The Strength to Carry On

Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking and Other Abuses among People Travelling along Migration Routes to Europe

Briefing Paper

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Executive Summary

The research study *The Strength to Carry On: Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking among People Travelling along Migration Routes to Europe* analyses the incidence of human trafficking among people travelling along migration routes to Europe; factors of resilience to human trafficking and other abuses; and factors of vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses. The study covers the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Central Mediterranean migration routes.

Resilience to trafficking and other abuses is driven by higher levels of education, financial resources and access to information, as well as possibilities for regular travel and transit, and access to services in a destination context. However, this resilience may be compromised by factors of vulnerability such as children travelling alone, experiences of trauma, violence and abuse, obstacles to accessing services and interactions with migrant smugglers.

Personal characteristics are not in themselves sources of resilience or vulnerability to trafficking, but the migration context affects people differently, and resilience and vulnerability are determined by migration policies and practices. Positive experiences of migrant smuggling keep people resilient, but using smuggling services can also make them vulnerable to trafficking. Resilience is boosted by regular immigration status, and timely and fair asylum procedures.

Access to essential services in a destination context, like safety, accommodation, education and physical and mental healthcare, determines people's resilience or vulnerability. Unaccompanied children need to be identified and provided with specialised services in order to remain resilient, especially during their transition to adulthood. Asylum authorities often lack capacity to identify trafficked people among asylum applicants. To encourage people to report cases, the authorities should build trust, fight anti-migrant sentiments and mitigate isolation of these communities.

Specific details about 69 potential trafficking cases were identified in the course of the research, and 14 cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion. A minority of these cases were officially identified by the authorities. People on the move are trafficked for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced migrant smuggling. The study also presents the experiences of victims of deprivation of liberty for extortion, and shows that extortion involves the abuse of a person's rights in order to obtain financial or material benefits. The main *modus operandi* of traffickers in the context of the migration routes, regardless of whether or not they also provide migrant smuggling services, is abusing people's position of vulnerability. This vulnerability arises from their need to use, and to pay for, migrant smuggling, due to the lack of alternatives for regular travel.

To prevent human trafficking, the focus should be on how people can remain resilient to trafficking and other abuses, and on mitigating vulnerabilities and exposure to dangers. The research recommendations should be implemented in order to address the urgent need to respond to human trafficking, to resilience and vulnerability to trafficking, and to the protection of the rights of adults and children on the move, contributing to overall stability, security and rule of law in the countries under study and the wider region. The intention of the study is contribute to an improvement in the situation portrayed by the research findings.

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The Strength to Carry On is the main outcome of the research project 'Study on Trafficking Resilience and Vulnerability en route to Europe (STRIVE)' funded by the US Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) and implemented by ICMPD. 91 people on the move and 245 key informants – organisations and institutions working directly with people on the move - were interviewed during 2018 in the countries under study: Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Germany and Italy.

This Briefing Paper sets out the main findings and recommendations of *The Strength to Carry On*, which can be downloaded in full, including all references to field research and literature, at: www.icmpd.org/publications/publications.

Introduction

Around **one and a half million people** have travelled along the 'Eastern Mediterranean route,' the 'Balkan route' and the 'Central Mediterranean route' since 2015, in order to enter an EU country and apply for asylum. The **Eastern Mediterranean route** leads from Turkey, where a number of routes converge from countries of origin in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq), West and South Asia (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia). From Turkey, people either travel by boat from the Western coast to nearby Greek islands in the North Aegean Sea, such as Lesvos, Chios and Samos, or cross the Evros River into Greece or Bulgaria.

Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes

The **Balkan route** then continues by sea or overland to Thessaloniki in Northern Greece, either directly or via Athens, and from there to the Greek border with North Macedonia at Idomeni/Gevgelija, and through North Macedonia to the Serbian border at Tabanovce/Preševo. Those who crossed from Turkey to Bulgaria travel onwards from there to Serbia. From Serbia, the route crosses into Hungary at Subotica/Szeged, or leads through Croatia and Slovenia. The route then takes people from Hungary or Slovenia to Austria, then Germany (initially Bavaria), Sweden and other countries in Western Europe.

Central Mediterranean Routes
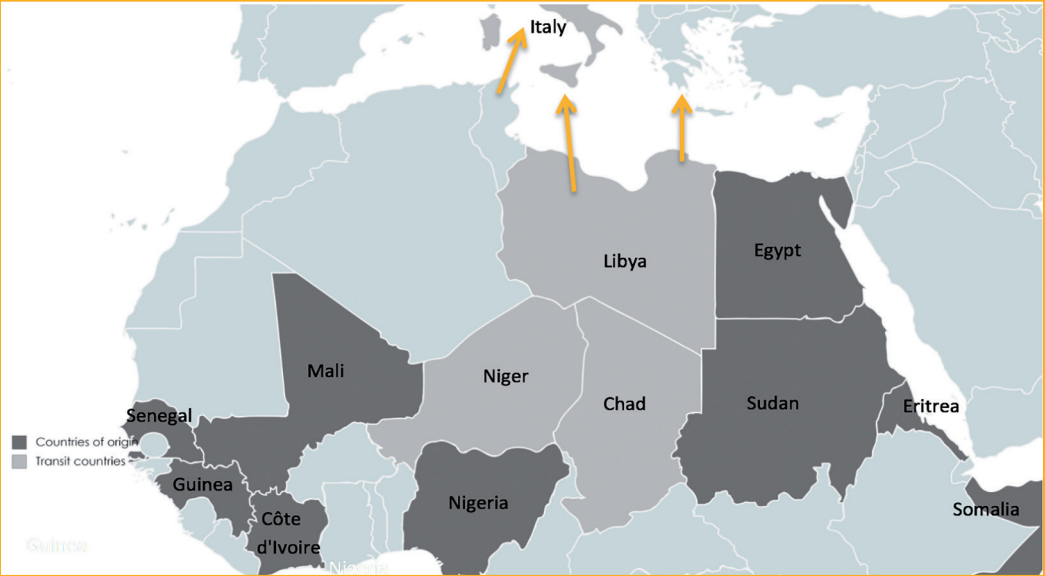
For the approximately half a million people who have arrived in Italy along the **Central Mediterranean route** since 2015, various migration routes through: West Africa from countries of origin such as Nigeria, Senegal, The Gambia, Mali and Ghana; Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, DRC); Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia); and more recently from North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco) and South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan), converge on Libya as the main transit country. People travel by boat from Libya to arrive at Italian ports on the islands of Lampedusa and Sicily (Pozzallo, Trapani, Messina) and Taranto on the Southern coast of mainland Italy. They either apply for asylum in Italy or travel to the Northern borders to cross into France at Ventimiglia/ Menton, Switzerland, or through Austria to Germany.

Total number of people registered as arriving along the migration routes in first countries of arrival in the EU
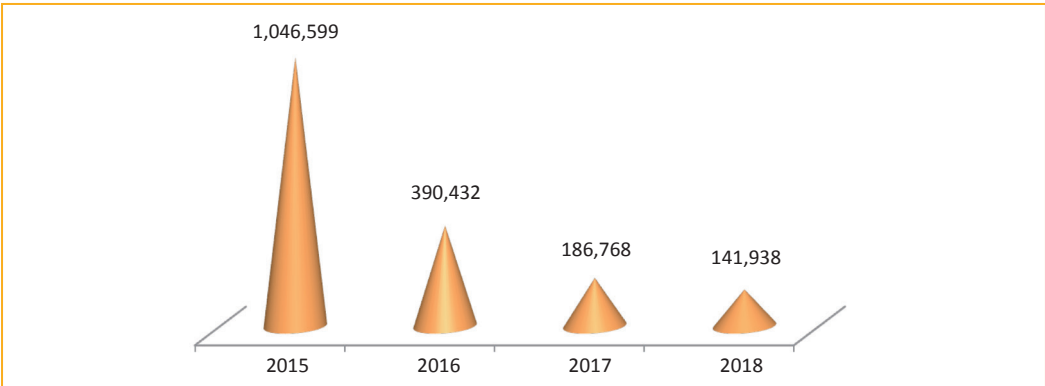
Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: https://migration.iom.int/europe (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015.

About the Study

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has been conducting empirical research on **human trafficking in mixed migration contexts and humanitarian crises** since 2014, in order to increase and enhance the knowledge base on how trafficking affects people who migrate and seek refuge. The research focus was initially on the effects of the Syrian conflict and displacement on human trafficking in Syria and its neighbouring countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. This research resulted in a comprehensive study entitled *Targeting Vulnerabilities*,[1] the first empirical, multi-country study to assess the links between conflict, displacement and trafficking. In mid-2018, ICMPD published *Trafficking Along Migration Routes to Europe*,[2] a research assessment of gaps, needs and challenges in the identification, referral, protection and social inclusion of trafficked people who used migration routes to travel to Europe, covering Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Sweden and Finland.

ICMPD then adapted the research methodology used for *Targeting Vulnerabilities* to carry out the project **Study on Trafficking Resilience and Vulnerability *en route* to Europe (STRIVE)**, a research project that began in October 2017 and resulted in the study *The Strength to Carry On*. The countries under study are situated along the main Balkan migration routes: Greece (which is also the first country of arrival along the Eastern Mediterranean route), Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. In addition, the research covered Germany, the main destination country for people using these routes, and Italy, the first country of arrival along the Central Mediterranean route.

The study is a **descriptive assessment of the phenomenon of trafficking, and not an evaluation of the anti-trafficking response of any country, programme or organisation**. It thereby supports national authorities and civil society in the countries under study, and EU and other regional and international policymakers, in their response to trafficking, by providing a robust, empirical knowledge base on human trafficking along migration routes to Europe since the beginning of 2015. The research does not seek to identify confirmed trafficking cases, but rather seeks to offer evidence-based information on indications of potential human trafficking to inform actions and follow-up measures by the authorities.

Research Methodology

The **research questions** of the study are:
- What is the incidence of human trafficking among people making the irregular migration journey to Europe?
- In what ways are some people making the migration journey to Europe more resilient to trafficking and other abuses?
- What are the vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses among people making the migration journey to Europe?

Two distinct groups of informants were interviewed for the field research, with tailored guidelines, guiding questions and methods of analysis for each group: **people who were travelling or had travelled along the routes** (refugees and other migrants) and **key informants** (staff of

international organisations, national and local state authorities, international, national and local NGOs and humanitarian organisations, journalists and other media sources, researchers and other interlocutors).

