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Human trafficking - the boomerang of a decadent society (Social perception of human trafficking in Dobrogea / Constanța)

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Abstract. We all know more or less that this social and criminal phenomenon is happening near us. Sometimes we hear from the mass media, or from television, such as the 5 p.m. TV news, that a criminal group has trafficked teenage girls or young men whom they have convinced to go abroad for a job for a very well paid job... how much importance do we give to this news... here is a question that I don't know how many of us ask ourselves. But, when the information begins to come from narrower circles, for example, from the circle of friends of the son or daughter at home, only then do we start to worry, only then do we begin to realize how important it is to know this criminal and social phenomenon. In order to observe how aware we are of the devastating effects of this criminal social phenomenon, to observe how well known are the causes, the methods of manipulation, the ways of actually overcoming the traumas that occurred as a result of such experiences, we resorted to the realization of this study carried out in the city of Constanța, Dobrogea area. Is society sufficiently informed about human trafficking? Is society involved in reducing this phenomenon? Can there be further legislative improvements regarding human trafficking? Are the essential questions that have been the basis of the research

Keywords. human trafficking, the social perception, manipulation, social policy, education, the press, mass media

Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a complex and multifaceted issue that encompasses various forms, such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking [1] and is a problem of human security [2]. The social perception of human trafficking plays a crucial role in shaping awareness, response, and efforts to combat this heinous crime [3,4]. Understanding how society perceives human trafficking is essential in order to foster empathy, generate effective solutions, and eradicate this modern-day form of slavery [5,6]. The social perception of human trafficking often faces significant barriers that hinder comprehensive understanding and action. One of the primary barriers is the misconception that human trafficking only occurs in distant countries or affects specific demographics [5]. In reality, trafficking is a global problem that transcends borders, impacting men, women, and children of all backgrounds [7]. The media plays a vital role in shaping societal perceptions of human trafficking. Unfortunately, the media can also contribute to distorted narratives and sensationalism, focusing excessively on shocking stories

and salacious details [8]. While raising awareness is important, it is equally essential to portray the complex realities of human trafficking accurately, shedding light on its systemic nature and the vulnerabilities that contribute to its persistence [9]. One very critical aspect of social perception revolves around victim blaming and stigmatization [10]. Society often places blame on the victims, perceiving them as responsible for their circumstances. This perspective fails to recognize the coercion, manipulation, and power imbalances that are inherent in trafficking situations [11]. Such stigmatization can prevent survivors from seeking help and perpetuate a cycle of victimization [12]. Developing empathy and a deeper understanding of human trafficking is crucial to combating this issue effectively. By recognizing that trafficking victims are not mere statistics but individuals with stories of exploitation and survival, society can humanize their experiences. Empathy enables us to challenge stereotypes, eliminate victim-blaming attitudes, and extend support and resources to survivors [13]. Education plays a vital role in shaping social perception. Comprehensive and age-appropriate education about human trafficking can help dispel myths, raise awareness, and empower individuals to identify and respond to signs of trafficking [14]. Governments, schools, community organizations and media should collaborate to integrate anti-trafficking education into curricula, ensuring that young people understand their rights, the tactics used by traffickers, and the importance of reporting suspicious activities [15]. Addressing the social perception of human trafficking requires collaborative efforts among governments, civil society organizations, law enforcement agencies, and communities. By adopting a victim-centered approach, where survivors' needs and voices are central to policy development and implementation, we can challenge societal perceptions that perpetuate the cycle of exploitation. Providing comprehensive support services, including shelter, healthcare, legal aid, and psychological counseling, is essential in helping survivors rebuild their lives [16].

Context and methodology

In the context of the increase in human trafficking in the last 15-20 years, we tried to capture how the social perception of human trafficking is structured in the Dobrogea area, with an emphasis on Constanta county. The research was carried out between January and April 2023.

The *general objective* was to observe the degree of awareness of the problem regarding human trafficking, and as *specific objectives* we pursued: a) The degree of awareness of the problem regarding trafficking, regardless of its specific; b) To what extent does the population know the situations that favor human trafficking. The research is exploratory and started from the following *research questions*:

- Is society sufficiently informed about human trafficking?
- Is society involved in reducing this phenomenon?
- Can there be further legislative improvements regarding human trafficking?

