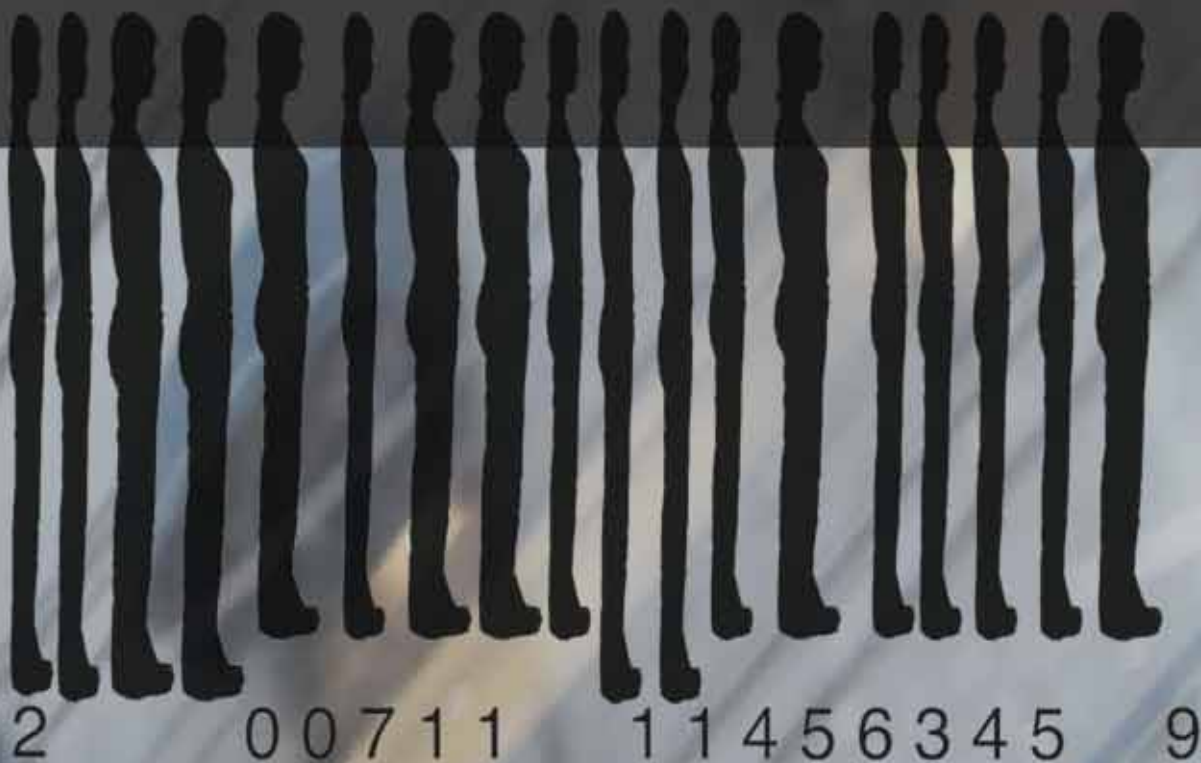


Anette Brunovskis
Guri Tyldum

Crossing Borders

An Empirical Study of Transnational Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings



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Preface

This report concludes a study commissioned by the Norwegian Ministries of *Local Government and Regional Development* and of *Justice and the Police* as part of their Plan of Action for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children. Fafo is grateful for this opportunity to enter a challenging research field. *Crossing Borders* focuses on the recruiting to prostitution in Norway of women who are crossing national borders, as well as personal, social, and, in the eyes of many, moral ones. The major aim is to tell the stories of these women, objectively and with compassion, by focusing on their opportunity situations, networks and choices that eventually led to them being recruited. A particular aim is to explore the role of enforcement, exploitation and trafficking. *Crossing Borders* also analyse how trafficked women have found their ways out again, using own resources and skills, as well as public and private helpers to cross the borders back. It is our hope to contribute to the current debate regarding appropriate policies to combat trafficking and to support women who are exploited in the prostitution market.

Several individuals and organisation contributed to the present study. First and foremost, our gratitude goes to Anna, Maria, Mona, Lisa, Nina, Ingrid, Susan, Tina, Elisabeth, Martha, Astrid, Carol, Sonya, Susanne, Isabel, Helen, Paula, Anita, Camilla, Gina, Olivia, Rita, Kristina, and Rebecca. These women shared their sometimes very painful memories with us in order to improve the understanding of trafficking. We also thank each of the 114 women who volunteered information about their lives in Oslo.

In the home countries, we had the fortune of drawing on the hospitality as well as the insights and practical support of close to twenty organisations. For the sake of protecting the anonymity of our informants who live in the shelters run by several of these organisations, we cannot disclose names. We extend our thanks following the principle of letting none be mentioned and none left out.

In Oslo, we obtained invaluable assistance from the Prosentret, a social service centre providing support to women and men in prostitution. Our thanks to Marie Bang-Nielsen, Camilla Hammergren, Liv Jessen, Irina Polykova, Ganimete Ramadani, Arne Randers-Persson and Inger Tangen. Our thanks are also due to Nadheim/Kirkens Bymisjon and Elisabeth Dahl for generously sharing their knowledge on the prostitution market in Oslo.

In addition to the authors of this report, a number of Fafo staff has contributed to the project. Researcher Lise Bjerkan managed the project under the supervision of Deputy Managing Director Jon Pedersen, and Researcher Anniken Huitfeldt contributed to shaping the project in its initial phase. Data was collected by Kristin Dalen, Jonas Feiring, Julius Jørgensen, Tor Olav Nævestad, Ane Mannsåker Roald, Linn-Kaja Rogstad, and Mai Tonheim. We thank them all for their work and their commitment to contribute to better the lives of women trafficked into and exploited through prostitution.

Oslo, February 2004
Jon Hanssen-Bauer
Managing Director
Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies

Sammendrag

Denne rapporten presenterer resultater fra en studie av utenlandsk prostitusjon i Oslo, med spesiell vekt på kvinner fra Øst- og Sentral Europa. Studien har to hovedmål. For det første har vi ønsket å beregne antallet kvinner som selger seksuelle tjenester, samt hvordan kvinner av ulik nasjonalitet fordeler seg innen de forskjellige prostitusjons arenaene. For det andre har vi søkt å utforske for de mekanismer som utspiller seg i tilknytning til trafficking av kvinner for seksuell utnyttelse.

I oktober 2003 arbeidet om lag 600 kvinner fra mer enn 40 land innen prostitusjon i Oslo, fordelt på tre ulike arenaer; massasjeinstitutter, annonser og på gata. Kun en tredel av de prostituerte kvinnene i Oslo er av norsk opprinnelse. En tredel er av asiatiske opprinnelse, hovedsaklig fra Thailand. Den tredje største gruppen kommer fra Øst og Sentral-Europa. Majoriteten av de prostituerte i Oslo er norske statsborgere eller har annen form for langsiktig opphold, kun en tredel er i Norge på kortsiktig opphold.

De prostituerte i Oslo er en sammensatt gruppe, med stor variasjon i både alder og utdannings nivå. De norske prostituerte er eldst, med en snittalder på 37 år, mens de østeuropeiske er yngst – halvparten er under 23 år. Det høyeste utdanningsnivået finnes hos norske prostituerte som opererer gjennom annonser (i gjennomsnitt 15 år). Med unntak av kvinner fra Balkan, har også de østeuropeiske prostituerte et høyt utdanningsnivå (i gjennomsnitt 13 år). Kvinner fra Balkan har et lavere utdanningsnivå og er samtidig den yngste gruppen, halvparten er under 21 år.

Vi har nærmet oss studiet av trafficking gjennom en rekke intervjuer med ofre for trafficking, som har returnert til sine hjemland. Vårt hovedfokus har vært på disse kvinnes livshistorier. Vi har ikke søkt å identifisere spesifikke trafficking tilfeller i Oslo, snarere har vi forsøkt å avdekke *mekanismene* som ligger bak trafficking, for på den måten å få en bedre forståelse av hvordan ofre for trafficking kan oppspores og hjelpes.

Det er svært sjelden at kvinner som blir ofre for trafficking er tatt med fra sine hjemland mot sin egen vilje. Det store flertallet har selv valgt å reise ut, og noen har vært klar over at de ville komme til å arbeide som prostituerte. En slik beslutning springer ofte ut av et ønske om å forbedre sin egen livssituasjon. Selv om en vanlig motivasjonsfaktor er et behov for penger, er det ikke alle som kan klassifiseres som fattige. Vi har identifisert tre hovedforklaringer for ønsket om å reise ut og/eller å

gå inn i prostitusjon. Disse er: «respons på en akutt krise», «langsigtig fattigdom» og «et ønske om å få mer ut av livet sitt».

Kvinner fra Øst og Sentral Europa som operer på sexmarkedet i Oslo er i stor grad avhengige av hjelp fra andre for å komme til Oslo og for å etablere seg i markedet. Ofte kommer de som står for denne bistanden fra kvinnens nærmiljø. De som står for rekruttering bygger i stor grad på et allerede eksisterende tillitsforhold, enten gjennom et personlig vennskapsforhold, eller gjennom et omfattende system for irregulær migrasjon, der uformelle jobbtilbud ofte blir oppfattet som en god mulighet til å tjene penger i utlandet. Denne prosessen åpner for mange ulike former utnyttelse.

Ofre for trafficking opplever å miste kontroll over eget liv. De kan ikke velge å forlate prostitusjon, eller når, hvor eller hvordan de skal arbeide. Direkte fysisk makt er ikke den viktigste måten disse kvinnene blir kontrollert på. Maktbruk kan forekomme i mange former, fra innestenging og vold, til trusler og manipulasjon, og en gradvis endring av egne grenser for hva en er villig til å gjøre. Ofte utnytter bakmenn kvinnenes sterke mistro til politiet i eget hjemland, til å sikre sin kontroll over dem. Kvinnene lever ofte isolert, og har ofte liten grunn til å tro at politiet i landet der de arbeider er annerledes enn politiet hjemme. I noen tilfeller har kvinner som først er introdusert til prostitusjon under tvang, fortsatt å prostituere seg mer eller mindre frivillig, etter at de har klart å komme seg unna de som kontrollerer dem.

Kvinnens mulighet til å komme seg ut av en traffickingssituasjon, er ofte mer avhengig av deres oppfatning av sin egen situasjon enn av faktiske fysiske hindre. Mange kvinner har forlatt sine bakmenn etter å ha fått tilgang til ny informasjon, som har bidratt til å endre hvordan de oppfatter sin egen situasjon. Dette kan være at kvinnen har fått fornyet tillitt til politiet, eller at de har mottatt tilbud om hjelp fra andre. I flere tilfeller har slike tilbud kommet fra kunder.

Andre traffickingofre har flyktet fra en tvangssituasjon, ofte med stor risiko, etter at deres situasjon av forverret seg til et utålelig nivå. Disse kvinnene synes å håndtere en gradvis forverring av egen situasjon, men bare til et visst punkt. Etter dette er de i stand til å legge planer for å rømme, noe de ofte ikke har vurdert seriøst tidligere. De fleste kvinnene kommer seg ut av tvangssituasjonen på egen hånd, med eller uten hjelp fra kunder. De kommer sjelden i direkte kontakt politi eller rehabiliteringstilbud. De som kommer i kontakt med rehabiliteringsapparatet har stort sett kontaktet organisasjoner som tilbyr støtte på egenhånd, en god stund etter at de har kommet tilbake til hjemlandet. Mange ofre blir aldri registrert eller tilbudt assistanse.

Få kvinner ønsker å anmelde bakmenn til politiet. Dels fordi de frykter for sin egen sikkerhet, men også, og like viktig, fordi de ikke tror det vil gjøre noen forskjell å anmelde overgriperne. Blant de som har gått til politianmeldelse er erfaringene blandede. To faktorer peker seg ut som spesielt viktige for å redusere belastningen

for kvinnen i denne situasjonen; å sikre at kvinnene blir skikkelig informert om hvordan saken utvikler seg og at de beskyttes mot hevnaksjoner fra bakmennene. Slik beskyttelse må vare lenger enn selve etterforskningen og rettsaken – en rekke kvinner uttrykker frykt for dømte bakmenn som har sont ferdig eller for hevnaksjoner fra bakmenneses nettverk.

Vitnebeskyttelse er ikke uproblematisk og kan innebære svært negative konsekvenser for de kvinnene det gjelder. De blir isolert fra tidligere sosiale nettverk og må starte opp eget liv på nytt igjen. I de tilfellene vi har kommet over av kvinner som lever under vitnebeskyttelse, er det kvinnen som har blitt fratatt sin frihet, ikke bakmennene som har ansvaret for deres situasjon i første runde.

Executive summary

This report presents the results of a study on foreign prostitution in Oslo, focusing on women from Eastern and Central Europe. The main goals of the study have been twofold. Firstly, we aimed to estimate the number of women selling sexual services, and the distribution of different nationalities in various arenas in the sex market. Secondly, we aimed to explore the mechanisms for trafficking women for sexual exploitation.

In Oslo in October 2003, there were approximately 600 women of over 40 different nationalities working in prostitution in three different arenas: massage parlours, advertisements and the street. Only one third of the prostitutes in Oslo are of Norwegian origin. Another third are of Asian origin, mainly from Thailand. The third largest group comprises women who originate from Eastern and Central Europe. The majority of prostitutes in Oslo are citizens or long-term residents – only about a third are in Norway on short-term stays.

The group of prostitutes is very diverse, and there are large differences between the women in terms of age and education. Norwegian prostitutes that operate through advertisements are the oldest, with an average age of 37 years, while the Eastern Europeans are the youngest – half of them are younger than 23 years. The highest level of education is found among the Norwegians and Eastern Europeans who do not come from a Balkan country, with an average of 15 and 13 years of schooling respectively. Women from Balkan countries have a lower educational level, and are also the absolutely youngest group; half is younger than 21 years.

We approached our investigation into trafficking mechanisms by conducting interviews with former victims of trafficking who have returned to their home countries. Our main focus has been on the life stories of these women. We did not aim to identify situations of trafficking in Oslo, rather, we explored the *mechanisms* behind trafficking in order to expand our knowledge of how victims of trafficking can be identified and assisted.

It is very rare that women who become victims of trafficking are taken out of their countries against their will. The vast majority choose to migrate and some are aware they will be working as prostitutes. This decision is often born of a wish to improve their life situations. Although the common motivating factor is a need for money, not everyone comes from a background of poverty. Three broad reasons for

wanting to migrate or to work in prostitution can be identified: “response to an acute crisis”, “long-term poverty”, and “wanting more from life”.

Women from Eastern and Central Europe in the sex market in Oslo today are largely dependent on the assistance of others in order to get here, and in order to set up their businesses. Most victims of trafficking and women who have gone into prostitution voluntarily have drawn on the assistance of others in order to be able to travel. Most of those who have provided the assistance come from the women’s immediate environment. The recruiters generally draw on a trust that is already established, either through a personal relationship, or through an extensive system for irregular migration where informal job offers are generally believed to lead to good opportunities to make money abroad. This process provides ample room for exploitation to take place.

The trafficking situations we explored are characterised by women having lost control over their own lives and not being able to choose, for instance, to leave, or whether they want to work, or how much they want to work. Direct physical force is not the main way of controlling these women. Coercion may take a large variety of forms, from being locked in, to being manipulated or experiencing a gradual shift in the boundaries of what they have agreed they are willing to do. We found traffickers commonly exploit the fact that many of the women have a strong distrust in the police in their country of origin. They have little reason to believe that things are different in the country they are trafficked to. In some cases, the women have gone from being introduced to prostitution in a coercive manner to taking up the work more or less independently after being able to get away from their traffickers.

The ability of women to leave a trafficking situation is often more dependent on their perception of the situation rather than of any physical constraints. Several women left once they had acquired new information that changed their perception of how free they were to leave. This decision generally had to do with whether the women felt they could trust the police, or because they received an offer of help. In quite a few instances the person offering assistance was a client. Other victims of trafficking made an effort to run away, sometimes taking a large risk, after their situations had deteriorated to an unbearable level. These women seem to somehow be able to cope with strains that are introduced to them gradually, but that for some there is a limit to what they will take, a point at which they are willing take a step that they would not have seriously considered before.

Most women leave their trafficking situations on their own, with or without the assistance of clients, and do not come directly into contact with police or rehabilitation services. Mostly, they have contacted organisations offering support on their own quite some time after returning to their home countries. Many victims of trafficking are never registered or offered assistance. Few women want to report their traffickers to the police. This is partially explained by a fear of repercussions, but

equally important is the belief that reporting the offenders will make no difference. Among the women who reported their traffickers to the police, experiences are mixed. The most important factors which minimise trauma in this regard are that the women are provided with a satisfactory level of information about the progress of their cases, and that they are protected from the traffickers. This protection must last longer than the duration of a trial; many women have expressed fear of convicted traffickers who are to be released from prison, or the friends or networks of the traffickers. It should, however, be noted that witness protection programmes entail some very negative consequences for the women in question. They may be isolated from their former network, and have to start their lives all over again. In the cases we encountered, the women are the ones who are deprived of freedom rather than those who were responsible for trafficking them.

1 Introduction

In this report we present the results of a half year study on prostitution and trafficking to Norway, with a focus on women from East and Central Europe. This issue has received growing attention in Norway over the past few years, as a sharp increase of women from Eastern and Central Europe operating in the sex market has been observed. According to key informants with access to the prostitution market in Oslo, this increase became apparent around three years ago; in 2000. The same year, Oslo Police District issued a report investigating the issue of trafficking in women in Oslo. Although the report states that no conclusive evidence was found of trafficking in women in the prostitution market, there were several indications that women were working under direct supervision of pimps who profited from their prostitution, and that several could be defined as having been lured into prostitution (Sætre 2000). This report also refers to a court case from 1999, where several men were convicted of crimes related to trafficking, as well as several other singular cases where trafficking was suspected to have taken place (*ibid.*).

The recent emergence of other presumed cases of trafficking, as well as experiences from neighbouring countries, indicate that trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is an issue that must be dealt with. This raises several questions: What forms may trafficking take in Norwegian society, and how can we detect it? Given that we are able to identify victims of trafficking, how can policies best be formulated, and what aspects must be taken into account? Is it possible to distinguish trafficked women selling sex from other prostitutes in the Norwegian sex-market? And does such a distinction make sense?

With these and other questions as a starting point, we have sought to explore the field of trafficking and prostitution with a focus on mechanisms involved in this trade. We have limited our focus in Norway to Oslo. It is well known that there are Russian women working as prostitutes in northern Norway, but this has been relatively well studied over the past years (see for instance Kramvig & Stien 2002, Stenvoll 2002, ECPAT Norge/Redd Barna 2001). Moreover, there is reason to believe that this particular segment of the sex market involves rather different mechanisms than that in the rest of the country, due, among other factors, to the fact that northern Norway borders on northwestern Russia.

1.1 Approach and sources of data

The first issue to be looked into in this study was the number and origin of prostitutes in Oslo. We have estimated the number of prostitutes working in prostitution in Oslo, and their nationalities. This was done by a combination of methods. For prostitutes working in the street, we applied Capture-Recapture (CR) techniques, which may be used to generate quantitative data out of a rapid assessment study of a difficult to reach population (Jensen 2002). For estimating the number and nationalities of prostitutes who get in contact with clients through advertisements, we collected advertisements from all known sources, over a four month period, and called up all telephone numbers during the month of October, to see if they were still in active use. In this telephone survey we also collected information on various background characteristics of the women.

Our second aim was to explore the mechanisms of trafficking in particular. In doing this, we conducted fieldwork in known countries of origin for victims of trafficking; and from which we know that there have been or are women working in the sex-market in Oslo, namely Lithuania, Ukraine and Albania. This approach was chosen because, first, we did not deem it probable that it would be possible for us to gain information about coercion, deceit or other factors that may qualify a situation to be defined as trafficking from women who were working as prostitutes in Oslo. Secondly, this was also a security consideration. Trafficking typically involves organised crime, and too diligent research can involve risks both for the trafficked women and researchers. Consequently, we did not aim to identify trafficking situations in Oslo, but interviewed former victims of trafficking who had returned, from a number of countries, to their countries of origin. Qualitative interviews were also conducted with foreign prostitutes working in Oslo. Our focus in these interviews has been on the life stories of these women; their social background, their situations when crucial choices were made, which alternatives they perceived were open to them, and which other actors were involved in decisions and practical organisation, as well as in providing advice, encouragement or discouragement at various stages.

Appendix 1 describes the different estimation methods applied, the phone survey undertaken among prostitutes working from advertisements, as well as the focus and approach for our interviews with trafficked women.

1.2 A note on the use of terms

Trafficking, and especially prostitution, are highly politicised fields, and are subject to heated debate. This is often also reflected in the use of terms. Over the past few years, the term sex-worker has become the preferred term by many involved in the selling of sexual services. Throughout the report, we will mostly be using the term “prostitute” for a person who provides sexual services in explicit exchange for money or other resources, and “prostitution” for the act of doing this. The reason is simply that, in Norway, these are still the most common terms in use. This does not imply that we wish to distance ourselves from the sex-workers’ rights movement, or that we have taken a stance against it. It has not been our mandate in this research to go into the issues of criminalisation, decriminalisation or legalisation of prostitution as such, or acts associated with it.

Furthermore, the terms prostitution and trafficking are not necessarily self-evident in their meanings, and to operate with a clear line of demarcation between the two may be problematic. We will return to this issue further throughout the report, notably in chapter 4, dealing with different forms of coercion and control, and throughout the remainder of the report. As a starting point, we have used the definition of trafficking in the Palermo Protocol.¹ Here, trafficking is defined as:

... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by the means of the threat or the use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or the receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations 2000).

The Protocol further specifies that exploitation includes at a minimum the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, as well as different forms of forced labour or the removal of organs. Although the definition specifically mentions the use of force or deceit, there is also an opening for defining less obvious situations of coercion as trafficking, through the element of abusing a position of vulnerability. It should also be noted that the definition as it stands in the Protocol does not require that a victim of trafficking did not give his or her consent to the exploitation. In fact, the Protocol states that if any of the means, (for example, force, deceit, and, notably, the abuse of a position of vulnerability) have been used, the consent of a victim of trafficking is irrelevant. This means that if a

¹ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations 2000)

woman working in prostitution may be said to have been in a position of vulnerability when she was recruited for prostitution, it is irrelevant whether she knew she was going to do sex-work or not. If someone profits from her prostitution, the situation is still defined as trafficking, according to the Palermo Protocol. We have, in our interviews, sought to explore both the “obvious” cases of trafficking in which there is a heavy presence of force and violence, as well as those that may be said to border on what today is usually seen as prostitution involving pimps as well as women selling sex independently.

1.3 Structure of the report

In this report, we first present a migration framework for understanding trafficking and trans-national prostitution in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 we describe the prostitution arenas in Oslo, and present our estimations of the number of prostitutes, their nationalities and other background characteristics. Chapters 4 to 8 are mostly based on analysis of material from fieldwork in Lithuania, Ukraine and Albania, but also draw on the data from our survey in Oslo. In these chapters, we aim to analyse and identify different mechanisms connected with the chain of events that constitute trafficking and entry into prostitution, based on the life stories of the women we interviewed. This includes the women’s background, the role of recruiters, different forms of coercion or lack thereof, exit processes, and return to home country. Our main conclusions are summarised in Chapter 9.

2 Prostitution, trafficking and migration

Every year thousands of migrants cross borders in search for work opportunities, increased incomes or the possibility to start a new and better life. Within this framework, extensive recruitment and organisation of migrants takes place. Among migrant women a substantial number end up in prostitution, either of their own free will or as a result of coercion in some form. In order to explain trafficking and transnational prostitution it needs to be understood within a framework of migration, and this has been our starting point in this report. Our choice of framework and perspective is outlined in the following sections.

2.1 A migration framework for understanding trafficking and prostitution

Migrant women in prostitution in Norway are a very diverse group. There is great variation between them in terms of their motivation for travelling, how their journeys and stays abroad were organised, and in their social background and their experiences before leaving their home countries. There is also great variation between the women in terms of how they work and operate in Oslo. In order to understand changes in international prostitution and how trafficking takes place, we need to look into the mechanisms and paths that people who travel abroad usually follow, and the alternatives that they have, or see themselves as having, at the various stages in their migration attempts. Below we give a rough outline of the migration paths that women usually follow, and the most common paths into trafficking and prostitution that are found within this framework. In the subsequent chapters we will treat the various stages in more depth.

A desire to go abroad

Even in the most brutal cases of forced prostitution and slavery, there are few recent stories of women or men who are transported out of their country against their own will. The victims may have welcomed an opportunity to travel, thinking they would find work, or escape from prosecution or economic insecurity in their home

countries. Many realise too late that the conditions under which they are going to live or “work” are not as they had been promised they would be. Recruiters to the sex industry around the world exploit the fact that there are millions of people who wish to travel abroad to find a job, get married or start a new life.

The need for assistance and organised travel

Whether they seek work, permanent residence, marriage or prostitution, women and men who travel abroad from developing and transitional countries can either travel independently or with the help of an organiser. For the majority of the population in developing and transitional countries, travelling to the West implies so many difficulties that organising the travel alone is usually not considered an option. Most people do not know how to proceed to find, for example, a job or a husband, or even a place to live in a foreign country. Language difficulties are often a further complicating factor. Moreover, many need assistance, practical and economic, in order to get travel documents such as passports and visas. Last but not least, many travel abroad as a response to economic problems at home, and do not have the financial resources to pay the travel expenses. Consequently, the majority of those who travel in search of opportunities do so with organisational and economic help of external organisers, or at least with the help of extended networks. In most cases we can talk of *irregular* migration, where people travel without the necessary documents, money or information in general. Persons and organisations that offer such assistance are of utmost importance for our understanding of how irregular migration takes place, and its outcomes, as the characteristics and intentions of these persons and organisations determine what risk the women and men are facing in the course of their migration. In this report we refer to such persons and organisations as *recruiters*.

Lack of control of outcome

Women and men who decide to rely on a recruiter and the recruiter’s networks when they travel abroad are thus often without significant economic resources, and have few or no foreign language skills or networks from which they can get adequate information about their destination country. Many travel with false documents, and with no money. Consequently, when they enter their destination country they are often in an extremely vulnerable position, where they are totally dependent on their recruiter and his or her networks. This vulnerability is often exploited by recruiters to the sex industry.

The risk of entering prostitution is not over, even if the women are not forced or lured into prostitution upon arrival. A number of women end up in prostitution

after some time in Norway. Several migrant women, who work in prostitution in Oslo today, started their lives in Norway with a formal job, often a cleaning job. Others had Norwegian husbands or boyfriends who brought them there. Also some asylum seekers seem to end up in prostitution, while waiting for a decision on their application, or after their application has been turned down². These women have not succeeded in their initial plans for a new life – they fail to be integrated into Norwegian society; some lose their jobs; others decide to leave their husbands or boyfriends. With limited language skills, and often marginal education, these women have few employment opportunities in the Norwegian labour market. Those who only have temporary residence papers risk being sent out of the country if they cannot support themselves. Others have an obligation to support family and close ones at home. Thus, the loss of income or economic security that a cleaning job or husband can give makes entering prostitution an option that might not have been considered when the women left their home countries. Also, for this group, there is large variation with regard to the extent to which the women make the decision to enter prostitution independently, or under direct or indirect pressure from organisers or boyfriends. The quality of networks (both in Norway and in the home country) and ability to access information (through language skills, networks and educational level) are important factors that influence outcomes, when a recruiter is chosen, upon arrival in Norway, and in later periods of high risk.

Going back

While we have to keep in mind the success stories of marriages, work permits and successful applications for asylum, the absolute majority of migrants from outside the developed world have to return to their home countries at some time.

Some return with money earned from prostitution or other work. Others return empty-handed. A woman who left in response to an economic crisis may find that the situation back home has not changed, that the economic problems are still there, and that there are still few opportunities to find employment. For those who come back without money, the economic crisis may be even more acute than when they left, particularly if family savings were used to cover the costs of travelling to Norway.