A total of 87 in-depth, narrative interviews with 91 people on the move were carried out. All interviews were subject to informed consent from the interviewees, and were conducted on condition of strict anonymity and confidentiality, with procedures in place for referral of any cases requiring an immediate response. Ethical principles for involving vulnerable people in research were taken into account. All those interviewed were travelling, or had travelled, along the Eastern Mediterranean and/or Balkan route, or the Central Mediterranean route. In addition, **a total of 215 key informant interviews - including individual interviews and focus group interviews with 2-4 people with similar profiles - were conducted with a total of 245 key informants** in the seven countries under study.

The 302 interviews with 336 people on the move and key informants were conducted **in the seven capital cities of the countries under study and in 32 other key cities, towns and villages** along the route and in destination countries,[3] the vast majority in person, but also by phone, Skype or email.

The study applied an interdisciplinary methodology, combining primary research in the field with desk-based research, as well as analysing qualitative and quantitative sources. **The data and information obtained was triangulated**, in order to cross-reference, compare and contrast findings from different sources, and findings obtained through different methods. As the interviewees' perspectives are necessarily subjective,[4] every effort was made to cross-check and triangulate information, rather than relying on one source, and to take bias and limited knowledge into account. In order to compensate for the limitations of a national perspective, the accounts of people who have themselves travelled along this route were prioritised, as they have first-hand experience of the issues that are analysed in this study.

In order to ensure the validity and robustness of the methodology and the analysis, **a peer review** system was applied. The research was subject to two rounds of external and internal peer review by two senior academics, as well as by the Head of the ICMPD Research Department.

Structure of the Study

Chapter one of the full study *The Strength to Carry On* describes the research methodology in detail, provides a brief literature review on the research topic and sets out the terms used in the study. **The second chapter** contextualises the main research findings by analysing the profiles of people who were travelling, the routes they took and the migration and asylum policies that

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3   In Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Mytilene, Moria, Kavala, Drama and Fylakio; North Macedonia: Skopje, Tabanovce, Kumanovo and Gevgelija; Bulgaria: Sofia; Serbia: Belgrade, Subotica, Kikinda, Sombor, Vranje, Bujanovac, Preševo, Adaševci, Principovac and Pirot; Hungary: Budapest, Tompa and Szeged; Germany: Berlin, Bamberg, Munich, Nuremberg and Bad Kreuznach; Italy: Rome, Venice, Mestre, Naples, Palermo, Agrigento, Catania, Bagheria and Ventimiglia.

4   The accounts provided by the people on the move who were interviewed relate only to their own specific experience, what they witnessed first-hand happening to other people on the move, and stories they heard from others. Similarly, the key informants who were interviewed each have specific limitations to their knowledge and certain biases, depending on whether they are from the government or NGO sector, from academia, or from other sectors. Most key informants also tend to see things from a national perspective of the country that they are in, rather than having full information about the whole routes. This also applies to literature consulted, which may have its own flaws and biases.

were applied to their situation. **Chapter three** analyses factors of resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses, dividing them into: personal factors that apply from the pre-departure phase through to arrival in an intended or *de facto* destination country; factors that arise during the journey from countries of origin through transit countries to destination countries; and factors that are linked to the national responses in countries under study, in a transit and/or destination context. **The fourth chapter** examines indications of potential trafficking cases in this context, distinguishing between different forms of trafficking and other abuses. The study concludes with **conclusions and policy-orientated recommendations**. The Annex of the Study contains potential trafficking cases and related abuses identified in the research, in addition to the 29 cases included in Chapter 4.

The Mediterranean and Balkan Migration Routes

Throughout the research findings, the significance of **the context of the migration routes** is evident. The geography of the routes, and the policies and practices applied during different periods in different places, all determine the experiences of people using these routes. Experiences are also impacted by the duration of the journey, and the obstacles encountered along the way, particularly obstacles that people had not prepared for in planning their journeys. Therefore, policy developments and profiles of people on the move during 2015-2018 are analysed in this section.

Four key moments marked experiences along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan migration routes since 2015

	Increase in people transiting	January – June 2015
	Regular transit	June 2015 – March 2016
	Closing of the route	March – December 2016
	Less people on the move	January 2017 – December 2018
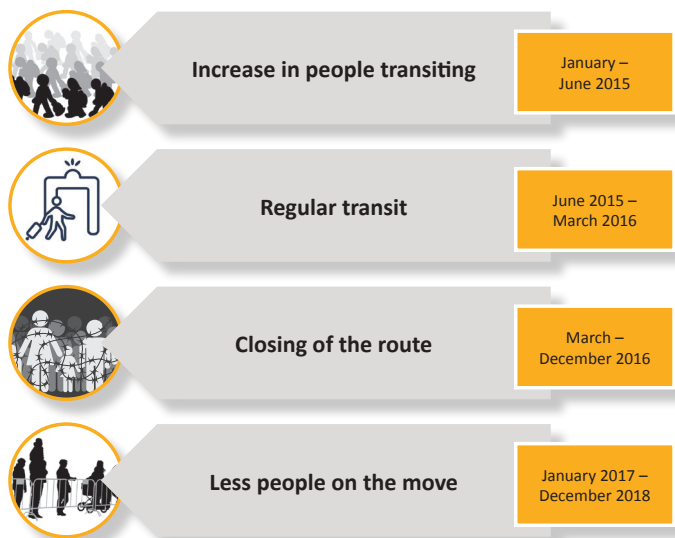
Phases in Migration along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes

While conditions on the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes were dynamic throughout the four years the research covers, there were certain specific moments of significant change. The first phase (January – June 2015) was characterised by **an increase in the number of people travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes**, starting in late 2014, and generally 'open borders' facilitating swift transit, even if transit was not yet regularised. Although migrant smuggling services were often needed to make the short sea crossing from Turkey to the nearby Greek islands, in general people were able to transit relatively swiftly through most of the countries under study. Throughout 2015, Syrians comprised the majority of people arriving across the Eastern Mediterranean, with significant numbers of Afghans, Iraqis and Eritreans also making the crossing and continuing along the Balkan route.

During the second phase, from June 2015 until March 2016, the Balkan route was more regulated and controlled, and **policies and practices generally allowed for legal transit through the Balkan countries**. The EU Agenda on Migration was adopted in May 2015, setting out immediate measures and a new strategic framework for migration management. As part of the Agenda, **'hotspots'** were set up in Greece and Italy, and, linked to this hotspot approach, a temporary intra-EU emergency **relocation** scheme was approved in September 2015, with EU Member States committing to relocate a total of 160,000 people 'in clear need of international protection' from Greece and Italy.

As described by an interviewee from a national authority in North Macedonia, in 2015, people were arriving in the country who "*did not meet the conditions for entry, and did not request protection from the state - they wanted to transit. Such a category did not exist.*" Therefore North Macedonia and Serbia put in place legal amendments in mid-2015, whereby **people were allowed to regularly transit through the countries, provided that they registered their 'intention to seek asylum' and left the country again within 72 hours**. The German government issued a statement in August 2015 that it would suspend the application of the Dublin Regulation to Syrians, allowing Syrian people to apply for asylum in Germany even if they had already transited through another EU Member State.

A barbed wire fence, almost 200km in length, was constructed along Hungary's borders with Serbia and Croatia, and completed in September 2015. Those who tried to enter Hungary through the border fence were to be charged with committing a crime. At the beginning of 2016, countries along the route restricted entry to everyone other than Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans. Afghans were subsequently removed from the list. By 20 December 2015, one million people had been recorded as arriving by sea or overland in EU countries of first arrival since the beginning of the year.

The Eastern Mediterranean route by sea from Turkey to Greece, followed by the overland route through the Western Balkans, were considered **safer and easier routes to travel than the Central and Western Mediterranean during 2015**. There was generally no need for smuggling services for this section of the journey, which maintained people's resilience to any risks arising from interaction with migrant smugglers. Many people travelling were Syrian and had sufficient resources and the opportunity to travel to their intended destination (usually Germany or Sweden) relatively swiftly.

The beginning of the third phase (March - December 2016) was marked by **the EU-Turkey Statement and by closures, restrictions and fortification of borders** in the countries along the Balkan route. The number of people making the sea crossing from Turkey to Greece decreased significantly throughout the rest of 2016. IOM recorded a total of 384,527 people irregularly arriving by sea and land in the EU in 2016, as compared to 1,046,599 during 2015.

The possibility to regularly transit from Greece through North Macedonia and Serbia was effectively removed. Many people who had intended to transit along the routes to Western Europe became 'stranded' along the way. Policies in Germany also started to move in a more

restrictive direction from 2016 onwards, limiting labour market access for certain groups of asylum applicants, and speeding up asylum, return and deportation procedures.

During 2018, the year during which the field research was conducted for the study, at total of 141,938 people entered EU first countries of arrival. **Some people began to travel in the 'reverse' direction, not only towards Western Europe, and people attempted to take new – and usually more dangerous – routes**. 'Reverse' movement was either:

− for seasonal work in the harvests in summer and autumn;
− because people had become separated from family members along the way who could not carry on and wanted to return to them;
− because they wished to return irregularly to their country of origin; or
− because they had not been able to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border to re-enter the EU, and therefore wished to return to Greece as the only accessible EU Member State.

From August 2017 to early October 2018, based on reciprocal measures on visa liberalisation for Serbians travelling to Iran, **Iranians could fly to Serbia without the requirement of a visa**. For some Iranians, this was a method of travelling regularly and safely as far as that country in order either to take a trip as a tourist; apply for asylum in Serbia; travel from Serbia to Western Europe to apply for asylum; or travel to Greece in order to fly to Western Europe by plane and apply for asylum.

In the wake of the 2017 general election in Germany and the 2018 elections in Bavaria, the German Government introduced **accelerated procedures for people applying for asylum in Germany who had already travelled through other EU Member States**, referred to as 'secondary migrants' in the German political debate.

The table below shows the number of people registered as entering the countries along the Balkan route. The year-on-year figures of people arriving in the countries under study provide a clear picture of a steady decrease since 2015 on the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan route.

Total number of people registered as travelling along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes, 2015-2018

Registered as arriving in:	Greece	Bulgaria	North Macedonia	Serbia	Hungary
2015	857,363	31,174	388,233	579,518	411,515
2016	176,906	17,187	89,771	98,975	19,221
2017	35,052	2,562	547	5,435	1,626
2018	49,158	2,503	3,126	8,022	382
Total 2015-2018	1,118,479	53,426	481,677	691,950	432,744

Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: https://migration.iom.int/europe (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015.