Data collection was done with the help of an omnibus questionnaire, which included 13 items apart from those referring to factual data. The convenience sample to which this questionnaire was applied is represented by 242 people who live or work in the Dobrogea area, Constanța county. They come from more than 20 various professional spheres and are between the ages of 13 and 79.

Table 1. Age category and gender of the respondents

Age group	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
13-20 years old	10	6,2%	2	2,5%	12	5,0%
21-30 years old	21	13,0%	28	35,0%	49	20,2%
31- 40 years old	38	23,5%	17	21,3%	55	22,7%
41- 50 years old	53	32,7%	24	30,0%	77	31,8%
51- 60 years old	30	18,5%	6	7,5%	36	14,9%
61 + years old	10	6,2%	3	3,8%	13	5,4%
Total	162	100,0%	80	100,0%	242	100,0%

Less represented segments are those under 20 with 12 respondents and over 60 with 13 respondents. The occupation of the respondents is very varied (21 occupations), from student to pensioner, from civil servant to medical staff, from driver to teacher, so we can say that this variety of jobs covers all levels of education, and a wide array of lifestyles and types of human interaction.

Research results

First of all, we tried to see what our subjects know about the general phenomenon of people trafficking. It was formulated as an open question, to leave the freedom of the respondent to answer according to his knowledge.

Table 2. What do you know about human trafficking?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Illegal act/criminal act/crime	43	26,5%	11	13,8%	54	22,3%
Information from mass media/ internet/ social networks/ newspapers/ books	17	10,5%	0	0,0%	17	7,0%
Definition (provided)	60	37,0%	0	0,0%	60	24,8%
A problem	7	4,3%	5	6,3%	12	5,0%
I don't know/I know little about the media	23	14,2%	7	8,8%	30	12,4%
Other	12	7,4%	57	71,3%	69	28,5%
Total	162	100,0%	80	100,0%	242	100,0%

The "other" category included a variety of responses:

- *Considering the case of the Tate brothers, I know that human trafficking is an increasingly common practice in our country;*
- *Human trafficking is more of a form of slavery;*
- *It is especially on young women;*
- *A very old problem with deep roots in corruption at all political and social levels;*

- *About human trafficking, I know that it is more intense in poor countries where people do not have the opportunity to be educated, or cannot come into contact with people who have a certain education to explain to them what human trafficking consists of, or the opportunity to see through case information campaigns;*
- *About human trafficking I know that it is practiced in poor countries;*
- *The information I have about this subject comes from the press, online, and I know that this practice is unfortunately found in most underdeveloped countries but not only.*

There are 60 respondents, representing a percentage of almost 25%, all belonging to the female gender, who tried to provide definitions of human trafficking. These definitions are more or less correct and/or complete, but which evoke a knowledge of this phenomenon on the part of the respondents. Among the definitions offered:

- *ART 201 CP - It is the crime that regulates human trafficking - which consists in recruiting, transporting, transferring, purchasing or placing a person for the purpose of exploiting him and manifests itself in several forms: by coercion, kidnapping, misleading, etc.;*
- *Trafficking in persons is the forcing of other people through illegal methods, to perform work, sexual services, illegal acts, organ harvesting;*
- *Trafficking in persons is the transfer of vulnerable persons through threat, kidnapping, deception or coercion;*
- *Trafficking in persons involves the deprivation of liberty of some persons, whether adults or children, taking advantage of their lack of education or other factors, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or through work;*
- *It is a form of exploitation and violation of human rights involving the illegal trade, transport and sale of human beings.*

A large part of the respondents considers human trafficking to be a criminal or criminal act. Their number is 54 respondents, representing a percentage of over 22% of the total respondents. Of these, 43 respondents belong to the female gender and 11 respondents belong to the male gender.

A number of 30 respondents answered with "don't know" or have little knowledge (especially from the news), representing a percentage of over 12% of all respondents.

There are respondents who said that they have information on this subject, in particular, from the mass media (TV), internet, social networks, newspapers, but also from books. These respondents are female and represent more than 7% of the total respondents.

A number of 12 respondents see human trafficking as "a problem" either at the local, national or international level. Their percentage is almost 5% of the total respondents.

The next aspect followed was to see if our subjects directly know any case of human trafficking. This item aims to identify the perceived frequency of existing trafficking cases at the community level and was formulated as an open-ended question for people who have had or are aware of a trafficking case to provide details that provide additional documentation this research.