² It seems clear that some traffickers exploit the asylum institution in Norway by systematically recruiting women to work in prostitution while they await the result of their applications. However, it has not been possible in this study to establish the motivation for the women to participate in this. Three types of motivations have been suggested: Some women may, in agreement with their organisers, see the asylum institution as a means for prolonging a stay where the goal initially was prostitution. Others may believe they will be granted asylum, and have agreed to work in prostitution temporarily as a means of paying off their travel debt. Finally, some may be offered to earn some money in prostitution when they realise that they will not be granted asylum, as they do not want to go back empty-handed.

Furthermore, women who have worked in prostitution, whether this was forced or by their own choice, often find it difficult to reintegrate into society when they try to go back to their “old lives”. As a consequence, some choose to go back into prostitution after a while, either in their home countries or abroad.

2.2 Explaining variation in outcome

As the section above illustrates, women may migrate with more or less similar goals, but can find themselves in very different conditions upon arrival in their destination country. In the following chapters we try to explain how these different outcomes develop, and to distinguish groups and situations of particular risk. As the perspectives we use will greatly influence the type of conclusions we are able to draw, we briefly present our choice of approach below.

Migration, and in particular prostitution-related migration from Third World and transitional countries, is often explained by means of a structural perspective, influenced by dependency theories in the social sciences (Lisborg 1998). Migration is seen as a consequence of the unequal distribution of wealth between the developed and underdeveloped world, and as a symptom of the division and redistribution of labour between the centre (the developed world) and the periphery. It is argued that migration is an outcome of a macro-social process – not a result of individual choice. It is simply one of the limited number of strategies Third World citizens have to improve their living conditions or simply survive. In contrast, the neo-classical perspective focuses on the individual actor; the individual is seen as a rational actor, who decides to migrate in order to maximise profit, as development of income levels and living standards develop at different paces in various parts of the world. Here the focus is on the individual’s access to information and resources when decisions are made.

It may be important to keep the structural perspective in mind when approaching the field of trafficking and international prostitution. However, as a macro perspective with its main focus on global inequality, it is not very helpful if we wish to find out how trafficking in human beings can be fought in Norway. In this report we prefer to focus on choices that individuals make, and the conditions under which these choices are made, as this knowledge can be used to understand how trafficking takes place, and increase our understanding of how women who contemplate migration can avoid situations that carry a major risk of exploitation.

In order to understand choices, we need to understand which resources the actor had available, in terms of for example, information, networks, and money, and also the framework of values, traditions and laws within which these choices have

been made. Thus, while we in this report focus mainly on individual choices, the choices are analysed in light of the social structures that surround the individual, and the resources he/she has available at the time when decisions are made.

This perspective raises a number of questions: First of all, what choices do women make that leads up to a situation of trafficking and exploitation, and what information and resources do they have available when these decisions are made? Which actors are involved at the various phases, and who makes the major decisions? And, finally, which options do the women see as being open to them and how did they evaluate the risk at the time they made the decision? These questions will be in focus of this report. We will start by describing the main actors: the migrant prostitutes that work in Oslo.

3 Migrant prostitution in Norway

The number of migrant prostitutes working in Norway, has been subject to much attention. According to previous estimations about 2500 women work in prostitution in Norway during one year, and among these between 30 and 40 percent have been believed to be of non-Norwegian origin (Dagbladet, 03.02. 2003). We have estimated that 617 women worked in prostitution in Oslo in October 2003, and among these 67 percent were of non-Norwegian origin. Among the migrant prostitutes, 52 percent are permanent residents in Norway. If we look at a full year, the number of women in prostitution in Oslo is somewhat higher, as there is a high turnover of migrant prostitutes who are here on short-term stays, as well as a group of citizens or residents that only work in prostitutions some months of the year. If we assume that the number of women in prostitution is more or less the same every month of the year (or that our estimate for October represents an average), we will estimate that about 1100 women work in prostitution in Oslo in one year. Of these are 79 percent of non-Norwegian origin.

We may distinguish between three main arenas where women working in prostitution in Norway get into contact with clients; individual advertisements, the street, and massage parlours. The largest arena is individual advertisements in which women offer erotic massage or escort services in specialised newspapers, magazines and on the Internet. In our study we have systematically collected telephone numbers from all known sources for advertisements for escort and massage (printed and electronic) over a four-month period (July to October). The numbers were called during October to establish if they were still in use. Much to our surprise, we discovered that it was possible to obtain substantial information from these telephone conversations, and we developed a small survey of the basic characteristics of prostitutes operating through advertisements. Based on the response rates in the various rounds of the survey, information given on the number of telephones used per woman and the number of women per telephone number, we modelled an estimate of the total number of women working in this arena, and their characteristics. According to this estimate approximately 398 women operated in this arena in October 2003 (see Table 1). Among the individual advertisements were several informal studios or massage parlours which did not advertise separately as studios, but which placed individual advertisements for each, or some, of the women who worked there.

Women working from such informal massage parlours are included in the above number.

An estimate of the number of street prostitutes was generated using capture-recapture methodology (see Appendix 1). Based on 4 separate observations on four different weekdays we estimate that about 133³ prostitutes operated from the street, during two weeks in mid-October.

The massage parlours and studios turned out to be the most difficult arena to get good estimates from. While some studios have a relatively stable level of activity, and can employ the same women over a relatively long time, others change employees, name, or even location, regularly. According to key respondents, some women will change the studio they work from several times in one year. As their activities are in principle illegal according to Norwegian law, it is difficult to get access to, and information about the women that offer erotic massage from these places. Based on interviews with key respondents, women working in these studios, and information provided by clients on the Internet, we have estimated that a total of 138 women worked from massage parlours or studios in October 2003. Of these, 66 percent were of non-Norwegian origin. A description of all the methodologies applied is presented in Appendix 1.

We did not make a separate estimate of number of prostitutes who operate from bars and hotels. However, interviews with key respondents and study of websites for clients in prostitution indicate that, to the extent that any women operate from bars at all, most of them are women who also operate from an adjoining massage parlour or on the street. In other bars where prostitution is thought to take place,

Table 1: Prostitutes operating in Oslo in October 2003, by arena and region of origin. Estimated numbers and percentages

	Advertisements		Massage parlours		Street		Total, adjusted for overlap*(- 8%)	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%		%
Total	398	100	138	100	133	100	617	100
Norway	115	29	45	33	58	44	201	33
Other Western Europe	17	4	10	7	0	0	25	4
East- and Central Europe	68	17	11	8	35	26	105	17
Asia	124	31	68	49	0	0	177	29
Other	74	19	4	3	40	30	109	18

* Here we assume that the overlap between arenas does not affect the distribution between national groups

³ The number of street prostitutes was estimated over a period of two weeks in October 2003. Since there is a relatively high turnover among the migrant women working in the street, the total number for October may be somewhat higher.

there does not seem to be much continuity in which women operate there, or whether prostitution takes place there at all. We therefore assume that all women who operate from bars are registered in one of the other arenas (massage parlours, advertisements or on the street).

There are no clear-cut lines between women working on the different arenas. About one third of the women who operate through advertisements said that they also contact clients in other arenas; either through massage parlours⁴ (19%) in bars (11%) on the street (6%) or in other ways (9%). Many of our respondents were uncomfortable about telling us the arenas in which they operate, and the refusal rate for this question was particularly high among women from Eastern and Central Europe. Among women operating from the street, the question seemed to be even less welcome, and, after several attempts, we had to give up trying to arrive at any useful estimates of overlap between the street and other arenas. Thus, while we have relatively good estimates for the number of women working in the various arenas, more insecurity is tied to the *overall* number of women working in prostitution in Oslo, as we do not know to what extent women operate in more than one arena. Based on information from the survey and key respondents, we have reduced the overall estimate by 8 percent to account for overlap.

Migrants from developing and transitional countries

In the following sections we distinguish between migrant prostitutes, and prostitutes of Norwegian origin. By migrant prostitutes we refer to all non-Norwegian citizens, as well as first generation Norwegians. Similarly, the women are classified into national groups according to nationality at birth, not according to present status.

In October 2003, 416 migrant women from 40 different countries worked in prostitution in Oslo. With the exception of a few women from the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark and Finland), all migrant prostitutes come from transitional or developing countries in Asia, Eastern and Central Europe, Latin America and Africa.

Women of Norwegian and Asian origin each make up about one third of the prostitutes in Oslo. While the Norwegians operate in all three arenas, and are the largest group operating from the streets, Asian women make up half the women in massage parlours, and are also the largest group operating through advertisements. Women from Eastern and Central Europe make up 17 percent of the prostitutes in Oslo, distributed equally between women from the Balkans (Albania, Kosovo,

⁴ Based on information from the interviews, we assume that the majority of these women work in informal studios, rather than in formal massage parlours that advertise as such.

Moldova and Romania) and other Eastern and Central European countries.⁵ Eastern and Central Europeans make up one quarter of the prostitutes in the street, and one about one fifth of the women operating through advertisements. Latin American women make up the third largest group operating from the street (19 percent). In total, women from South and Latin America, Africa and other regions make up 18 percent of the prostitutes in Oslo. In addition, there is a small group of first generation migrants to other Western European countries who refer to themselves as, for example, French or Spanish, but are of African or Latin American origin.

The single largest group of migrant prostitutes come from Thailand. This group is almost eight times larger than the second largest group – women from the Dominican Republic. With the exception of Thai prostitutes, each national group is relatively small – while prostitutes from the Dominican Republic made up about 20 women, prostitutes from Albania, Lithuania, Estonia and Brazil each are in groups of about 10.

3.1 A group with much diversity

In the following sections we present the results of a telephone survey of prostitutes working through advertisements, conducted in October 2003. The idea of conducting a telephone survey of this very special group of individuals may seem strange to many, as it initially did to us. However, as we started to call up telephone numbers used in advertisements to see if they were in active use, we realised that a large proportion of the prostitutes were not only willing to provide information, but also wanted to talk. Some were frustrated with the image that often is presented of prostitutes in the Norwegian media and were grateful to be given a chance to be “seen”. Others realised there is need for more knowledge about this group, and expressed the hope that the information we collected would be used to improve the conditions under which they live. Many participated simply because they were curious. The length of an average interview was about 15–20 minutes. However several conversations turned into more in-depth interviews lasting up to an hour. In some cases the respondents were called up again to make an appointment for a face-to-face interview. In one case we were invited to an informal massage parlour for an interview with the women working there.

A total of 225 women or men answered the telephone, and among these 36 percent were very co-operative, while 15 percent were willing to provide some information, giving a total of 114 cases with information. Among the women who answered their telephones, 49 percent did not want to provide any information. The refusal rate was highest among Western Europeans (not including Norwegians) (55

percent), notably women from our neighbouring Scandinavian countries, followed by the Norwegians, of whom 49 percent refused to provide any information at all. Women from Eastern and Central Europe were most inclined to co-operate, and as many as 57 percent were willing to provide information. Our interviewers are familiar with Eastern and Central Europe and speak Albanian, Polish and some Russian, and we believe this may have influenced the participation rate for this group. The Asian women had the lowest refusal rate: only 30 percent refused to provide any information. However, only 36 percent were very co-operative, while an equally large group were willing to answer some of the questions put to them. Similarly, 25 percent of the African, South and Latin American women were very co-operative, while another 27 percent were willing to provide some information. Partial participation was particularly common among African respondents. The results are adjusted (weighted) according to the language proficiency and estimated nationality of those who refused to participate, so that differences in response rates between national groups would not influence the results (see Appendix 1).

It does not seem that citizenship or length of stay in Norway influence how cooperative the women were; several of our co-operative respondents had only been in Norway for a few days at the time of the interview and there is no correlation between length of stay and degree of co-operation. Women over 40 were generally more likely to volunteer information, and were more comfortable talking about sensitive issues, however, overall, there is no difference in average age between those who were very co-operative and those who were only somewhat co-operative.

In some interviews the language problems were severe, as the respondent was not able to communicate in neither English nor Norwegian. Among Asian respondents in particular, questions were sometimes not understood. In some cases the telephone was taken over by another woman from the same country, and the interview was conducted through a combination of proxy and translator.

There are undoubtedly biases in our data, since the people who refused to participate are most likely somewhat different to those who were willing to provide data. In a few cases the telephone was answered, or taken over, by a male who stopped the interview. We can only speculate in what ways these women may be different from the other respondents. We do not believe that our survey has covered women who are under the strict control of pimps or organisers, to the extent that such women are present in Norway.

Interviewers informed respondents that we would prefer them *not* to answer individual questions rather than to provide inaccurate information. While this may have saved us from collecting misleading data, it has resulted in relatively large variation in response rates for the various questions. We do not report the results of questions where response rates are particularly low. It is worth noting that the largest refusal rates are not associated with the most obviously sensitive questions. While

most women did not find it problematic to say when they sold sex for the first time, a surprisingly high proportion of the respondents (in particular Thai women) did not want to say how many years of education they had completed.

The majority are long-term residents

In spite of the fact that only one third of the women working in prostitution in Oslo are born in Norway, we estimate that 48 percent are Norwegian citizens, and 67 percent are permanent residents in Norway.

Among those operating through advertisements, less than one third is in Norway on a short-term stay. Here the differences between the different nationalities are particularly important – among women of Asian origin, about 40 percent have Norwegian citizenship, 37 percent have permanent residence in Norway, while another 16 percent are citizens of another Western European country (usually Sweden). Only 6 percent of the Asian women who actively advertised escort or massage in Oslo in October 2003 were in Norway on short-term stays. Also, among the Latin American women with individual advertisements, the majority have citizenship or permanent residence in Norway, and 33 percent are here on short-term stays. However, information from key respondents indicate that the majority of the Dominican women who work on the streets are in Norway on a Schengen visa, staying in Europe (not necessarily working only in Norway) for three months at a time. Among the Eastern Europeans, the situation is different – as many as 74 percent of the women operating through advertisements had been staying in Norway for less than 6 months.

These data are consistent with the data we collected on the language proficiency of women answering the telephone, as we can expect that most long-term residents are able to communicate in Norwegian. While only 13 per cent of the Eastern

Table 2: Prostitutes with individual advertisements in Oslo, by nationality, Norwegian citizenship, residence and average length of stay in Norway

	Average length of stay, months	Stayed in Norway for more than 6 months, %	Average length of stay for long-term residents, years	Norwegian citizenship, %	Citizenship or permanent residence, %
Western Europe	9	30	2	0	0
East- and Central Europe	17	26	5	0	15
Asia	57	79	6	41	79
Other	35	42	7	22	56
All migrant prostitutes	34	47	6	22	49
n	48		24	99	

European answered the telephone in Norwegian, this was the case for two thirds of the Asian women. In addition, 7 percent of the Asian women answered the telephone in Swedish. The African and Latin-American women fall in between: one third answered the telephone in Norwegian and the rest in English.

In order to estimate the proportion of women operating from formal massage parlours or on the street who have citizenship or permanent residence in Norway, we assumed that the proportion with citizenship or residence would be the same for each national group, irrespective of where they work. We believe that this has probably underestimated the proportion with citizenship and residence, as women who work in formal massage establishments need to obtain a work permit (according to information given by key respondents). It should thus be possible to assume that all women working from massage parlours have permanent residence or citizenship. Furthermore, among both Asian and Eastern European women, the ones who answered the telephone in Norwegian were *less* likely to agree to be interviewed (thus not providing any information about citizenship or residence) indicating that the proportion of migrant women with permanent residence or citizenship in Norway is higher than what is estimated here. According to this moderate estimate, 297 of the total 617 prostitutes (48 percent) are Norwegian citizens, and 416 (67 percent) are permanent residents in Norway.

This has important implications for how we understand prostitution in Oslo. The general perception has often been that the prostitution arena in Norway consists of two main groups – drug addicts, perhaps the most marginal group in Norwegian society, and migrant prostitutes who come to Norway on relatively short stays in order to earn money. However, according to our data, two thirds of the migrant women who are permanent residents in Norway sold sex for the first time in their lives more than a year after they moved to Norway. The stories behind these numbers vary – some are women who were married to a Norwegian, or supported themselves with a cleaning job, who got divorced, or lost their jobs. Others entered prostitution at a time where they needed extra money. There were a few accounts of women who started working in prostitution while they are married (or continue working after they are married), as they do not feel that their Norwegian husbands understand their need to send back money to relatives back home. Whatever the background stories may be, our data show that the high proportion of migrant women in prostitution in Norway is not only a consequence of internationalisation of sex markets and migrating prostitutes. An important part of this group is migrant women, or immigrants, who became prostitutes after arriving in Norway. This suggests that another marginal group in the Norwegian society is at risk of entering prostitution, that is immigrant women.

Short-term visitors

While Norwegian citizens and permanent residents make up the largest group among the prostitutes in Oslo at any given time, short-term visitors make up the most important group if we look at the total number of women who work in prostitution in one year. Women who visit Norway on a tourist visa may legally stay for a maximum of three months⁵, and if we can assume that the number of migrant women in prostitution is about the same throughout the year, we may assume that the group of the short-term visitors will change three times in the course of a year⁶, giving us a total of 587 women on short term stays. Assuming that the number of prostitutes in Oslo stay the same every month throughout the year, the number of long term residents that work in prostitution increases as well, as 15 percent of the Norwegian and 32 percent of the Asian prostitutes worked less than 6 of the last 12 months⁷. If we take this into account we estimate that 497 long term residents worked in prostitution in the last 12 months, giving a total of 1083 prostitutes in Oslo in one year.

As Table 3 indicates, when we look at the total number of women who work in prostitution in Oslo over a year, the distribution between national groups changes dramatically. Now the migrant women make up 79 percent of the prostitutes, and Asian women become the largest group making up 27 percent of the prostitutes. However the differences between regions of origin are quite small – the women from East- and Central Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America and Western Europe each make up about a quarter of the prostitutes that operate in Oslo in one year. When

Table 3: Estimated number of women working in prostitution in Oslo in one year, by nationality and length of stay

	Estimated October 2003	Long term in one year	Short term in one year	Total in one year	%
Norway	201	231	0	231	21
Other Western Europe	25	7	52	60	6
East- and Central Europe	105	27	233	261	24
Asia	177	185	112	297	27
Other	109	46	189	235	22
Total	617	497	587	1083	100

⁵ At the time of our survey, short-term visitors (women who had been in Norway for less than 6 months), had stayed an average of 1.5 months.

⁶ Here we assume that half of the short-term visitors only visit Norway once a year, while the other half visit twice a year, and that they stay for three months. Half of the short term visitors interviewed claimed to be in Norway for the first time, and only one third had been in Norway three times or more prior to the interview.

⁷ Here we do not include women that entered prostitution less than one year ago.

we look at the number of prostitutes over a year, the relative importance of the street as arena for prostitution increases, as Dominican and Eastern and Central European women dominate this market, and the majority of these are on short-term stays. However, even when the total number of women in one year is taken into account, the advertisement arena is still the most important in terms of the number of women.

Age and duration of prostitution

Among the women operating through advertisements in Oslo, the Norwegians are the oldest – half the women are older than 39 years. The Eastern and Central Europeans are by far the youngest, both among those who work in the streets and those who operate through advertisements – one half is *younger* than 23 years. Within this group women from the Balkan countries (Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria) stand out as the youngest, with a median age of 21 years. The average age for Asian, African and Latin-American women is around 30 years, both among those who advertise and the ones who work the street. We do not have any estimates for the age of women operating through massage parlours.

Many women use a “working age”, that is, the age they claim to be when speaking to their clients (very often 28 years), but we are confident that in most cases they told us their real age. However, none of the respondents claimed to be younger than 18. If there were any women younger than 18, we do not believe they would have told us their real age. Key respondents working with prostitutes in the street have said they often come across women that appear to be very young, and a few cases have been reported of prostitutes under 18 in Oslo. Our interviewers have also reported that some of the respondents they have interviewed seemed to be very young. How difficult it may be to determine the age of young women with experience from prostitution became apparent to us during one of our interviews. Our respondent, a victim of trafficking, had an appointment to go out with a friend later

Table 4: Present age and age of début, by region and arena of operation – median (mean)

	Women operating on the street	Average age Women operating through advertisements	Début in prostitution*	Sold sex for the first time less than one year ago*, %
Norway	No data	39 (39)	28 (29)	10
East- and Central Europe	23 (23)	23 (25)	22 (23)	59
Asia	-	30 (33)	27 (29)	48
Other	31 (34)	30 (31)	27 (29)	33
n	34	101	78	78

* Age and time for debut in prostitution is only recorded for women operating through advertisements

that evening. During the interview our respondent and her friend would go from being restless and bored, to laughing and giggling as teenagers do. Based on their behaviour it was not difficult to guess they were two 16 year olds. One hour later the girls had changed clothes and put on make up, and were ready for an evening out. The total transformation of not only appearance, but also behaviour, left us quite uncomfortable. Is our belief that only the most experienced observer would be able to see that they were actually two children.

Based on the information we have available now, it is not possible for us to establish whether children are working in prostitution in Oslo. However, we may keep in mind that 10 percent of the Norwegian women, and 13 percent of the Asian women said they were younger than 18 the first time they sold sex. In spite of being by far the youngest group, no Eastern or Central European woman who answered this question said she was younger than 18 when she sold sex for the first time.

Women of Norwegian origin have often worked in prostitution for several years, with an average of 10 years (varying 0 to 43 years). Only 10 percent have worked in prostitution for less than a year. Among migrant women, the recent debutantes make up a much higher proportion – half the Asian women, and almost two thirds of the Eastern and Central European women who operate through advertisements claim to have sold sex for the first time less than a year ago. Four out of five Asian and Eastern/Central European women and all the African and Latin American women who answered this question sold sex for the first time in Norway. Only 11 percent of the Eastern Europeans and 17 percent of the Asian women have sold sex in their home country. Among the African and Latin American women who were willing to answer this question (only five individuals), none had ever sold sex in a country other than Norway.

This has several implications for how we understand prostitution in Oslo. First and foremost, while we met some migrant women who travel from one country to another working in prostitution, this seems to be far less common than we initially expected. The absolute majority of the migrant women who operate through advertisements either live in Norway, or travel back and forth to their home countries, working in prostitution here, but not at home. To the extent these women are part of organised networks, these networks seem to mainly operate bilaterally, having contacts in Norway and countries of origin

Secondly, the vast majority of the migrant women entered prostitution in Norway. More than four in five migrant women had never sold sex before they came to Norway for the first time. As we argued above, two thirds of long-term residents entered prostitution more than one year *after* they moved to Norway. Among the Asian long-term residents, more than half say they sold sex for the first time less than a year ago. This group has lived in Norway for an average of six years. It is thus possible to assume that a large share of these women did not have prostitution as

their main motive for migration, but that their debut into prostitution came as a result of subsequent events.

One final implication of these numbers is that many migrant women only sell sex for a limited time. While many observers have reported an increase in the number of migrant prostitutes in Oslo over the last year, this increase can not account for the large numbers of migrant women who started selling sex less than a year ago. This number is in sharp contrast to the prostitutes of Norwegian origin, who have worked in prostitution for an average of 10 years, and among whom one tenth sold sex for the first time less than 12 months ago. We thus have to assume that a significant proportion of migrant women have left the prostitution arena in Oslo in the last 12 months as well.

Education

The educational background differs significantly between national groups⁸. The highest educational level is found among the Norwegians operating through advertisements, where half have 15 years of education or more. Women from Eastern and Central Europe also have high average education (see Table 5), the exception being women from Balkan countries who operate from the street. In this group more than two thirds have less than nine years of education, and 23 percent have less than five years. It is often argued that persons with four years of education or less have a very strong probability of being illiterate. Among Asian women there is also a significant proportion with very limited education – 21 percent have less than five years, and 60 percent less than nine years.

Asian and Eastern and Central European women thus stand out as two very different groups of migrant prostitutes in Oslo. The majority of Asian prostitutes have lived in Norway for many years and operate mainly through advertisements

Table 5: Educational level, by region of origin and arena of operation

	Years of education (median)		8 years of education or less, %		4 years of education or less, %	
	Ad.	Street	Ad.	Street	Ad.	Street
Norway	15	no data	16	no data	0	no data
East and Central Europe	13	10	13	50	0	15
Asia	7	-	60	-	21	-
Other	12	13	25	0	0	0
n	89	21	89	21	89	21

⁸ For educational level among women operating from the street, we were only able to get good estimates for East- and Central European women.

and massage parlours. They are usually older than the Eastern and Central Europeans, and many are illiterate or have limited education. The majority of Eastern and Central European prostitutes are here on short-term visits, and they operate in all arenas in Oslo, although they more often work through advertisements and on the street. The average age is only 23 years, but, with the exception of some Balkan women operating from the street, they have a high educational level.

Supporting family members

Among the prostitutes of Norwegian origin, only one third carry the responsibility for supporting family members, mainly own children. For Eastern and Central European women two thirds have some kind of support burden, while among Asian women, three out of four have somebody they support. About half of the Asian and Eastern and Central-European women⁹ support at least one of their parents. In addition, about half of the Asian women support own children. As the average age for Eastern and Central European women is relatively low, the proportion supporting own children is only 26 percent. In addition, two thirds support younger siblings. It is interesting to note that the Eastern and Central European women who do *not* support anybody are significantly older than the ones with a support burden – among those who support at least one family member, the average age is 23, and half are younger than 21 years. The Eastern and Central European women who do *not* support anybody are on average 26 years old. Among the Asian women we find the opposite pattern. The ones without a support burden are 32 years old, on average, half of whom are below 29, while the ones who support at least one family member are, on average, 37 years of age. For the women of Norwegian origin, there are only minor age differences between those with and without a support burden.

Individual decisions or organised work

There are several factors that can be taken to indicate that a significant amount of the migrant women do not make the major decisions themselves about how their work should be organised.

First, we find it interesting that a significant proportion of the women with individual advertisements in newspapers, magazines and on the Internet do not know specific details of their advertisements. Among Asian prostitutes, 15 percent openly admit they do not know where they advertise and, if we include all who only know that they advertise “somewhere on the Internet” or “in some magazine” but are not able to say the name of any specific source, the proportion goes up to 27 percent of

⁹ Among the African and Latin American women, very few answered this question.

the Asian women, and 25 percent of the women from Eastern and Central Europe. Among the Norwegian women 14 percent could not say where they advertise.

A number of in-depth interviews with migrant women operating in Oslo confirm that which arena they operate from is determined by organisers, before they leave their home countries. When the women decide to go to Norway (especially if they go for the first time), they accept a “package-deal” where all decisions on how their work should be organised have been put together, either by someone with experience of working in Norway, or by pimps or organisers. The amount or share of earnings to be paid back to the organisers is usually part of the deal.

We would like to emphasise that some women present this as a service they buy – much like other people buy a package-deal from a travel agent. One of our respondents in Oslo has worked in prostitution in various countries in Europe for many years, and has had the same organiser in her home country all the time. She argues that he is a very good organiser, always finding good apartments, and there are no drugs or other problems. When she travels with his “help”, she pays him one third of her earnings, in addition to rent for the apartment. Lately she has started to travel independently, as she now has enough experience to organise things herself. She says she was lucky to find this organiser; when she travelled abroad the first time she was in desperate need of money, and would have accepted any offer that was given to her.

Another factor that indicates a high level of organisation of migrant prostitutes is that women who have never been in Norway before, and who have only been here for a few days, are able to answer telephones whose numbers appear in advertisements that are several weeks or months old. Even more often, the women answering the telephone use a working name other than the one used in the advertisement. We interpret this to indicate that the telephone numbers are passed on from one woman to another, so that the start up cost of getting established in a new market is not too high for women who come on short-term stays. In order for this to be implemented to the extent that it is now, the level of organisation of migrant prostitutes must be relatively high.

It is also interesting to note that the national groups always operate on the same arena: Albanian women are almost exclusively observed on the street – even on only one specific street in Oslo. Lithuanian and Brazilian women can be found through advertisements and in small massage parlours, but never in the street, while Estonian and Dominican women are almost exclusively observed on the street. The Thai women dominate the massage parlours, and a large group also operate through individual advertisements. Thai prostitutes never operate from the street. While it is possible that the total lack of Thai women operating from streets may be explained with reference to a cultural perception of street prostitution being unacceptable (something suggested by many Thai respondents), it is difficult to find cultural

explanations for the differences in approach between Estonian and Lithuanian, or Brazilian and Dominican women.