The numbers of people arriving in Italy by sea peaked in 2016, before decreasing gradually in 2017, and dramatically in 2018

The **Central Mediterranean route**, though affected by some of the same EU-level policies as the other routes, is to a large extent conditioned by developments at national level in Italy. Steady numbers of people arrived along the Central Mediterranean route throughout 2015-2016, followed by significant decreases in 2017 and 2018.

People registered as arriving in Italy by sea, 2015-2018
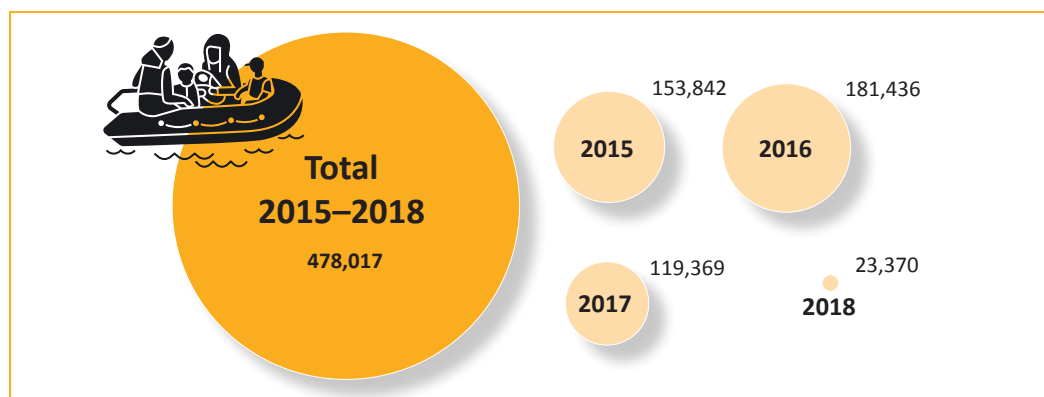
Total 2015–2018: 478,017

2015: 153,842
2016: 181,436
2017: 119,369
2018: 23,370

Source: Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring: https://migration.iom.int/europe (as of end 2018). Data for 2015 are from the IOM DTM Yearly Overview: https://displacement.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-mixed-migration-flows-europe-yearly-overview-2015.

Until 2015, Italy had received the highest numbers of people arriving along the migration routes to the EU – around 170,000 people during 2014. **The majority of people arriving along the Central Mediterranean route and applying for asylum in Italy in 2015 were from West Africa and Horn of Africa**, mostly men, though with a slight increase in unaccompanied children. Smaller numbers of people from Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Ukraine also arrived in Italy. During 2016, a larger proportion of those who arrived in Italy also applied for asylum in the country, particularly West Africans and Eritreans, and more women and unaccompanied children.

In February 2017, **Italy and Libya signed a Memorandum of Understanding** on migration cooperation. An increased proportion of Nigerians and Bangladeshis arrived in Italy in 2017, and an increased proportion of unaccompanied children. Apart from those who used the Balkan route, some Eritreans, Nigerians and Somalians also used the Central Mediterranean route to travel onwards and apply for asylum in Germany.

The Security Law adopted by Italy in late 2018 provides for measures to combat "illegal immigration," to effectively implement deportation orders, and to regulate temporary residence permits for humanitarian purposes. Italy and other EU member states increasingly restricted the operations of search and rescue ships. The main nationality of the 23,370 people arriving in Italy by sea in 2018 was Tunisian. While there has been a steady decrease in the number of people arriving in Italy since 2016, the number of people arriving in Spain, across the Western Mediterranean, has steadily increased since 2015, reaching 64,427 in 2018.

Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking and Other Abuses

Resilience is understood as resisting trafficking and other abuses, while vulnerability relates to the likelihood that trafficking will take place

Resilience to trafficking and other abuses is understood in this research as the factors that contribute to preventing trafficking and other abuses from occurring. Resilience refers to the more positive aspects of the experience of the migratory journey and focuses on those people who were not abused or exploited – and why that was so. **Vulnerability, on the other hand, refers to risks of trafficking and factors that make people travelling along the migration routes more likely to be trafficked or exploited**. In some respects, resilience may be simply the opposite of the vulnerabilities: if certain vulnerabilities are not present, then a person is more resilient. However, many factors of resilience were also identified that are not linked to vulnerabilities.
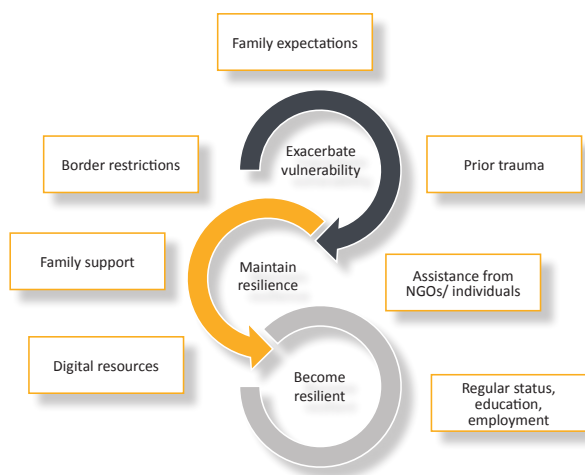
Resilience is conceptualised as a starting point that can be maintained or enhanced - or compromised by factors of vulnerability. Resilience is conceptualised as the default condition because the majority of people travelling along the routes are not trafficked, and therefore the research identifies what factors cause certain people in certain situations to be trafficked. Trafficking is therefore considered an aberration and a departure from the norm. This should not, however, detract from the fact, as is clear from the research findings of *The Strength to Carry On*, that a large number of people have experienced severe human rights abuses in this context.

It is also important to understand vulnerability in order to improve responses. In certain specific cases, situations of vulnerability to human trafficking can present indicators of actual trafficking cases, which, in turn, on further investigation, may be determined to constitute the crime of trafficking in persons.

Vulnerability and resilience are inextricably connected. In order to reduce trafficking and other abuses, the focus should be on reducing vulnerabilities and exposure to different dangers on the

one hand, and building capacity to resist, on the other. Trafficking and other abuses take place because people are vulnerable, and exposed to dangers, and and are not in a position to resist these dangers. The research shows that factors of resilience and vulnerability:

- are dynamic over time – they do not remain static throughout the journey;
- affect different people in different ways - what may be resilience for some is vulnerability for others; and
- are cumulative – determined by a combination of interacting factors.

For people travelling, events and contexts **prior to departure, during the journey, in transit countries and in intended destination countries** all have effects on resilience and vulnerability. Resilience and vulnerability may increase, decrease or transform. Resilience and vulnerability factors are negotiated, defined and re-defined throughout particular periods of the journey. For example, how a person is treated as a child may constitute vulnerabilities during some stages of the journey, but resilience at other stages of the journey, or at destination.

Personal characteristics and circumstances drive resilience and vulnerability

Personal factors are not in themselves sources of resilience or vulnerability to trafficking. Rather, they interact with contextual factors of resilience or vulnerability in specific ways to increase resilience or exacerbate vulnerability. Personal vulnerabilities and factors of resilience are relevant throughout the journey, from the pre-departure phase in the country of origin or former residence to settling in the intended final destination.

Issues related to age and gender were the factors of vulnerability most frequently cited by key informants, specifically, that children (particularly unaccompanied children), and women and girls are more vulnerable. **Children are vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses *per se***, because of their lack of life experience. However, the circumstances of their migration journey may increase or reduce that vulnerability. Age interacts with gender, making girls, boys, women or men particularly resilient or particularly vulnerable, depending on the context and situation.

Women and girls are at a higher risk of sex trafficking in particular, as well as related abuses such as 'survival sex' (the exchange of sex for a good or service that the person needs) and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). **Men and boys are generally considered more resilient, yet they are also exposed to specific vulnerabilities and gendered expectations**. In some cases, the presumption of their resilience may in fact exacerbate their vulnerabilities.

Little information was obtained about people on the move who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT), though they are subject to specific vulnerabilities due to discrimination. People with disabilities and elderly people also have specific vulnerabilities in the context of migration journeys.

> *"The trip was very difficult. I arrived with the help of God, who gave me strength."*
>
> – 35-year-old Iranian man interviewed in Hungary (HU-M-01)

Religious faith provides people with the psychological strength to endure the difficulties of the journey. The majority of the 91 men and women interviewed for this study who had travelled the route stressed their religion or faith as a factor of resilience - not specifically resilience to trafficking, but as a source of strength to deal with the difficulties of the migration journey and their experiences in destination countries.

People travelling the routes rely on their psychological strength, motivations, plans for the future, and a general sense of hope, in order to carry on. According to a Syrian man who was interviewed: *"When we lose hope in life, we are dead. It is hope that allows us to live."* Being flexible about plans and adapting to changed circumstances are also forms of resilience. On the other hand, if people's expectations of the journey and of their situation on arrival in the intended destination country are too far removed from reality, this can be a specific source of vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

> A young Afghan man interviewed in Hungary identified his mental strength and determination as a key element of resilience, as well as his hope for an improvement in his situation. He mentioned a line from a song, which he listened to in order to remain hopeful: *"Your dreams will bring you forwards, your memories drive you backwards, what will you have left?"*
>
> Song: "Lams" (Touch) by Bahram Nouraei, from the 2015 album *Eshtebahe Khoob* (Good Mistake).

An additional source of resilience and hope for people on the move is support from members of their families. However, people may be motivated to make the journey by the prospect of being able to improve their family's future, and are under pressure because of the expectations of family members. While these family expectations may be a source of hope and endurance,

they can also make people **more vulnerable and more likely to put up with suffering themselves, including abuse and exploitation, in order to ensure their family's wellbeing**.

> *"We are the sacrificed of the system. We don't come to Europe to get rich, but to help our families get out of poverty, and to educate the youngest so they can attend better schools than we did. […] I know this is the reason why thousands of young Africans like me come to try their luck in Europe."*
>
> – 35-year-old Senegalese man interviewed in Germany

Some personal factors of vulnerability are also motivations for taking the decision to migrate, such as poor economic circumstances and future prospects, experiences of violence, conflict and SGBV, interactions with public authorities in the country of origin and the treatment of marginalised groups. Some people's personal resilience is also compromised by traumatic experiences prior to departure, which may then be exacerbated by subsequent trauma experienced during the journey.

