



National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human  
Beings and Sexual Violence against Children

# Human trafficking is happening here

Fact sheet accompanying the Ninth  
report of the Dutch Rapporteur

## Human trafficking is happening here

Human trafficking is happening here. Recent years have made clear that people can be exploited in many ways and in many places. In prostitution, but elsewhere as well, such as the agricultural and horticultural sectors, and the catering industry. Not long ago a conviction was handed down for the exploitation of street newspaper vendors.

Human traffickers take advantage of people who are often in a weak position or they use violence to coerce others to work for them. Crimes like these demand a tough approach. Human trafficking must not pay and we must do our best to protect the victims of human trafficking.

Victims and the way we deal with new or existing forms of human trafficking are a key part of my Ninth report. You will find the recommendations in this fact sheet. Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon. We can only succeed in tackling the problem if society at large and government agencies are aware of this and together take a firm stance. A robust response has been mobilised in the past few years. However, the battle against human trafficking is never won. The effort to fight it remains our challenge for the years ahead.

Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen,  
*National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human  
Beings and Sexual Violence against Children*

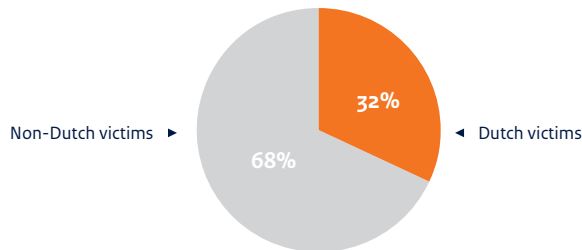


Copyright: Ivar Teunissen

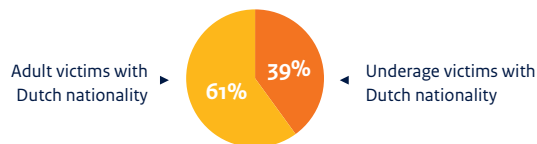


## ‘**‘Loverboy’ victims are human trafficking victims. They need to be recognised as such’**

Nationality of notified victims 2007-2011



Dutch victims 2011



### Domestic human trafficking

Domestic human trafficking involves victims and perpetrators who both come from the country where the exploitation takes place. Of the registered possible victims of human trafficking in the period 2007-2011 one third were Dutch. In 2011, as many as 39 per cent of the Dutch victims were underage. The picture apparently did not change in 2012. Some human traffickers would seem to wait to exploit their victims in legal prostitution until the girls have reached the age of eighteen, the age at which voluntary prostitution is legal in the Netherlands. The fear is that the grooming period, or the recruitment phase, and the subsequent sexual exploitation, also outside the legal sex industry, already begins at a young age.

The ‘loverboy’ phenomenon has been an issue in the Netherlands for more than fifteen years. The term, however, is a misnomer, for in fact loverboys are human traffickers. Now’s the time to call loverboys by their proper name and treat their prey as victims of human trafficking.

At the present time care for these victims is inadequate, notably in the case of underage victims of domestic trafficking. Instead of seeing them as girls experiencing the typical problems of adolescence, we need to realise they are human trafficking victims. All professionals working in care for minors need to become aware of this.

The expertise to recognise underage victims of domestic trafficking would appear to be lacking in the youth care sector. No specialisation on the subject exists and not enough is being invested in training. Nor is any specialist care package available. The lack of training has repercussions on registration. It is plausible to assume that failure to recognise or acknowledge these victims of human trafficking results in underreporting. As a result at the moment the Netherlands does not comply with the various European directives regarding the protection of minor victims of sexual exploitation.

The recommendation to the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister of Security and Justice is to bring the protection of minor victims of domestic human trafficking in line with European legislation and regulations. Identification, registration and care, including suitable and safe shelter, are crucial parts of this.