In street prostitution, the strong segmentation between national groups is further strengthened. One street is totally dominated by women from the Balkan countries, while the Dominican women are concentrated on the outskirts of this area. The Estonian women work together in one area, while the African women of the same nationality are usually found together in other areas. To some extent, this division between national groups can be interpreted as being organised by the women themselves, as they may prefer to work together with other women who speak the same language and come from a similar background. However, interviews with key respondents and women working on the street have indicated that pimps and organisers also play an important role in implementing this strict division between areas.

Taken together, these factors strongly suggest a high level of organisation of the migrant women working in prostitution in Oslo. According to key respondents, there is large variation in the “deals” the girls have with their organisers: some have to pay a fixed sum per day, others pay a share of what they earn which varies from 25 to 50 percent, although, in some cases, it is as much as 90 percent. Some women claim to work independently, and insist that they only pay for rent of apartment¹⁰. However, the majority seem to have had some kind of assistance in organising both their journey and stay.

There have been reports of women working more or less independently, who have been able to earn up to NOK 300 000 after three months of work in Oslo. However, these amounts are probably only possible in some very small segments of the prostitution arena. But even if they can only bring back ten percent of this, it would be equal to one year’s average salary in a country like Estonia, and 4 to 12 times the average yearly salary in countries like Albania or Moldova.

Integration and access to information

Among prostitutes of Norwegian origin who operate through advertisements, almost two-thirds have either full-time or part-time jobs (see Table 6). In addition 15 percent attend some kind of school or evening classes. Among the Asian prostitutes, one third have either a job or go to school, and this is the case for 16 percent of the Eastern and Central Europeans.

We believe that a woman with a job, or who is attending school, can be interpreted as having at least a minimum of integration with the “ordinary” society. Such

¹⁰ It should be noted that renting costs for apartments used in prostitution, are often significantly higher than open market renting prices in Oslo.

arenas for integration and information are extremely important, as this is where migrant women may learn how things work in Norwegian society. As we will come back to in later chapters of this report, knowledge of how the police and other institutions work is an important factor that enables women to break out of a potential situation of exploitation. Two thirds of the Asians, and 84 percent of the Eastern and Central Europeans do not have any of these points of integration to the Norwegian society. However, 60 percent of the Eastern and Central European prostitutes say that they have visited Pro-senteret on at least one occasion. Pro-senteret is an organisation working for and with women in Prostitution in Oslo, offering medical check-ups, free condoms and informal conversations and advice. Thus, while the majority of the Eastern and Central Europeans do not seem to have much integration into “ordinary” Norwegian society, they cannot be said to be totally isolated, as they have access to information and some resources through their visits to Pro-senteret. Among the Asian prostitutes where the majority are long-term residents, more than one third have never heard about Pro-senteret or other support organisations for women in prostitution.

In order to understand the different approaches to integration to the Norwegian society, it may be useful to distinguish between two ideal types of motivation for entering prostitution: the “search of opportunities”, that you find among women who hope to find a man to marry or even an ordinary job, and the “search of money”, among women who come with the sole purpose of earning as much money as possible before they go back. Needless to say, there is much variation within these groups, and some women can be motivated by a combination of the two. However, the type of motivation a woman has for entering prostitution in Norway, may influence her approach to integration into Norwegian society; the “opportunity seekers” will often see prostitution as a short-term solution, that enables them to travel to a new country, but wish to keep their activities hidden in order to be able to make a fresh

Table 6: Indicators of integration and access to information (work, school and visits to Pro-senteret), by region of origin. Percent

	Fulltime job	Part-time job	Attending school	Have visited Pro-senteret	Never heard about Pro-senteret	Do not work or go to school, and have never heard about Pro-senteret
Norway	21	42	15	43	10	0
East- and Central Europe	0	0	16	60	29	18
Asia	4	25	10	45	37	21
Other	19	0	0	19	19	0
All	12	21	12	47	22	9
n	84	84	81	78	78	78

start a soon as an opportunity in terms of a husband or a job arises. These are women who seek integration into the Norwegian society, through work, learning the language, and other relationships. Women who's main motivation is to earn money see their stay in Norway as limited to a short period, and for this group it may not be not so important to keep secret what they are doing here, provided nobody *back home* finds out about what they have been doing. Back home they might claim to have a cleaning or teaching job in Norway. Thus, the “money seekers” are less likely to seek integration into the Norwegian society – some even express aversion to Norway and Norwegians, and count the days until they can return home. However, these women may be more open about their work in prostitution, and seek assistance and information from organisations such as Pro-senteret.

Women who neither have a job, nor attend school, and do not know about Pro-senteret, can be interpreted to be either “opportunity seekers” who have not succeed in integrating, or as “money seekers” with very limited access to information. For a number of reasons that we will come back to later, we see these groups as being particularly vulnerable to exploitation. They make up about one in five of all Asian and Eastern and Central European women with whom we have been in contact (see Table 6).

4 Resources, choices and risk situations

A central issue for preventing trafficking is whether risk groups or risk situations can be identified. In order to design effective prevention programmes, it is important to establish as precisely as possible who the target group is. It is important to explore what contributes to an increased risk of becoming a victim of trafficking. While there have been reported cases of women who have been kidnapped with the purpose of exploitation in prostitution, the vast majority have at some point made a choice to migrate, to start working as a prostitute, or both. This choice must be seen in the context of the situation the women have found themselves in at the time the decision was made, and these situations may be seen as risk situations.

In our interviews with prostitutes and victims of trafficking, we sought to explore three issues in particular in relation to the context in which choices are made. We tried to get a picture of our respondents' general socio-economic background, that is, if there is a presence of factors which are generally believed to limit opportunities, or in other words, a lack of certain resources. This is the topic of the first section of this chapter. In the following section, we explore the involvement of other actors in the process of making a choice of migration or prostitution. By this we mean the role played by a woman's social environment, or network, in affecting the thresholds for choices, and also whether the choice is actually made by the woman herself or by her household, rather than the role played by recruiters or traffickers. The role of recruiters is the issue of Chapter 5. Finally, we present what the women themselves describe as the decisive factor for making the choice to migrate or enter prostitution, that is, the situation they responded to and their perceived opportunities in this situation.

Some words of caution are necessary. A crime cannot be explained solely by looking at the characteristics of the victim. There is a very real danger that identifying risk factors among victims draws attention away from the perpetrators of the crime. The central actors in the trafficking process are after all those who exploit the women. Drawing a parallel to cases of rape, one is allowed to hope that a woman's clothing or sexual history is no longer seen as relevant for determining the culpability of the rapist. In the same way, trafficking should not be explained solely by a woman's misplaced trust in a job offer, her family relationships, or her economic situation. These factors may indeed contribute to trafficking by creating a situation that is easy for traffickers to exploit, but are insufficient in themselves to explain trafficking.

4.1 Background and resources

Economic situation, education, employment and family relationships are central resources inasmuch as they can be expected to influence the opportunities available to an individual. People who are wealthy, with higher education, a good job and a good relationship with the family can be presumed to have more opportunities open to them than others. While many of our respondents are in some way deprived in one or more of these areas, there are also great individual differences. Below we discuss the elements of poverty, education, employment and family relationships in relation to trafficking and what our respondents have described.

Poverty and economic hardship

Almost all the women we have interviewed have experienced economic difficulties, but in a large variety of forms. Even when our respondents have been poor, the poverty they describe is not necessarily desperate. For example, none of them spoke about going without food, or lacking appropriate clothing for winter. Some describe situations that can hardly be defined as poverty at all. For example, one of our respondents was an adult when she went into prostitution: She had a steady job and was perfectly able to cover rent for her apartment where she lived by herself, her mobile phone bill, and other necessities. However, she was not satisfied with her economic situation, as her salary did not allow for much by way of being able to go out, or to buy things that were not strictly necessary. One can classify her situation as financially troubled, but hardly one of poverty. At the same time, several of our respondents can be described as being on the verge of a more desperate situation, and their situation can more easily be described as poverty: Another one of our respondents had been living more or less from hand to mouth on a farm, getting by partially on what she and her family were able to produce there, and partially with the help of friendly neighbours who would give them money.

In some cases it seems that it is the subjective perception of the economic situation that is the problem rather than specific difficulties in covering necessities, and in these cases it is doubtful whether one can classify the respondents as living in poverty at all. This does not mean that the economic situation is not a problem. There may be a large contrast between the individual expectation of how their life should be and the situation they found themselves in. As the economies of Eastern Europe changed fundamentally during the 1990s, many people experienced a very sudden drop in their incomes. They saw the loss of things they had taken for granted, and had to adjust quite quickly to new circumstances. In addition, economic differences between people increased quite dramatically, and new patterns of, and possibilities for, consumption became very visible. For some, this may have led to a

sense of relative deprivation; feeling left out and not being able to partake in the new opportunities.

While a bad economic starting point may be part of an individual's life situation, it may also be part of a more general context in which the individual lives, for instance residing in a poor area with limited opportunities. This general context is central inasmuch as it affects the threshold for migration. For instance, Albania, Moldova and certain areas of Ukraine are marked by a very high degree of irregular labour migration to other countries, to the extent that it has become a more or less normalised way of seeking work; not very different from seeking work within the same country. In this context, seeking work abroad is a much less dramatic course of action than it is in areas where migration is less common.

Poverty is frequently mentioned as the root cause of trafficking (see for instance Konrad 2002:5, Renton 2001:55). To some extent this may be true, but it is not necessarily an exhaustive explanation at the individual level. In reality, the vast majority of women living in poverty do not become prostitutes, and do not become victims of trafficking. At a structural level, poverty may be a better explanation, as it may be part of a larger complex consisting of a general breakdown of structures, corruption and the spread of organised crime; all elements that may contribute to an environment where trafficking is possible.

Education and unemployment

One of our preconceptions when embarking on this research was that women who become victims of trafficking would generally have very low education. This turned out to be untrue. We interviewed women with a range of educational backgrounds from young women with highly unsatisfactory schooling, to women with several years of higher education. However, most of the women falling in the latter category have found themselves in a context where their education does not help their employment prospects. This may be because they are not able to find a job within their field of expertise, because their jobs are very low paid in spite of higher education requirements, or because they work in a field where salaries are not paid. In one of our field sites in Ukraine, this has been a particular problem for nurses and teachers, typically female-dominated professions.

Often, a relatively large proportion of poor people are in employment¹¹. A key informant in Ukraine working with trafficking issues holds the view that the problem in Ukraine is not a lack of jobs, but the low level of the salaries. This is confirmed

¹¹ This is a general issue with regard to poverty and unemployment; the poorest part of the population are generally not regarded as unemployed according to common definitions of what unemployment is (Arneberg & Pedersen 1998:100). They have to find some way of getting income, as they have no alternative sources to fall back on.

Table 7: Activity the month before going abroad for the first time by region of origin. Percent

	Eastern /CentralEurope	Asia	Other	All
Looked for work	18	33	10	21
Went to school	29	9	52	29
Worked	24	24	38	27
Other	29	33	0	23
Total	100	100	100	100
n	17	12	5	34

in our data on migrant prostitutes in Oslo (see Table 7). Only 21 percent of the women interviewed were looking for work at the time when they went abroad to work the first time, while 27 percent had a job of some kind. The largest group is, however, women who come straight from school.

Level of education does not seem to play a significant role with regard to the ability to assess employment offers, or with regard to being more sceptical to travelling abroad for work purposes through informal channels. Among those of our respondents who have been given false job offers we find women in all education categories, from those with very low or almost non-existent education to those with professional and higher education.

Our data suggest that finishing education, regardless of educational level, may be more important in creating risk situations than having low education. Several of the trafficking victims we met had accepted job offers not long after finishing their education, since that was when they started looking for something to do. Not being able to find a job upon finishing education and therefore being more likely to accept a dubious offer may constitute a much higher risk factor than not having any education at all.

Family relationships

Just as there are variations in educational levels, the relationships the women have with their families also differ. In general, the relationships our respondents describe may be divided into two groups: very emotionally distant and difficult, and very close and loving.

Some of our respondents described a very troublesome family history. Quite a few had alcoholic fathers. In several of these cases, the respondents' parents divorced because of the father's drinking. One respondent was sent abroad in her teens after her alcoholic father had stolen all her mother's money. A few women have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse in their families, and some of them ran away from home in order to escape abusive parents (not only fathers). We also interviewed women who described having had very difficult relationships with their husbands.

Some of had married very young after falling pregnant, and were divorced before they reached their mid-20s.

In contrast to the difficult and sometimes abusive relationships described above, quite a few of the women said that their relationships with their families were very close. One of our respondents emotionally described her relationship with her parents as “beautiful”. Another girl, who is an orphan, says she could not imagine how she could live without her grandmother, who took care of her all through her childhood.

Both the distant and the close type of relationship are characterised by the family either never having functioned as a safety net, or at some point having ceased to function as one. Both types of relationship may influence the propensity to travel abroad, but for different reasons. The ways these types of relationship affect the decisions the women make may be a wish or need either to get away from the family, or help out family members in need. We describe this in more detail below.

4.2 Choosing migration, choosing prostitution: The role of other actors

Victims of trafficking will generally, as mentioned above, at some point have chosen either to migrate or go into prostitution. Although the latter group is rarely mentioned in relation to trafficking, there is little doubt that this group is very vulnerable to exploitation. In existing literature on trafficking, relatively little emphasis is given to the fact that some of those who end up in situations of serious exploitation, forced prostitution and trafficking have either worked in prostitution already, or have made a choice to enter prostitution. Elisabeth Kelly does however make the point that women who choose to migrate to work in the sex-industry, and who subsequently find themselves in situations of exploitation should also be referred to as victims of trafficking, and that this is also an issue that needs to be addressed (Kelly 2002:17). Rare information campaigns specifically warn against the dangers of choosing to work in prostitution abroad. Generally, though, campaigns address those who contemplate other types of work. However, according to the IOM in Ukraine, a substantial proportion of the women who come in contact with their rehabilitation centre for victims of trafficking reported working in prostitution before ending up in forced prostitution and exploitation abroad. As we argued in relation to the definition of trafficking in the first chapter of this report, knowingly going into prostitution does not exclude the possibility of being trafficked.

To some extent, decisions about migration and prostitution are made in response to the same type of situations. This is hardly surprising, as both working abroad in

a regular job and going into prostitution offer an opportunity to improve income. For both types of choices, there are certain thresholds that must be overcome. At the same time, it is quite obvious that choosing prostitution will have other consequences than choosing to migrate, in terms of social costs. In order to understand choices made, we need to take into consideration the context within which the decision is made. Two aspects relating to the role of other actors are particularly important here. The first issue is to what extent the women have networks with experience from migration or prostitution. The presence of these kinds of networks serves to lower the threshold for the respective choices. The second issue is to what extent the decision was made by the woman herself, or by her household.

Networks with experience may reduce the perceived risk

For most residents in developing and transitional countries, a decision to migrate is associated with high risk and uncertainty. As we discussed in Chapter 2, a vast range of practical and economic factors complicate the possibilities for travel. In order to understand how migration takes place, we need to take into consideration the formal and informal institutions that tie together the countries of origins with the countries of destination, and thus motivate and facilitate migration (Lisborg 1998). Of major importance here are the various types of legal and illegal companies that specialise in recruiting and distributing labour to labour markets around the world. Of equal importance are the informal networks and relationships that tie together migrants, former migrants and non-migrants both within, and not least, between sending and receiving countries. Here we talk about relationships based on kinship, friendship, patron-client relations, a regional and local common starting point, and other common feelings of community. These network resources make up a type of social capital, or a network resource that can be potentially exploited in order to facilitate migration.

The risk and costs associated with migration is reduced as social and trans-national social networks expand and intensify. Migration may thus have a self-reinforcing effect within a community or social group. The first migrants do not have any networks or social relationships or accumulated knowledge to base their actions on. For them, migrating may be perceived as high cost and high risk. But for the subsequent migrants the perceived risk and costs are gradually reduced. Every migrant gains experiences, and access to an expanded network in the receiving country. Family and friends in the sending country may exploit this network, increasing the incentive to migrate. Every time migration is chosen, the number of experiences, and the size of the network is expanded, which leads to further decreases the cost and risk for the next generation migrants.

However, as there is little doubt that the *perceived* risk associated with migration is reduced with increased migration in a person's community or social network, this does not necessarily mean that the *actual* risk is reduced. During our fieldwork we visited a medium sized city in western Ukraine. In national statistics it is among the cities with the highest unemployment and lowest average income in the country. However, open market real-estate prices are almost on the same level as in the capital, Kyiv. According to NGOs in the area, about one fourth of all households receive transfer income from relatives who work abroad, and a substantial proportion of the population have worked abroad at one time or another. The NGO also continually receives information about newly repatriated victims of trafficking. We will not attempt to estimate the proportion of the population who have been exploited in some way in connection with migration, but based on our interviews in this city we do not doubt that it is high. Still, all our respondents insist that, before they travelled abroad, they might have heard of trafficking as a phenomenon, but *nobody had ever heard about a concrete case from their city!* Only after they returned did they find out that relatives and friends had had similar experiences. Most victims of trafficking are ashamed of what has happened to them, and keep their experiences to themselves. Only success stories of migration are told to others, while stories of exploitation and abuse are kept secret. This increases the incentives for people to migrate, and reduces the perceived risk associated with it. However, since recruiters may seek out this area when they find out how easily women there can be recruited, it is likely that the risk of abuse and trafficking actually has increased with the increased migration.

This network theoretical perspective thus explains how chain migration takes place. But also among women who choose prostitution, the type of network seems to be important, as the existence of friends or acquaintances who have sold sex before serves to lower the threshold for others to enter prostitution. This friend or acquaintance can provide information and practical assistance in finding and serving the first client, and in many cases, they have served to illustrate that it is possible to lead a double life – to keep the prostitution experience secret:

The small trading business owned by Rita and her husband had gone bankrupt. Together with their two-year-old son they had to move out of their apartment to a very poor area of the city, where, according to Rita, the population is mainly alcoholics and criminals. They had no stable source of income, and could barely afford food. One day a friend of Rita's came to visit. She had heard of Rita's difficult situation, and had decided to tell her a secret: She had on several occasions worked as a prostitute abroad and, because of this, was able to provide for her family. Rita was taken by surprise, but agreed with her friend that

this is also the solution for her. The friend put her in contact with her organisers and, shortly afterwards, Rita worked as a prostitute in Germany.

For Rita, the friend provided her with an opportunity to earn money. Furthermore, she showed that ordinary women can enter prostitution, and that they can lead a “normal” life back home. We doubt that Rita would have entered prostitution if her friend had not suggested it to her, as the insecurity and perceived risk of entering would be too high. Another factor that influenced Rita’s decision to enter prostitution was that it was possible to do it secretly by working as a prostitute abroad. For several respondents, being able to migrate and work as a prostitute in a foreign country provides the opportunity to keep prostitution separate from the lives they lead in their home country, and gives anonymity. This lowers the danger of being faced with condemnation, and consequently the threshold for entering prostitution. That this is a common mechanism is illustrated by the data from our survey, which showed that the vast majority of women from Eastern and Central Europe who are working as prostitutes in Oslo, have never sold sex in their home country.

When migration is a household decision

The decision to migrate can be an individual choice, but in many societies, major economic decisions are made on the household level. In some cases the whole household decides to migrate to improve their life chances, but often the household decides to send out one member in order to earn money and send it back to the family. This could be ordinary labour migrants, or women who are sent out to marry a person with residence in another country. Migration as a consequence of a household decision has been identified as a way to understand migration from Thailand to Europe (see for instance Lisborg 1998).

Our interviews have also indicated that Albanian women often travel abroad as a result of a family decision, often as a result of an organised marriage with an Albanian living abroad. Several NGOs and key respondents in Albania have pointed to limited opportunities for women in the paternalistic and traditional Albanian society, where the extended family is very important, and where young women seldom question the authority of their elders and the decisions they make. In cases where migration is the result of household decision, it is not sufficient to look only at the background and network of the woman who travels abroad, but of the household that she comes from, and her position within this household. While we cannot disregard the possibility that some people have knowingly sold their relatives to the sex-industry, it seems likely that the majority believe they are doing their best for their daughter or niece when they accept an offer of marriage from a seemingly

wealthy man living abroad. Sometimes we may speculate that relatives in a desperate situation chose to ignore some danger signals.

Women from other countries in Eastern and Central Europe appear usually to be more directly involved in the decision to migrate. Some leave because they wish to get away from complicated family relations, and do not even ask other family or household members for advice. Others live alone and have no family or household members who can influence or advise them when they contemplate the possibility of travelling abroad. However, the majority of our respondents left home as a response to economic problems in the household. While other household members may not have put them under direct pressure, there has often been a strong indirect pressure on the women to leave:

Carol lives in an area where travelling abroad to find work is very common – several of her friends have worked abroad as housemaids for several years. At the time when she decided to go abroad to earn money, her husband had been unemployed for several years. Lately, he had developed some health problems, so travelling abroad himself was not an option. Their economic situation had been strained for years, but as her two children were becoming teenagers, the need for money became acute, as the children would have to leave school if they could not pay for tuition for higher studies. Even though Carol is a timid woman in her mid-40s who had never been abroad before in her life, there was no other person in her family who could go abroad to earn the money they needed. Thus Carol started asking around in her network to find out whether anyone knew how she could find a way to work abroad.

In this situation it might be difficult to say that migration is a direct result of a household decision. However, it is very unlikely that Carol would have travelled abroad had she lived alone. Her decision can only be understood in relation to her sick and unemployed husband, and her teenage children who wanted to continue to attend school.

4.3 Choices in response to what?

The point at which a choice is made to enter prostitution or to migrate is central to our understanding of how trafficking happens. What occurs directly before this decision is made is key to understanding the mechanisms of trafficking, and what factors contribute to creating risk situations. We have sought to explore how the women themselves describe the reasoning behind their choices, and how the women have perceived their opportunity situation.

Our respondents describe a wide variety of causes for their decisions to migrate or enter prostitution. Before proceeding, it should be noted that it may be problematic to look for *the* reason of any given choice. What we describe in the following sections is what the women we have interviewed describe as the catalyst for the decision. This event may as such be the last part of a chain of events that leads to the choice they make.

The reasons our respondents have described for their choices fall into three main categories: 1) different types of acute crises, 2) long-term economic difficulties, and 3) wanting more from life. These categories are described in more detail below.

Acting in response to an acute crisis

One of the most common reasons given by our respondents for entering prostitution or deciding to migrate was that they had to act in response to some form of acute crisis. An economic crisis differs from long-term poverty in being sudden and unpredictable, and often being perceived as demanding an immediate response. There are different types of crises that may occur, but all entail a need for money. There are three broad types of crises: economic crisis, family or relationship crisis, and the need to provide for someone in the immediate family.

The first type of crisis is clearly related to a need for money due to external circumstances. This could, for example, be the loss of a job that provided steady income, or the bankruptcy of one's own business. What is important in this case is not necessarily the absolute level of income, but the relative drop in income, or the urgency in the need for money. The urgency of finding a way to make money is increased in cases where the women also need to provide for their children.

Maria described her crisis simply as losing her wallet while she was in a town where she did not know anyone. What is interesting in this case is that she had been living under very difficult economic circumstances for years, with the official state child benefit as her only income. The real value of this benefit had been steadily eroded by inflation. Still, during the long time that she had lived in what can be defined as poverty, she did not turn to prostitution as a way of solving her financial difficulties. It was only after having slept in the train station and not having eaten in three days that she took one client in order to get home. After returning home, she found herself increasingly pondering the fast money she had been able to make, and after some months, she decided to start working as a prostitute. She continued selling sex for six years.

Another one of our respondents, Sonya, also experienced a financial and acute crisis:

Sonya was sharing a house with her mother, sister, nephew and husband. Her husband was drinking a lot, and usually spent most of their money on alcohol.

When Sonya was seven months pregnant, her sister got an offer of a job abroad and left. One week later, the house burned down, and the four of them had to move to one small room in a shelter. They did not have any news from Sonya's sister, who they had expected to send money from her job abroad. Sonya was desperate to earn money for a new house, and when she after four months got a job offer from someone she knew well, she accepted. She was promised that she could earn 400 to 500 US dollars per month painting houses. Sonya says she would have agreed to do anything at that time, since she was at a very low point. They had no house, her sister had been gone for four months, and they had no money. Sonya ended up being trafficked. She was systematically beaten up and forced to prostitute herself for six months.

As indicated by the two stories, the scale of the economic crises can vary considerably, from losing a wallet to losing a house. The principle is still the same: while both Maria and Sonya have a long-term history of financial difficulties, the catalyst is a sudden and unpredictable need for money that spurs their respective decisions of prostitution and migration.

The second pattern of crisis has a backdrop of relationship or emotional crisis. This is also associated with a need for money, but this need often has its background in a breaking of relations with a provider, or a serious conflict with the family. This appears, for example, to be typical for women or girls who have been in abusive relationships with parents, and who have run away from home. Marion had been abused by her parents during most of her childhood. When she approached her teens, she ran away from home, and found refuge with a friend. The friend earned money in prostitution, and provided for her for a while, but finally refused to do so, which meant that Marion was faced with a financial crisis. Being under considerable pressure from her friend, she started to work as a prostitute. In this type of case, the relationship with the family is very poor, as we mentioned in the description of typical family relationships above. This girl's family does not function as a safety net, meaning that they are what she wants to get away from, and as a result of this, she is left more or less to her own devices.

A relationship or emotional crisis is also found when women have a serious conflict with the family or a family member and feel a strong need to get away. The main problem is still to get money as soon as possible, even if the main problem is not necessarily a change in the income pattern through the loss of a provider. Isabel described this situation. She had, in her own words, a very intense relationship with her parents, whom she lived with. At one point they had a particularly bad conflict, and she moved out, no longer being on speaking terms with her family. This conflict made her want to get as far away as possible from her parents, and she started looking for someone who could help her go abroad. She was doing all right

financially, having a boyfriend who provided for her. He did not want her to leave and asked her if they could not try to find jobs somewhere else in their country, but she only wanted to get away. After less than a month, she was able to find someone who offered her a job, and she left immediately. She was trafficked into prostitution for around six months. Theresa's story is in many ways similar. She had previously been offered, through an acquaintance, the opportunity to go abroad to work in prostitution, but had decided not to go. One year later she had an intense fight with her father. A few days later she was selling sex in Oslo.

Several migrant women interviewed in Oslo said that they entered prostitution after they broke out of a marriage with a Norwegian man. These are women who, due to language difficulties, little education and a lack of knowledge about Norwegian society, are not able to find work in the Norwegian labour market, and see prostitution as the only means of supporting themselves.

The third type of crisis involves the need to provide for close relatives. In contrast to women who have faced a traumatic breaking of relations with their family, these women are usually very close to their family, and feel a strong responsibility for their well-being. In these cases it is not necessarily the women themselves who experience an economic crisis, but someone who is very close to them. Paula had a pregnant younger sister with no means, and decided to look for a job abroad in order to help her. She accepted a job offer of going to Italy to be a nanny, but ended up selling sex in Kosovo. Kristina's mother divorced her abusive spouse, and was left with no means to provide for herself and Kristina's younger siblings. Taking on the responsibility of providing for her mother and younger sisters and brothers, Kristina chose to go abroad to work as a prostitute.

As we showed in the previous chapter, the majority of migrant prostitutes in Oslo provide for at least one family member. Among the women from Eastern and Central Europe, half provide for a parent, two third for younger siblings, and one out of four provide for their own children. The ones who have responsibility to provide for a family member are significantly younger than the ones who do not.

Long-term financial difficulties

Initially, we said that most of the women we have interviewed did not give long-term financial difficulties as the main reason for their decision to travel abroad or to start working as prostitutes. It is however the case for some. In general, these women have had long-term problems either relating to having a low-paid job, or to having a job where salaries have not been paid. There may also be other factors that accumulate into a very difficult financial situation.