A person's general level of education, qualifications and literacy skills are a determining factor for resilience, as well as risk awareness and general life experience. This also facilitates access to essential information, reducing reliance on migrant smugglers and other illicit actors. One crucial aspect of this is digital literacy and access to the internet and social media. Conversely, people with lower levels of education and who are less informed are more vulnerable to trafficking and abuse.

A person's financial situation matters at all stages along the route, and defines the planning phase. Resilience to trafficking and other abuses, as well as general safety, are determined to a significant extent by financial resources. Specifically, the ability to avoid going into debt, or at least to quickly pay off debts incurred, is important for resilience. This interacts with affording a swifter and safer migration journey to the intended destination. Financial difficulties make it easier for people to be manipulated, deceived and exploited, and often correlates with lower levels of education.

Resilience and vulnerability are determined by migration policies and practices

The circumstances of the journey determine many of the key factors of resilience and vulnerability, and are conditioned by contextual policy factors. **The need to use this route due to the lack of alternatives for regular travel, and the consequent need to use migrant smuggling services, is the defining factor**. The journey itself is a driver of vulnerability, and the subjects of the research are by definition people who took the journey.

> "The worst thing is that when you are a migrant, you face things that kill you from the inside and from the outside."
> – 18-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary

A key driver of resilience therefore, to almost all forms of trafficking and other abuses, is the possibility to travel regularly by plane, with an entry visa for an EU country. Legal channels for making the journey are the single most important determinant of resilience, as they allow people to avoid this dangerous journey altogether. For the small proportion of people who travelled regularly, the journey was cheaper and safer, and they were more resilient to trafficking and other abuses.

In the absence of options for regular air travel, the possibility of regularised travel by sea and/ or overland is the next best source of resilience. This was available to many people, at least for some sections of their trip from Greece to Germany and other EU countries, from mid-2015 to March 2016. So these people, and especially those among them who had higher chances of being granted international protection in an EU country, like Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis, had a more positive experience of the journey and less need to use smuggling services. This contrasts with the vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses of people who travelled since March 2016, and people from countries considered 'safe countries of origin'.

The restrictions on movement and mobility that have been progressively imposed by European countries since 2016 have significantly increased the vulnerabilities of people using the routes. Logically, people wish to travel as cheaply and safely as possible, but changing policies and restrictive laws and measures leave them with few options. "*The biggest problem was staying in camps waiting for a legal possibility to continue the journey,*" according to a 26-year-old Afghan man interviewed in North Macedonia.

While transit countries outside Europe were not the main focus of the research, there were indications of vulnerability, including abuses suffered by people on the move, in Iran, Turkey and Libya. **The arduousness and trauma of experiences transiting through these countries, during the sea crossings to Greece and Italy and at border crossings in Europe, compromise people's resilience**. However, based on accounts of experiences in Turkey and the far shorter and safer sea crossing to the Greek islands, people travelling this route experience less violence and exploitation than those travelling through Libya and across the Central Mediterranean.

> "*In the chaos of Libya, militias of all kinds reign and impose their law. Exploitation of migrants has become one of their specialities. Everyone is armed and powerful. Our life was worthless in the eyes of these people.*"
> – Senegalese man interviewed in Germany

Issues that contribute to people's vulnerability when crossing borders within Europe include reports of deferred refusals of entry in Italy, and of human rights abuses and illegal returns ('pushbacks') in Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. These abuses suffered by people on the move, including children, are highly detrimental to their resilience, as well as leading them to distrust state authorities.

An 18-year-old Afghan man, interviewed in Hungary, had crossed the border from Turkey to Bulgaria as a child:

"*The things they did to us, you can never forget.* […] *I don't say it gladly, but the world has to know about what happened to us. We tried to cross the* [Turkish-Bulgarian] *border six times and the* [Bulgarian] *police caught us five times. They didn't just beat us, they also took everything, money and mobiles, everything. If the police officer had a good heart, he took everything from you, but at least he gave you back your bag, but that only happened once out of the six times. They beat me very badly all five times.*"

In addition, since September 2015, official entry from Serbia into Hungary has been managed on the basis of an unofficial 'waiting list'. This means that people are left with few alternatives to using smuggling services to evade this system, and/or using alternative, riskier routes. The other option is to pay to be moved up on this list, increasing financial vulnerability.

The vast majority of people travelling along the Balkan route wish to carry on to the next country as soon as possible. They never intended to spend any significant amount of time in these countries, and would not have entered them at all if they had an alternative, quicker, or safer route to their intended destination countries. However, **this desire to swiftly move on, combined with policies and practices that increasingly restricted transit since March 2016, significantly compromised people's resilience**. Not having official ID documents, or not being registered in a country they are transiting through, also makes people vulnerable to exploitation and other abuses, as they are more likely to avoid the authorities and less likely to request assistance.
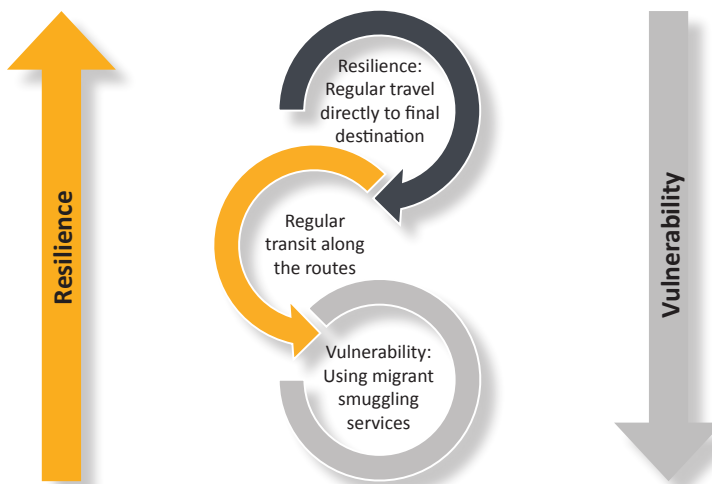
Options Influencing Migration Decision-Making

Transiting through Italy to other European countries can also make people vulnerable to trafficking, particularly when borders with countries such as France, Switzerland and Austria, are closed for transit, making irregular crossing the only option. The situation at the northern borders in Italy (Ventimiglia, Bardonecchia, Como and Brenner) can cause vulnerabilities.

Positive experiences of migrant smuggling maintain people's resilience, but using migrant smuggling services can also make people vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses

As a consequence of the lack of legal channels for migrating and seeking asylum, and the lack of possibilities to transit regularly along the routes, **almost everyone who travels the route uses migrant smuggling services**, at least at some point. Many of the determining factors of resilience or vulnerability depend upon people's experiences of migrant smuggling. **Using smuggling services constitutes resilience if smugglers carry out the task for which they have been paid, and vulnerability if people are directly abused and exploited by their smugglers, or are abused and exploited because they need to pay for smuggling services**.

Resilience in the context of the migration journey

Resilience
Vulnerability

Resilience: Regular travel directly to final destination

Regular transit along the routes

Vulnerability: Using migrant smuggling services

Depending on the experiences that people have, **using smuggling services may be a factor of resilience, or, if it is not, the user of smuggling services may perceive their interaction with smugglers in a largely positive light, due to their lack of alternatives**. 'Good smugglers' make sure that everyone is safe and reaches their destination, care about their business reputation and are often not part of a sophisticated, organised criminal network.

> "[Smugglers] *are good. It depends, if your smuggler is good, you will be good. If your smuggler is not good, you won't be good. When I was in prison* [in Bulgaria], *I met a smuggler. His brother was with me for 15 months. This was good to know. Then I know he is good. In this period, I did not get into any bad experiences with smugglers, just because he was very good to me. He took me from Bulgaria to here* [...]. *He always tried to suggest a good game for me, a fast one.*"
>
> – 23-year-old Pakistani man interviewed in Serbia

For people who can afford more expensive, safer smuggling services, the smuggling experience is a factor of resilience. This applies particularly to those who can afford a 'full package' all the way to their intended destination country, provided by people of trust from their country of origin. Conditional payment in phases to smugglers, subject to safe arrival, may enhance the safety of service-users, increasing their resilience and reducing the likelihood of abuses.

People also had very negative experiences of smuggling, varying from **deception in relation to prices and routes, to threats, sexual and physical violence, sex trafficking, forced labour and deprivation of liberty for extortion**. Experiences of deception, threats and violence significantly reduce people's general resilience, and increase their vulnerability to exploitation and trafficking by smugglers or by other actors. Severe physical violence is perpetrated by smugglers on the Balkan route, and nearly everyone interviewed who had travelled along the Central Mediterranean route reported experiencing theft, violence or exploitation.

> "*Smugglers rape children if they can't pay. According to my experience, most unaccompanied children are raped. There is no boy who didn't experience any abuse during the journey. When they resist violence, smugglers burn their body with cigarettes. I have also heard of children who resisted and kicked, so the smugglers handcuffed them and raped them like that.*"
>
> – Child protection expert from a migrant community in Hungary

In other cases, vulnerabilities arise not directly through interaction with smugglers, but as a result of the need to pay for their services. Smuggling services are provided without involving abuses or exploitation, but people on the move run out of money or go into debt in order to pay for the services, making them vulnerable to labour exploitation in particular.

The composition of travel groups has implications for resilience and vulnerability

The group with whom people travel also has an influence on the likelihood of them being abused or trafficked. Group dynamics are different for girls, boys, women and men, and depend on whether someone travels with their family or alone, and whether they travel with people from the same extended family or community or with strangers.

