the restrictive status of “victim of human trafficking” ³² .	Recognised victims, including children trafficked for sexual purposes, are entitled to psychosocial and psychological care, however this depends upon conditions difficult to fulfill particularly for child victims.

A state-operated helpline for child victims of trafficking (*indicator 3.1*) accessible by all children at risk or victims of trafficking for free and staffed by trained personnel is essential to provide assistance and facilitate access to other relevant services for child victims of trafficking. Ideally it should be able to operate in the main languages of countries from where the child trafficked victims originate in cases of transnational trafficking and be promoted nationwide. Children’s shelters for trafficking victims (*indicator 3.2*) should be separated from adult shelter and provide a place of safety where specialized care and support services can be given in a structured way. Child trafficked victims have suffered various forms of physical and sexual abuse and require specialized support including comprehensive medical services (*indicator 3.3*) freely offered and available to all child victims of trafficking and sustained counseling services (*indicator 3.4*) delivered by trained and experienced professionals to assist the child in the full recovery process.³³

Following the European Commission decision to reserve 116000 as a common missing children telephone hotline in every European Union Member State (2007), the Belgian government set up in April 2009 a national 116000 hotline operated by a highly skilled child rights NGO, Child Focus. This hotline provides support to parents of missing children but also for children at risk or children victims of trafficking, 24 hours, 7 days a week.

There are only three specialized shelters for children who are victims of trafficking in Belgium: 'Juna' in Aalst (Flanders), 'Esperanto' in Wallonia, and 'Minor Ndako' in Brussels. Lack of residential structures to provide specialized assistance to child trafficking victims, both girls and boys, and especially in smaller cities has to be addressed by the Belgian government. In these shelters children are provided with medical and psychosocial and psychological support through specific care and protection programmes. But, access to these programmes is dependent upon the confirmation of the status of 'victim of human trafficking'³⁴. Children who want to obtain this specific status have to fulfill the following requirements: 1) break off all contacts with the traffickers, 2) have to be counseled by a specialized reception centre and 3) have to file a complaint against the traffickers. These conditions have been criticized as being too high of a threshold, particularly for child victims. Furthermore, these restrictive conditions to obtain the 'trafficking victim' status have contributed to the lack of effective support available for unaccompanied minors who are particularly vulnerable to the risks of being trafficked (the '*Office des étrangers*', or Foreign Office), registers 1,000 UAMs every year). If unaccompanied children do not obtain the 'trafficking victim' status, they are not granted the right to reside in Belgium. Thus, these children are highly vulnerable to be further re-trafficking.

CALL TO ACCELERATED ACTION TO DELIVER ADEQUATE CARE AND SUPPORT TO CHILD VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN BELGIUM

- More residential options and shelters are needed to provide assistance to child trafficking victims (both girls and boys) especially in smaller cities, as they are currently insufficient.
- Conditions to obtain 'trafficking victim' status as well as residential status for children victims of trafficking (especially unaccompanied children), should be urgently modified to provide them with full access to specific care and protection programmes regardless of whether they agree to file a complaint against their traffickers.
- The establishment of Codes of Conduct for minimum care standards for care staff to ensure that children entered into the care of social services receive adequate assistance and are not exposed to the risk of being trafficked or re-trafficked

5. CAMPAIGN PETITION IN BELGIUM

Since the Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People campaign was launched in August 2009, thousands of customers have already demonstrated their commitment in contributing to this social change to secure a safe world for children. Based on the findings from this Belgium Progress Card, we are calling for immediate action in Belgium to give children and young people the protection that they deserve.

In Belgium we call for greater protection of children and young people against child sex trafficking through urgent proactive implementation and enforcement of protective measures.

Specifically we call for:

- The development of specific policy to integrate child trafficking in the curricula of school teachers as well as capacity building activities for teachers;
- The establishment and funding of Police units specializing on identification of unaccompanied minors;
- The urgent review of conditions required to obtain 'trafficking victim' status as well as residential status for children victims of trafficking and unaccompanied children so that they can be provided with full access to specific care and protection programmes;
- The establishment of more accommodation options and shelters to provide assistance to child trafficking victims (both girls and boys), especially in smaller cities as they are currently insufficient.

Note: Whilst the national campaign petition is focusing on the specific needs and priorities for Belgium, it is directly contributing to the global ECPAT /The Body Shop call for all states to ensure more accelerated and concerted action on their existing commitments, by 2012, to prevent and stop child trafficking for sexual purposes.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This campaign utilises an innovative method to analyse the progress of 42 states' efforts to combat child sex trafficking by tracking three key goals and 4 specific indicators for each goal as the campaign progresses. Data for the Progress Card Booklets was collected through various sources, focusing mainly on ECPAT's experiences in monitoring progress on the implementation of the Agenda for Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children³⁵. Data was also sourced from UN bodies, governmental, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking measures. It should be noted that the availability and quality of data in each of the 42 countries included under the monitoring initiative of the campaign is in places uneven. In many countries data on sexual exploitation of children and trafficking are not systematically collected, are localised to project areas rather than having national scope, or fall outside an established management information system and are thus inconsistent. However, every effort to define parameters to minimise differences has been made and ECPAT works with its partners in each of the countries to identify the optimal data sources. Taking these factors into consideration, indicators have been selected on the basis of the following criteria: availability and ease of access to information and level of relevance of the action for achievement of the goal. It is also necessary to note that these indicators are assessing measures directly undertaken or supported by states and do not necessarily reflect the large amount of work undertaken by many NGOs around the world, often in order to compensate for a lack of adequate action on the part of government. The decision to assess only state-supported measures is based on the fundamental principle that, while the protection of children is a shared responsibility of all actors of society, the obligation to guarantee that children can fully enjoy their fundamental rights is borne by the state.

Due to limited data collection and disaggregation of information on child trafficking for sexual purposes, accurate estimates of the number of children affected worldwide are impossible. This booklet thus assesses the country's progress only in relation to the policies that the government has enacted and not on the basis of estimates of the scale of the problem. As such the ranking does not factor in the extent to which the country is a place of origin, transit or destination for child sex trafficking. The existence of policies to combat child trafficking within any given country is considered to be the first fundamental step to trigger allocation of human and financial resources for concrete action as well as providing a tool for the public to call for accountability. Thus it is judged to be a robust base indicator of progress.

A more in-depth explanation of each of the goals and corresponding indicators is provided in Chapter 3 of the official campaign report, "Their Protection is in Our Hands: The State of Global Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes."

This booklet was produced by ECPAT International and ECPAT Belgium.

7. ENDNOTES

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