Martha had just finished her education, but the salary she got from her part-time job as a teacher was very limited. The economic problems caused many fights between her and her husband. When an acquaintance of a colleague offered her to work abroad as a governess over the summer, she never doubted whether she should take the offer. She ended up in a situation of violent forced prostitution.

Martha did not experience any economic shock or sudden crisis, just a continuing insecure economic situation, which gradually took its toll on her marriage. Susanne's story is similar; she was a single mother to a girl approaching her teens, and found it increasingly difficult to find enough money to cover her needs. She had formerly worked in a factory, but lost her job when there were cutbacks. Susanne says: "Here, in our city, you can work yourself to death, and still not get any money". A girl she knew had received an offer of going abroad to work but was afraid to go alone. She asked Susanne to go with her. Susanne considered it, and accepted.

Both Martha and Susanne ended up being trafficked. They both come from an area where it is very common to go abroad to work, and where it is very difficult to find jobs that pay well enough to make a living. Several other women from the area have similar stories in which the main motivation was to find a reasonably well-paid job.

Wanting more from life

While many women who have chosen to sell sex or who have been trafficked describe the background for their decisions as some sort of crisis or long-term financial difficulties, one group describes their choices very differently. These women fall into the category of wanting more from life than a regular day-job can provide. This type of reason has generally been given to us by women who present their prostitution as a free choice and who were working as prostitutes at the time of the interview.

One of our respondents, Mona, describes how she first got started with prostitution, and why, after a break of a year, she started again:

When Mona was 19, she started going abroad, to do small trade. She bought goods, and sold them in the market back in her home country. She went back and forth several times, and got to know other women from her country who lived there. Among her new friends were several girls selling sex. Mona saw that these girls were having a good life; they went to nice restaurants and earned a lot of money. After some time she thought: why shouldn't I do this too? She started selling sex, and continued for about a year. When she met a rich man, whom she moved in with, she stopped selling sex. They stayed together for about

one year, and then they broke up in an undramatic fashion. After the break-up she went back to her home country, where she stayed for about half a year. Through friends/networks she got a job as head for an import company. It was a straightforward job in which she did not really have to do anything, she only had to show up at the office every day. The salary was quite good, and it was no problem to live off it. However, she found the job boring. She found another job, which was much the same as the first one, but she was just as bored. Then she decided to go to abroad again and sell sex. She operates in the high-class segment of the sex-market in the country where she works, and can easily make a third of the average local monthly wage in one day.

In Mona's case, there is no description of any kind of crisis or hardship as motivating her decision to sell sex. When she decided to start, it was because she could see that other women working in prostitution had access to "the good life" of going to restaurants and having money to spend. Similarly, when she took up her job as a prostitute after some time, she says it was not motivated by need, but boredom.

Another one of our respondents gave as her main motivation for selling sex that she was young and wanted to live a little. While she was living in her home country, she did have a job, and a salary she was able to live off. She is currently working as a prostitute in Oslo.

The motivation of wanting more from life was only given by women who describe their choice of being prostitutes as a free choice, and who are still active in the sex trade. Former victims of trafficking never mentioned this as a motivation to seek jobs abroad. This may seem a bit peculiar. We cannot exclude possibility that women who are active in selling sex can have a tendency to justify their job in this way, and communicate the good sides of their job. This may be in contrast to women who have had the same motivation but ended up in a forced situation. The women in this group may feel a need to say that they were in a situation with no choice and no other opportunities.

The common denominator for the key factors: The need for money

As we stated in the beginning of this section, it may be difficult to point to one single reason that made one women decide to enter prostitution, or travel abroad in search for opportunities. Rather, it is more reasonable to say that the women that have been influenced by several factors, which all served to lower their threshold for entering prostitution or travelling abroad. All our respondents have one thing in common, and that is a need for money. However, the situations that the women have responded to are too diverse to be classified only as poverty. In this connection, poverty becomes a simplistic summary of a wide range of reasons, including

losing a wallet, losing a house, escaping an abusive parent, being bored, financing children's education and paying debts.

In addition to the immediate reasons given by the respondents, the existence of someone in the social environment with experience from labour migration or prostitution seems to have been an important factor for many.

5 Recruitment to trafficking

As we have established, in the vast majority of cases, victims of trafficking and foreign prostitutes make a choice at some point. Their motivation can broadly be described as wanting to improve their personal situations through travelling abroad in order to make more money.

However, in none of the cases we have studied, did we find that the choice to travel abroad or consciously engage in prostitution had been made independently. The decision had always been a response to a recruiter, someone who has either offered to help find the first client, or offered a job abroad. This also applied to women we talked to who claimed to be working independently as prostitutes – none had made this choice entirely without the influence of others, usually people already involved in prostitution or trafficking as recruiters or as prostitutes themselves.

5.1 Relations with the recruiter

There is a great variation in the type of the relationship the women have to those who recruited them. Usually, however, there is some kind of relationship, since those who make the offer are usually not total strangers. Trust, in different forms, is a central element in the recruitment. Most of the women we interviewed said their recruiters came from their immediate environment. Some have been close friends, or even family members, while others have been more distant acquaintances. A common feature is that the recruiters have exploited a trust that either has been based on a personal relationship, or a trust in a general system for providing jobs abroad.

Individual trust and close relationships

In a few cases, it seems that a recruiter has specifically targeted a young woman with the intention of recruiting her to prostitution, spending some time establishing trust before the (false) offer is made.

Lisa was living in a town away from her family when she met a man who became her boyfriend. After they had known each other for some months, he said that he could get her a job in Spain. She told him that she did not have any money for tickets or documents, but he said that he could help her with that. Still, she declined to take the offer. Lisa had heard about the dangers of trafficking, and had a brochure on the topic. A month after she got the offer the first time, her temporary job contract was coming to an end. She had not managed to find another job, and when she saw that she would not be able to pay the rent for her apartment, she decided to accept the offer. She had discussed the offer with a friend and her sister, and they were both very worried, telling her that she should not go. Lisa had, however, made up her mind. Once she told her boyfriend that she wanted to take up his offer, she left within two days. A friend of the boyfriend took her to Germany and sold her there. She never saw her “boyfriend” again.

In Lisa’s case, it seems that the man she at the time considered her boyfriend had been a recruiter who had identified her as a potential victim from quite early on. The fact that it only took two days from the time Lisa decided to take the offer to the time of her departure indicates that he had well-established contacts who were able to not only organise the trip very quickly, but also to establish the contacts with the “buyers” in Germany. Another aspect is that Lisa had been aware of trafficking stories at the time she was recruited, but she did not relate them to her own situation. Even though her friend and sister met what she said about the job offer with scepticism, it seems that she trusted her boyfriend more. The abuse of trust is central to Lisa’s story, as the trust she has in her boyfriend outweighs her knowledge of trafficking and the reaction of her immediate network when she makes the decision to go.

A recruiter may also draw on established relationships. One of our respondents was recruited by a close friend of her family’s; a woman her parents had known for years and with whom they had a close relationship. She had no doubts about the validity of the job offer she received from this woman. Other respondents referred to being recruited by friends who they had known for years, people they had no reason to distrust.

For women who accepted jobs as prostitutes, it appears to be very common that the person who offers the opportunity is a close friend. In this connection one should use the term “recruiter” carefully, since the person who introduces the idea of prostitution may have no intention of profiting from it. It may be more correct in this connection to speak of “initiators”, meaning the person who initiates the idea of prostitution and to a greater or lesser extent assists in arrangements for the *début*. However, we should also be careful not to let the idea of friendship cloud the

possibility that the “friend” may also be an exploiter. Accepting help with plane tickets or finding customers, may incur a debt or an obligation to pay part of earnings to this person.

It is quite common among our respondents that a female friend who has experience of selling sexual services introduces the idea of entering prostitution. Having a friend with experience of prostitution seems to lower the threshold for the decision to sell sex, and the friend also serves as a guide to how to start selling sex and getting into contact with customers. This was the case for Kristina.

Kristina ran away from home when she was 15, to get away from an alcoholic and abusive stepfather. She sought refuge with a close friend who was about the same age. On the same evening, they discussed how Kristina could make money. Her friend said that maybe she could sell sex, and said, half jokingly: “Do you think I have not done it before?” It turned out that her friend had sold sex on several occasions, and the two girls decided to leave for the capital the next morning. When they arrived, they bought a newspaper with ads for massage parlours and called the numbers to look for work. Someone came to pick them up, and they sold sex on the first evening. Kristina is now 22, and is working in prostitution in Oslo.

In Kristina’s case, her friend introduced her to the idea, although they decided together to look for work in the capital. Because the friend had experience with selling sex, she was also able to suggest how they could find work. Aside from the fact that Kristina made her *début* as a prostitute when she was a child, she was also in a high-risk situation when she made her *début*: By going along with her friend’s suggestion, she had very little opportunity to control the situation. When the two girls called seemingly random massage parlours and were picked up, they were in a potentially hazardous situation. They had little or no knowledge beforehand of the intentions of the people who picked them up, and they were put to work immediately.

One of our respondents told a story which was initially similar to that of Kristina, but with a very different outcome.

When Anna was 15 she ran away from home and stayed with a friend. Her relationship with her parents was very difficult, and she had run away before. The girlfriend she stayed with made money from prostitution. After some time the friend did not want to carry the financial burden of supporting her anymore, and told her that she would have to make her own money. One day when Anna came back to the apartment, her friend had invited some men there who became Anna’s pimps. After some time, the police came for Anna to take her back to her parents. This time, her father beat her so badly that she could not walk for

several days. As soon as she could walk again, she went back to her friend, and to the same pimps. After some time, the pimps decided to sell her, and took her to the capital, where her new pimps changed her identity, regularly beat her up and forced her to sell sex. She is now 16, and has escaped from her pimps after reporting them to the police.

Both Anna and Kristina were introduced to prostitution by friends of about the same age, and who had experience with prostitution. What differs in the two stories is the relationship with this friend. Anna was clearly in a position of dependency on her friend, and it was the friend who made the decision for her by inviting the pimps and insisting that Anna made her own money from prostitution. This appears to be very different for Kristina who took the decision together with her friend, apparently without any pressure from her.

In all the cases we encountered of women choosing prostitution, the idea had been initiated by a female friend or acquaintance with experience in the field. In cases of deceit which led to trafficking, women were the recruiters in several cases.

Generalised trust and the extended network

In many cases the recruiter is a part of the woman's extended network, usually a friend of a friend, but not someone with whom the woman has a close personal relationship. This is very common in areas with a high level of general irregular migration. Recruitment for trafficking appears to follow the same pattern as recruitment for other irregular migration. In some areas, a general unspecified offer of a job may be enough for a woman to decide to go abroad.

Being offered jobs abroad is a part of the general way migration is organised in these areas, and the women may not be particularly wary, even though the persons making the offer may not be particularly close to them. In addition, when irregular migration is very common, it is connected to limited opportunities locally, and the threshold for deciding to migrate may in general be lower. One of our respondents, from an area where a large share of the population is said to go abroad for work, accepted a job offer that was very unspecific.

After Isabel had finished her education at 20, she was not able to find a job. After one year of being unemployed and living with her parents, she had a big argument with them, and moved out. She went to stay with a friend. She knew many people who had gone abroad and earned big money, and she wanted to leave her country, both to earn money, and in order to get away from her parents. An acquaintance put her in contact with a man who said he could get her a job in Turkey. When Isabel said she did not have a passport, the man said that he could get one for her, and that she could pay him back later. He did not say

how much she would have to pay. He did not say what kind of job she would get, only that he could get one for her. As for the pay, he did not say how much she would earn, but said that the money would be good. Isabel was not sceptical about the offer. During the one month that elapsed between the time Isabel got the offer until the time she left, she told several of her friends that she was going to leave. They were all very positive, and some started to think about leaving themselves. When Isabel got to Turkey, she was handed over to a group of men. They told her that she owed them US\$800, and that she had to pay off the debts by selling sex. She was there for six months.

The offer that Isabel got was vague, to say the least, and she did not have a close relationship with the man who made the offer, or with the person who put her in contact with him. All the same, she never doubted the validity of the offer, responding instead to what she knew of others who had gone abroad and made good money. In addition, her friends confirmed her positive feeling about being offered a very good chance to make money. Other respondents from the same area that Isabel came from also said that they were never in doubt about offers made to them by relative strangers. One said: “Why should I have doubted it? There were so many others who took these offers”, while another, responding to a question about the opportunity to go to a big city in a neighbouring country: “Everyone went to [...] at that time”.

Recruitment and trust

While recruitment based on personal relationships takes advantage of personal trust, recruitment in these cases is based on a generalised trust in an informal system of finding jobs that, to the individual's knowledge, usually works quite well. Both of these types of recruitment have their challenges when it comes to information in order to prevent trafficking. Lisa had information about trafficking, and her friend and sister asked her not to go but she trusted her boyfriend. Informing Lisa about the dangers of trafficking may not have protected her from what happened, since it does not help to discourage young women from ever trusting anyone. Similarly, when a society has a large informal system for finding jobs that, to a great extent, keeps the wheels turning, it is difficult to provide information that will prevent young women from taking up offers of this kind. Their experience is that people who go abroad return with a large amount of money, and that travelling will give them opportunities not available at home.

Tina, one of our respondents, experienced both being able to find a job abroad through a friend and, later, being trafficked after being offered a job by another friend.

When Tina was 26, she and her family were going through a hard time financially. They owed a friend of Tina's mother money, and were not able to pay off the debt from their salaries. Around this time, a woman Tina knew called her from the country where she was working in a restaurant, and said that there was a job possibility there for her if she wanted it. Tina left, and started working in the restaurant together with her friend. They left their jobs after a conflict with the manager, but were able to find other jobs in a factory through some acquaintances. They did not have working permits and, after being arrested twice, they were deported to their home country. Tina had been able to make quite a bit of money while she was abroad, and she was able to pay back part of her family's debts. When she came home she found a job in a factory, but the pay was quite low. After a year she got another offer to go abroad to work, also from a friend. The job offer she got this time, however, turned out to be false, and she was sexually exploited. The man who she had considered her friend took all her money, and she returned home penniless after some months.

Tina does not even have to rely on the experiences of others when it comes to assessing whether there is a good chance of making money abroad. She has had personal experience of leaving her home country to work abroad twice. The first time she earned enough to pay off her family's debts, the second time she was traumatised and left with nothing. When she assessed the two offers, there was little to indicate that the first offer was real, whereas the second would lead to her being trafficked.

5.2 The role of the recruiter

The recruiters appear to be organised in different ways: some run a more or less one-man business, while some are obviously a part of a much larger network. However, it is very difficult to get reliable information about this through the methods we used in this study. Interviews with victims of trafficking can give some information about how recruiters and traffickers operate, but the organisation of criminal networks behind this trade is often unknown to the victims. The roles played by the recruiters of the women we interviewed varied a great deal with respect to how involved the recruiter was in the final exploitation.

In a few rare instances, the recruiter continued to control the women after they arrived abroad. Generally, the roles of the recruiters may be divided into two main groups. First, there are those who give the initial job offer, follow the women on the journey, and hand them over, effectively a sale, to someone else. There may be

several intermediaries in this process. Second, there are those whose role is limited to making an offer, or putting the woman in contact with someone else. In these cases the link to final exploitation is not necessarily apparent. Theoretically, it is possible that some recruiters in this group may not even know the details of what will happen to the women they recruit.

Being sold or transferred

In most cases, victims of trafficking are not aware of the fact that they are going to be sold until the transaction is a fact. Consequently, they have little opportunity to get out of the situation before they are under the control of their exploiters. In Ingrid's case, her situation gradually dawned on her in the course of two or three days. She had been accompanied to her country of destination by the man who had made her a job offer two or three months before. Together, they went to see a woman who took Ingrid to a hostel, where she asked for Ingrid's passport so that she could have her properly registered before she started working. After this point, Ingrid never saw the man who had accompanied her again. A few days later, the woman came back with two men, who took Ingrid to another small hotel. It was only at this point that Ingrid found out that she had been sold.

Many of our respondents described the moment they understood that they had been deceived and robbed of control over the situation as extremely dramatic and traumatising. A general experience has been that they have been told that they owe the organisers a large amount of money for the journey and for the assistance in obtaining documents, and that they have to sell sex to pay these debts as soon as possible. This was the case for Isabel.

Isabel left for Turkey together with the man who had offered to help her to find a job. He was very friendly and had also helped her with a passport as well as with the expenses for the journey. When they arrived in Istanbul, they went to a hotel. While Isabel stayed in the room, the man went downstairs. After an hour or so he came back with a man who he said would be able to get her a job. Isabel and the man who had come to the room went downstairs, and she was taken to a car in which there were several men to whom she was introduced. Together they went to a flat where she slept that night. The next morning when she got up, one of the men told her that she owed them US\$800, and that she would have to work it off by selling sex. Isabel panicked, and had no idea what to do. She started to cry, and begged the men to let her go home, but it was no use.

Isabel was shocked to find out that she was not going to get the job she thought she had been offered. At the point when her situation was revealed to her she had already been transferred between people and locations twice, and was alone in a foreign country. In the face of this situation and the debts she was told she owed, she was more or less paralysed, and could not see any way out.

In quite a few other cases, the exploiters did not even attempt to argue that the women have to pay back debts, they simply beat them into submission and took them to clients. The use of threats to harm children or other family members have also been reported. Others have experienced a more gradual understanding of what was expected of them. They have not been given the sudden shock of being told that the job they had been offered was non-existent, but were put under pressure to take one step at the time towards selling sex.

What is common to all the cases we investigated is that at some point the women lose control over their situations. In the next chapter we discuss the different methods that exploiters use to keep this control over the women, and how the women responded.

6 Coercion and control

Mass media, movies and official reports have given many graphic and horrifying accounts about women in forced prostitution, presenting us with a picture of women that are locked up, physically abused and threatened to provide sex. However, pimps and organisers use a variety of methods to make women co-operate and only a small number of women that can be classified as victims of trafficking are physically locked in at any time. Roughly speaking, we may distinguish between four main types of approaches that pimps and organisers use to make the women enter, and stay, in prostitution. Many pimps use elements from all categories, and some women have experienced different treatment at different stages of their stay abroad.

First, there is the use of violence and physical boundaries. This category is quite self-evident: the women are locked in and sometimes beaten into submission, and have no opportunity to leave. Secondly, there is the category that we have called “captive behind open doors”. Methods of keeping women under control may here take more “subtle” forms than for the first group, and there are few or no physical hindrances preventing the women from leaving. Women in these situations may stay in prostitution against their will as a result of manipulation, or because they simply do not know how to get away. Many also have a strong fear that their families will find out that they are prostitutes. The third form of control is what we have called “internalised” or “self-imposed oppression”. These are women who come to accept the control that other have over them, or accept that they are bound by having to pay off debts. This may be tied to a gradual moving of boundaries of what they are willing to do, or through developing romantic feelings towards their oppressors. Finally, some women stay in a situation of exploitation simply because they are able to, or hope they will be able to, make money from it.

What characterises all trafficking stories is, however, that the girls do not see it as possible to escape the situation they find themselves in. They believe that they have to continue providing sex to clients, either to avoid violence, get food, or in order to pay off debts. Some women feel they have no choice but to stay, because they need to earn money for children or other relatives at home. We will describe the different uses of force and manipulation in the following sections, before we proceed with a discussion on the difficult distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution, and whether such a distinction makes sense when discussing trafficking.

First we will present three stories of captivity, illustrating the large variation in forms that captivity may take.

6.1 Three stories of coercion

Sonya's story

After arriving in an Eastern European capital, Sonya was taken to a big vacant building. She was met by two men, and at this point the woman she had been travelling with disappeared. As Sonya had expected to work painting buildings, she had not brought any nice clothes. The men said that she was going to go and look for work, and asked her if she had any nice underwear. Sonya said she did not. They offered to give her clothes, and Sonya asked why she should have nice underwear if she was going to paint houses. They said that she should go to offices to look for work and that she had to look nice. Sonya asked why again, and started to cry. They beat her up and forced her into a car, and took her to her first client. Sonya says she does not know how the clients could even look at her beaten face, but concludes that it was not important to them how she looked.

Sonya lived in a house together with eight women of different nationalities. The men took the women to clients' homes by car, and picked them up again afterwards. They usually got food when they worked. Women who tried to refuse to work, or did not "behave" in other ways were locked in the basement. The basement was very cold, and Sonya developed chronic health problems following this abuse. When they were locked in the basement they did not get any food or water. The men had taken her passport to be able to show her papers if the police stopped them on the way to clients. I asked Sonya if she thought she would have run away if she had her passport; she says it would not have made any difference, as she never had the chance.

At one point she was taken to a factory to serve clients; there were some 18 people present. Some of them were police. One man who was a guard there said he would help her, but first he wanted to have sex with her. Afterwards he did nothing to help her, he had only used her. This happened several times when she tried to tell clients the situation she was in. Sometimes they said they would help, but they only fooled her. Sonya thinks they did not want to help her because she looked so ugly with her bruised face. She thinks she looked like a tramp. Sonya says it was almost impossible to run away, and she believes that all police were bribed. She was finally able to escape with the help of a client.

Gina's story

Gina was married to Markus she was in her teens. He had promised that he could take her to Italy where they could earn money. Since Gina didn't have legal papers, while her husband did, they travelled separately, and Gina arrived in Italy, and was settled in by a friend of Markus.

A few days later a woman came to the house where she was staying, and asked what relationship Gina had to Markus. "I am his wife", Gina answered. "I also considered myself his wife a long time ago", the stranger said, and added: "you will be working nights. When it became clear that Gina did not understand, the stranger commented: "You're from the countryside, aren't you?" before explaining that Gina would have to prostitute herself. Gina said she would never accept that. "Neither did I in the beginning", the stranger said.

Some days later Markus brought Gina mini-skirts and other sexy clothes. At first Gina was excited, because she had never had such clothes before. Then he told her that she would have to work on the street. She was taken to an area where prostitutes operate, with only a little money for getting home later. However, she was not able to go through with it. She was very confused, and got into a taxi, and managed to explain the way back to the house. Markus understood that this would not work, and handed Gina over to a friend. Gina was told that Markus had gone to prison. The friend was much tougher than Markus, and beat her (sometimes with a belt, other times with a telephone charger) and threatened that, if she did not co-operate, he would go and get her younger sister. She gave in to the pressure, and did what he told her to do.

After working on the street for three months, she decided to try to get a hold of her husband, and called the telephone number she had. Markus answered the phone, and she said it was his wife calling. Apparently he thought she was his real wife, as he asked her how the children were doing... She got furious when she understood that he had fooled her, and called home and asked for help to get out of her situation.

Nina's story

After Nina arrived in a German city, she was taken straight to the brothel where she would work. The brothel had two employees, the owner, and a waitress. In addition there were guards who opened the door. The main room had a bar, and some sofas. The girls would sit on the sofas, and the clients would come and pick the girl they wanted and take her to a room. Nina was instructed to say, if

somebody asked, that she had come there to rest, that she rented a flat in the house, and that the clients were her friends.

She could not choose what clients to take, and only once did she refuse: One horrible man had asked her to do something she did not want to, and battered her when she refused. She ran screaming out from the room, and a guard came and threw the man out. She never considered telling a client that she was there against her own will.

She did not go to the shops herself, but told the organisers what she wanted, and it was brought to her. They brought her food, and also clothes, for example, when she needed a new dress. She was allowed outside into the garden where she could play tennis and billiards with the other women.

After four months she was brought to another place. She does not know why she was brought there. There were stricter rules at this place, and the girls had to clean when they were waiting for clients. They had to be ready for the clients at 10 o'clock in the morning. After two weeks she became very angry about the conditions, and shouted about this. Her anger reached a peak when the boss of the bar took an ashtray and threw it in the face of another girl because she had not cleaned it.

Two weeks later, a man came and took Nina to a place in a different town. She stayed there for two months. There were seven girls working in the new place, all of them foreigners. The owner was a woman. She did not tell the pimps how much the women actually made per client, and this meant that they managed to keep some of the money for themselves (about NOK 200 per client). In the other places where she worked, there was nothing left after she had paid for food and clothes.

One of the women was working there voluntarily. She was East European, but married to a local. She did not have a pimp, and only paid a small share of the money she earned to the bar. According to Nina, she was a very good person. After two months, the co-worker said she would call the police, because she understood that the other girls were being forced. At first Nina had been sceptical, but the other women told her that she could trust the police in Germany, and then she was happy.

The three stories above illustrate the large variation in the forms that captivity and forced prostitution can take. While Gina and Sonya were exposed to systematic physical abuse, Nina was never openly threatened nor beaten. Gina was allowed to walk the streets relatively freely, and was not systematically monitored when she was working. Sonya and Nina were isolated in a house, and never met anybody apart

from clients, organisers and other victims of trafficking or prostitutes. However, Nina and Sonya's situations are different in most ways: When Sonya protested, she was beaten and locked in the basement, while Nina, after having protested about her new working conditions, was moved to a place with more freedom, and even had the opportunity to earn some money for herself. She did not live with the constant fear that Sonya experienced.

Few of us have any trouble understanding how Sonya was forced into prostitution – she did not have any opportunities to run away, and was physically abused when she did not co-operate. But what is it that made Nina co-operate, and why did Gina not run away before? In the following sections we discuss the most common mechanisms that pimps and organisers exploit, in order to make women co-operate and not run away.

6.2 Force and violence

Among our respondents we came across several horror stories of daily beatings, group rapes, and violent clients. These are perhaps “the typical” trafficking cases in the way trafficking is portrayed in mass media and public discourse. However, pimps that rely only on violence and locked doors seem to be rare.

In discussion groups on one Norwegian website for clients of prostitution, we have come across several discussions on forced and voluntary prostitution. The participants in these discussion groups all expressed concern about the extent to which the women whose services they buy are in prostitution by choice, as they do not want to exploit victims of trafficking. Our interviews with victims of trafficking have indicated that there are people who are willing to buy, and even seem to seek out, those who are forced. However, there is probably (or hopefully) a limit to how large this market segment is. Furthermore, selling a woman who openly protests and resists involves a high risk for the organisers. Thus, in most instances, organisers and pimps will attempt to get the women to co-operate, and make them appear to engage in prostitution voluntarily. Pimps and organisers use several different approaches to achieve this.

Learning not to ask for help

In the first days or weeks, the women may be sold to clients who are aware of the forced situation. If the women ask for help to escape, the clients report back to the pimps, and the women are punished. According to Susanne, those who were caught asking for help would get a brutal beating, and for some time after, only be sold to

the worst clients – the drug addicts and violent ones. Susanne’s case is among the most brutal ones, one in which women are directly punished for asking for help. In other instances the only “punishment” for asking for help is the humiliation of being refused this help, or even of being promised help that is not given, as was the case for Sonya. Many were led to believe that the police and others know about their activities, and that nobody cares about them. After some time, the fear of the consequences of asking for help, combined with the lack of belief that anyone would help them, seemed to stop most of the women from asking for help.

It is worth noting that the majority of our respondents never asked any clients for help to escape. They believed the clients were aware of their situation, or simply did not think that anyone would help them if they knew. A recurring theme in our interviews was that the women found it difficult to trust people they do not know. As we discussed in Chapter 4 many have experienced abuse before, either in childhood or marriage, or both. Many have experienced being betrayed by those close to them, people who choose to ignore physical or sexual abuse by a father, an uncle or a husband. Sixteen year old Anna did not even ask for help when asked directly by the police whether she needed it.

Anna was a victim of internal trafficking in her home country. At one time the two pimps who controlled her started to fight. After this, one of them (who on several occasions had been violent with the girls) took Anna and one other girl to the police and told them to report the other man for pimping. The pimp was present while the girls pressed charges against the other pimp, but one police-woman got suspicious and pulled Anna aside and asked if she needed help. Anna chose not to tell her anything. Only after the female police officer had telephoned and talked to her several times did Anna become convinced that she could trust her and asked for her help.