When children travel in the company of one or both parents, this is a key source of resilience. Nevertheless, three crucial issues can be detrimental to the resilience of children travelling with parents. Firstly, children may appear to be travelling with their parents or family members, but in fact this is not the case. Secondly, a child's parent or parents may be the ones who are abusing and/or exploiting them. Finally, children may become separated from their parents along the route.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Children on the Move

Child is resilient because (s)he is travelling with parent/guardian	Adult accompanying child is not actually their parent/guardian
	Child is separated from their parent/guardian *en route*
	Parent/guardian abuses child
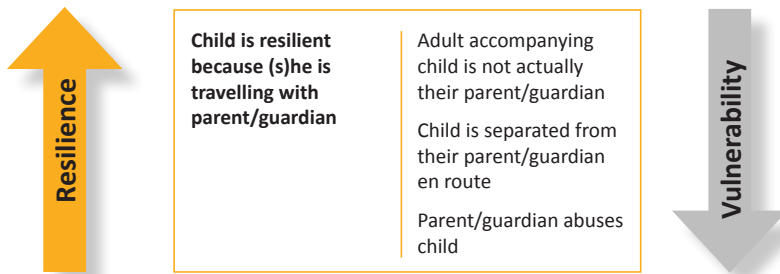
Family separation is a crucial factor of vulnerability along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Families can become separated by accident; as a travel strategy; because of border control operations; or by smugglers in order to extort money. This is a key moment of increased vulnerability for children who started the journey with their parents, as well as increasing the vulnerability of adults who may be desperate to urgently reunite with their children.

Unaccompanied and separated children are particularly vulnerable in the context of the migration routes. The vast majority of unaccompanied children are not orphans, but rather have become separated from their parents or guardians at some stage, either on departure from their country of origin or during the journey, when they become separated from their family *en route*.

Children may be sent by their parents to travel alone, whereby a family selects the child whom they consider best equipped to travel to the intended destination country, usually a teenage boy. This is either as a strategy for the entire family to migrate, by subsequently joining the child, travelling regularly through family reunification, or irregularly, using the migration routes; or it is a strategy to supplement the family income, with the expectation that the child will send money earned in the destination country. While both scenarios may cause the child to be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, because of the risks of the journey and the pressure to earn money, if the child's family subsequently travel and reunite with them, this boosts their resilience as they can once again enjoy parental care.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, due to gender- and child-specific risks. Women travelling with their children but without an adult male companion are particularly vulnerable. Women and girls may also be at risk from some of the men and boys they are travelling with, and therefore they seek protection from other men, including family members. If the men whom they seek protection from protect them, then this is a source of resilience. On the other hand, some women and girls are abused or exploited by men whom they sought out for protection.

If women and girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses in the context of the migration journey, then it follows that men and boys are more resilient. **Yet this presumption of resilience among many state and NGO service providers may actually exacerbate men's and boys' vulnerabilities to trafficking and other abuses**. Single adult men are a vulnerable group in this specific context precisely because they are considered the least vulnerable, and because they are more likely to be victims of physical violence perpetrated by law enforcement, smugglers or other men.

> "*Single young men are not seen as vulnerable by any organisation, programme or state authorities, thus making them the most vulnerable in the long run in Serbia. Smugglers are more violent towards them, the police are more aggressive, and many of them are under a lot of pressure – in terms of mental health – there is a lot of PTSD among single men*."
>
> – Interviewee from an NGO in Serbia

Vulnerabilities for men and teenage boys also arise from the fact that smugglers may take young men and boys travelling alone along more dangerous routes than families, women and children, and because of family expectations in terms of earning money to support family members. Boys are significantly over-represented among children using the routes, particularly among unaccompanied children. Unaccompanied boys are a specific at-risk group for trafficking.
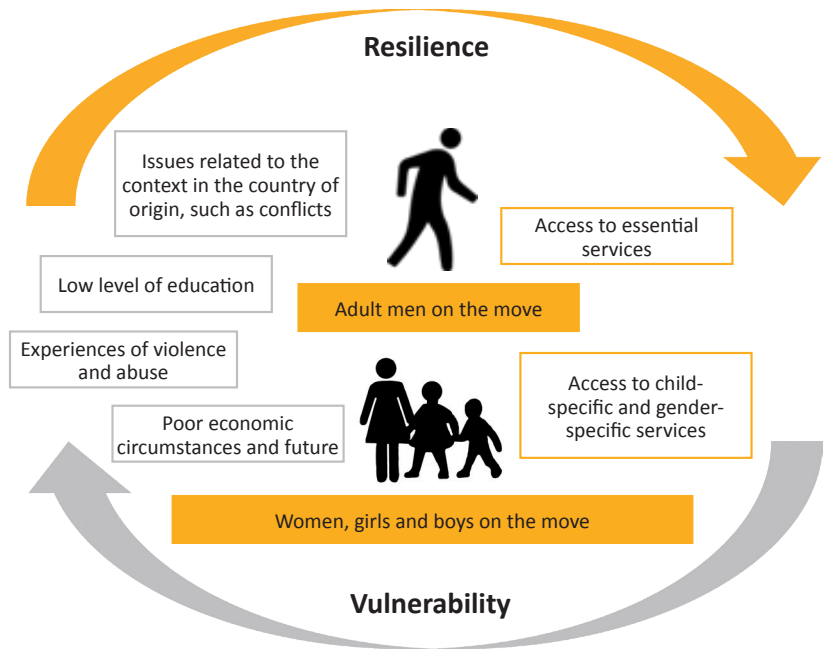
This creates a paradox of 'vulnerable groups', whereby people considered the most vulnerable tend to have better access to services *en route* and in destination contexts, while people not considered vulnerable are actually rendered more vulnerable due to lack of access. It is the perceived vulnerability of an unaccompanied child or a woman travelling alone that ensures better protection services and increased resilience in transit and destination countries in Europe.

People often travel in groups of people from the same country, which may provide a source of group resilience. There are many reports of solidarity among people who travelled along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Sometimes people who did not know each other before decide to travel together during the journey for safety. However, in contexts where groups are more heterogeneous, inter-group conflicts may also be exacerbated in the tense migration context, causing vulnerabilities to violence, robbery and other abuses.

> An NGO worker interviewed in Germany spoke of how an Afghan man described the support he received along the route: "*If I had not met strangers again and again on my way through Iran, Turkey and Greece, and along the Balkan route, who helped me, just like that, I would not have survived. In every country, regardless of their religion, there were people who helped me, just to help*."

People often work for some time in intended transit countries, like Libya, Turkey and Greece, in order to earn enough to continue their journey and/or to send money to family members. **Because they generally do not have authorisation for employment, this is irregular work, which can make people vulnerable to labour exploitation**. However, they often perceive this irregular work as resilience, because earning some money is better than having no money at all.

Throughout the journey, digital and computer literacy allow people to access information through social media, mobile apps and other online sources, also representing an important alternative source of information to information provided by migrant smugglers, and constituting a factor of resilience. Help provided by local people in transit countries and support from civil society actors are also key sources of resilience. Religious communities can provide a concrete source of support during the journey.

> "*I must say that I was alone during this journey, I had no friends, but I was with people who had gone on the same journey. Luckily I was connected with people on Facebook at each stage of my trip. I wrote to them and described where I was and asked them what to do and which route to take.*"
>
> – 26-year-old Syrian man interviewed in Germany

Legal status, timely and fair asylum procedures and appropriate identification of unaccompanied and separated children can boost resilience

Once people arrive in a destination context, whether the intended or *de facto* destination, various contextual and situational factors influence their resilience and vulnerability to trafficking and related abuses. Particularly for those who manage to reach their intended destination country, **arrival in itself is for many people a form of resilience, as it means the end of a risky journey and the potential for legal status, employment and integration in a new home**.

Resilience and vulnerability are related to legal status and access to asylum. If a person was granted regular entry to an EU country, such as through a refugee resettlement programme, community sponsorship programme, a tourism, work or study visa or family reunification procedures (or in the future, perhaps, through humanitarian visas), then they are significantly more resilient as they avoid the journey completely. In the destination context, this also means that for many of them **their legal status is already regular, and in most cases, they can seek employment or enter education**.

If that is not the case, then **the next best scenario is timely access to a fair asylum procedure on arrival, or to other alternatives for regularisation of their status**. For the smaller number of people on the move who apply for asylum in the countries along the Balkan route, gaps within the asylum systems may discourage people who would otherwise consider it as an option and leave them with no viable alternative but to continue the journey using smuggling services.

In Germany and Italy, **resilience is determined to a significant extent by whether people are granted refugee status or some other form of international protection or legal residence status, how long the procedure takes, and what the conditions are for them** while awaiting the decision and after being granted or refused status. Many people who are refused any form of protection status or other regular immigration status, or effectively denied access, remain in the country without a regular status, significantly increasing their vulnerability to labour exploitation in irregular work, as well as other forms of exploitation.

> *"They have no choice but to enter the asylum system: they're stuck here in Italy because of the Dublin Regulation, they can't reach their network in other European countries, and in practice they can't find a real job. Here in Italy people are forced to seek asylum even if they are not entitled to it."*
>
> – Lawyer interviewed in Venice, Italy

Marriage can be a source of resilience, particularly mentioned by men, if it grants them the right to regularly travel to, or regularly reside in, a country of destination. People who have spouses or children in destination countries have easier access to legal residency and work permits.

Access to services determines people's resilience or vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses

The national responses in the seven countries under study - as countries of transit where people end up staying for a significant period of time, as countries of *de facto* destination or as intended destination countries – **are a crucial determinant of resilience or vulnerability**.

Accommodation is a basic need for girls, boys, women and men transiting through and residing in a country, and effective access to adequate, safe accommodation, both along the route and in a destination context, is a key factor of resilience. Many people resided, or are residing, in official accommodation centres in the seven countries under study, including reception centres, transit centres and detention and pre-removal centres. In some cases these centres can provide conditions of resilience, however, there are also reports of vulnerabilities and abuses due to accommodation conditions. Many of the centres do not have adequate staff who can identify abuses or vulnerabilities, in order to protect people at risk and prevent exploitation.

> A 19-year-old Afghan man interviewed in Hungary described sexual violence at a centre in Bulgaria:
>
> "*I only want to say that from the entire journey, this camp was the worst. There were a lot of rapes in the camp. Girls were raped there. There were a lot of men there, this is why. I stayed there for six months. Police officers behaved very badly. There was theft and rapes every day.*"

In certain cases, **the conditions in centres make people residing there feel unsafe and at risk**, which increases their vulnerability to trafficking. At some centres, women and children are harassed or subjected to SGBV, and there are reports of smugglers and traffickers residing at centres in order to recruit service-users or victims. When traffickers target potential victims at centres, this is a direct and specific vulnerability, while interacting with migrant smugglers may also render people vulnerable. According to an Iranian man interviewed at an accommodation centre in Serbia: "*If I want to try the 'game', I just send a Viber message or meet a smuggler here in the playground.*"

The risks for women, boys and girls in particular may be **mitigated if there are special designated areas for these groups within accommodation centres and gender-segregated provision of services, with adequate safety measures and female staff, police officers and interpreters**. However, if these are inadequate, then women and children are rendered vulnerable.