Table 3. Do you know any cases of human trafficking?

	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Yes	45	26	71
No	117	54	171

A number of 171 respondents answered that they do not know cases of human trafficking, representing a percentage of over 70% of all respondents. Of these, 117 are female representing a percentage of over 48% of the total and 54 are male representing a percentage of over 22% of the total respondents.

A number of 71 respondents declared that they are aware of such cases, especially those publicized on TV, mass media, social networks, etc. Their percentage is just under 30%, with respondents belonging to both genders, more precisely a number of 45 female respondents representing a percentage of approximately 19% and 26 male respondents representing a percentage of almost 10%.

What forms of human trafficking do you know?

The purpose of this item was to see which forms of traffic are more familiar to the respondents and it was formulated as a question with fan-type answers, with the possibility of multiple answers, to be sure that the respondents understand the question and to facilitate the answers of the respondents who, although they have heard of a certain form of traffic, can momentarily forget about them and through these predetermined answers they can stimulate the memory, helping the respondent to give an answer as accurate as possible.

Table 4. What forms of human trafficking do you know?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Human trafficking for labor exploitation	119	23,1%	65	25,3%	184	23,8%
Human trafficking for sexual exploitation	136	26,4%	62	24,1%	198	25,6%
Human trafficking for the purpose of recruiting or forcing them to beg or steal	96	18,6%	52	20,2%	148	19,2%
Human trafficking for organ harvesting	72	14,0%	35	13,6%	107	13,9%
Child prostitution	92	17,9%	43	16,7%	135	17,5%
TOTAL	515	100,0%	257	100,0%	772	100,0%

The answers to this item lead us to believe that all forms of traffic are known to the respondents in a higher or lower percentage.

The most well-known form of trafficking is that carried out for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which is also the most publicized, but also the most frequent, according to the data of the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP). The number of those who have heard of this form of exploitation is 184 respondents, representing a percentage of over 81% of all respondents. Respondents belong to both genders, more precisely a number of 136

respondents belong to the female gender and a number of 62 respondents belong to the male gender.

Human trafficking for labor exploitation is the form of trafficking that occupies the second place in the respondents' knowledge, being recognized by 184 of them, representing a percentage of approximately 76% of all respondents. There are 119 female respondents and 65 male respondents.

On the 3rd place in the knowledge of the respondents is human trafficking in order to recruit or coerce them to beg or steal, being chosen by no less than 148 respondents representing a percentage of approximately 61% of the total respondents.

The penultimate form of trafficking in the respondents' choice is child prostitution which was chosen by a number of 135 respondents, representing a percentage of almost 56% of the total respondents.

The last form of traffic nominated by the respondents is the one carried out for the purpose of taking organs, being mentioned by 107 respondents which represents just over 44% of their total. Among them, a number of 72 respondents belong to the female gender and 35 respondents belong to the male gender. This form of traffic is the only one that does not exceed 50%, but it is represented by a considerable percentage.

Because all the responses recorded percentages between 44% and 82%, we can say that all forms of traffic are known, to a lesser or greater extent, by the respondents.

How do you react when you find out about such cases?

The purpose of this question was to see if the respondents react to possible cases of trafficking, if they know how to react and how they do it. The answer to this item was left open to give respondents the freedom to formulate their own answers.

Table 5. How do you react to such cases?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Notify the police/authorized bodies/ANITP/State institutions/Call 112	60	35,1%	41	45,6%	101	38,7%
Try to help the victim/authorities	9	5,3%	9	10,0%	18	6,9%
I feel helplessness/anger/indignation/pity	41	24,0%	12	13,3%	53	20,3%
They don't react/ don't know/ are afraid	29	17,0%	12	13,3%	41	15,7%
The competent authorities must intervene	2	1,2%	3	3,3%	5	1,9%
By fighting	4	2,3%	1	1,1%	5	1,9%
Other	19	11,1%	8	8,9%	27	10,3%
No answer	7	4,1%	4	4,4%	11	4,2%
TOTAL	171	100,0%	90	100,0%	261	100,0%

A number of 101 respondents would notify the police/competent bodies/ANITP/State institutions or call 112 if they knew of or witnessed a case of human trafficking. It is worrying that they represent a percentage of 39% of all respondents, that is, only 2 out of 5 would make a report, and of those who would make this report, they would do it anonymously. Women seem to be less willing to make a report compared to men.