The low level of trust displayed by Anna may be rooted in a childhood of abuse from a violent father. When she tried to run away from home, she was on several occasions hunted down by the police and brought back again. This experience meant she had no reason to trust the police, or other strangers for that matter. It might seem like some traffickers systematically search out women with histories of abuse and mistreatment, or that these women are more easily recruited for these purposes.

It is worth noting that the only three respondents who say they systematically asked clients for help throughout their stay (Sonya, Susanne and Martha), were all above 30 when they were sold. These three are also the respondents who described having received the most brutal treatment. We can only speculate whether the brutal treatment was caused by them asking for help, or whether it was the cause of them asking for help.

Food and nicer clients as rewards for co-operation

In several cases the women were given the choice of providing sex to clients or not getting any food. In cases such as that of Elisabeth, providing sex was the only chance they had not to go hungry.

Elisabeth was kept locked in a factory where preserves are produced. The women were told to wash dishes, clean and take out rubbish – all the dirty work. There were 15 people from her country working there. They were not given food regularly. The entire group received only one packet of coffee a day. They had to work in the factory from 8 o'clock in the morning to 8 in the evening, with a 15-minute break to run to the toilet in the middle of the day. Sometimes whole groups of men would come to the house, and the owner would choose some women to entertain them. When these women came back they would bring money and food, and then everybody would eat. This was the way they survived.

We may say that Elisabeth was not *forced* by her organisers to provide sex, but sold it of her own free will, in order to get food in a very desperate situation. Of course, the organisers created this situation deliberately. In most cases the link between food and prostitution is not that direct. Many say they were given very limited food or money by their organisers, but had an opportunity to get food or money to buy food from clients. Others claim they were given more food when they had serviced many clients. Here, food became a reward for those who co-operated, and gave the women an incentive to behave as was expected of them.

Others did not describe problems with food or physical comfort in their captivity. Some of our respondents had lived with economic problems and poverty for some time before they ended up in forced prostitution. To the extent that the job in itself and the loss of freedom can be disregarded, the overall living conditions in captivity were in several cases better than the life they had at home. In Moldova we were told the story of Catherine, a victim of trafficking: When she was told to go back to her home town and take up her old life, she was a bit apprehensive about it. The town was poor, and before she left she had been living in deep poverty. “When I was abroad, every time I opened the fridge it was full of food”, she said. “It was even chicken every time I wanted it.”

The absence of violence and adequate supply of food are not the only factors that distinguish the living and working conditions of victims of trafficking. Most of our respondents also distinguished between good and bad clients. The “good ones” may take the women to restaurants or give them tips, or they may simply be the ones who are not violent. Even though women in forced prostitution are generally not allowed to choose which clients to take, it is often possible to get regular customers and make “the good ones” come back by providing good service. This creates

an incentive for the woman to co-operate and behave in the way that is expected of her when providing sex to clients – even if she is in the situation against her own will. Furthermore, the job the women are expected to do is of such a nature that that it may seem more rational to co-operate and achieve a measure of control over the situation, in order to reduce injuries and pain.

Consequently, as the women learn the rules of the game, many start behaving as they are expected to. For clients and others, it might be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them from the ones who are in prostitution by choice.

6.3 Captive behind open doors

Victims of trafficking are often portrayed as locked in an apartment, and being physically unable to go out. However, in many cases, the captivity the women are in takes a much less obvious, or visible, form. As we will come back to in the next chapter, a surprising element in many stories is that, even in situations with much brutality and violence, when the women first decide to leave, they often seem to be able walk out relatively freely. How can we understand captivity in this form?

It is important to acknowledge that coercion may take many forms, and that the psychological factor of fear is central. Since women who are victims of trafficking often have very limited opportunities to communicate with others who are not involved in their exploitation, they may be very vulnerable to manipulation. Women in these situations also often have a strong fear that what they are doing will become known to their family or local community, even if their prostitution is obviously forced. Aside from the fear, it appears that many women simply do not know what to do, or who to turn to for help. We discuss these and other issues, and how these factors contribute to keeping women in a situation they do not want, below.

The numbness of losing the passport

The passport appeared as a central element in almost all our interviews with victims of trafficking. According to Elisabeth, when they took away their passport “...then we understood that we were captives. I knew that you should never give up your passport when you are abroad. Then you don't have a chance”. Isabel's experience was almost identical.

After arriving in the new city she was told that she had a debt of US\$800, and that she would have to work it off by selling sex. Isabel wanted to run away, but the men had taken her bag and passport. She thought that, without her passport,

she could not run away, and she did not know what to do. I ask her if she had heard of other women having their passports taken away, and she had, from television news. She had heard that if your passport is taken away from you, everything is hopeless.

We have a long list of similar stories from our interviews. Many respondents explained how much effort they put into trying to get their passports back before they ran away. However, when asked why they needed the passports, the women were often not so certain. Some argued that you cannot go to the police unless you have your passport but, in most cases, it seems as if the women want their passports in order to *avoid* the police in case they are stopped in the street. Many were told that the police are aware of what their traffickers were doing, and that the police had been paid not to intervene. Several women we talked to insisted that had they told their story to the police, they would have been taken back to their pimps. In some countries this may be true.

For some women, the simple combination of not having their passports, and being told that the police and others are aware of what has happened to them, and do not care, make them believe that it is hopeless to put up a fight. They give up without even trying.

The fear of the police

Since the women are often kept isolated from the world outside, they may not learn much about the country that they have come to. Their assumptions about how the police operate and work will usually be based on their experiences with the police in their home countries. Thus, if they are told that the police are bribed and are allies of the organisers, they will most likely believe it, if this kind of situation is common in their home countries. As Nina's story above illustrates, only after she started interacting with, and was persuaded by, an East European who was married to a local, she accepted the possibility of being rescued by the police.

Among the foreign women who work in prostitution in Oslo, if they have contact with the police at all, it is mainly with the immigration police, who come to the streets or their apartments to check their documents, or to the massage parlours to check their work permits. Among those who have experienced violence or robbery, almost all the women we interviewed choose not to report this to the police. Some said they did not want any trouble; others said they did not want neighbours or others to know about their activities. One of our respondents had been robbed three times and raped once in the previous two years, but never reported it to the police. When asked why not, she simply stated that she did not like having anything to do with the police.

Among those who reported robbery and violence to the police, experiences were mixed. We would like to emphasise that many said that they had been treated well, but the story of Julie may serve as a warning for those who consider reporting robbery to the police.

Julie was taking a night off, and had gone to a café with some friends. Late in the evening she called her roommate at home. A man she did not know answered the phone, and said that he had killed her friend. Julie immediately called the police, and hurried home. When she arrived at the apartment, the police were already there. The robbers had left, and had taken all their money, but her roommate was OK. Julie started asking her roommate in their own language what had happened and, because they were both upset after the incident, both started to scream and yell. The police officers started to look a bit uncomfortable, and asked to see her documents. Julie said perhaps they thought she was a pimp or organiser; this was the only way she could make sense of what happened: She was asked to show that she has the necessary means to stay in Norway. As all her money had just been stolen, she was unable to do this. Julie was then taken into custody, and deported the next day.

Julie was one of the few prostitutes in Oslo to say she had reported a robbery to the police, mainly because she thought her roommate was in danger. But when she turned to the police for help, they abused her trust, and sent her home, as if she was a criminal. Julie has been back in Norway several times since then, but has never had any further contact with the police. Her friends in Norway all know the story well, and have learnt that they should not contact the police when in trouble. In a separate interview a woman told us the same story about “somebody she knows” – but this time the robbery takes place in a different city in Norway, and the girls are of different nationality. It is possible that such treatment is quite common in Norway, but we believe that is more likely that this story has taken on life of its own, and has spread among the migrant prostitutes in Oslo, teaching them how *not* to behave in case you are robbed, and how naïve it is to trust the police.

Where do you go, and who do you call?

In many cases, the main obstacle that keeps the women from running away is that they do not know where to go for help. The lack of information and interaction with the outside world makes the women totally dependent on their organisers, and many pimps make sure it stays that way.

When women arrive in a new country, they often do not have even basic foreign language skills, little or no knowledge about the country they are in, and no friends or social network that they can make use of. Thus, if something happens to

them, many have no idea where to go for help. The only people they know in the new country are their organisers and exploiters. The story of Jennifer below may illustrate how helpless many are in this situation.¹³

Jennifer had been invited to work for a Norwegian company, but upon arrival in Norway, she was taken to an apartment and raped by a group of men. In her luggage she had a copy of a woman's magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, in her own language. In the magazine she had seen an advertisement for a trafficking hotline in her home country. She was able to steal a mobile phone to take it with her to the bathroom, from where she called the hotline. She knew which city she was in, but did not know the address. She was asked to describe the view from her window, which she did. The hot-line staff contacted the police in Norway. They found her three weeks later.

As illustrated in Jennifer's story, even if a victim of trafficking is able to get a hold of a telephone, she will often not know who to call. Some have been able to call relatives and friends at home to ask for help but, according to hotline staff in Ukraine who often talk to the relatives and friends afterwards, many do not know how they can be found. According to one story, a woman called her parents to ask them help her, but was only able to say that she was in Africa, and not even which country. Others say that they were given an opportunity to call home, but did not tell their close ones anything about their situation, either because the telephone conversation was monitored, or because they did not want to worry their parents or relatives. The possibility of calling a hotline with experienced and professional staff who speak their own language may enable some women to get advice and escape before it is too late. Simply knowing one phone number, as in the case of Jennifer, may make an enormous difference. In the case of Astrid below, knowing about one place where she could go helped her out of a desperate situation.

When Astrid came to Italy looking for a job, she stayed for the first few weeks in a hostel run by a charitable organisation, Caritas, that also works with trafficking victims. When Astrid got a job, she was held captive in the house of a lawyer. In addition to doing all the housework, she had to provide sexual services for the man in the house. She never got any money, and was never allowed to leave the house. Then one day the lawyer had a big party, so the gates were left open. She ran out, and directly to Caritas. This was the only address she knew in the city. She did not go to the police, as the family had told her that if she went to the police they would just tell them that she had stole from them. The husband in the family was a lawyer – she was an illegal immigrant. She was not in doubt about who the police would believe.

¹³ Jennifer was not one of our respondents. Her story was referred to us from key respondents in NGOs in Ukraine.

“If you didn't know about Caritas – do you think you still would have run away,” I ask. “If I didn't know about Caritas,” Astrid repeats, and starts crying silently, “I don't know. I couldn't stay there any longer. If I had, I would have found a pistol and killed myself”.

Astrid was recruited after she had arrived in Italy, and had a few weeks to get to know the city before she was held in captivity. Unlike most other of our respondents, she knew where she could go for help. When it was possible for her to escape, she did so, and was able to go directly there. Astrid was the only one of our respondents who got in touch with an NGO on her own initiative after escaping.

Wanting to keep it all a secret

Some women do not ask anyone for help, because they are ashamed of the situation they are in, and wish to keep what has happened to them a secret. They just want to go back home, without having to tell their story to anybody. Even if they have been forced into prostitution against their will, many fear the reactions they will get when they come home if people find out. They do not want to ask the police or any other organisations for help, as this would make it difficult to keep the secret.

This fear is often exploited by organisers and pimps, and used to make women co-operate.

Paula was forced to sell sex in a Balkan country for several months. She worked every night, seven days a week, and had five or six clients every night she was working. She was not able to keep any of the money for herself. While working, she was usually never under any direct supervision, and in principle, there was nothing to stop her from leaving. She was asked several times by representatives of the local law enforcement if she had any problems, or if she needed any help, but always declined. She had been told that if she tried to run away, the pimp would contact her family at home, and tell them that she was a prostitute.

Paula's story illustrates the immense shame that many victims of trafficking feel for the situation they are in. NGOs in many countries of origin also confirm that one of their major difficulties is making families and local communities understand and accept victims of trafficking. In some cases NGOs even recommend that victims of trafficking keep their experiences secret even from their family, in order to make it possible to go back and take up their “old lives”. It is this fear of losing her “old life” that made Paula co-operate and not run away – to her it was worse to think that she would not have anything to return to when her days of prostitution were over.

6.4 When oppression is internalised

Not all stories of forced prostitution have the same elements of force and threat as we have described above. In many cases it makes more sense to talk about women who are lured into prostitution, or who are put in a situation where they feel they have no choice but to start providing sex to customers. In some cases, such as that of Susan, it seems that there has been a gradual moving of the boundaries she initially set for what she would be willing to do:

Susan received an offer to work as a dancer in a hotel in a Middle Eastern country. There was to be nothing else involved in the job, only “Dance, go to sleep, repeat” as she puts it. For this job she would be paid US\$650 a month. Everything was supposed to be legal. She repeats several times that she was only supposed to dance.

She travelled by plane, together with five other girls and their recruiter. At the airport they were met by the manager of the hotel. When they got to the hotel they were told that they needed to have their blood tested before they could start working. This made Susan a bit suspicious, but she agreed to give a blood sample. When the manager had received the results, they started to work. After they had danced for a couple of nights, they were told that the job was not only dancing, but “consummation” as well (“consummation” means to keep men company in a bar; sit with them and get them to order expensive drinks, often earning a certain percentage of the money from the bar). At first, everything was OK, but then the clients wanted “more intimate services”. Susan says there was no way out, so she agreed, as did the other four women. All the money went to the boss, but sometimes the clients gave an extra few dollars to the women. She describes the relationship with the boss/pimp as “OK” at this time. She called her parents a few times, but never said anything about her situation. After some months other, more brutal owners came in, and her situation deteriorated further.

It is impossible for us to say what would have happened to Susan if she had refused to provide sex to the clients. It is possible that the only consequence would have been to be sent home without money. What was clear is that Susan felt as if she had no choice but to accept the situation. This could be because she felt an underlying threat of violence if she did not pay off the debt of the expenses for her travel from her home country, or because she understood that this was the only way she would be able to stay in the country and earn money. By letting the women become prostitutes via dancing first, and then “consummation”, the owner of the bar made the women move one step at a time, and was able to maintain what Susan describes as

an “OK relationship” with the women even as they were entering into prostitution. Susan did not want to work in prostitution, but ended up there because her traffickers created a situation that made her feel she has no choice. Whether or not she made the final choice herself should not be relevant.

Accepting that you belong to a pimp

There are women who decide to enter prostitution with no pressure or assistance from others, and who keep all or almost all of the income for themselves. There is no data on the proportion of women who operate independently in Norway or in other countries but, according to our data and the information that we have available, this group is particularly small among Eastern and Central European women, both among those who work in their home country, and those who work abroad.

In many Eastern and Central European countries, prostitution is highly organised, and is often tied to organised crime. Prostitution is often illegal, and women in prostitution need protection not only from violent clients and crime, but also from police and the legal system. In one interview with NGO personnel working with women in prostitution in Lithuania, the respondents could not say for certain that they would recommend that women work independently – the women without protection are often exposed to violence. Murders happen regularly among the independent women in the street. Others are raped and abused. According to these NGOs, pimps may protect prostitutes from random violence perpetrated by clients. Furthermore, because prostitution is illegal, prostitutes also need protection from the police. Several Lithuanian women suggested to us that it is possible to buy protection from a pimp, or directly from the police. A prostitute who does not have an arrangement with a police officer or a pimp will be regularly arrested and fined.

In Ukraine we were not able to find out how the prostitution market operates. The only institution that we could find that works with women in prostitution is situated in Odessa, where the prostitution arena is assumed to be very different from the rest of Ukraine, as this is the main entry point for women who are deported from Turkey.¹³ According to the very limited information that we have, the prostitution market in Ukraine is so organised that it is simply impossible to operate without the assistance of a pimp. One NGO in Kyiv had an HIV information campaign targeting women in prostitution, but found the only way of getting access to the women was to ask pimps for assistance.

As a consequence of this highly organised prostitution arena, women from many countries in Eastern and Central-Europe do not question the role of the pimp when

¹³ According to key respondents, large numbers of women from all over Eastern Europe are dropped in Odessa every week by Turkish Police. The ones who do not bring any money with them sometimes see no other option than prostituting themselves in order to get money to travel back home.

they enter prostitution. This does not mean that they accept any type of deal or treatment from the pimp. It could be said that a “negotiation” takes place between the woman and the pimp. It is in the interest of the women to obtain as much freedom as possible, to choose which clients to take, when and where they want to work, and of course, to keep as much of the money as possible. The pimp, on the other hand, is interested in maximising profit, having the women take as many clients as possible, and getting the biggest possible proportion of their incomes. While there have been accounts of actual negotiations between women and their pimps, where the daily rate has been negotiated down when the market has been bad, in most cases, the “negotiation” is implicit, and the outcome is based on the situation the woman finds herself in when she enters prostitution or comes to a new country. Factors that influence the outcome seem to be the presence of a debt, the women’s network in the country where she works, as well as the age and experience of the women.

There are several accounts of women who fall in love with their pimps or organisers, although this has not been the case for any of our respondents. When 16-year old Anna’s trafficker was arrested, the police took both Anna and her co-worker to a shelter for trafficking victims. However, while Anna could tell a story of abuse and exploitation, Anna’s co-worker did not want to testify, as she saw the pimp as her boyfriend. She ran away from the shelter one day, after having beaten Anna so severely that she ended up in hospital. We do not want to speculate here about whether we can talk of a “Stockholm syndrome”, or if this can be said to be love under unusual circumstances. Many key respondents have commented that while victims of trafficking often find it very difficult to trust in strangers, they may grow extremely attached to a person who is able to get through to them. It has been suggested that some traffickers exploit this. It is interesting to note that, according to key respondents, the migrant women working in the street in Oslo often will refer to their pimps as their boyfriends.

Paying off debts

One issue we initially struggled to understand was why the women often seem to accept that they are indebted to their traffickers. A common opening phrase that the women are met with when they arrive in a new country is: “I have now bought you, and you owe me X amount of money that you have to pay back by working for me”. Some women simply accept this.

There are three elements central for understanding this. First, many have already taken upon themselves debt before they leave home, and accept that it is their responsibility to pay it off. Secondly, some agree to pay off this debt, as they believe they will be “free” after this. Finally, many accept being sold, as buying and selling of women in prostitution is somehow accepted in their home country.

As we have mentioned in previous sections, women who travel abroad as irregular migrants have often taken on some kind of debt before they leave, in order to pay for documents and tickets. In some cases this debt seems to be implicit, and the women herself may not be certain what the agreement is before she leave her home country. In other cases it is part of the deal the women makes with the recruiter.

The recruiter told Susanne that he had a long list of different jobs that she could choose from, in several different countries. If she decided to go to Turkey she would have to work for free for three months to cover the expenses for the travel, but if she went to Italy, or another West-European country, it would take six months before she would start earning any money for herself.

According to Susanne, this type of arrangement is common among irregular labour migrants in the area where she lives. They all understand that they somehow need to pay back the travel expenses. When Susanne ended up in the sex industry in Turkey, the presence of a debt was not a surprise – the only surprise was that she would have to pay it off by prostituting herself.

There are several examples of women accepting this debt, and that they have to pay it off by prostituting themselves. Some want to pay off their debt because they believe that only after that, they can truly be safe from the organisers and their networks. Others want to eliminate their debt so that they can start earning money, which was their initial purpose of their journeys. Thus, in some cases, simply by telling the women that they have to earn money, they become “voluntary” prostitutes, because they see no other way to obtain the often large amounts that they owe.

The system of buying and selling of women, seems to be common in the prostitution arena in many Eastern and Central European countries. The women who operate in this arena might find it unreasonable or dysfunctional, but they usually accept that “this is the way it works”.

Mona works in prostitution in Vilnius. At the time of the interview, she operated more or less independently, in the top segment of the prostitution arena. Some “administrators” had her telephone number and, if they sent her clients, would take 50 percent of the fee. However, it was always up to her to decide whether she wanted to take a client or not. When she got clients on her own, she kept all the money herself. “Nobody has ever sold me, therefore they cannot claim anything from me,” she explained.

We asked her whether she had ever considered going to a Western European country, as the potential income there is much higher. Mona admitted that she had considered it, and if she decided to go she knows whom to contact. However, if you want to work in the West, you have to be sold through an organisation, Mona explained. She did not want to risk that. In Vilnius she has her own

free life, and she does not want to sacrifice that. She is not Lithuanian herself, so she does not have to fear being recognised. However, women from Vilnius do not want to work in their own city, so they have to go abroad to work. According to Mona, they all know the risk they are running by being sold.

Mona described the buying and selling of women in prostitution as if it is the most natural thing in the world. When she explained how the system works, her tone was almost patronising, and she clearly thought that the two Norwegian researchers were a bit naïve. She underlined that the freedom she enjoys was due to the fact that she had never been sold, and that it was important for her that this did not happen. However, if she were to end up in a situation where she was sold, she would not question the buyer's right to impose restrictions on her.

As we described in Chapter 4, Mona entered prostitution gradually. First she got friends that were prostitutes that she envied for the lifestyle they were able to maintain. With the assistance of these friends she entered prostitution herself. She had a day job for a while, but decided to go back to prostitution again after some time. She was never in an acute need of money, and she was never put under any pressure from recruiters or organisers. Consequently, Mona has avoided being sold. Mona stands out from our other respondents as she was in a position where she could “negotiate”; she had time to consider her options, and she was in a position where she could turn down offers she didn't like. Furthermore, through her friends that had already entered prostitution, she had information that could help her avoid bad decisions. The majority of our respondents that have entered prostitution, have had an acute need for money, or have already been in a situation where they were dependent on the person that gave the offer. They have not had the luxury of time that Mona had, and have accepted the first offer they got.

6.5 Earning money

One issue that is often ignored when trafficking is discussed, is that victims of trafficking can be given money for their prostitution. If a woman is lured or forced, giving her money does not change the fact that she did not initially want to sell sex. Giving the women a proportion of the money is perhaps the easiest way to make the women cooperate, as it makes both the woman herself, and her environment, interpret it as if she is taking actively part in prostitution herself. According to NGOs in Albania, some traffickers have even started sending some money home to the women's family, in order to legitimise what they are doing, and in order to prevent them from coming looking for their daughter or niece.

To what extent women do get money when they are in a situation of force or exploitation has been difficult to establish through our study, as many seem to underscore to what extent they are given money or not. It is however often a surprising element in the escape stories the women tell, that they suddenly have money to bribe a guard, or even to buy an airplane ticket back home. The women may be afraid that they will be deprived of their status as victims, or even their right to rehabilitation if it is known that they actually earned some money during their stay abroad. This attitude seem to be echoed among some NGOs and professionals working with victims of trafficking: according to one NGO representative in Ukraine, a women that has made money while abroad, can not be a victim of trafficking.

Also women who agrees to enter prostitution can be victims of trafficking, if she afterwards cannot choose to leave prostitution (i.e. because of debt), or if she has been taken advantage of in a vulnerable situation and a pimp or organiser makes money on her. As we showed in Chapter 4 migrant women often arrive in their destination country with a acute need of money. When they realise upon arrival that their only option for paying back their debt and earning money is through prostitution, some may eventually accept this. The women become prostitutes “by own choice”, but in a situation where no other options were available to them, in a situation constructed by their traffickers.

6.6 Voluntary or forced – does a distinction make sense?

As the discussion in the section above illustrates, it is often difficult to distinguish between those who choose to enter prostitution of their own free will, and those who are forced to do so. Another area where it may be difficult to draw up a clear line between those women who are in prostitution voluntarily and those who are coerced is when women who enter prostitution under force continue to operate with a higher degree of independence, as was the situation for Susanne.

Susanne was in her mid-thirties when she travelled to Turkey together with a 21-year old girl and a recruiter. The recruiter had promised them work. Upon arrival, they were taken to a hotel to meet their new female employer. The employer gave the recruiter money, and he gave their passports to the women. Before he left he told the girls they might find the work difficult in the beginning because of the language. “I will be here the whole week, and you can contact me if you need help,” he said. They never saw him again. When the recruiter left, Susanne had still not understood that she was in trouble. They were taken to a new hotel – a very nice hotel, where two very nicely dressed men sat by a

table. Susanne thought it was the manager of the factory they would work in who wanted to meet them. They were served tea, and then she was told to go with one of the men to a hotel room. The man pushed her towards the bathroom and expressed in finger language that he wanted her to take a shower. First she didn't understand, then she refused – she didn't want to get undressed in front of him. Then he beat her. Hard. He pulled her hair and kicked her. Then he raped her. Several of her ribs were broken, and she could not sleep for four days because of the pain. She found out later that when the pimp bought new girls, she sold them to the richest clients first.

After the rape, she went out to look for the 21-year old, but didn't find her. Susanne only saw her again two days later, looking totally broken down. The 21-year old looked like she wanted to say something, but kept silent. Susanne only found out later what had happened to her. They had not beaten her because she had not tried to resist. She had been raped by three men.

They were placed in a hotel, where Susanne shared room with a 19-year old girl from Moldova. “She was a very beautiful girl, but scared of everything, like a hare. She had been there for three years. She always got the worst, most violent clients,” Susanne explained.

Sometimes they got some money from clients, and the pimp also gave them some cash to buy food and cigarettes. Sometimes the clients would feed them (take them to a restaurant) before they went to the room. She asked clients to help her escape several times in the beginning, but when she did, the clients told the owner. After that she only got the bad clients – drug addicts and violent people.

Susanne stayed in the hotel for about half a year. Once a new woman was brought in who said she knew of another pimp who could get them a job, and give them 50 percent of what they earned. However, the girls did not have their passports, so they could not leave. Susanne also argues that they could not run away since they did not know the language.

One day this girl came back after having been exposed to a “programme” with 12 men. She was so beaten up she wasn't able to get out of the bathtub on her own. That day they decided to run away. They paid off one of the guards using tips they had got from clients, got their passports and left the hotel.

First they went to work for another woman, but as they did not like it there, they left after three weeks. Then they started working for another pimp, who offered them jobs in a discothèque. It was a dancing job from 9pm–4am, where women could make arrangements with clients themselves. They got to keep 50 percent of the money they earned. “I was very thin at this time, since they hadn't

fed us much in the first place, so I didn't have any problem getting clients. This was a good time.” One day the pimp who had first bought her saw her working, and the two women were again put under guard in the hotel they were first confined to. This time they were able to escape the same night, and went back to her last pimp. After that point, they decided to be more careful, so they moved into the pimp's house, and started working from a tourist hotel.

After some time they had a big fight with the new pimp – he wanted to have sex with them for free, but they insisted that he had to pay in the same way that all the other clients had to. He got angry and called the police, who came to the house and arrested them (they no longer had valid visas). Susanne had to give all her money to the police in order to be set free. That night Susanne went to work in a bar. Late that evening, the police raided the place. Susanne said she did not even try to hide. She just sat at the table while all the other girls ran away, and lit herself a cigarette while she waited to be deported.

She went home with all her belongings in two small bags. Susanne says she did not want to bring home anything else: “It is a hard job – a dirty job – you pay for it with depression. I didn't want the money. I wanted them to send me home naked.”

Susanne was first deceived, and then forced into prostitution in a very violent way. She says it never occurred to her that she could end up in such a situation: “Who would think they would want to sell a women in her mid-30s?” she asked. However, when she finally decided to escape, she did not go home. Even after she had earned enough money to pay for the travel back home, she continued working as a prostitute, for a pimp who let her keep 50 percent of her income. At the time when she is deported, she does not even have a pimp. How can we understand this?

First of all, when Susanne left home, she and her family had large economic problems. Susanne had a teenage daughter, and lived together with her retired mother and her sister. Susanne's ex-husband was an alcoholic who did not provide financial support. Their only source of income was selling handmade items in the local market. Susanne had seen the possibilities of earning a lot of money relatively fast, and she had already paid the price of seeing herself as a prostitute.

In the period when Susanne was earning some money on her prostitution, she was in an ambivalent state of mind. She wanted to come home with money, knowing that her family needed it. At the same time she did not want the money, because it was associated with shame, and because of the mental price she pays for them. In the end she decided she could not cope with the situation, and she did not try to escape deportation. It is worth noting that this changed in one day – earlier the same day, she gave all her money to the police, in order to escape deportation. When she

left the country where she had been working, she had no money, only a few presents: “I wanted them to send me home naked,” she says.