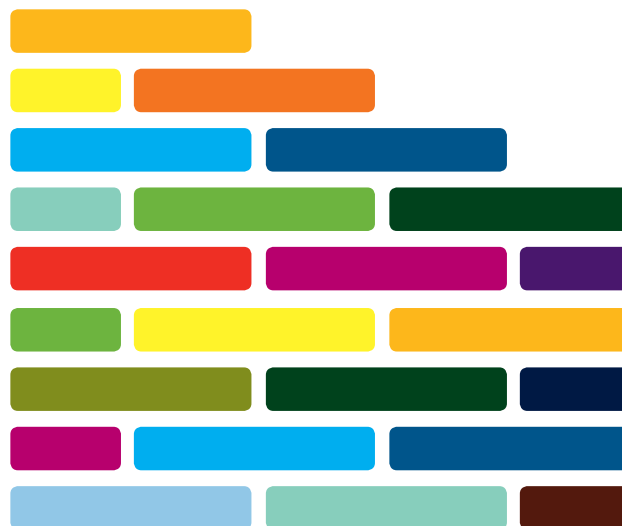


During a spot check at a farm a labour inspector discovered a shed in which people were working in bad conditions. The workers said they were earning three euros an hour. The farm was enclosed by a high fence that was always kept shut. In a similar check in the prostitution sector a detective encountered two seventeen year old girls. They spoke neither Dutch nor English and one of them had bruises on her shoulder. Neither girl had a passport.

In both situations there are sufficient indications that the people in question could be victims of human trafficking. If government agencies encounter possible victims of human trafficking they need to know what to do to protect them. The victims must also be registered. Although government agencies in the Netherlands carry out good work there is no single comprehensive document that clearly defines who should do what and when, and how, to protect the victims. The documents that do exist are barely accessible, fragmented and not binding.

Change is needed here. The National rapporteur recommends that the Minister of Security and Justice should ensure the development of a national referral mechanism, a comprehensive document which includes work and procedural protocols for the protection of victims.

**‘Victims of human trafficking are entitled to protection. That is why all government agencies need to know what they should do’**






Prostitution is not a synonym for human trafficking, but the prostitution industry has proved to be particularly prone to use for trafficking purposes. The idealised picture of the voluntarily self-employed prostitute is not borne out by the facts. The prostitution sector must be made less susceptible. This is a challenge that requires a broad package of measures.

There is no single panacea. The first step is to formulate consistent policy. At the moment policy on prostitution differs from municipality to municipality. This is an invitation to human traffickers to search for local authorities who have no policy or who barely enforce it, if at all. The coming into force of the new legislation on prostitution is a first step. Filling in the further details of the policy on prostitution is a responsibility of the local authorities. They are best advised to cooperate at regional level to coordinate policy and thus prevent some places becoming more attractive to human traffickers than others.

Making the prostitution industry less susceptible requires more than just legislation and regulations. Supervision and enforcement of prostitution policy is crucially important. Improving the position of prostitutes is also vital. Local authorities should explicitly include the improvement of the position of prostitutes in their policy.

Clients, too, have a responsibility to reduce the susceptibility of the prostitution industry to trafficking. Recourse to criminal law is one of the means available. The recommendation is that it should be made an offence for a person to use the sexual services of a prostitute if he knows, or can reasonably be assumed to know, that he or she has been coerced or pressurised and is in fact a victim of human trafficking.

A nighttime photograph of a canal in a city, likely Amsterdam. The water reflects the warm lights of buildings and street lamps. A motorcycle is parked on the sidewalk in the foreground. The scene is dark, with the primary light sources being the artificial lights of the city.

**‘The prostitution industry is susceptible to human trafficking. A uniform approach is needed to combat abuse. The position of prostitutes must be strengthened. Clients must be held accountable.’**

Exploitation comes in many guises and occurs everywhere. Not just in the sex industry, but beyond.

Frequently mentioned sectors are agriculture and horticulture and the catering industry, where labour exploitation can occur. Little attention is paid to this form of exploitation, observes the National Rapporteur. The engrained idea in society at large and in government agencies is that this is a less serious forms of exploitation. Examples in the report prove otherwise. Like sexual exploitation this form of human trafficking equally serves to undermine the social fabric.

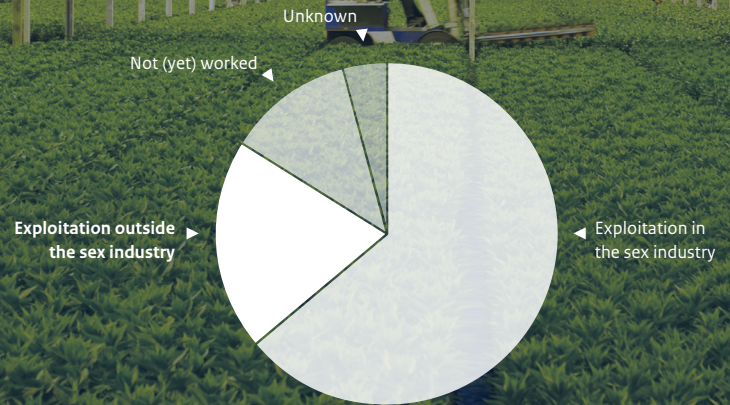
Besides exploiting people's labour new phenomena have recently been connected with exploitation, such as forced begging and applying for allowances under coercion. It is crucial that the government is prepared for the occurrence of these new forms of human trafficking. Awareness-raising and training are vital. Important, too, is the identification of new partners in the battle against human trafficking. If a new form of human trafficking is discovered we need to ask which agency within the government and beyond has the authority to intervene effectively.