When people are accommodated in closed centres, under conditions of detention and with restricted access to essential services and timely and fair asylum procedures, they suffer trauma and lose trust in authorities, all of which makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Asylum applicants in detention are subject to many factors that compromise their resilience: the prison-like environment; lack of information about their legal status; mistreatment;

isolation; abuse by peers or staff; and uncertainty about the future.

If unaccompanied children are correctly identified by the authorities of the country they are in, they can be **provided with the specialised services they are entitled to (legal guardian, specialised accommodation, etc.) and are then far more resilient to exploitation and abuse**. One practice that specifically affects the resilience and vulnerabilities of unaccompanied children is age assessment – the process applied by states in cases of doubt to determine whether a person is in fact a child. The majority of unaccompanied children arriving in Europe along the migration routes are teenagers aged 15-17 years. This means that often, during the process of the journey, arrival and the asylum application, they 'age out' of protection systems, turning 18 and then being considered as adults in terms of status and service provision.

The resilience of many unaccompanied children, even if they are correctly identified, is also compromised by a **lack of trained guardians with the capacity to take care of these children, and who are appointed as swiftly as possible**.

Resilience and Vulnerability of Unaccompanied Children

Resilience (upward arrow)

Child is resilient because (s)he is identified as unaccompanied and provided with protection

Authorities incorrectly identify child as an adult

Authorities incorrectly consider accompanying adults as parents/guardians

Children state that they are adults

Children turn 18

Vulnerability (downward arrow)
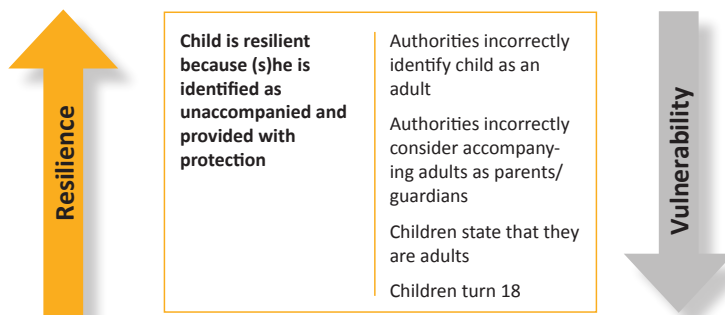
Access to education is one of the most important resilience factors to human trafficking for children. **Vocational training for adults is also a specific factor of resilience**, both during the course of the training itself, as a meaningful activity, and as a way of subsequently integrating people into the labour market. Because economic vulnerabilities are one of the key factors making people more prone to trafficking and related abuses, **accessing decent employment in a destination country is a crucial factor of resilience**. As a Senegalese man described, after experiencing many difficulties during his journey to Italy: "*Then I had the opportunity to have humanitarian protection, and now I found a job as a security guard at a big supermarket. I am very happy*."

On the other hand, the 'enforced idleness' created by restrictions to access to the labour market, and, to a lesser extent, limited opportunities in the labour market for those who do have access, is detrimental to financial and psychological resilience. In some cases, it may lead people to accept exploitative work due to the lack of alternatives.

> "*I try to help other people, because there are a lot of people who have problems, and I spend my time helping them, also in order to forget about my own problems. I go out to help communicate with the lawyers, hospitals and different places. I'm busy all day and that helps me to survive.*"
>
> – 42-year-old Eritrean man interviewed in Germany

People on the move and key informants mentioned **social networks of friends and family as playing an important role in resilience in the destination context**. A number of people interviewed for this research volunteered and worked at NGOs - an important source of resilience, allowing them to keep occupied, make friends and feel part of their new communities. Other people received assistance from private individuals or NGOs. On the other hand, xenophobia, anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments also have an effect on a person's feelings about their country of residence, making them more vulnerable.

Lack of effective access to adequate physical and mental healthcare is a factor of vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses for children and adults, and a specific vulnerability to re-trafficking for those who have already been trafficked. Mental health issues related to trauma experienced prior to departure or during the journey require gender- and child-specific, immediate, effective and long-term treatment in order to boost people's resilience to further abuse and trafficking.

Effective access to information about their situation and about their options when people arrive in a destination context, in a format they understand, is a crucial aspect of resilience to trafficking other abuses. People need to know what stage their asylum application is at, how long they will stay at an accommodation centre and what their legal options are, otherwise, due to frustration and uncertainty people may to look for alternative, irregular options. An important aspect of access to information is the availability of translation services and cultural mediators to ensure effective communication and build trust between national authorities and people on the move.

> "*Nobody has explained to these people the ways in which they can earn some kind of money* [...]. *Many people become victims of exploitation or turn to prostitution to earn small amounts of money, because they think there is no other way to earn money and work for a decent wage.*"
>
> – NGO worker on Lesvos, Greece

Human Trafficking in the Context of Migration Routes

Few trafficked people are officially identified among people on the move

Official identification of trafficking cases in the countries under study among people travelling the routes is limited and unlikely to reflect the actual prevalence. Those who have been identified along the Balkan route are mostly from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria, and mostly boys and men, while along the Central Mediterranean route, they are mostly Nigerians and other Sub-Saharan Africans, mostly women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation.

The research did not seek to identify confirmed trafficking cases, as this can only be carried out by the responsible authorities in the country in question, but rather sought to uncover sufficient indicators for a follow-up by these authorities. Despite the lack of official statistics, there are many indications of trafficking among people using the migration routes, including **trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, exploitation in forced criminal activities (migrant smuggling and drug trafficking) and forced marriage, as well as deprivation of liberty for extortion**.

While not an indication of prevalence in itself, a total of **69 potential trafficking cases that took place during 2015-2018 in the seven countries under study were identified** in the course of the research, as well as general indications of the incidence of trafficking. **A minority of these cases were officially identified by the authorities in the countries concerned**.

Potential Trafficking Cases Identified in the Course of the Research

Form of Trafficking	Total Number of Cases	Cases involving Women and Girls	Cases involving Men and Boys
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	21	14	7
Forced Marriage	5	5	0
Labour Exploitation	29	7	22
Forced Criminal Activities	7	1	6
Sale of a Child/Illegal Adoption	3	0	3
Removal of Organs	4	0	4
Related Abuse			
Deprivation of Liberty for Extortion	(14)	(4)	(10)
Total Potential Trafficking Cases	69	27	42

Exploitation takes place in countries of origin prior to departure, in transit countries outside Europe such as Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Libya, and in countries of transit and destination in Europe. Exploitation is generally not coordinated along the route, but a person may be exploited in different countries and locations by actors who are not in contact with each other.

People on the move are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, labour exploitation and forced criminal activities, and deprived of their liberty for extortion

Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls is prevalent in this context, despite the relatively lower proportion of women and girls travelling the routes. In Greece, Germany and Italy, there are a higher number of formally identified cases of women trafficked for sexual exploitation in Libya and in European countries, particularly among those who travelled the Central Mediterranean route.

> "*A case we worked on involved an unaccompanied girl from Syria, who stayed in Turkey for two years. They had her locked in a basement and sexually exploited her. They cut her hair and even used some kind of acid on her, you could see marks on her body. She managed to escape and arrive on Samos.*"
>
> – Interviewee in Greece

Men and boys are also affected by sex trafficking. The exploitation sometimes does not involve prostitution, but rather 'survival sex' – the exchange of sexual services for a good or service that the boy or young man needs. Unaccompanied boys are particularly affected by sex trafficking, as well as sexual abuse. Sex trafficking of Afghan boys in the context of *bacha bāzī* was identified in North Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Germany, an exploitative practice by men who sexually abuse boys.

Forced marriages affect girls and women from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran in their countries of origin, *en route* **and in European countries**. Some of these marriages are for the purposes of domestic servitude or sexual exploitation, while in other cases significant sums of money are exchanged for the marriage itself, and girls and young women are 'bought and sold'.

Men and boys trafficked for forced labour are mainly exploited in agriculture, as well as other sectors such as textiles, services industry, construction, and in begging. People are exploited in agriculture in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy and Germany. The sector where many people on the move are exploited in transit countries like Serbia and Hungary is the services industry. Women are exploited in domestic and care work. Only in Italy were cases reported of young West African men begging, especially in Rome, with some indications of exploitation and debt bondage.

A 42-year-old Eritrean man spoke about his working conditions in Sicily, Italy:

"I was working outside on the farms with other people; about 400 or 500 people on one farm. We collected potatoes, tomatoes and olives. The working conditions were very hard, for a miserable salary. […] And this work was illegal because our employers didn't want to pay taxes and we didn't have permission to work. At the same time, like many other migrants, I was homeless, without social assistance or health insurance. We had to fight to survive. We slept on the ground in old buildings."

Apart from sex and labour trafficking, the main form of trafficking among people who travel the routes is forced criminal activities, particularly migrant smuggling. Boys and men are recruited by migrant smugglers and forced to provide smuggling services overland, and to navigate boats from Turkey to Greece and from Libya to Italy. In some cases, they are also exploited by the same groups in other forced criminal activities, especially drug smuggling and sale. Isolated cases of trafficking for sale of a child/illegal adoption and for removal of organs were also indicated in the research.

"Afghan and Pakistani boys who wanted to cross the Evros region […] *were forced to smuggle people in order to repay their debt, and sometimes they were arrested as smugglers, while in reality they were the victims."*

- Interviewee in Greece

There is an ongoing debate at international policy level and among researchers as to whether deprivation of liberty for the purposes of extortion (also referred to as 'kidnapping') should be considered human trafficking. The findings of this study presented the ***modus operandi* of the perpetrators, the experiences of the victims and the existence of acts and means, and showed that extortion involves the abuse of a person's rights in order to obtain a financial or material benefit**.

Afghan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Syrian people travelling the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes are deprived of their liberty for extortion in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, rural areas of North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Deprivation of liberty for extortion is widespread in Libya, perpetrated either by isolated actors or when people are forced to stay in prison camps not only for the purpose of extortion, but also for forced labour.

