



PRESS RELEASE

24 June 2004

For immediate release

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS COMING TO IRELAND TARGETED BY TRAFFICKERS, REPORT FINDS

An estimated 10% of unaccompanied minors coming into Ireland are the focus of investigation in relation to criminal trafficking or smuggling by adults, a new report commissioned by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has found. Child trafficking investigations deal with children mainly from the former war zones of the Balkans, the coastal countries of West Africa and Romania. Suspected victims of trafficking are aged between 3 to 17 years old and include both boys and girls.

“Although it is extremely difficult to obtain evidence on the scale and extent of trafficking due to lack of data collection and the hidden nature of the phenomenon, the experience of front line professionals clearly indicates the existence of child trafficking in Ireland” said Pauline Conroy, the author of the report. “In this regard Ireland is no different from other European countries which are trying to harmonize their actions to combat the issue at a transnational level.”

The study makes a number of recommendations including improving the collection of statistical data on unaccompanied minors and trafficking and providing secure legal status for these child victims for whom no asylum claim has been made. The publication is part of the EU-wide research project funded by the European Commission’s STOP programme and the Government of Ireland through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Further information from Magdalena Majkowska, IOM Dublin, 01-8787900,
info@iomdublin.org;

ENDS

See Next page for Editor’s note on IOM

Editor's note:

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. Established in 1951, one hundred and two states are currently IOM members and a further twenty-nine hold observer status, as do numerous international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

IOM's *mandate* is to help ensure the orderly flow of international migrants; to promote international cooperation on migration issues; to aid in the search for practical solutions to migration problems; and to contribute to international solidarity by providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.

IOM *key services* include: assisted voluntary return, counter-trafficking, migration health, organised transfer of migrants in need of international protection, information campaigns for potential migrants, labour migration programmes and technical cooperation on migration.

IOM's *counter-trafficking activities* are geared toward the prevention of trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, and the protection of migrant's rights. They include carrying out information campaigns, providing counselling services, conducting research on migrant trafficking, providing safe and dignified return and reintegration assistance to victims of trafficking and helping governments to improve their legal systems and technical capacities to counter trafficking.

Under the heading of trafficking in migrants, IOM is particularly concerned about those migrants who are, or have been, deceived or coerced into situations of economic exploitation, which unfold through forced labour, forced servitude, coercion, debt bondage, or other violations of their fundamental human rights; furthermore, IOM is concerned about trafficking, as it poses a migration management problem to governments of sending countries as well as transit and receiving countries.

For general information on IOM visit www.iom.int and on IOM counter-trafficking activities http://www.iom.int/en/who/main_service_areas_counter.shtml