Exploitation outside the sex industry must be actively tracked down since it is often concealed from society and government agencies. Tackling exploitation outside the sex industry therefore needs to become a policy priority. Creative investigations must be followed by effective prosecution.

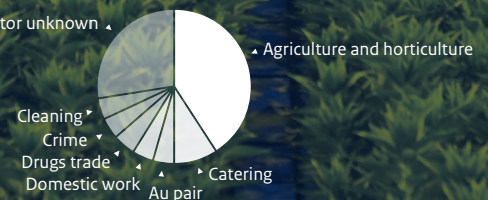
The Minister of Security and Justice and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment are recommended to pay more attention to tackling this form of exploitation. Moreover, organisations confronted with new forms of human trafficking must continue investing in training and consciousness-raising and dealing with the identification of human trafficking.

**'Too little attention is paid to exploitation outside the sex industry. It is important to be alert to new forms of human trafficking.'**

Victims, sectors of exploitation 2011



Sectors of exploitation outside the sex industry 2011





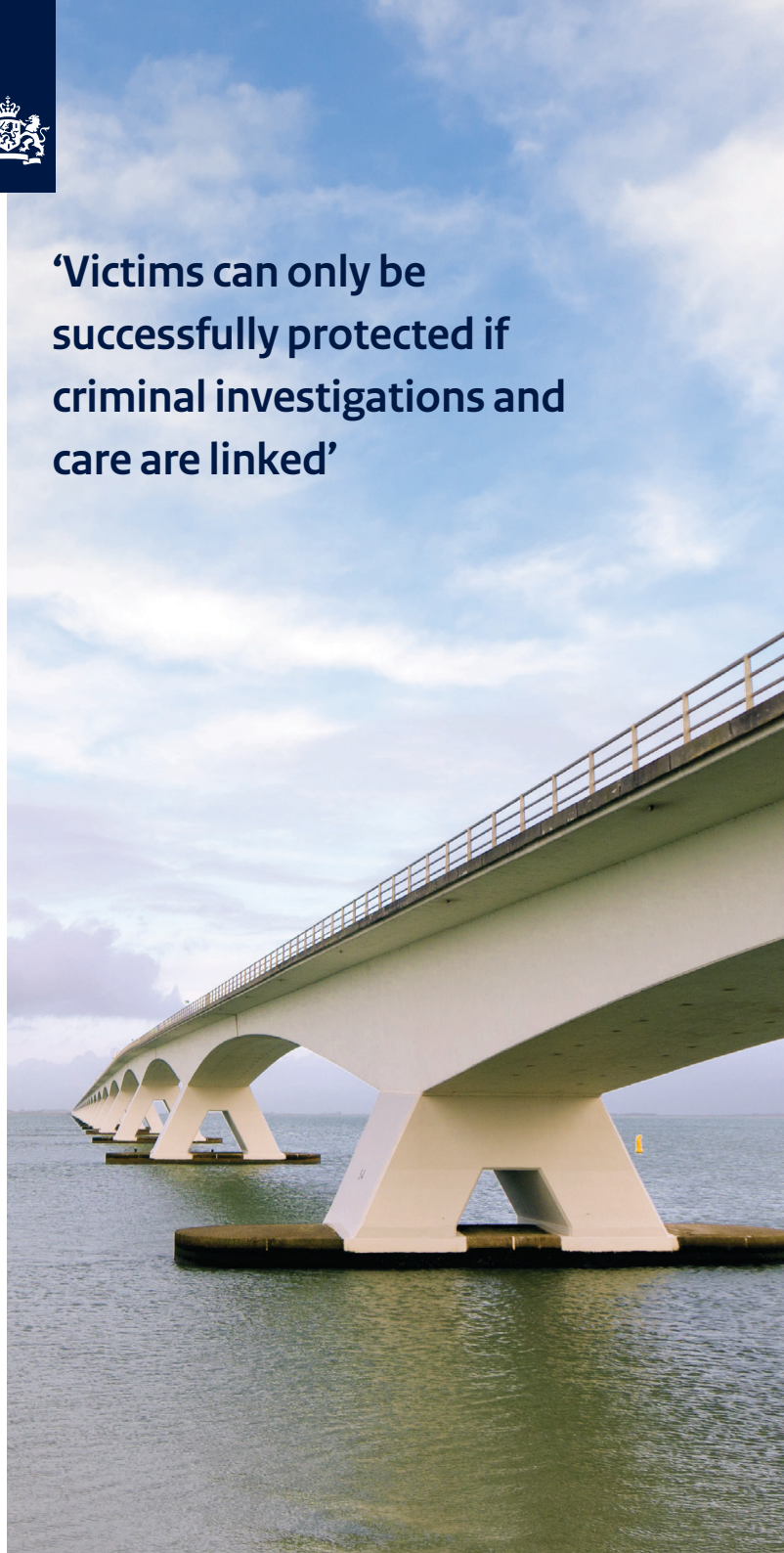
Players in the care sector – such as youth care, the municipal health service and care and shelter agencies – have a major job to do in identifying possible victims and play a key role when it comes to the protection of victims. Protection can only be effective if the authorities from the different domains work together.

