With the fall of the Wall and the introduction of a market economy in Eastern Europe, trafficking has become increasingly common. The countries of the region have cooperated with the EU in attempts to stop this activity. But trafficking has not diminished. There are those who claim that anti-trafficking efforts have actually led to increased trafficking. Others are of the opinion that the efforts are misdirected, that the welfare of the victims is being ignored.

“There are root causes of trafficking in the countries of origin, such as poverty, unequal gender relations and traditional social structures to name a few, there are root causes involving the migration process, such as the lack of safe and legal migration opportunities – especially for certain categories of migrants, such as low-skilled and women – as well as root causes in the countries of destination, such as demand for cheap and exploitative labor and the increasingly repressive policies towards undocumented persons.”

This is how Irena Konečná, director of La Strada in the Czech Republic, summarizes the reasons why it is so difficult to stop trafficking. In her view, there are problems in the countries of origin as well as in the destination countries – but also in immigration policy itself.

La Strada is an NGO that supports the victims of trafficking and provides information on the danger that trafficking poses. La Strada International is a network of nine NGOs based in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldavia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Macedonia and the Netherlands. La Strada focuses on groups that are particularly at risk: youths, the unemployed, minorities, and migrants. It runs telephone support and offers victims safe housing and other types of help. One of the first La Strada organizations was founded in the Czech Republic in 1995. At its inception, the organization focused primarily on sexual exploitation. But according to Konečná, the trend in the Czech Republic has been towards an increasing number of people being subjected to labor exploitation. Konečná does, however, emphasize that there are no clear boundaries between different kinds of exploitation. They coincide and intermix.

“I would like to stress that human trafficking is not something ‘static’. Rather, it is a process that can begin with labor exploitation and violation of labor laws but end as forced labor or human trafficking, or even sexual exploitation,” says Konečná.

With time, the Czech Republic, like Poland and other countries, has become an important destination country. In the Czech Republic, there are businesses and individuals who engage in sexual as well as labor exploitation. The pattern recurs in other Central European countries that have put themselves through IMF’s reform program in order to make the transition to a market economy. They go from being countries of origin to being transit countries as well; finally, they gradually turn into destination countries.

The phenomenon is complex: trafficking develops and is transformed. The streams of people who are being bought and sold go in different directions.

The introduction of a market economy in the former Communist states led to unemployment and greater social inequality. The women and men who end up in or engage in – trafficking have, in many cases, no alternative. They are simply trying to support themselves and their families. As the borders are closed, they are generally forced to enter the richer countries through illegal channels. There are recruiters who actively search out likely subjects for trafficking. Some groups are more vulnerable to attempts at recruitment than others.
The anti-trafficking efforts that have been under- taken in the Baltic states, for example, have primarily treated the problem as a legal matter—the perpetrators must be apprehended, as a migration issue is not always considered as a serious concern. As a woman’s issue—the fight against trafficking is an element in the fight against prostitution.

Prior to the EU Ministerial Conference—which took place on October 16th on the occasion of the Anti-Trafficking Day, itself established by the EU—of a number of NGOs (Anti-Slavery International, La Strada International, Strada International, Nomos, ILGA, Action Against Trafficking, the Un’s palermo protocol, the un’s global plan of action, the un’s protocoll on trafficking in persons), it was expressed that anti-trafficking measures at the EU level would, first, lead to more stringent migration control, and, second, divert the fight against trafficking into a fight against organized crime. They entreated the EU to assume a more far-sighted view of the trafficking problem, and improve support and help for persons who are or have been exposed to trafficking. A broader view would include things such as labor exploitation, and present legal forms of anti-trafficking laws that are applicable to all European countries. The purpose of the present study does not always function smoothly in these countries.

Furthermore, cooperation between police and NGOs has united in a common statement in which the fear of retaliation is expressed. The NGO’s cooperation is the essence of the existence of the TF-THB (Transport, Transnational, and Transcultural). The NGO’s purpose is to improve conditions for the groups that leave Moldavia, Kristina Abiala contends. She is not impressed with the work that EU does to stop trafficking. "Sweden’s minister of justice Beatrice Ask has, during the Swedish EU presidency, said that trafficking is to be prevented through legislation and increased cooperation between customs officers and police. Sweden already has a very good cooperation with the EU, even if every country were to adopt anti-trafficking legislation, the lack of unity and unity of mentality identified by those who encounter victims of trafficking.

LILYA IVANCHENKO is an attorney and a Human Trafficking Prevention Project manager at the Russian Anti-Trafficking Network. She heads an international support organization with its main office in Moscow and one of the branches, in other parts of the world. It runs a support network of NGOs that are active in anti-trafficking, from Latin America to the EU countries, and those who are fighting for anti-trafficking. In Estonia, there is a tendency towards international human trafficking from Estonia, from the northeastern part of the country, to countries where they are exploited either as labor, or as sexual.

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"You can never stop people from dreaming of a better life—fortunately, I would say." M. Wijers & S. Hoff, Feasibility and Assessment Study.

"For a woman desperately trying to support herself and her family, leave Moldavia is visual evidence everywhere proving that migration does pay. One’s neighbor could have just left Moldavia and now leave Moldavia. That is, ensure that they can support themselves and create a future for themselves in the country of destination. The reason one ends up if one tries to migrate— and a Human Trafficking Prevention Project manager at the Russian Anti-Trafficking Network. She heads an international support organization with its main office in Moscow and one of the branches, in other parts of the world. It runs a support network of NGOs that are active in anti-trafficking, from Latin America to the EU countries, and those who are fighting for anti-trafficking. In Estonia, there is a tendency towards international human trafficking from Estonia, from the northeastern part of the country, to countries where they are exploited either as labor, or as sexual.

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