There is no doubt that Susanne has been in a situation of serious trafficking and forced prostitution. But can we say that Susanne’s trafficking situation ended at some specific point in time during her stay in Turkey? Probably not. Susanne never wanted to work as a prostitute, and did not end up in this situation by choice. After she escaped she tried to make the best of her situation – a situation she has wound up in because of traffickers.

6.6 How can we recognise trafficking?

In the discourse on trafficking, many have demanded tools and definitions by which they can establish whether or not a woman has been a victim of trafficking or not. We do not believe that it is possible to come up with a black and white definition that makes it easy to distinguish between women who are victims and those who are not. We may assume that there are migrant women in Norway who have chosen to work in prostitution, and who do so independently and without the involvement of pimps or organisers. On the other hand, we may also assume that there are women who are locked up and systematically raped and abused. However, these two categories make up a very small part of the migrant women who work in prostitution in Oslo today. The majority are found in between.

The trafficking concept is used to refer to methods of coercion and control, that limit migrants' possibilities to act, and to take control over their own lives. In this chapter we have discussed various aspects of coercion and control that should be tied to our understanding of trafficking. Through our study we found four main aspects where traffickers manipulate and impose restrictions and control; when women enter prostitution against their own will, when they are not free to leave prostitution if they wish to, when they cannot determine the conditions under which they work and when they do not receive money from their prostitution. All four aspects should be understood as dimensions or continuums, where the women at one end are under total control, and women at the other end are totally free to act.

In order to understand to what degree a woman has entered prostitution by choice, we need to consider several factors. While the cases of women who are raped or threatened to comply obviously fall into the category of coercion and control, women who are manipulated to gradually cross boundaries for what they are willing to do, or who have been deliberately put in a situation where they see no other alternatives, cannot be excluded from this category. Further down on the continuum we find women who have been recruited into prostitution when they are in a

very vulnerable position, for example, children who have run away from home, or women who have experienced a family crisis or lost their jobs, and who are in acute need of money. We should keep in mind that a woman who was forced, manipulated or lured into prostitution several years ago may still be regarded a victim of trafficking, even if she no longer works for the same exploiters.

Secondly, an important distinction between victims of trafficking and independent prostitutes is to what extent they are free to leave prostitution if they want to. Here, women who are locked inside brothels or apartments are the obvious examples of coercion and control, but also women who live under threats of being exposed as prostitutes, or who have been told to pay off debts before they can leave should be included.

The third aspect concerns the conditions under which the women work. A prostitute may be a victim of trafficking if she cannot decide where, when, how and for whom she wants to work. An independent prostitute will be able to choose which clients to take, and how many clients she wishes to serve per day. Once more, a woman who is threatened or forced into submission by a pimp or brothel owner is the obvious victim. Perhaps a less obvious case of this type of exploitation is when women have to pay a fixed sum per day to their pimps, regardless of whether they have had any clients that day or not. If the fixed price is high, or demand is low, such an arrangement may limit a woman's room for action, and make it difficult to take one day off, or to decide not to take a particular client. This is an arrangement commonly found in Oslo.

Finally, a migrant woman may be a victim of trafficking if she cannot keep the money she earns from her prostitution. While it might not be reasonable to charge an airline company or travel agent that earns money from migrant prostitutes with participation in trafficking, any unreasonable charge of money, either it is for travel, housing or "protection" should be interpreted as a limitation to the woman's freedom of action. Again, the women who do not get any money from their own prostitution are the obvious victims, but we believe that women who give 90 percent of what they earn to their pimps clearly also belong in the category of coercion, even if they do not object to the arrangement themselves. In this group we also find women who are "sold" and have to pay back debt because of this. Further down the scale we may place women who pay smaller shares of what they earn to pimps and organisers. In some expanded understandings of the trafficking concept, any migrant prostitute who gives money to a pimp is a victim of trafficking.

As we have tried to illustrate in this chapter, force, coercion and even captivity may take many different forms. A woman that may be classified as a victim of trafficking according to one of the dimensions above, may not be classified as a victim according to the others. A woman who has chosen to work in prostitution, but who

ends up working under conditions she cannot control nor leave, or who does not receive money for her job, should also be classified as a trafficking victim.

Trafficking is, for each individual woman, not necessarily a static process in which the foundations and rules are laid at the start. The circumstances may change throughout their stay abroad. A woman who is forced or lured into prostitution, but continues working after her debt is paid off, will still be a victim of trafficking. Women running away from traffickers may perfectly well continue to sell sex as a means of supporting themselves, or even attempt to earn money to pay off the exploiters in the hope that they will be left alone. Consequently, a victim of trafficking is not easily recognisable. This is illustrated by the fact that several of our respondents, who have undoubtedly been victims of trafficking, were contacted by the police in the countries they were in several times, without ever being identified as victims.

7 Exit processes – getting away

Understanding the process of getting away from a situation of trafficking and forced prostitution is important in order to assist victims. The point when women leave the situation they are in is a key point of change in their life stories, and is often dramatic. Most women leave a trafficking situation through their own actions.

Two questions are central to getting away from trafficking: Why and how the women leave. The why question may be a bit surprising – in many ways it should be obvious why a woman would want to leave if she is forced or lured into prostitution from which she gets little or no money. For some women the answer is indeed the obvious; they have been subjected to such a level of violence and force that their only thought is to get away. At the same time, we have established that, very often, there are no physical obstacles to leaving the situation; and women may be controlled by manipulation or a belief that there is no way out. Several of our respondents have only made an effort to get away after a long period of time. We find that many women have experienced either a change in their perceptions of opportunities to leave; or a deterioration in the situation they were in which has caused them to take a chance they had not previously considered.

Concerning how the women have left, most have in one way or another escaped. What varies is the degree to which others were involved in this process, and how dramatic the escape has been. Very few have been able to leave entirely without the help or assistance of others. Only a small minority have been freed through police raids or similar interventions.

In this chapter we first explain what has happened in order for the women to make the decision to get away, before proceeding to describe how they have left.

7.1 Why do they leave?

Although there are some women who are only able to leave after someone else intervenes in their situations, for instance the police, most left as a result of their own actions. The question is; what brought them to this decision? It should be noted that, even if force is less visible, it does not mean that their situation is less serious.

The lack of physical obstacles does not exclude serious threats, or a level of manipulation that leaves the women with a sense that there simply are no alternatives, as we discussed in the previous chapter.

The motivations women give for leaving fall into three categories which are closely related to the forms of control and exploitation they were subjected to. The women's own understanding of the situation they are in is of major importance. The first group left because they had nothing to lose, and were able to take an opportunity that presented itself. These women have generally been in a situation characterised by extreme control, degradation and violence. The second group left after their perceptions of the police changed. Having previously thought that the police could not be trusted and that leaving was not an option, something happened to change this perception. Finally, there are those who decided to take a risk they earlier did not contemplate when their situations took a turn for the worse. Each of these categories is described in more detail below.

Nothing to lose

In many ways, the easiest category to deal with consists of the women who constantly try to get away, and who finally succeed in escaping when an opportunity is offered. One might say that these women act as expected in response to a situation of force. For this category, the question of why they left is hardly relevant. They are probably the ones who are most easily defined as victims of trafficking by the police and others. It also seems that the women who behave in this way are the ones who are subjected to the most brutal and degrading treatment, and who are under very strong control, for instance, through being constantly supervised. They have not experienced a gradual introduction to coercion, but have been kept like prisoners right from the beginning of their exploitation. They are not manipulated into thinking they will make money after they have paid back debts; rather, they are treated more or less like slaves. They leave simply because they have to, and they have succeeded in escaping because a suitable opportunity has presented itself.

A change in perception of alternatives – new trust in the police

Trafficked women often relate only to their pimps/exploiters and to the customers, or to other women in similar situations. Consequently, the exploiters may possess more or less an information monopoly over the women. It is not uncommon that women are told that it is no use in running away, as the pimps have bribed the police and they will just be returned to their exploiters, and punished severely. The issue of having bribed the police may not be true, the problem for the women in this situation is that they have no way of verifying the information, and may be too scared

to take a chance. Women may also be afraid of the police if they are in a country illegally, and fear being sent home.

In some cases, it seems that someone has acted as a catalyst for the women to get away by giving them new information. These people offer a different understanding of opportunities, in particular in relation to whether the police can be trusted or not. This role can be played by the police themselves or by others with whom the women have been in contact.

In one of the cases we encountered, a representative of the local police managed to establish trust with an underage victim of trafficking, which subsequently led to her release, and the arrest of the man who was prostituting her. The way this particular police officer accomplished this was by positioning herself as an individual, rather than a representative of a faceless institution, in relation to the girl

On the first contact with Anna, the police officer sensed that something was wrong, and suspected that she might be in a forced situation. The police officer told the girl that if she ever had any problems, she could come directly to her, and she would try to help. She also gave Anna her phone number. At this stage, however, Anna did not tell the police officer anything about her situation. The police officer followed up the particular case by calling the girl on her mobile phone several times, and after approximately one week, the girl decided to run away from her pimp, found the particular police officer, and decided to press charges.

An important aspect of this story is that this girl was not locked in, and even possessed her own mobile phone. While she was miserable in her situation, she had not considered going to the police for help, in all likelihood based on her former bad experience with the police. In principle, there had been nothing to stop her from reporting the man to the police before.

The key issue here is that the police officer managed to be first and foremost an individual in relation to the girl. When she sensed that something was wrong, she did not tell the girl that she could come to *the police* if she needed help, but that she could come directly *to her*. She not only made herself available, but actively and personally followed up on the case by contacting the girl several times, thereby proving that she was interested and willing to help. In this way she was able to establish sufficient trust for the girl to see that there was an alternative to the situation she was in, and that there was a way she could leave.

Trust in institutions can, as in the example above, be established through the representatives of an institution being able to come across as trustworthy individuals. It can also be established through an intermediary – an individual the woman or girl trusts who tells her that the police are trustworthy, but who is not a police representative. This was the case for Nina, whose story we told in the previous

chapter. After Nina was trafficked to Germany, she never considered the possibility of trusting the police until a local woman who sold sex in the same place told her that the police in Germany was different from the police in Nina's home country. The woman said that she would call the police, as she could see that Nina and some other girls working there were in a bad situation. Nina confirmed to the woman that she wanted to get away, and encouraged her to contact the police.

Common to both Nina and Anna's cases is that the only thing that changed in their situations when they asked for help is that they start to trust the police, a trust they did not previously have. Further, it is important to note that neither Nina nor Anna were completely isolated from people not involved in their exploitation. In Anna's case, it was even her trafficker who had brought her to the police in the first place, confident that the hold he had on her would prevent her from asking for help.

Another important lesson from Nina's story is that while the police as an institution has an important role to play in order to establish trust, it is also possible for others to convince disbelieving women that the police can be trusted. Actors involved in health programmes, or social services may have easier access to certain women in sex-markets than the police have. Consequently, they may also serve as trust builders in relation to women in prostitution. This is however dependent on this type of actors having a good working relationship with the police based on trust. No organisation will encourage victims of trafficking and exploitation to report it to the police if they are not confident that the women will benefit from it.

A change in situation – deterioration of conditions

As we have described in last chapter, some women who live in a situation of a high level of control and forced prostitution appear to have more or less accepted the situation they are in, and do not try to escape in spite of systematic mistreatment and lack of control over their own lives. For many women a change or break up in their environment seems to serve as a catalysts for them deciding to break out. Usually this change entails a deterioration of their conditions. They seem to be willing to accept degradation and misery to a certain point, but beyond that point, they take action to escape.

If a situation that is bad to start with turns out to be even worse, it leads some women to seek a way out that they may not have seen as an alternative before. For Camilla, the turning point came when she discovered that the pimp she had been working for during the past four years had sold her to another man. Paula's story is similar; when she learnt after five months that she had been sold to a new pimp, she broke down in front of a customer and accepted his offer of help to run away. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the exploiter's hold on Paula was a threat to tell her family that she was a prostitute. This threat had prevented her from trying

to leave before, but faced with the possibility that her situation would further deteriorate, she took the chance. For Gina, this change came when she learnt that her “husband” was married to another woman. For Susanne, this took place when her friend was beaten so badly that she could not get out of the bathtub on her own.¹⁴

7.2 How do they leave?

The majority of women we interviewed took the initiative themselves to get away, either by deciding to run away, or by asking someone for assistance. Almost all of the women may be said to have escaped. The way they escaped took various forms depending on the type of control the women were subjected to.

Only a minority got away without the involvement of others. Just as someone has often acted as a catalyst to motivate the women to leave by providing new information, the majority of women have also been given practical assistance to get away by someone else. The police have rarely been involved unless the women went to the police personally, or managed to get someone else to tip off the police to conduct a raid. There are however several who have been helped by customers.

As indicated above, some situations are marked by such express brutality and force as opposed to the manipulation exerted in others that a desperate escape is the only option that is open to the women involved.

Grabbing the first opportunity to escape

A few of our respondents were controlled by means of locked doors and being held captive. Some of the women who were deprived of their freedom in this way managed to escape by grabbing the first opportunity. Their escapes can be described as coincidental – a door that is usually locked may one day suddenly be open, providing a stroke of luck and, literally, a way out.

Elisabeth was trafficked for a combination of labour and sexual exploitation. She was locked in a factory producing preserves together with several other women. It soon became clear that she would not get any money, and the only way to get food was to have sex with the owner of the factory and his friends. The women were usually under constant supervision, but one day when Elisabeth was taking out the rubbish, she realised that there was nobody in the yard. She was able to get into the back of a truck standing ready to take the products into the city,

¹⁴ See the previous chapter for Susanne and Gina’s stories.

and hid there. She had no papers, and only US\$20 that she had brought from home. When she got into the city she found a market where a lot of people from her own country were trading. Some of them helped her by taking her in for the night, and letting her call her family back home.

When Elisabeth managed to escape, it was unplanned, and she was able to take advantage of a mistake made by the people who controlled her. The same is the case for Astrid, whose story we referred in the previous chapter who was able to escape because the gates that were usually locked were left open one day. For these women there is a fine line between freedom and continued exploitation.

The considered plan

Two of the women we talked to have made rather elaborate plans to get away, relying on themselves. They kept calm, and quietly assessed their opportunities without their traffickers suspecting anything. Lisa told us of how she reacted when she realised that she would not get the job in a bar that she had been promised, but was expected to sell sex.

When Lisa was left alone with the man who had bought her she felt like crying, but told herself not to panic. The man took her to a bar, where it had been decided that she would stay. She did not work the first day. On the second day, an Albanian costumer came to her, but when they were alone, she explained her situation to him. Lisa used a dictionary to make herself understood, and asked him for help. He agreed and said he would meet her the next day at 3 o'clock. When she came to the square where she had agreed to meet the man at 3 p.m., he was not there. It turned out later that he had meant at 3 a.m. Lisa headed towards the highway and started hitchhiking. Some policemen stopped, and told her that she could not hitchhike on the highway. They took her back to the centre of the town again. She did not consider telling the police about her situation. She thought she was safe. So she started walking towards the road again, taking another route this time. On the way a car was passing by in the opposite direction hooting at her. She saw that it was the men who had sold her. They had to turn the car around to get to the other side of the road, and she ran into the bushes to hide. She put her passport close to her body, left her belongings in the bushes, and found a better place to hide. She lay on the ground, too afraid to move. After some time the voices and movement disappeared. Then she decided that it was time to trust the police. She went to some business buildings by the road where there were people working, and rang the door bell, but nobody answered. After some time, a man came out to take a smoke. She showed him his passport, and tried to explain her situation. She had left her dictionary in

the bushes. The man invited her in, and she went to the toilet to clean up, and then the police came.

Lisa realised that she has to keep calm, and started to look for ways out immediately. She was not under constant supervision, but was in a foreign country where she was unable to speak the language, a situation many women would have considered hopeless—several of our respondents did just that. Nevertheless, Lisa was so determined to get away that she – armed only with a dictionary and her passport – was willing to try to escape. Her escape was dramatic, but she succeeded. It should, however, be noted that she was willing to go to great length and exposed herself to a dangerous situation in order to avoid the police. This may be related both to a suspicion of police in general, based on experiences from her home country, and also to her status as an illegal immigrant. It was only when she found herself in clear and direct danger that she was willing to contact the police.

Gina also quietly made her plan and managed to outsmart the men who controlled her. As described in the previous chapter, Gina had been forced and deceived into prostitution with a combination of violence and false promises. When she found out that someone she had initially trusted was only exploiting her, she decided that enough was enough.

Gina told the man who controlled her that she missed her sister badly, and begged him to let her call her. In the end, he agreed, but on the condition that he could listen in on the conversation. She did not know her sister's phone number, but he found it. As he dialled the number, Gina watched intently to try to memorise the numbers. She heard her sister's voice on the other end of the line, but did not say a word to her, as she concentrated on remembering the phone number. The man hung up, and Gina told him that she had changed her mind; she did not want to talk to her sister after all. When Gina went out to work in the street, she was always equipped with a mobile phone and a phone card to the value of approximately 5 Euros, so that she could call her pimp if she got in trouble. This was not enough to call her sister again, but she tried to keep some money aside from customer payments. After some time, she had enough money to ask a customer for help to buy a phone card. This time she managed to contact her sister. She did not want to tell her the real story, but said that she was in a place with many women, and that her sister should tell the police. Gina thought the police would understand what this meant. After some time, Gina was sent home. This was not because of direct intervention by the police, but because the police had started to ask questions about her. Her traffickers saw it as too risky to keep her where she was and sent her to her home country.

Both Lisa and Gina were able to keep their wits about them when they saw that they needed to get away, and they outsmarted their traffickers. Both told us their stories with proud defiance, and even underlined certain aspects of comedy in their escapes. Both succeeded in getting away, but not without risk. For Lisa, her plan resulted in a dramatic escape with many close calls; for Gina, it was really a long shot that the police would understand what her cryptic message actually meant. Had these two women been able to call a hotline, or had trust in the local police, it is possible that their escapes could have been less risky.

The intervening customer

Both Lisa and Gina tried to get some help from customers to escape, but the customers were not central to their plans. In the end it was their own efforts that enabled them to leave. According to IOM Ukraine, as many as 10 to 15 percent of the women assisted at the rehabilitation centre in Kyiv have been helped out of their trafficking situation by customers. Customers have also been central to the escapes of several of our respondents. In a further two cases, women obtained the assistance of customers. It should be noted that asking customers for help is not always a good strategy. Susanne told us about how she and the women she worked with were put through what may be called a bizarre training programme when they were first forced to sell sex, and were only given to customers the exploiters trusted. As described in the chapter above on coercion and control, women who tried to ask for help were severely punished.

Nevertheless, it is likely that Isabel would have had great difficulties in getting away had it not been for one of her customers.

Isabel was held captive in an apartment together with three other women. The man who had bought them always took them to clients' homes, and when the client had paid, they were taken back to the apartment and locked in. There was also always a man in the flat to guard them. At one point one of the girls disappeared. The man said that she had gone home, but Isabel did not believe it, as the girl had been beaten very badly by the men just before she disappeared. Isabel stayed in this place for six months. In the end she was helped out by a client. This client had been very kind, and Isabel thinks that maybe he had fallen in love with her. He asked for her very often. He gave her money to keep for herself, as some clients did. However, the money was always taken away from her when she came back to the flat – the pimp made the women empty their pockets and searched them after they had been with clients. Clients never let them use the phone because they were afraid of the pimp, but the pimp would sometimes let them call home after some of the girls said that their parents would

worry about them. Also, one of the girls had a baby at home. The pimp always listened when they called home. Isabel called home three or four times while she was abroad. She told her parents that she was working as a waitress. After six months, the client that Isabel thought was in love with her bought her passport from the men. She spent a week in his home. She tried to ask how much he had to pay for her passport, but he would not tell her. The man wanted her to stay with him, but she only wanted to go home. He never tried to pressure her to stay, but bought her a plane ticket and gave her money for the journey home. She says that he was a good man, but that she did not trust any men at that time. She has not had any contact with him after she came home.

Isabel's perception of her situation was that she would not have been able to get away if her client had not bought her. She was kept under strict control, and feared for her life after what had happened with the woman who disappeared. Her client became in some sense a kind of hero in her story, even though he had repeatedly had sex with her, tacitly accepting the pimp's control, and in the knowledge that she was not doing it voluntarily. However, in this situation it seems that he developed some feelings for her, indicated by the fact that he did not try to force her to stay with him, and that he was willing to spend a considerable amount of money on buying her and helping her to get back home. Susan had a similar experience. She said that one client who was always very nice to her, one day understood that she did not really want to be doing this job, and bought her passport. He also got her a plane ticket and told her to never come back.

Not all clients who become a part of the release of the women are "heroic characters", going to great lengths to free the women, as depicted by Isabel. Sonya tried, desperately and repeatedly, to ask clients for help. Several times men promised to help her in exchange for sex, only to ignore their promises later on. She finally managed to run away when one client stuck to his word and let her go after she did what he wanted:

When her client had finished, Sonya ran into the street. She had the phone number of an acquaintance in the city, and thought that her only chance was to get hold of this woman. Sonya saw a car approaching with a man and a baby in it, and managed to stop him. She thought that, because he had a baby with him, maybe he would help her. He said that he would, but only in exchange for sex. She agreed, and he took her to the nearest train station. There she saw a policeman and tried to ask for help. He did not believe her, and told her brusquely to get away. The policeman thought she was a vagrant or a hobo, and told her she had no rights. Sonya tried to ask others for help, but people only rushed by. In the end she stood on her knees in her miniskirt, in a state of panic, crying for help. A young girl gave her some change. Sonya tried to call her acquaintance,

but nobody answered, and she got on the train. By this time it was late at night, and she took the subway to one of the end stations. She got off at the last station on the line, and a man started to push her around, and acted very threateningly. Sonya tried to call for help, but nobody reacted. He dragged and pushed her out of the station, and into a basement in a yard nearby, where he beat her up and raped her. Before he left, he threw a bundle of cash at her. With this money, Sonya was able to call the one phone number she had again, and finally the woman she knew answered. She was given directions to the flat, where she stayed for five days. The acquaintance gave her money for her journey home.

Sonya's story is one of the most brutal cases we came across during this study, and the level of abuse she went through is almost impossible to comprehend. It was a client who facilitated her escape, but only by letting her go after he had finished with her. Another man also helped by letting her go with him in his car to a train station, but again, only after she had given him sex. What finally enabled her to call her acquaintance and get help was the money her rapist threw at her when he left. Although these men are central actors in Sonya's escape, all the events occurred within a context of extreme degradation and humiliation.

Just leaving

Some women have appeared to simply have left prostitution with relative ease. This does not mean that they have not been subjected to control or coercion. On the contrary, what happened must be understood in light of the discussions above both on various forms of coercion and control in Chapter 6, and in light of the importance of the women's perception of their situations as a contributing factor to keeping them under the control of traffickers. When Camilla found out that she had been sold, she tore up her false passport and flushed it down the toilet. She went out on the street to work as usual, but when the police came to check her papers, she showed them her false identity card, and told them that she was not a 24-year old Italian as her papers stated, but a 17-year old who had been coerced by the same man to sell sex since she was 13. Similarly, Anita was taken by her trafficker to apply for asylum when she got to her country of destination. He had told her that she would have to sell sex, and had threatened that if she did not co-operate, he would hurt her little brother. In the first interview with the police, Anita stuck to the cover story he had told her to use. However, one week later, she had realised that she could not go through with what he wanted her to do, and told the real story the next time she was interviewed. She was immediately moved to a safe place by the police, and the police started looking for her traffickers.

When traffickers provide women with ample opportunities to talk to the police, such as in the cases of Camilla and Anita, it seems to be based on a conviction that they do not run any risks in doing so. This is most likely based on an experience that the women will not talk, and is a clear illustration of the power of threats or manipulation. Neither Camilla nor Anita would have been identified as victims of trafficking had they not decided to tell their true stories. Camilla had the appearance of any other migrant street prostitute, and Anita was just another immigrant seeking asylum.

7.3 Interventions and assistance

Identifying victims of trafficking and providing them with assistance is a very challenging task. There are victims of trafficking who move with relative freedom, but whose room for action is limited in other ways. Some fear the police and have been manipulated into thinking that the police will not believe their stories, or even that the police are bribed and support their traffickers. However, as this group is generally not locked in, it might be possible to reach out to them with information that might change these perceptions. The power of changed perceptions about the police and trust in the police has been illustrated in some of the stories above. This change has been the main spur for the women to get away from the exploitation they have been subjected to. Some women were told by their traffickers that they would be sent back to their home countries if they went to the police. Being sent home by the police would not mean that the women's debts would be cancelled. The fear of being sent home may be a more difficult perception to work against, as in so many cases this is precisely what will happen if an illegal migrant working in prostitution comes into contact with the police. This factor may give traffickers a means of control over the women they exploit.

It is even more challenging to identify cases of trafficking where women are subjected not only to manipulation, but are also living under threats to themselves or their families. Many who have been in contact with the police have not asked for help for the fear of endangering the security of family members. Further, many women are kept isolated from the outside world. The only way to find them is through extensive investigation.

In relation to exit processes, it is interesting to note the sometimes far-reaching involvement of customers who have realised that the prostitutes they go to are not doing the work voluntarily. Clients are, after all, the one group that is in closest contact with women exploited through prostitution. However, while the client's help was essential for Isabel and Susan to escape, we came across stories of pimps who

exploit the clients' wish to help the women out. Although they are willing to accept large amounts from clients who want to "buy the woman's freedom", the women are simply sold on to another brothel or pimp. It might therefore not be a good idea to recommend that clients get directly involved in trying to secure the freedom of the women, or give any money to pimps or organisers for this purpose, as this might create a new market where pimps can profit. However, clients may be an important source of information for police and other organisations that try to discover cases of trafficking. It is possible that targeting this group directly through, for example, the media where sexual services are advertised, could sensitise clients to the need to report suspected cases of trafficking. Information campaigns in pornographic magazines or on websites might teach clients how to behave, and where to bring a woman, if they come across a victim of exploitation who wishes to escape her situation. At the same time, it is the clients who make prostitution a lucrative arena of operation for traffickers. Without clients, there would be no incentive to procure women for prostitution. For each client who intervenes and assists a victim of trafficking, there is an unknown (though undoubtedly large) number of men who have turned a blind eye and done nothing.

8 Going home

There are four issues in particular that we have sought to explore in relation to the women's return to their home country. The first is how they have come into contact with rehabilitation services. It should be noted that all of our respondents who were interviewed outside Norway have been in contact with various rehabilitation services or other institutions, as this was the way they were identified by us.

Secondly, we have explored whether the repatriated women have reported their traffickers to the police. The experiences of those who have reported their traffickers vary greatly, from very positive to actually contributing to fear and insecurity. We also describe the reasons women have given us for not wanting to talk to the police.

Thirdly, we will describe the relationships the women have with family and friends after they return, with a particular focus on the shame and secrecy that often follows an experience of trafficking.

Finally, we discuss the situation of victims of trafficking in the longer term, based on the experiences of the women we interviewed. These women have been at various stages of rehabilitation.

8.1 Contact with rehabilitation services

Approximately half of the women travelled home on their own accord, and had not been in contact with the police or any other organisations in their destination country when they escaped. Among the women who were in contact with the police, approximately half of them were directly referred on to rehabilitation services upon their return.

The procedures followed by police when confronted with trafficking cases differ greatly. Lisa and Nina, who were both trafficked to Germany, were immediately referred to local shelters with competence and experience in dealing with trafficking once they had been identified by the police. They stayed there until the German social workers were able to find places for them in their home countries, and were then offered a place to go. Women we spoke to who were trafficked to Turkey, on the other hand, have been put in prison, and been deported with papers giving the reason for their deportation as prostitution.

Only a very small group have come directly into contact with rehabilitation services on their return. For some of our respondents, it has taken up to two years from they came home. One organisation working with rehabilitation in Ukraine says that most of the women it works with make contact on their own initiative, usually after being told about the organisation by someone they trust. The organisation's impression is that those who are the most traumatised by their experience, or have been subjected to very brutal exploitation, usually take longer to tell their stories.