A lot has been invested in cooperation at the regional and local level in the Netherlands in recent years. The Netherlands has Regional Information and Expertise Centres (*RIEC*) and Safety Coordination Houses (*Veiligheidshuizen*), two collaborative groups that enable organised crime and local crime to be tackled. Various agencies meet in these groups to coordinate their activities optimally. The link between the different cooperating groups is essential, both to prevent gaps in the tackling of human trafficking *and* to avoid duplication.

Although structures are present in the Netherlands to link care, enforcement, investigation and prosecution in practice this proves difficult. The coming into force of a new covenant for example now makes it impossible for those providing care to sit down together with the other agencies in the Regional Information and Expertise Centres. The Safety Coordination Houses can still do so. Hence, establishing a link between the Regional Information and Expertise Centres and the Safety Coordination Houses is all the more essential.

Connection is the key word, because there is no need to create something new when the Regional Information and Expertise Centres and the Safety Coordination Houses already exist. The Minister of Security and Justice is recommended to foster the link between the Regional Information and Expertise Centres and the Safety Coordination Houses. The collaborating groups themselves need to see to the necessary links in their own organisations.

**‘Victims can only be successfully protected if criminal investigations and care are linked’**





# The Dutch Rapporteur reports on the nature and scale of human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands

## What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is exploitation or the intent to exploit. In fact it covers all labour or services which are performed under duress, in the widest sense of the word, and which people have not chosen to do voluntarily. Human trafficking and exploitation may be accompanied by poor working and living conditions though not always.

## What does the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children do?

The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children reports on the nature and scale of human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands. The rapporteur monitors the effects of policy conducted in these domains, identifies bottlenecks and makes recommendations to improve the tackling of these themes. The National Rapporteur has no investigative authority and is not a complaints agency. Internationally, the Rapporteur has a unique, independent position in relation to the government and is both a national and international authority.

## Who is the National Rapporteur?

The National Rapporteur is Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen has worked for years as judge, most recently as vice-president of the district court at The Hague. She was previously a public prosecutor.

The National Rapporteur is supported in her work by a team of researchers from diverse disciplines including lawyers, criminologists, anthropologists, politicologists, philosophers and social psychologists.

## What activities does the National Rapporteur carry out?

The National Rapporteur publishes reports on human trafficking and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands and on the effects of the government policies pursued. The reports contain recommendations for improving measures to tackle human trafficking and sexual violence against children, information about relevant legislation and regulations, prevention, the detection and prosecution of perpetrators and care for victims. The National rapporteur collects quantitative and qualitative data by means of independent research, through research in external databases and the organisation and participation in meetings and conferences. The rapporteur takes part in diverse task forces and expert groups in the field of human trafficking and sexual violence against children. The National rapporteur is also active internationally. She advises within a network of rapporteurs on the European policy to be conducted in the fight against human trafficking.

---

**Postal address**  
P.O. Box 20301  
2500 EH The Hague

Telephone: + 31 (0) 70 370 45 14  
[www.dutchrapporteur.nl](http://www.dutchrapporteur.nl)