> As a human rights lawyer interviewed in Serbia described:
>
> "*In 2016, migrants testified to us that in villages in* [North] *Macedonia* […], *people lost their liberty in the houses of smugglers. Members of the victims' families received threats of violence if they did not send money. Many people were starved and abused.*"

Most potential trafficking cases among people on the move are not identified, and people rarely seek assistance

Most trafficking cases among people on the move are not being identified, and trafficked people rarely seek help, due to challenges that affect trafficked people in general, and challenges specifically affecting this group. The challenges to identification by national stakeholders in this context are:

a) **High numbers of people transiting** at certain times, and in certain locations, and entering and exiting countries within a short time, making it difficult to assess individual cases;
b) **Lack of capacity among among asylum authorities** to identify potential trafficking cases;
c) **Lack of capacity among national authorities and NGOs** to identify potential trafficked people and gaps in protection systems for trafficked people;
d) General **lack of political will** to address the issue.

The challenges affecting the likelihood that people on the move who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking will seek assistance are:

a) The **desire to transit** as quickly as possible to the intended final destination;
b) **Lack of trust** in the authorities and fear of deportation, with the attendant risk of re-trafficking;
c) **Fear of possible retaliation** by traffickers, especially if they do not trust the authorities to protect them.

Human trafficking takes place in the context of migrant smuggling

It was difficult to obtain empirical information on the profiles of traffickers and exploiters in this context, apart from the **overlap with people providing migrant smuggling services**. Traffickers:

- are often also involved in migrant smuggling, or take advantage of people's vulnerabilities, due to their need to pay for smuggling;
- are either from same country and/or linguistic group as the people they exploit, or from the country where the exploitation is taking place;
- are opportunistic actors operating at a low level, without much cross-border cooperation;
- or, especially in the context of the Central Mediterranean route, belong to more sophisticated trafficking networks.

The main *modus operandi* of traffickers, regardless of whether or not they also provide migrant smuggling services, is to abuse people's position of vulnerability. **This position of vulnerability arises from their need to use, and to pay for, migrant smuggling services, in a context of lack of alternatives for regular travel**.

Recommendations

To prevent human trafficking, the focus should be on how people can remain resilient to trafficking and other abuses, and on mitigating vulnerabilities and exposure to dangers. These recommendations are derived directly from the findings of this study, providing **evidence-based guidance** to policymakers and practitioners, and to people on the move. They should be implemented in order to address the urgent need to respond to human trafficking, to resilience and vulnerability to trafficking, and to the protection of the rights of adults and children on the move, contributing to overall stability, security and rule of law in the countries under study and the wider region.

The recommendations address **how to prevent human trafficking and other abuses among people travelling along migration routes to Europe, how to promote the identification and protection of trafficked people, and how to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice**. The implementation of some of the recommendations is in line with a general consensus about the rights of people on the move among policy-makers, practitioners and the people themselves, while other recommendations require significant advocacy and political will in order to become a reality. The intention of the study is contribute on both fronts to an improvement in the situation portrayed by the research findings of *The Strength to Carry On.*

A. Policy-Level Recommendations

1. Expand alternatives for regular travel	
What?	Significantly expand the range of alternatives for regular travel for refugees and other migrants, and their availability, to avoid people making irregular and dangerous journeys. This includes possibilities for regular migration (including labour migration and family reunification) and programmes for regular travel for refugees, including resettlement, community sponsorship and humanitarian visas.
Why?	When adults and children can travel safely, swiftly and regularly, they avoid all of the vulnerabilities arising from making the journey along the migration routes to Europe, including using migrant smuggling services.
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies, including EASO; Governments of other destination countries; international stakeholders, including UNHCR.

2. Allow for legal transit along migration routes	
What?	For people who cannot access legal opportunities for travel, allow legal transit through countries along migration routes.
Why?	People who can transit legally and swiftly through transit countries are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses, and if transit regularised and registered, they are more likely to trust the authorities. This avoids situations where people become 'stranded' and reduces their reliance on migrant smuggling services.

Who?	European States; Governments of countries considered as 'transit countries' by people travelling the routes; EU bodies; international stakeholders.

3. Treat people at European borders with dignity and adhere to human and child rights

What?	Enforce legal provisions that protect people's human rights and child rights when crossing a border.
Why?	Experiences of human rights and child rights abuses at borders make people more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses, and less likely to trust state authorities. Legal obligations on non-*refoulement* and positive obligations on identification and protection of vulnerable people are a state responsibility. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014) *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders* provides guidance in this regard.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including Frontex; international stakeholders, including OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; border and coast guard staff; police.

4. Improve the safety of sea crossings

What?	Ensure that people who travel across the Mediterranean Sea have access to protection, and that search and rescue operations are adequate in order to rescue people whose lives are at risk. Ensure effective cooperation with civil society to support search and rescue operations.
Why?	The dangerous sea crossing, as well as costing thousands of human lives, is a traumatic experience that compromises the resilience of survivors to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including Frontex; international stakeholders, including OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; NGOs engaged in search and rescue; border and coast guard staff.

5. Ensure timely access to a fair asylum procedure on arrival, or to other alternatives for regularisation of people's status in transit and in a destination context

What?	Provide effective access to timely and fair procedures for all forms of international protection, including legal assistance and representation, and to other opportunities for regularisation of status in transit, *de facto* destination and intended destination countries.
Why?	While people are awaiting their status determination, and particularly if their asylum application is refused, or if they are without regular status, they are more likely to work under exploitative circumstances and to wish to move on to another country using migrant smuggling services.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including EASO; UNHCR; asylum authorities; immigration authorities.

6. Combat forced migrant smuggling as a form of human trafficking	
What?	Undertake any necessary legal amendments and ensure that anti-trafficking stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to identify cases where people who seem like perpetrators of migrant smuggling are actually victims of trafficking for forced migrant smuggling, to protect the victims, and to prosecute the actual perpetrators.
Why?	People forced to provide smuggling services may be considered perpetrators rather than victims, meaning that they are not identified as trafficked people and do not have access to protection and justice, as well as being held criminally responsible. This also means that the perpetrators, who have trafficked these people for forced migrant smuggling, are not brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Europol; Interpol.

7. Combat deprivation of liberty for extortion	
What?	Undertake any necessary legal amendments and ensure that stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to identify cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.
Why?	Cases of deprivation of liberty for extortion may meet the definition of human trafficking. People who have suffered the human rights abuse of deprivation of liberty for extortion, often accompanied by physical or sexual violence or other abuses, are not generally identified as victims and therefore do not have access to protection, and the perpetrators are not brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Europol; Interpol.

8. Apply non-punishment provisions to people on the move who have been trafficked	
What?	Ensure that people who have been trafficked for the purposes of forced migrant smuggling and other forced criminal activities are not punished for these crimes, by making any legal and administrative amendments necessary, ensuring effective implementation of non-punishment provisions and training all relevant stakeholders.
Why?	People who have committed crimes such as smuggling of migrants and drug trafficking as a result of their condition as a trafficked person should be subject to non-punishment provisions and not held criminally liable. The actual perpetratrs should be brought to justice.
Who?	European States; EU bodies, including the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Frontex; prosecutors; judges; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; social workers; NGOs; UNODC; OSCE; Council of Europe; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

9.	Implement measures to ensure that families can remain together	
What?	Implement measures to ensure that families can remain together: in countries of origin, by providing alternatives; in countries of transit, by allowing families to travel and reside together, and to reunite if they become separated; and in countries of destination, through family reunification.	
Why?	Children and adults travelling or residing alone are more vulnerable than children and adults travelling or residing together with their families.	
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies, including EASO and Frontex; international stakeholders, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; border and coast guard staff.	

10.	Ensure protection of unaccompanied and separated children transitioning into adulthood	
What?	When unaccompanied teenage children 'age out' of protection measures (when they turn 18), allow for a transition phase during which certain child protection measures are still applied, including legal representation if necessary, up to the age of 21 years, to ensure that they are adequately prepared for independent adult life. Take the young persons own wishes, decisions and their best interests into account.	
Why?	On the day that unaccompanied children turn 18, they are no longer entitled to special protection services for unaccompanied children, and they become acutely vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.	
Who?	European States; European Union (EU) bodies; international stakeholders, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.	

11.	Fight xenophobia, anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments, and mitigate isolation of migrant communities	
What?	Combat anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiments in countries of transit and destination, to combat discrimination and targeted abuse. Promote the social inclusion of migrant communities to avoid people becoming isolated.	
Why?	People on the move who are subject to discrimination and abuse are less resilient to abuses, and less likely to trust the authorities and other actors in the country they are in. People who only interact with members of their own communities may be more vulnerable to exploitation or abuse by co-nationals.	
Who?	European States; EU bodies; politicians; anti-racism bodies; media; schools; police; migrant-led organisations; migrant communities; NGOs.	

B. Operational-Level Recommendations

12. Assess groups of people on the move to determine family relationships and identify potential abuses

What?	Individually assess members of a group to ensure that those claiming to be family members are in fact related, and to identify any abuses taking place in a family context. Provide for separate immigration and asylum procedures for each member of a family.
Why?	People travelling with someone who fraudulently claims to be a family member are more vulnerable to abuse, particularly children. Only in cases where serious abuse takes place within a family should children be separated from their parents or guardians. Adults and children whose immigration and asylum procedures are conducted separately have better access to protection.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; family courts; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children; NGOs.

13. Put in place specific protection measures for girls, boys, women and men

What?	Put in place specific protection measures for girls, boys, women and men, recognising the special needs of women and children, and recognising that men and boys are also vulnerable to abuses, particularly unaccompanied and separated boys.
Why?	Women and girls, and children in general, require special protection measures in order to remain resilient. In addition, when men and boys are not considered 'vulnerable groups', they may be denied access to protection and essential services, rendering them more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; child protection services; accommodation centre management; NGOs; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

14. Ensure protection of accompanied, unaccompanied and separated children

What?	Children on the move should have effective access to decent education and other child protection measures, particularly while residing at official accommodation centres. Unaccompanied and separated children should be correctly identified as such, with accurate and fair age assessment, allocation of a guardian and special accommodation measures for their protection, in accordance with UNCRC General Comment No. 6 (2005) *Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin* and EASO (2018) *Practical Guide on age assessment*. The best interests of the child should be a primary concern in all decisions affecting them.
Why?	All the countries under study have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses *per se* due to their lack of awareness and life experience, and decreased capacity to resist traffickers and other potential abusers, as well as limited capacity to exit an exploitative situation. When they have access to appropriate child protection measures in transit and destination countries, children's resilience can be increased and their best interests can be promoted.

Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children; accommodation centre management; police; border and coast guard staff; NGOs; schools; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

15. Ensure adequate, accessible and safe accommodation to provide conditions of resilience

What?	For people on the move who are housed in official accommodation centres, ensure that humane and dignified living conditions, safety and access to services are in place. Special protection measures should be in place for women, girls, boys, unaccompanied girls and unaccompanied boys. Adults should be allocated to closed centres only as a last resort and children should not be detained. NGOs, translators, cultural mediators, lawyers and social workers should be granted access to all accommodation centres, including any closed centres.
Why?	Risks of trafficking and exploitation for people at accommodation centres may be mitigated if the living conditions and safety measures are adequate and if access to essential services is ensured. Gender- and child-specific risks can be mitigated if there are special services and designated areas for these groups within centres, with adequate safety measures and female staff, police officers and interpreters.
Who?	Accommodation centre management; private security firms operating at accommodation centres; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services; police; NGOs; lawyers.

16. Make sure that human traffickers are not residing at accommodation centres or using centres in order to recruit victims

What?	Establish identification and security procedures at accommodation centres, to make sure that the centres are not locations for trafficking recruitment.
Why?	Traffickers target accommodation centres for people on the move as locations for recruiting victims, making people residing at these centres particularly vulnerable.
Who?	Accommodation centre management; private security firms operating at accommodation centres; police; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; child protection services.

17. Provide access to vocational training and decent employment

What?	Teenagers and adults in intended and *de facto* destination countries should have access to vocational training, studies and regular employment, with measures to promote their labour market integration and opportunities for employment in migrant-led and migrant support organisations. People who are working irregularly should have access to justice and protection if they suffer labour violations or labour exploitation.
Why?	People are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses when they are in training or studies or engaged in decent employment.
Who?	Vocational training centres; third-level educational institutions; state employment services; labour inspectors; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; employers; trade unions; NGOs.

18.	**Provide medical care for physical and mental health**
What?	Ensure that all adults and children on the move have access to adequate and necessary physical and mental healthcare in transit and destination countries.
Why?	People who suffer physical abuse, trauma, physical or mental illness, or are elderly or have a disability, may be more vulnerable to trafficking and other abuses. Their resilience can be boosted if they receive adequate treatment.
Who?	Health services; hospitals; accommodation centre management; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

19.	**Provide effective access to information about their situation and about their options when people are *en route* or in a destination context**
What?	Provide accurate information for people on the move about their rights and duties in transit and destination contexts, and about the legal procedures affecting them, in a format that they understand (including online and through mobile apps for people who have access) and in a language they understand (including through translators and cultural mediators).
Why?	People's lack of accurate information about their situation can be exploited by traffickers in order to provide them with risky alternatives.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; police; NGOs; migrant-led organisations; migrant communities; translators and cultural mediators; international organisations.

20.	**Promote civil society and volunteering**
What?	Fund and promote the activities of NGOs and faith-based organisations that support people on the move, and encourage the involvement of people on the move as volunteers in these organisations.
Why?	People on the move who are supported by civil society organisations, and who are active with civil society organisations, are more resilient to trafficking and other abuses.
Who?	NGOs; faith-based organisations; migrant-led organisations; state authorities; donors.

21.	**Build the capacities of asylum authorities to identify trafficked people**
What?	Incorporate the screening and identification of vulnerabilities, and of potential trafficking cases, into the asylum process, by providing specialist training to asylum authorities and putting procedures in place for referral. People who are trafficked and have a right to international protection should have access to both protection mechanisms. People who are trafficked, and as a result of the trafficking have a right to international protection, should also have access to both protection mechanisms. People who are trafficked and who do not have a right to international protection, should be protected as a trafficked person and granted a residence permit as a victim of trafficking.

Why?	The asylum procedure presents an opportunity to identify cases of vulnerability to trafficking and of potential trafficking, which, if taken advantage of, can increase the identification of trafficked people among asylum applicants, and ensure that people have access to the protection measures and justice that they are entitled to.
Who?	Asylum authorities; EU bodies, including EASO; anti-trafficking stakeholders; migrant communities; international organisations.

22. Build capacities of anti-trafficking stakeholders to identify trafficked people among those using migration routes

What?	Provide specialist training, and put procedures in place, to ensure that people on the move, including asylum applicants, who have potentially been trafficked, are screened, identified and referred to anti-trafficking stakeholders for protection and access to justice.
Why?	Anti-trafficking stakeholders may not have experience of working with asylum and immigration authorities to identify trafficked people. If these institutions work better together, more trafficked people can be identified and protected.
Who?	Anti-trafficking stakeholders (government and civil society); asylum authorities; immigration authorities; migrant communities; international organisations.

23. Investigate suspected cases of migrant smuggling for indications of trafficking, exploitation and abuse

What?	Focus law enforcement responses on cases of trafficking, exploitation and abuse by people providing migrant smuggling services.
Why?	Some people are resilient while using smuggling services, while others are rendered vulnerable by their interaction with people providing smuggling services who intend to abuse or exploit them. Law enforcement efforts on migrant smuggling cases should focus on severe cases involving human rights violations, including trafficking.
Who?	Border and coast guard staff; police; prosecutors; judges; Frontex; Europol; Interpol.

24. Increase identification and protection of trafficked men and boys

What?	Ensure that anti-trafficking stakeholders are informed, trained and properly resourced to screen and identify trafficking cases among men and boys, as well as among women and girls, providing victims with protection and bringing traffickers to justice.
Why?	Men and teenage boys may be overlooked in anti-trafficking responses, meaning that they are not identified as trafficked people and do not have access to protection and justice.
Who?	Social workers; NGOs; accommodation centre management; labour inspectors; police; prosecutors; judges; migrant communities; border and coast guard staff.

25.	**Build trust in state authorities among people on the move, to encourage reporting of cases of trafficking and other abuses**
What?	Build trust in state authorities among people on the move, use interpreters and cultural mediators to improve communication with people on the move, provide access to justice and protection measures to trafficked people without making access conditional on them remaining in a transit country, and protect trafficked people from retaliation by traffickers and their networks.
Why?	People on the move may not report trafficking cases due to a lack of trust in state authorities, communication difficulties, their desire for onward travel, fear that the authorities cannot protect them or their families from retaliation by traffickers and their networks and fear of deportation.
Who?	Immigration authorities; asylum authorities; social workers; NGOs; police; prosecutors; witness protection programmes; migrant communities; interpreters and cultural mediators; lawyers; child protection services; guardians of unaccompanied and separated children.

26.	**Incorporate special measures related to people on the move into trafficking screening, identification, referral, protection and prosecution mechanisms**
What?	Incorporate specific, adequate measures related to the context of people on the move into National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms for the protection of trafficked people, setting out the roles and responsibilities of asylum, migration and anti-trafficking stakeholders in the screening, identification, referral protection and assistance of trafficked people. Set up or strengthen bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for identification, protection, investigation and prosecution between transit and destination countries along the migration routes.
Why?	People on the move who are trafficked may not be identified or protected due to a lack of coordination between asylum, migration and anti-trafficking authorities, at national and transnational level. Trafficking cases that take place in transit may only be identified in intended destination countries, requiring bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to protect victims and bring traffickers to justice.
Who?	National Referral Mechanisms; immigration authorities; asylum authorities; anti-trafficking stakeholders; social workers; NGOs; police; prosecutors; judges; Europol; Interpol; Eurojust; Frontex.

C. People on the move and their families

27.	**Have a well-informed plan for the migration journey prior to departure**
What?	Obtain as much information as possible about modes of travel, conditions, costs and rights and duties in countries of transit and destination prior to the departure. Avoid trusting only information provided by migrant smugglers. Use online and mobile sources of information where possible, making sure that the sources are reliable.
Why?	Accurate information about the journey, about rights and duties, and about the situation in transit and destination countries, is a crucial source of resilience to trafficking and other abuses.

28. Travel together with family members or close acquaintances	
What?	If possible, travel in the company of family members or other people of trust, and do background checks on anyone you are travelling with whom you do not know well, examining their motivations and intentions. Avoid allowing children to travel alone.
Why?	Travelling together with family members and other people who can support each other keeps people safe during the journey and on arrival in the intended destination country. Children aged under 18 travelling without their parents or guardians are particularly vulnerable and at risk.

29. Stay informed and adapt to changed circumstances	
What?	Use reliable sources of information, including people of trust, and online sources of information, in order to stay abreast of the situation, which may change during the course of the journey. When circumstances change and obstacles are encountered, where possible, adapt to these circumstances and change plans accordingly, ensuring that you have sufficient information about the changed situation.
Why?	Being faced with an unforeseen obstacle or a change in circumstances can be a moment of frustration and desperation, increasing people's vulnerability to trafficking and other abuses. If people do not respond in an informed fashion, they may become even more vulnerable.

30. Report any abuses suffered or witnessed to the authorities or NGOs that can provide assistance	
What?	Seek assistance from NGOs, trusted persons, asylum or immigration authorities, social workers, lawyers, human rights defenders or police if you suffer abuse or you witness someone else suffering abuse.
Why?	If trafficking and other abuses are not reported and identified, victims of these abuses cannot receive protection services and the perpetrators cannot be brought to justice.

31. Avoid going into debt with migrant smugglers and other travel facilitators and make sure you have enough money for the journey	
What?	If at all possible, ensure that you have sufficient finances for the journey, and that you do not go into debt with migrant smugglers.
Why?	Running out of money during the journey makes people vulnerable to exploitation, in order to earn money to continue the journey. Being in debt to migrant smugglers represents an acute vulnerability.

32. **Family members should keep their expectations realistic**	
What?	Family members of people on the move, in countries of origin or destination, should keep their expectations realistic and understand that changes of circumstance can have an impact on the situation of the people on the move.
Why?	Family expectations can exert significant pressure that may cause people to enter into a situation of exploitation or make them more vulnerable to abuse.

The Strength to Carry On   Briefing Paper

Around one and a half million people have travelled along the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Balkan route and the Central Mediterranean route since 2015, in order to enter an EU country and apply for asylum or remain without regular immigration status. This study analyses human trafficking among people making the migratory journey, as well as examining their resilience and vulnerability to human trafficking and other abuses. The findings of the research indicate the urgent need to prevent and respond to trafficking and vulnerabilities to trafficking in this context, providing evidence-based recommendations to policymakers and practitioners, and to people on the move.