A large number of women travel home on their own, and never receive any help from such programmes. Information from key informants also indicate that a large number of women decline offers of being put into contact with rehabilitation services when they are repatriated. This leaves the question of what happens to those who never come into contact with various help services. At present, we know very little about this group, and their lives after escaping trafficking.

A note on rehabilitation and organisations: Big challenges, small means

The functioning of the rehabilitation system surrounding returned victims of trafficking has not been a main theme guiding our research. However, during the fieldwork in Lithuania, Ukraine and Albania, several issues regarding the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking and the functioning of different NGOs came up in interviews with key informants working in this sector. This is especially related to the nature of the system for funding projects related to victims of trafficking, but also to the difficult issue of different approaches taken by the sometimes very small organisations working in this field.

In all the major countries of origin for trafficking in Eastern and Central Europe today the work of prevention of trafficking and the rehabilitation of victims is the domain of NGOs of varying sizes and persuasions. Generally, NGOs work with project financing, meaning that they can start projects for which they have funding only for a short period of time, often as little as three months. This may even apply to larger projects. In late 2003, a shelter for victims of trafficking that we visited had not yet managed to secure finance for the running of the shelter in 2004, and was unsure about whether it would be possible to find money in time. At the time of writing, there were just over 20 people living there, most of them children.

One result of this short-term financing from different actors is that it is difficult to plan ahead. It also means that the ability of such projects to pay salaries is often limited. One NGO in Ukraine, running what is said to be one of the best programmes in the country, says that its work is mostly done on a voluntary basis and for free, and the staff only get a little money, whenever there is some money to spare. One challenge for NGOs working under these conditions is to keep staff

motivated. The job is difficult, and the stories staff are confronted with are often extremely tragic. Staff members regularly face the frustration of not being able to provide their beneficiaries with what they feel is necessary. When working conditions are so poor, it is difficult to retain staff. Aside from the strain on the individuals, institutional memory is lost if staff do not stay for long. The opportunity to develop the capacity of staff and to build on experience may be limited. The prevailing circumstances make it difficult to recruit staff with the necessary skills. Several NGOs expressed a need for trained psychologists. One NGO expressed a strong wish to be able to offer victims of trafficking contact with lawyers with international experience, something it was presently not able to do due to a lack of funds.

There is also the question of what happens to beneficiaries of programmes after the stay in the shelter is over. The typical duration of a shelter stay appears to be around three months. There are often very limited opportunities outside the shelter, and a three-month stay in a shelter does not resolve all the problems, so victims are often not fully capable of fending for themselves. One NGO in Ukraine expressed worry about what would happen to two of the women living there. Both were victims of trafficking who had returned with small babies, and both had alcohol abuse problems. Their three-month stay at the shelter was coming to a close, but the NGO had nowhere for them to go. At the time of the interview, the NGO saw no other alternative than for the women to stay on.

One difficult issue that is rarely discussed is the qualifications of various NGOs with respect to reintegrating victims of trafficking, and whether the victims' rights are being adequately respected. It should be noted that what is discussed below is far from being valid for all organisations in this field. It should also be noted that people working in these organisations do a tremendous job, often with few rewards. Still, for the sake of the victims of trafficking, it is necessary to keep the issues of victims' rights in rehabilitation must mind, notwithstanding the gratitude for the job the NGOs are doing.

Several NGO-run shelters impose strict rules on the women who stay there. When discussing challenges in their work, the staff of one NGO shelter said they had had some problems with some of the women who came to stay. These were women who went out of the shelter and drank alcohol, and who did not come back to the shelter before nine in the evening as they were supposed to. The representative said: "We wished them goodbye after two weeks". The question is, does a shelter actually have the right to impose these rules on women who need help? Is it reasonable to expect a grown woman to be home by nine every night? Does she not have the right to get help if she wants to come home at 10 p.m., or even at 4 a.m. for that matter? This is not the only NGO that demands that women abide by their rules if they want help.

The conditions imposed by some NGO shelters make some offers of rehabilitation unattractive to many women. While there are some who doubtlessly may find it a relief to be included in a programme and simply abide by a set of rules, there are others who would in all likelihood find this a suffocating experience. It may even echo what they have experienced during the time of being trafficked, where decisions were made for them and restrictions imposed on their freedom.

The NGOs also hold a large amount of power when it comes to deciding who will and will not receive assistance. One NGO employs a former policeman to do initial interviews, and determine which women are “real” victims. A representative of this organisation said that she would not consider anyone who had received any money from her traffickers as a victim of trafficking. A big challenge for organisations is to convey information to local communities. There is no doubt that they face a lot of obstacles in the forms of prejudice and preconceptions about victims of trafficking being loose women and prostitutes, thereby not worthy of sympathy or assistance. Many NGOs have a strong focus on establishing a firm line between trafficking and prostitution, in order to get support from their local communities. However, it is debatable whether such a line exists, and women who have made a conscious choice to sell sex can obviously also be exploited. Even getting money from pimps or traffickers does not exclude the possibility that exploitation has taken place. Demarcating a clear line between trafficking and prostitution with pimps may therefore not be useful, and may contribute to excluding certain groups of women from assistance they may need.

Another difficult issue is that of the victims’ stories not always being true. We do in no way wish to undermine the credibility of victims of trafficking in general. However, during our work, we have in several interviews experienced that there are strong indications that the women have known more about their destinations and the jobs they would be expected to do before they left, than what have chosen to convey to us, or to staff at the organisations they have been in contact with. A serious question, to which we presently do not have an answer, is whether this is somehow influenced by attitudes found among NGOs who are supposed to help them. As already mentioned, there is nothing to indicate that women who have known that they will work in prostitution are not exploited. However, since organisations offering help aim to find sympathy for victims in their local communities, it is quite possible that the environment is not conducive for a woman to admit that she did intend to sell sex, or that she did in fact get *some* money for doing this work.

Regardless of whether this tendency to play down having made a conscious choice to enter prostitution has anything to do with the pressure that women may feel, this may well undermine the prospect of rehabilitation. It is probably difficult to get effective psychological assistance if the real story of what happened is never told. Also, if the community in general feels that women who have chosen prostitution

have no rights and deserve what happened to them, there is a very real chance that women may adopt these views themselves.

8.2 Contact with the police

There is a broad agreement that the one thing that is needed in order to combat trafficking is to apprehend and punish those who are responsible. The prerequisite for achieving this goal is to create a conducive context, encouraging women to report those who exploit them. Several of our respondents reported their traffickers, but others are adamantly opposed to talking to the police. The most important prerequisite for talking to the police is trust – trust that one will be protected, and trust that the case will be handled properly. In addition, it is of utmost importance that the women who have reported their exploiters are kept informed about progress in cases. Below we describe different experiences of reporting traffickers to the police, as well as reasons given for not wanting to do so.

Experiences of reporting the traffickers to the police

Being able to report traffickers to the police and being treated decently is a very positive experience. This is something that may restore the confidence of women that justice will actually be done, and may restore confidence in institutions in general. Being able to put the blame where it belongs may be an important step in the process of coming to terms with what has happened. Lisa described a very positive meeting with the police in the country to she was trafficked.

When Lisa managed to escape the people who trafficked her, she was able to come into contact with the police. They treated her very nicely, she was provided with clean clothes, and given coffee and food – she had not eaten for 24 hours and was exhausted. She was taken to a hostel for battered women, where she rested for one day. The next day, the police came for her with a translator, and they went together to find the house where Lisa had been held. As soon as this was done, she was moved to a different location to stay with an organisation with experience in dealing with trafficking. She stayed there for two months, until she decided to go back to her home country. She could have stayed until the court case came up, but she did not want to. A place was found for her at a shelter in her home country, where she stayed for about a month. At the time of the interview, she had been home for half a year. The German police has kept in regular contact with her, and has informed her about developments in her case.

When we asked her whether she wanted to go to Germany to testify, she answered, without any doubt or hesitation; “Yes!”

Lisa’s experience with the police in Germany was very positive. She had initially tried to avoid contact with the police as she did not trust them, based on what she knew of the police in her home country, but found herself in a situation where she had no choice. She greatly appreciated the fact that the police kept her informed about the status of her case, and this seemed to keep up her motivation to testify. She was not deterred by the fact that someone had been looking for her, even though she suspects that they are friends of the people who attempted to sell her.

Not everyone has a positive experience of talking to the police. Anita does not have a bad word to say against the police in the country she was trafficked to. It is, however, clear that the difficult situation she currently finds herself in could have been alleviated by more professional follow-up of her case by the police.

Anita, who is 17 years old, told the police all she dared about the man who attempted to traffic her, in spite of being under direct threats of harm to her family. The police treated her very nicely, and assisted her to go home when she wanted to. However, she was not offered any contact with a social worker or any psychological help. She wanted to go home because she missed her family so much. In the eight months that have passed since her return, however, she has not been able to go back to her family. She has not heard anything from the police about her case, or whether the man who attempted to traffic her and his partners have been arrested. Anita is living in a secret location behind locked doors, and is not allowed to go out because her situation has been assessed as high-risk. She does not know how long this will last, or when she can hope to resume a “normal” teenager’s life. She would very much like for the man responsible to be put in prison.

A story like Anita’s would probably be most discouraging for any victim of trafficking considering reporting traffickers to the police. However, the police have acted with relative sensitivity at least in direct contact with Anita. The problem seems to be that when she leaves the country, the information flow stops. Anita’s worries, however, do not. At the moment, it is Anita who is literally living behind bars, not the perpetrators of the crime committed against her.

According to key informants, the ongoing provision of information to complainants is one of the key areas for the police to improve in relation to women who report pimps and traffickers to them. Pro-senteret in Oslo came into contact with a young woman who wanted to report her pimps to the police. She did, and was treated with politeness and interest. One month after reporting her pimps, she had not yet heard anything about the status of her case. She was extremely worried, and

wondered whether the pimps had actually been contacted by the police, whether they had been arrested, and whether they now knew that she had lodged a complaint against them. She fled the country, unable to cope with the strain of not knowing.

The stories go on. Anna, 16, after reporting her pimps to the police, was, while staying in a shelter, beaten so severely by her pimp's girlfriend that she was hospitalised for two weeks. While in hospital, she was contacted by the police who said that there was no need for arranging special protection for her, as she was only a child – the pimps would probably not bother to come after her. Nina, who laid a complaint with the police and whose traffickers were convicted, is very worried, as she knows that the men would soon be released from prison. She has heard from friends that some strange men have been trying to find out where she lives, and she is worried that they will come after her. When we asked her whether she would consider going to the police to ask for protection, she broke into a hearty laugh, leaving little doubt about what she thought about the naivety of our question.

In short, reporting traffickers to the police may be an experience that prolongs the difficulties these women face, sometimes even adding to the trauma, but it need not be like this. It is extremely important that women who decide that they will testify, and consequently may put themselves at great danger, are given proper and professional follow-up, such as in the case of Lisa, above. Protection from threats, and a sufficient level of information about progress with the case is the absolute minimum for encouraging women to testify. If this security cannot be provided, which seems to be the situation for many women today, one should seriously question the ethics involved in encouraging women to testify at all.

It should also be noted that it may take quite a lot of time for the women to feel ready to go to the police with a story of trafficking. As women are often manipulated while they are abroad, it may take time simply to convince themselves that they did not cause all that happened themselves. More than one of our respondents expressed that she regretted ever being so stupid as to believe the person who recruited them, thereby taking the blame on themselves. It also takes time to assess the potential consequences of going to the police. It took Olivia more than a month after she returned to her home country to tell the police what had happened to her.

When Olivia first returned to her home country, she was sent to relatives of the men who had acted as her pimps. They knew that the police had become aware of her situation, and instructed her about what she should and should not say if asked. After two days of staying with these people, Olivia decided that the situation was untenable, and went to the police. She told them parts of the story, but not the whole truth of who had been involved because she was too afraid. The police took her story seriously, and transported her to a shelter within the

police district. It took Olivia a month to muster the courage to tell the police the full story of what had happened. When she did, she was again treated in a very friendly manner, and transported to a safe place.

It took time for Olivia to decide to talk to the police, and to tell the full story of what had happened. In addition, she had been lured into prostitution over a period of time and it took time for her to come to terms with the fact that people she initially had trusted were in fact lying to her and exploiting her. Many of the women in the same situation as Olivia have ended up not going to the police.

Reasons for not talking to the police

While the women we have described in the paragraph above have actually co-operated with the police, and some have testified in court cases, there are many who have not. The most obvious reason for not wanting to give information to the police is, not unexpectedly, fear of repercussions. The women may already feel that they have put themselves and their loved ones in a dangerous situation by escaping from the traffickers, and they may not want to further aggravate this situation. Some also experience direct threats from their traffickers, and choose, based on experience, to believe the threats will be carried out.

Others express that the reason they are not talking to the police is not necessarily that they are afraid, but that they want to get on with their lives as soon as possible, and do not want to get dragged through the same experience once again by having to relive it. Sonya said simply: "I can't talk to the police, I have a child to look after". We asked her if she was afraid that someone would hurt her or her child, but she replied that it was not that, it was just that she would not go to the police, she needed to be just a mother. Sonya had enough on her mind without having to deal with a trial as well. She had a very traumatising experience abroad, and was struggling with severe health problems as a consequence of the abuse she was put through. She also found it difficult to get by financially. As a consequence of her health problems, she could not work, and her alcoholic ex-husband was of very little help. At the time of the interview she was living in one small room together with five other people.

For some women, a low level of trust in the ability of the police to protect them contributes to a lack of interest in testifying. Many had a low level of trust in the police before they left their home countries. In addition, it is not uncommon for traffickers to attempt to further undermine any trust in the police. Depending on what country the women have been in, there is also a very real risk that if they succeed in getting away from their traffickers, they will be deported with papers say-

ing that they are prostitutes. All in all, this is not the most conducive setting for persuading a woman to put herself through the ordeal of a court case.

We came across some cases in which it seemed more or less happenstance that women did not report their pimps or traffickers to the police. Women who have been in contact with the police immediately after getting away from traffickers, for instance after a police raid, said they were too afraid or confused at that time to even consider telling the police what had happened. For instance, Ingrid was freed from her exploiters after a police raid at the hotel where she was kept. She was taken straight to the police station, and put in a detention centre for two days while her travel documents were prepared. She said that the police treated her well, but she had no idea whether her traffickers were caught or not. During the two days that she was in detention, she was too afraid to talk, and did not tell the police anything about what had happened to her. When two days had passed, she was released and put on a plane back to her home country. After she came back, it took her six or seven months to become aware that there was an organisation in her city assisting victims of trafficking. She contacted the organisation, and got treatment for, among other things, the depression she had been struggling with ever since she came back. She does not see going to the police now as a possibility, almost two years after she came home.

Just like Ingrid, many women are often initially very afraid, and it takes time for the police to build up trust. Women are transferring their experiences with and impression of the police in their home countries to the police in other countries. It is no secret that the police as an institution is held in low regard in several of the countries that are well-known countries of origin for victims of trafficking.

It is often difficult to get women to testify against traffickers, but even when they do, only a small number of cases that actually go to court lead to convictions. The effect of this on the women who have chosen to confront their traffickers can be extremely detrimental, and this discourages others from testifying.

Elisabeth did talk to the police initially, right after she got away from the men who exploited her, but she was never asked to testify, and has not heard anything about where the case stands. In some sense, though, she felt that this was just as well. She said that she learnt that you should never, ever go to the police or go through with a court case after meeting a girl while she was in rehabilitation. The girl had reported her traffickers and testified in court. The traffickers had, however, been acquitted. The girl was terrified, and refused to leave the shelter where she was living. She had started taking drugs as a consequence of her shattered nerves. Elisabeth said that the people at the shelter wanted her to report her story to the police as well, but, she said, "I want to live. I have a child, I am too scared".

Elisabeth strongly feels not only that a court case is probably pointless, it could also do her harm by putting her even more at risk than she is now. She does not want to live in constant fear. She has been able to return to her local community, and live a normal life, and sees no reason why she should jeopardise the life she has managed to build up again. Social workers at various organisations working with victims of trafficking confirmed that it could have devastating effects for a woman if she goes through a trial and her traffickers are acquitted. Many have lost all faith in the justice system, and have to cope with the additional burden of not being believed when they tell their stories.

8.3 Shame and secrecy: The success stories live on

The reasons for not telling the police are also related to a wish that nobody should find out what has happened. Some women never tell their stories to anyone except to people working with rehabilitation. Martha came home after nine months in captivity, only to find out that her husband had started a new relationship in her absence. She moved in with her parents, but has never told them what had happened to her. Some months after her return, she saw an advert in a newspaper for a local hotline for victims of trafficking, and decided to call. She was on the phone for two hours, crying, telling her story to someone for the first time. The same is the case for Tina, who was sexually exploited for more than half a year. When she came home, she did not tell anyone what had happened. It was only a full two years after her return that she became aware of the local organisation working with trafficking, and told her story there. Her family still do not know what happened.

Women feel ambivalent about telling their stories. On the one hand, there is a tremendous shame about what has happened, and some fear that family members will reject them if they find out what has happened. This is largely due to the stigma attached to prostitution. The degradation of simply having been tricked should however not be underestimated. Carol was exploited abroad in a non-sexual way, and describes the shame she feels about this. While she was abroad she discovered that her residency permit had not been arranged for as she thought, and she was horrified to realise that this made her an illegal immigrant. When she did not get any of the money she had been promised for three months of hard work, she felt crushed. Carol said that her wish would be to be able to work legally abroad; "...then", she said, "we could go out to work and still feel like human beings". Elisabeth explained why she only told her closest family about what happened to her: "If you come home with a lot of money, you are a hero around here. However, if

you come home with nothing, they look at you as one of the lowest of the lowest, since you have ended up in such a situation. It is humiliating”.

While many women feel shame and fear rejection, there are also those who say that they do not wish to worry their family with their stories. Martha said: “How can you tell your mother something like this?” Another respondent, Susan, was able to call her parents several times when she was abroad, but she never told them what had happened. She was afraid that they would be devastated if they heard what had happened to her.

There are numerous consequences of not feeling able to tell these stories. It is an enormous strain on the individual to keep a secret of this kind, and the personal costs are high. The women are cut off from the opportunity to talk about their experiences with those who are closest to them, and who might give them support. Furthermore, even though the women may not tell people what has happened, someone does actually know – the person who trafficked them in the first place. As we discussed in Chapter 5, this person very often comes from the woman’s immediate environment, or has friends/partners living in the same area. This leaves the women in a very vulnerable position – the fact that they have been trafficked before can actually turn into a means for threatening them into going abroad again.

In addition to the unfortunate individual consequences of this secrecy, the fact that these stories rarely reach the local communities contributes to preserving a favourable environment for trafficking. Regarding awareness in order to prevent recruitment, it seems that there is only so much an information campaign can do. The dangers lectured about in campaigns are not necessarily identified with the job offer a woman gets, if she has never heard of any cases of trafficking in her environment. Several of our respondents expressed no doubt about the offers they got, as “everyone” took these offers up, and they knew so many people who had been successful. When these stories are the only ones that are known, it creates an inaccurate image of informal job offers as always being success stories. Ingrid’s story is a prime example of this.

Ingrid got divorced at a rather young age and went, together with her small child, to live with her mother, who financially supported them. After some time, Ingrid’s mother decided to try to go to Italy to get a job. Ingrid wanted to go too, but it was too difficult to get the documents she needed. Some time after her mother left, she got an offer of a job in another country. She left her child with another family member and went. When she got to her destination, she was transported to a hotel, where she was locked in and forced to sell sex for five months. She was freed after a police raid, and sent home. She told her mother what had happened to her. When she heard Ingrid’s story, her mother told her that right after she had come to Italy, she had been given a job offer that turned

out to be false. A man had taken her passport from her and even attempted to sell her, but she had managed to run away.

Ingrid knew nothing about her mother's dramatic experience when she accepted the job offer she got. She said that she felt she had no reason to doubt the validity of the offer, as she knew so many people who had obtained jobs abroad in the same way, and "everyone" took these offers up at that time. She saw this as a very good way of earning money. It is quite possible that Ingrid would have been more sceptical had she known about her mother's experience.

Apart from the personal strain of not telling these stories and the way this affects the image of illegal work abroad, there is another, rather chilling, consequence of the fear many women have for their stories becoming known. Several of the women we talked to who managed to escape chose not to reveal to anyone what happened to them, even though there were other women and girls left behind in the same place, sometimes under quite grotesque conditions. It seems that the fear for the reactions, from their environment and from traffickers, are so strong that they override the feelings of responsibility they may feel towards those left behind. This is far from an easy decision. Astrid said that she often wonders if the man who exploited her is now doing the same to another girl. At the same time, she could not see how she would possibly get anyone to believe her story. An important lesson from this is that it is very difficult to identify even very forced and serious situations – there is no guarantee that anyone will tell anyone about them even if they get away.

For some women there is a somewhat lower threshold for telling friends about what has happened rather than family, although only a few of the women we talked to have done so. Those who have told their friends say that they have been treated sympathetically, and that it has helped them to share their experiences. Isabel told her friends about what happened, and at the time of the interview was living together with another girl who was also trafficked. She says that this is a tremendous help to her, and that their shared experience makes it easier to cope with what she has been through. However, Isabel is part of a very small minority of women in this position. Most women try to keep their stories to themselves as much as possible.

8.4 Current situation and future prospects

The women we interviewed were in different stages of rehabilitation. The time that had elapsed since their return to their home country varied between six weeks and nearly four years. Their situations at the time of the interview varied considerably,

depending more on their experiences than the length of time they had been back home. Camilla, who had escaped from her trafficker more than two years previously and returned to her home country held an immense amount of anger, and told us that she frequently thought of killing herself. She was sold when she was 13, injected with heroin, to which she developed an addiction, and put on the street and in various brothels in several European countries over the course of nearly four years. Having been home for more than two years at the time of the interview, Camilla still wanted to kill the people she felt were responsible for what happened to her. One of the two years she spent back in her home country was spent in prison for attempting to murder one of them. It is quite obvious that her situation is dramatically different from that of Lisa; who had been home for 10 months at the time of the interview, but who ran away three days after she realised she had been fooled and was expected to prostitute herself. She said that she was never actually sexually exploited, and has been in contact with rehabilitation services ever since she first made contact with the police. Lisa has managed to turn her experience into something she felt was positive. She had started to volunteer for the shelter that assisted her when she was returned to her home country, and was undertaking occasional visits to schools to tell the pupils about what happened to her as part of a programme for the prevention of trafficking. Lisa had also been able to refer a girl she met to the shelter for help.

Some of our respondents had returned quite recently at the time of the interviews and were living in shelters. It is consequently difficult to predict how their situations will turn out when they leave the rehabilitation programmes. Among those who had been back for a longer period, or who were no longer participating in programmes, most had jobs, but very few were earning enough money to get by comfortably. For instance, Susanne was trying to get by collecting scrap metal to sell. There was not much money to be made from this. Because she found this humiliating, she tried to avoid being seen doing this. Susanne was also knitting sweaters, earning around US\$5 per sweater. There were also women who did not work. Sonya, for instance, was unable to work because of the health problems she developed in the course of being trafficked.

Some express a deep distrust in people in general, but being a bit cynical, this is not necessarily a bad thing in the circumstances. On the subject of whether she wanted to go abroad again, one young woman said that she definitely would like to get a job abroad and earn more money. We asked her how she would go about it, and she replied that it would have to be through someone she trusted and knew well. She had returned to her home country two years previously, after having been trafficked by a man she considered a close friend and had known for a long time. However, this woman has proved to be the exception. The majority of women said that

they never wanted to go abroad again, and that they would also strongly discourage friends who were considering doing so.

It is fair to say that women returning after an experience of trafficking do not see many positive changes in the situation they left. When a woman returns to her home country, the fact is that very little will usually have changed. She finds she is still facing the same problems that may have caused her to seek a solution by going abroad, only with the additional luggage of an often very traumatic experience and the continued fear of her traffickers. As such, her situation will often be considerably worse than when she left. The prospects of this situation improving within a short period of time is often limited. For many women, their lives will have changed dramatically, and the consequences are something that they may live with, if not for a lifetime, then at least for many years.

There are women who simply do not see any option of staying when they return. Some even re-enter prostitution hoping to be able to operate with independence, being “older and wiser” after what they experienced. We did not encounter any women who have done this after experiencing trafficking, but were told about several cases by representatives of NGOs. One NGO described what happened when they had received a victim of trafficking who had a small child and came to the organisation to discuss her future. She had been shown around the shelter and offered a place to stay, and told about the different training programmes she could participate in doing hairdressing and dressmaking. The woman had followed her around silently, and paused to think when the “tour” was over. She said: “I think I’ll go back to Germany”. After recounting this story, the representative of the NGO said to us: “What can you do, and what can you tell her? After all, the child has to get food somehow”.

9 Conclusion

The fundamental theme in this report is the crossing of borders. We have described how women cross personal, social and, in the eyes of many, moral borders when they enter prostitution or decide to migrate. Furthermore, we have described how the crossing of geographical borders gives room for exploitation when opportunities for legal migration are limited. But most importantly we have attempted to show how trans-national prostitution and trafficking challenge the borders between the social categories of prostitute and victim.

When setting out to explain social phenomena we cannot escape using categories. Categories are important if we wish to distinguish groups in particular need of assistance, and we need to distinguish categories in order to direct efforts at preventing certain types of outcomes. However, in order for these categories to be useful, they need to properly reflect the real world. In this report we argue that imposing a strict dichotomy of “worthy victims of trafficking” and “fallen women in prostitution” reflects a fundamentally simplistic understanding of exploitation in prostitution, which does not reflect the actual situation in the sex-industry today. Exploitation may take on many different forms, and it is not always apparent where a line could be drawn between trafficking and voluntary prostitution.

Victims of trafficking often act and look like prostitutes

While there are cases of women being locked in and being forced to sell sex, there are several other forms of coercion and exploitation that victims of trafficking may be exposed to. Traffickers may limit a women’s freedom of action or determine the conditions under which a women *enter* into prostitution, her possibility to *leave* prostitution, her possibility to *determine the conditions under which she work* and her possibility to *earn money* on her prostitution. For each aspect we may find different degrees of force and coercion. Consequently, we may talk about various degrees of coercion in trafficking, where trafficking is seen as a continuum, and the use of physical force make up one end of the scale, and prostitution with considerable freedom of action make up the other.

This implies that physical violence can be one element in, but does not cover all the aspects of coercion that victims of trafficking may be exposed to. We argue that an understanding of trafficking as forced prostitution is unsatisfactory, and that

the focus must not be on whether women have consented to selling sex, but on whether they are exploited. The prostitution arena is generally stigmatised, closed and secluded, and these elements create favourable conditions for exploitation. Whether or not a woman has consented to this exploitation is not relevant in classifying cases of trafficking; the lack of consent undoubtedly aggravates the crime, but is not a necessary element in order to establish that a woman has had a seriously diminished room for action. This is the primary principle that must govern an approach to trafficking in Norway today, and means that in order to fruitfully combat trafficking, one needs to relate to the prostitution arena as a whole, not only at certain segments.

One third of the prostitutes in Oslo are of Norwegian origin, one third are long-term residents, and one third stay for a short time

In our study, we established that two thirds of the women who work in prostitution in Oslo in October 2003 were of non-Norwegian origin, or what we have called “migrant women”. However, about half the migrant women in prostitution in Oslo are citizens or residents in Norway, women who are, or have been, married to a Norwegian, or who have obtained permanent residence in other ways. The other half of the migrant prostitutes in Oslo is made up of women who come to Norway on short-term stays.

While there may be short-term visiting migrant women from Eastern Europe who have entered prostitution by free choice, and operate in Norway without any influence and under no control of pimps or organisers, this group seems to be relatively small. Similarly, we cannot exclude the possibility that there are women who are locked inside apartments, and forced to provide sex to clients, but we also believe this group to be small. The majority of women are found in between.

We have not in any systematic way tried to establish to what extent exploitation takes place among migrant prostitutes in Norway, as we do not believe it is possible to get good data on this. Still, according to interviews with key respondents and with some of the women who work in prostitution in Oslo, it appears that a large proportion of short-term visiting migrant women from Eastern Europe work under supervision of a pimp, or at least have been assisted to travel by an organisation that profits relatively extensively from the women’s prostitution.

We also know that most of the Eastern and Central Europeans that work in prostitution in Oslo are very young (half are 23 years or younger), and that 80 percent sold sex for the first time in Norway. Half of them were in Norway for the first time, and sixty percent sold sex for the first time less than a year ago. While most of the Norwegian, Asian, Latin American and African women were in their late 20s when they sold sex the first time, half the Eastern and Central Europeans were 22

years or younger at the time of their *début*. Two thirds have the responsibility of supporting someone economically; usually parents and younger siblings, but one in four also support their own children. Half of those who support someone economically are 21 years old, or younger. When all these facts are taken together, it is difficult not to wonder whether at least some of these women have been exploited in a very vulnerable position.

Poverty alone cannot explain why trafficking takes place

While global poverty, and large economic differences are important factors that explain the extensive irregular migration that takes place between the developed and developing world today, poverty alone cannot explain how and why trafficking takes place. Women that have decided to enter prostitution, or to travel abroad in search of opportunities, often do so in response to an acute crisis. The crisis can be personal or purely economic, but usually entails a need to obtain a substantial amount of money relatively fast. While some may have strong ties to members of the immediate family, most victims of trafficking are characterised by limited social networks. When an acute need for money arises, the women do not have family or acquaintances that may function as a safety net, or who may provide secure alternatives to irregular migration or prostitution.

Trafficking feeds on a lack of information and lack of integration

Having relevant information is one of the main resources that enable women to avoid, or escape, a situation of exploitation. Access to information is important not only before the women decide to go to another country, but also during their stay abroad.

Women who become victims of trafficking often lack basic information about the country they are travelling to. In many cases it is this lack of information that makes it necessary to rely on recruiters. This lack of information also makes the women more vulnerable to manipulation and deceit, as they do not know what to expect, and what is possible, or not possible, in other countries.

Nevertheless, information campaigns simply stating that it is dangerous to travel abroad, may not always have the desired effect to prevent trafficking from taking place. Many victims of trafficking that we have interviewed had heard of trafficking as phenomenon before they left their home country. One respondent even had an information leaflet on trafficking at home. However, as victims of trafficking often keep their stories secret, very few had heard about a case of trafficking in their community or in their expanded network. Recruitment to trafficking is based on trust: trust in an informal method of recruitment for jobs, or in a relationship with a

recruiter. Information campaigns telling people about the dangers of travelling abroad will have little effect in a society where success stories of irregular migration are widespread. Women with a desperate need for money also sometimes seem to ignore the risk when they get an offer to travel abroad; several of our respondents were urged not to go by family or friends, but chose to ignore the warnings. In these cases, being warned about the dangers of international travel does not seem to have much effect, if the women are not simultaneously given information that can help them solve the crisis they are in, or in other ways reduce the risks involved in international travel.

Also after arrival in the destination country, access to information is of crucial importance for those that wish to break out of a situation of exploitation. Many women have stayed in a situation of trafficking because they believe that they have no other alternative. This may not necessarily be true, but can be the result of isolation, lack of information, or manipulation and lies from traffickers. Keeping the women isolated from Norwegian society, and ensuring they have minimal knowledge about it increases the control traffickers and pimps can have of the women. Many women have left situations of trafficking after finding new information about the possibilities for leaving. Others were able to leave because they knew where to go, or who they should contact.

Information about how to contact organisations and institutions that will assist them, could make an important difference for many. Most importantly, women that wish to break out of a situation of exploitation need information about how the police and other law enforcement institutions operate in Norway, and what opportunities they will have if they choose to break out.

During our study, we found that it was far less difficult to get in contact with migrant prostitutes than we had initially anticipated. Several women asked our interviewers for information, for instance on legal rights in relation to residence permits or how to set up business independently. Others expressed that they believe it is illegal to sell sexual services in Norway, and consequently believe that they can be punished if they contact the police. This indicates that many prostitutes in Oslo lack basic information about rights and opportunities in Norway, and also do not know where to go for such information. This lack of information seriously limits their possible room for action.

The arenas the women use to get in contact with customers are also open for others, meaning that it is possible to monitor new arrivals to this market. Consequently, it is also possible to contact women quite systematically in order to provide information. Providing all women in prostitution with this type of information may be one step on the way to enabling at least some women who wish to leave a situation of exploitation to break out.

Identifying trafficking demands the establishment of trust

As we argued above, victims of trafficking often act and look like prostitutes, and rarely ask for help on first contact with the outside world, be it police, social services, or customers. In many cases the only way to identify a situation of serious exploitation, is if the women want to volunteer this information herself. Women will not provide information if they have no trust in those they relate to. In order to encourage women to report situations of exploitation and coercion, it is necessary to establish trust – trust in an institution they can contact, and trust that reporting their exploiter will actually lead to an improvement of the conditions under which they live. Furthermore, trust in the police, and the legal system in general, is of outmost importance in order to make women testify against their traffickers.

Victims of trafficking often find it difficult to trust in people they do not know, in particular among women that have experienced exploitation and abuse, not only during their stay abroad, but also in childhood or marriage. Many have negative experiences from contact with police and other official institutions from their home country. While establishing trust in an institution or the system at large may take a long time, many women seem to find it easier trust in another individual. Consequently, the chance of disclosing cases of trafficking will increase if representatives of institutions come across as individuals; telling a woman that “you can contact me if you have any trouble”, instead of “you can contact the police if you have any trouble” may make the phone call easier to take. This means that there should be continuity in the staff of any type of organisation or institution that seeks to approach prostitutes and potential victims of trafficking.

To the extent that migrant women in prostitution in Oslo today have any contact with the police, this appears to be mainly with the immigration police, who routinely control their visas, and work permits. We will argue that in order to combat trafficking it is necessary to focus on exploitation, and not on the legal status of immigrant women in prostitution. This is hardly new, but bears repeating. The effect of focusing only on the legal status of women migrants in the first instance has the effect of moving the problem elsewhere. Finally, it serves to confirm the image many women have of the police in their home country, as controllers and not as potential protectors, and as such, serves to seriously diminish the trust in the police.

The proportion of prostitutes in Oslo today who are here without legal travel documents can be presumed to be diminutive, and as such they do not present a serious threat to Norwegian society in terms of illegal immigration. The effect of trying to expel this group is extremely damaging of attempts to identify trafficking situations and exploitation in the prostitution arena in general. The effect is not limited to the women directly affected, but becomes a part of the general knowledge among foreign prostitutes as they hear of others who have been sent home by police. Exploited women who are here illegally may consequently be afraid of

contacting authorities. In sum, it seriously diminishes the chance of identifying trafficking situations.

Solid routines are necessary for anyone likely to come into contact with victims of trafficking.

In order to establish trust, women who report of trafficking and exploitation need to feel that they are taken seriously and believed, and that their security concerns are addressed. This relates to routines for reception or first contact, the offering of psychological assistance or contact with social workers, security considerations and information. These routines must not only include the situation in Norway as a destination country, but must be expanded to include countries of origin.

Many victims of trafficking have no desire to establish themselves in Norway, but wish to go home. In these cases, they should routinely be given the opportunity to be referred on to organisations or institutions that can provide them with the assistance they may need. Here a thorough control on quality should be imposed. Assistance must not be dependent on the willingness of the woman to testify in a trial, and women in these situations must be given ample time to make the decision whether or not they want to testify. For many it has taken months even to decide to tell police about what has happened to them, and it is unrealistic to expect women to make rapid decisions on whether to take on organised criminal networks in court. Consideration should also be given to the fact that for many women it may not be the right decision to testify or press charges. This will depend on how much she feels she can muster, on the character of the people she is testifying against, on her family situation, and/or on the presence of threats to her security. Furthermore, women who do decide to press charges or give information about traffickers must be provided with information about where their cases stand. This information must also be continued after the women have returned to their home countries. A lack of information leaves the women in limbo, and creates fear and insecurity.

Appendix 1: Description of methods and estimation techniques

This appendix describes the methods applied in the production of the data used in this report. The appendix is divided into three parts; first we present the data-collection and estimation techniques used in the survey of prostitutes working through advertisements. Secondly, we present the capture-recapture techniques used for estimating the number and basic characteristics of the prostitutes operating on the streets. Finally, we describe the research sites and methods applied in our qualitative interviews in Lithuania, Ukraine, Albania and in Oslo.

A survey of prostitutes working through advertisements

As described in Chapter 3, a telephone survey of prostitutes operating through advertisements was conducted in October 2003. The main aim of the survey was to establish how many telephone numbers selling sexual services are in active use. As we soon realised that it was possible to obtain more information through these conversations, a short questionnaire was developed, and information about basic background characteristics was collected. In this section, we describe the techniques applied in estimating the number of women who operate through advertisements before going into the survey details.

Estimation Techniques

Advertisements for massage and escort services were systematically collected and registered between July and October 2003. Advertisements from six different sources were collected – three each from print media and the Internet. Most of the sources were referenced at two or three different times, and a total of 12 issues were registered (see Table 8, overleaf).

We investigated several other sources, but these did not seem to be of major importance. While several Internet sites seem to offer escort or massage services in Oslo, all websites encountered linked back to one of the three sites listed below. Ordinary contact forums in other pornographic publications do not seem to be an important arena for advertisements for *paid* sexual services. Likewise, while some offers of paid sexual services have been registered on “text-TV” and commercial SMS-chats, this does not seem to be a particularly large arena, and we assume that the women who contact clients in this way either operate in a limited scope or supplement this method with other means for contacting clients.

While more than half of the first three sources’ telephone numbers had not been previously registered, the share of new numbers in subsequent sources was between

24-40 percent. In the last two sources covered, only 7 and 5 telephone numbers (9.5 and 6 percent) were new, respectively (see Table 7). As there is a relatively high turnover among the women offering sexual services in Oslo, we may assume that the new telephone numbers from the last two sources were either newcomers or women who had changed their telephone number. We thus find it reasonable to assume that we registered close to the total amount of telephone numbers used for sale of sexual services in October 2003.

Some of the registered telephone numbers were no longer in use at the time of our survey, and calling them would result in a recorded message from the telephone company stating either that the number is no longer in use or that the number cannot be contacted while the user is in another country. In addition, some telephone numbers were used by persons who did not sell sexual services. These telephone numbers were removed from the sample frame, giving a total of 446 telephone numbers. Of these, 50 percent, or 221 numbers, were never answered.

The telephone numbers were called up to 7 times if there was no answer, but each number was called, on average, 2.5 times. Calls were made at various times of the day, the majority of which occurred between 12:00-20:00. In the first round, 35 percent of the telephone numbers were answered. Among those remaining, 21 percent answered our second call, and between 4-15 percent answered the in each subsequent round. From 0 to 63 telephone numbers were left out in each round,

Table 8 Sources for registration of telephone numbers in use for sale of sexual services

Source	Type	Month	Advertisements	Telephone numbers not previously registered
Søndag Søndag	Weekly newspaper	July	115	94
Kontakt	Monthly magazine	August/Sept.	103	71
Eskorte	Internet	September	100	53
Sexdate	Internet	September	62	26
Kontakt	Monthly magazine	Sept./October	104	25
Clubkontakt	Internet	October	80	38
Clubkontakt	Monthly magazine	September	84	25
Søndag Søndag	Weekly newspaper	October	89	27
Sexdate	Internet	October	55	17
Massageguiden*	Internet	October	170	130
Søndag Søndag	Weekly newspaper	October	73	7
Clubkontakt	Monthly magazine	October	77	5
Total			1112	518

Note: At the time of the survey, Massasjguiden had not been updated in almost a year, and most of the telephone numbers were no longer in use. However a few active numbers did appear; 40 of the numbers had previously been registered, and out of the remaining 130 telephone numbers, 6 were answered on the first attempt, by women offering sexual services.

and were never called back up. Based on subsequent rounds' response rates, we estimate that a telephone number that was called unsuccessfully once had a 40 percent chance of being answered within the subsequent six rounds; similarly, a number unanswered after two attempts had a 28 percent chance of being answered in the subsequent five rounds. If we assume that response rates would stay the same in each round if all telephone numbers were called seven times, we estimate that another 66 numbers would have been answered and 155 numbers were out of use in October 2003 (see Table 9).

This gives us a total of 291 telephone numbers actively selling sexual services in October 2003. According to information given by the respondents, each woman had, on average, 1.3 telephone numbers, and each number served an average of 1.7 prostitutes. This varied greatly, however, between prostitutes of different nationalities. Each Norwegian or Western-European prostitute advertised, on average, 1.4 telephone numbers; each Asian woman advertised, on average, 1.3 numbers; Eastern- and Central-European women advertised 1.2 numbers each; and African and South-/Latin-Americans advertised 1.1 telephone numbers each. Western-European and Asian women averaged 1.6 prostitutes per telephone number, while Eastern- and Central- Europeans averaged 1.5 per number, and women from other regions averaged 3 prostitutes per number. The data were thus weighted for each region (Western-European, Eastern- and Central-European, Asian and Other) according to the total telephone numbers per women and total women per telephone numbers. Based on this adjustment, we estimate that a total of 398 prostitutes operated through advertisements during the month of October 2003.

Table 9 Estimates of response rates and non-contacts for each round of telephone calls

Rounds /Nr of calls	Numbers called	Numbers answered		Estimated			Estimated total not belonging to frame
		Numbers answered	%	Numbers not called again	response rate if called 7 times	Estimated non-contacts	
1	410	143	35	36	55	20	16
2	204	42	21	63	40	25	38
3	145	22	15	17	28	5	12
4	103	13	13	20	17	3	17
5	28	3	11	62	18	11	51
6	25	1	4	0	8	0	0
7	8	1	13	16	13	2	14
				7			7
Total	923	225	-	221	-	66	155

The survey

As presented in Chapter 3, the survey had an overall response rate of 51 percent, and 36 percent of respondents completed full interviews. Considering the special target group of this survey, and the extremely sensitive topics that it touches upon, we find the response rate surprisingly high; refusal rates of around 50 percent are not uncommon in telephone surveys of the general population in Norway. Response rates were lowest among Norwegians and other Western Europeans, and highest among Asian and Eastern/Central Europeans. Eastern- and Central- European women were most likely to cooperate fully. We believe this is partly due to the fact that our interviewers are familiar with Eastern and Central Europe and speak Albanian, Polish and some Russian, and partly due to this group's relatively high educational level. While the majority of Asian women would agree to participate, they were sometimes reluctant to give information because they did not understand what the information would be used for. Many Eastern- and Central Europeans, on the other hand, made it clear that they did not need an explanation of the concept of a social survey.

Interviewers recorded whether or not those who refused to participate were able to communicate in Norwegian and estimated their region of origin based on accent and whatever information the respondent was willing to provide. This information was used to estimate the region of origin for all women that answered the telephone, and to adjust the estimation weights for non-response.

The method of correction of the weights for refusals employed here is the so-called "adjustment cell method" (see, among others, Lehtonen and Pahkinen 1995; Little and Rubin 1987). In this approach, respondents that are considered to be fairly similar are identified, and the non-response rate is calculated for each group of respondents ("adjustment cells"). Only the non-response of those that could have responded but for some reason did not do so is considered (i.e. we do not adjust for non-response due to frame imperfections). The inverse of the non-response rate in each adjustment cell is then used to adjust the sampling weights for each respondent. In our survey, each region of origin represents an adjustment cell.

A total of 40 questions were asked, including age, education and nationality; how they contact clients; in which countries they have worked; when they started selling sex; persons they support economically; work experience; and contact with police and other institutions. The interviewers were instructed to record information through informal conversations, and questions were thus not asked in a 100 percent uniform way. If a respondent did not want to answer a question, the interviewers would move on to the next issue, and not put the respondent under any pressure in order to get all questions answered. This has led to relatively high rate of non-response on some questions, but we believe that it has also saved us from recording false or misleading information. Results of questions with particularly high item non-

response are not reported in this report. Furthermore, as information was collected through informal conversations, much additional information was collected from many respondents, providing us with a very rich background material used for interpreting the results of the survey. The results of the survey are presented in Chapter 3.

Capture-recapture of street prostitutes

Among the prostitutes working through advertisements, it was possible to compile a list of telephone numbers that could be used as a sampling frame for the survey and estimation. For street prostitutes, no such list is available, nor could one be easily compiled, therefore, alternative estimation techniques were required. Here we have used Capture-Recapture (CR) techniques, which may be used to generate quantitative data out of a rapid assessment study of a difficult to reach population (Jensen 2002). In particular, CR is a methodology designed to generate estimates of the size of a given population and data that are representative of the characteristics of that population. The core of the CR methodology is a strategy for obtaining the correct estimation weights when we know little or nothing in advance about the size of the population or the probability of selection.

The logic of CR is as follows: An area where the target population is known to operate is observed on two separate occasions. If the same individuals are observed on the first and second occasion the actual population can be assumed to be not much different from the total number of observed individuals. If, on the other hand, there is very little overlap, or “recaptures”, between the first and second observation, we may assume that there is a significant unobserved population. If O^1 and O^2 represent the first and second observations and R is the number of recaptures (individuals observed both the first and second time), an estimate of size of the total population, E , can be calculated by the following formula:

$$E = O^1 * O^2/R$$

This calculation is based on an assumption that the population under study is closed and the study area complete. In other words, the inferences we can make based on the material are limited to the area that is actually covered¹⁵. According to key informants in law enforcement and agencies or organisations involved in assisting prostitutes, Oslo’s street prostitution is concentrated in one area, and our estimates are based only on observations in this area. To the extent that there are street prostitutes in other areas of Oslo, they are not included in our estimate. Another more problematic assumption is that the population under study should be closed – that there should be no new women entering or leaving the prostitution arena over the

course of the study period. In Oslo, many prostitutes – in particular, those from Eastern and Central Europe – often work for only a few months at a time, and new women regularly begin working as prostitutes. In other words, the population is constantly changing. We have therefore chosen a very short period of estimation (2 weeks), in order to limit the effect of women entering and leaving the arena on the total estimates.

Another challenge this method poses is the difficulty in recognising whether or not individuals have been previously observed. In order to overcome this challenge, we decided to employ social workers (of Russian and Albanian origins) from Pro-senteret¹⁶, who are familiar with the groups of women we wished to survey and have a higher probability of recognising them. Furthermore, as the social workers are believed to have obtained some trust among many street prostitutes and are regularly observed in the area in which the prostitutes operate, their presence is less likely to influence the women's presence in the street, and thus, their probability of observation.

All non-Norwegian prostitutes working in the specified area were registered on five occasions in the middle of October. In addition to nationality, age and level of education was recorded among those willing to provide this information. Registration was done between 21:30 and 23:15 on four different weekdays. On the first four occasions, between 18 and 26 women were observed, while only 12 women were observed on the last day of observation. On the last day of observations, several police cars were observed in the outskirts of the area of observation, and we believe this led many women to leave the streets. As we do not believe this is reflective of an average day, we have decided not to use the figures from the last day in the overall estimate.

A total of 48 migrant prostitutes from 13 different countries were observed working on six different Oslo streets. Forty percent of the women (19) were observed only once out of five times, and we thus have to assume that there is a significant unobserved population.

If the women were observed more than once, the second and third observations were usually in the same street as the first, indicating that the women work in fixed places. This is consistent with information received from key respondents. The largest group of women work on Skippergata, and were observed an average of three out of five times – twice as often as the women working on other streets. This can be taken as an indication that the women on Skippergata spend less time away with

¹⁵ If the target population is known to operate in a large number of areas, it is still possible to draw a sample of the known areas and infer the total population from the sampled areas.

¹⁶ An Oslo-based prostitution resource centre, providing health care and assistance to women and men in prostitution.

clients, but we find it more reasonable to assume that the higher frequency of observation is an indication that the women in this area are more often out in the streets working. We are not able to say with certainty if the women in other areas work less often or if they also work from other arenas (such as via advertisements or out of bars).

As the women on Skippergata were more often observed (“recaptured”) than women on other streets, we have estimated the number of prostitutes in this area separately. Based on four observations, a total of six CR operations can be performed, and an overall estimate is computed based on the average over all six estimates (see Table 9 and Table 10). According to our CR estimate, a total of 17 migrant prostitutes worked on Skippergata during our two-week observation period. However, since a total of 18 migrant prostitutes were actually observed, we take this number to be our estimate, and assume that we have observed more or less all women working on Skippergata. For the women working outside this area the number of recaptures was much lower, and there is more insecurity tied to the estimate. The lowest estimate is 32 and the highest 117, giving an average of 57 migrant prostitutes. This gives us an estimated total of 75 women of non-Norwegian origin working on the streets over the course of these two weeks in October.

CR cannot overcome some of the basic problems that come with studying difficult-to-reach populations. It suffers from some of the same problems and limitations as rapid assessment (RA) methodologies in general, which include the difficulties in identifying and finding the groups – especially for activities that are hidden and/or underground – and concerns over the accuracy of the information provided by respondents. CR also has some limitations beyond those found in RA methodologies, since it seeks to obtain reliable and representative quantitative data. However,

Table 10 Observations, recaptures and estimates on Skippergata, by day

	First and second	First and third	First and fourth	Second and third	Second and fourth	Third and fourth	Overall estimate
Observation one	11	11	11	10	10	12	
Observation two	10	12	13	12	13	13	
Recaptures	7	7	8	7	8	9	
Estimated number	16	19	18	17	16	17	17 (18)

Table 11 Observations, recaptures and estimates on streets other than Skippergata, by day

	First and second	First and third	First and fourth	Second and third	Second and fourth	Third and fourth	Overall estimate
Observation one	9	9	9	14	14	6	
Observation two	14	6	13	6	13	13	
Recaptures	4	1	1	2	3	2	
Estimated number	32	54	117	42	61	39	57

despite the various limitations and assumptions required, this method provides a significant improvement over alternative methods for measuring counting and generating statistics on many hard to reach populations (Jensen 2002).

The number of women operating from massage parlours is based on estimates from key respondents in Pro-senteret and Nadheim¹⁷, as well as from women working in these parlours with whom we have been in contact. Fourteen massage parlours in Oslo are claimed to offer erotic massage, and we estimate that there are 138 women working in these locations. In October 2003, each parlour employed somewhere between 5 and 30 women, but the majority are believed to have 8-12 employees.

Field studies

The main body of data used in this report was produced during three field trips to Lithuania, Ukraine and Albania (henceforth referred to as *countries of origin*) during the summer and fall 2003, and through field studies among migrant prostitutes working in Oslo. In each period of fieldwork, two Norwegian researchers visited a country of origin for 6 to 10 days. In Lithuania, only the capital city was visited, while one site in addition to the capital was visited in both Ukraine and Albania. Most of the fieldwork was carried out in the form of interviews, informal conversations and observations. The main target groups in our study were:

- Women and girls that were former victims of trafficking or had worked in prostitution in Norway or other countries
- Women and girls working in the sex market in their country of origin
- Officials, health personnel and NGOs working with prostitution in general, and with trafficking in particular.

While the main focus in this study has been on trafficking and prostitution in Oslo, the focus in the countries of origin was not solely on trafficking for sexual exploitation to Norway, as the experiences of women and girls who have been trafficked to or worked as prostitutes in other countries are also of interest. The purpose of including respondents of this type in the study is mainly to widen the basis for identifying processes that are present in trafficking for sexual exploitation in general. Identifying Eastern- and Central-European women who were in Norway proved, as expected, difficult, but not impossible. In all three countries of origin, several relevant NGOs and government institutions were visited, and, in total, 17 victims of trafficking were interviewed in their country of origin. In addition, several interviews were conducted with women who worked more or less independently in

¹⁷ Both Pro-senteret and Nadheim are organisations working for and with women in prostitution.

prostitution in Lithuania. In Ukraine and Albania, interviews were conducted with NGOs working with women in prostitution, to the extent that such NGOs existed. In these two countries we could not find any organisation that was able to assist us in finding respondents among local prostitutes. In Ukraine, we were told that this was very difficult because prostitution is illegal and tied to organised crimes.

In Oslo, six face-to-face interviews were conducted with migrant women working in prostitution, in addition to a large number of telephone interviews that turned into longer, in-depth conversations. In addition, numerous key respondents from NGOs and government institutions working with issues of prostitution and trafficking in Oslo have provided information and participated in interviews. About half the face-to-face interviews in the countries of origin and Norway were conducted in Russian, while the remaining half was conducted through translators, or in English or Norwegian for interviews with key respondents. Translators were usually recruited among the NGO personnel.

The main aim of the field studies was to increase our understanding of why Eastern- and Central-European women get involved in prostitution in Norway, and how trafficking of women into prostitution takes place. This entailed searching for the following information:

- The social and economic background of the women involved
- Which crucial choices the women make, when these choices are made, and what alternatives these women believe they have at the time
- Which other actors are involved in these decisions and practical organisation, as well as in providing advice, encouragement or discouragement at various stages.

A further aim of this study was to look into the process of escaping prostitution or trafficking. This warranted an understanding of the situation in which the women or girls were involved while engaged in prostitution, which actors were involved when the decision to leave was made and in the actual process of breaking out. Furthermore, we needed to know more about the situation the women faced after they had left prostitution and/or a situation of trafficking, and the alternatives that they believe they have at this phase.

In most cases, victims of trafficking and women working in prostitution are difficult to identify. Those that are identified are often reluctant to talk about their choices or experiences. There was thus little room for selecting respondents in any systematic manner. When choices could be made, the respondents and field sites were chosen in order to maximise information at each stage in the fieldwork process and in order to deepen, cross-check, verify or falsify our developing understanding of the processes present in trafficking and prostitution. For example, after conducting

several interviews with women who had been trafficked into the sex industry, we sought out respondents that had been trafficked for labour exploitation to check whether the same mechanisms influenced the choices they made.

Ethical considerations

Conducting interviews on trafficking, exploitation and prostitution raises several ethical and methodological issues. Throughout the fieldwork, considerations of the security and mental well-being of both respondents and interviewers was always given first priority. The respondents were always informed that if they were not comfortable talking about a specific topic they did not have to, and could end the interview at any time. If, when a specific topic was raised, the respondent indicated that he/she was under emotional stress or afraid, we would offer to change the topic. In some cases where the respondent was obviously very uncomfortable, we would end the interview. Most of the face-to-face interviews were arranged with the assistance of various NGOs through which the respondents would have access to assistance and had either gone through, or was in the process going through, rehabilitation and psychological assistance. Experienced personnel from the NGOs would, in these cases, either sit in on the interviews, or be in the room next door. The NGO personnel would follow up with the respondent after the interview if they felt this was necessary. When requested by the NGOs, the respondents were given a small sum of money for participation in the interviews. All telephone interviews in Oslo ended by questioning whether or not the respondent knew of prostitute support organisations. Women that did not know about these organisations were given their contact information, and was recommended that they contact them if they wanted advice or someone to talk to.

Most respondents told us stories that they hadn't even told their closest family or friends; others are hiding from criminal organisations or pimps. It has therefore been of outmost importance to keep the identity of respondents secret. Needless to say, all names have been changed, and personal details that are not of relevance to the information at hand have often been somewhat altered. We have also chosen to keep many of the respondents' country of origin unknown. We regret the potential loss of information that might have resulted from more country-specific analyses, but have, in some cases, seen this omission as necessary in order to protect our respondents. Due to the same considerations we have decided not to mention by name the many NGOs that helped us and provided respondents and information in our fieldwork in countries of origin.

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Crossing Borders

This report presents the results of a study of transnational prostitution and trafficking in women, with two main goals. The report presents an estimate of the number and nationalities of women selling sex in Oslo, based on a survey undertaken during one month in 2003. Further, the report investigates mechanisms of trafficking and exploitation in prostitution, through analysis of interviews with women focussing on life histories. A particular aim is to explore the role of enforcement, exploitation and opportunities at various stages of the process. *Crossing Borders* also analyses how trafficked women have found their ways out again, using own resources and skills, as well as public and private helpers to cross the borders back.



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