On the 2nd place are the respondents who limit themselves only to the senses, without acting in any way. They either feel pity, helplessness, empathy, compassion towards the victim, or they feel anger, indignation or even hatred towards the trafficked person or the authorities. The number of these respondents is 53, representing only 1/5 of the total respondents. Women feel such feelings in a greater proportion compared to men.

It is worrying that people who do not react, either because they do not know how, or because they do not want to for various reasons (they are afraid, do not want to get involved, etc.) occupy the 3rd place in the answers of the respondents. Their number is 41 respondents representing a percentage of approximately 16% of the total respondents (with small differences between men and women). What is perhaps even more shocking are the answers received. A good example is that of a female respondent who answers that "I don't get involved. In general, the victim agrees".

The respondents who described in a special way the reaction they can have in the case of a case of human trafficking are 27, representing a percentage of just over 10%. Of these, 19 are female and 8 are male. Among the most eloquent answers are:

- I feel outraged. The state and civil society should get more involved in combating human trafficking.
- It worries me because they are caused by poverty and lack of education.
- So far, I have only come across these cases in campaigns like this, or on TV. I always sympathize with the victims and I would like no one to go through something like this, including me and the people close to me. If I encountered this case in real life, I don't know if I would be able to act on the spot. Accustomed to the mentality of "it's their business, don't meddle in other people's business", with the fear of being held accountable if they intervene, or with the thought that I am not able to intervene, due to my rather young age and limited experience of life, I would hesitate to get involved.

Very few respondents try to help the victim, regardless of whether we are talking about physical, verbal help, through advice or information. Their number is 18 respondents, representing a percentage of 7%, these being equally divided between the two genders, 9 belonging to the female gender and 9 to the male gender.

Which of the following people are more prone to human trafficking?

This item was introduced to see, in the respondents' perception, what is the perceived profile of the victim, in this way it is possible to observe not only the knowledge regarding the form of traffic, but also the knowledge regarding the profile of the victim. This item was formulated as a closed question with fan-type answers, covering all age segments in which a victim of human trafficking can be placed.

Table 6. Which of the following people are more prone to human trafficking?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Children up to 12 years old	102	31,5%	51	30,0%	153	31,0%
Teenagers	150	46,3%	76	44,7%	226	45,7%
Adults	37	11,4%	24	14,1%	61	12,3%
Elderly	35	10,8%	19	11,2%	54	10,9%
TOTAL	324	100,0%	170	100,0%	494	100,0%

From the answers of the respondents, we can deduce that they mostly know the people who are willing to be victims of human trafficking.

Most answers go towards identifying teenagers as being more prone to human trafficking (almost half of the respondents 45.7% - 226 answers - with insignificant differences between the two genders).

Children up to 12 years represent the age segment that one out of three respondents consider to be more vulnerable in terms of human trafficking (again with insignificant differences between the two genders).

One out of 10 respondents considered that the age segment most likely to be a victim of human trafficking is the elderly.

The fact that teenagers represent the greatest risk of being trafficked, according to the respondents, is not at all surprising if we look at the most known forms of trafficking by them.

What do you consider to be the main determining causes in human trafficking?

This item was added to see, in the respondents' opinion, what are the perceived causes that determine or facilitate human trafficking (open question with multiple answers).

Table 7. What do you consider to be the main determining causes in human trafficking

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Poverty	121	15,00%	67	16,30%	188	15,50%
Lack of education and information	120	14,90%	64	15,60%	184	15,10%
The disorganized family	110	13,70%	55	13,40%	165	13,60%
entourage	101	12,50%	50	12,20%	151	12,40%
Consumption of prohibited substances	90	11,20%	40	9,70%	130	10,70%
Domestic violence	89	11,10%	36	8,80%	125	10,30%
Alcohol consumption	67	8,30%	31	7,50%	98	8,10%
Videochat	57	7,10%	35	8,50%	92	7,60%
Online dating ads	46	5,70%	33	8,00%	79	6,50%
Other	4	0,50%	0	0,00%	4	0,30%
TOTAL	805	100,0%	411	100,0%	1216	100,0%

Poverty is the main reason why a person risks becoming a victim of human trafficking, according to a number of 188 respondents, representing a percentage of 15.5% of nominations. At a very short distance is "Lack of education and information" (184 nominations - 15%). Reasons such as "disorganized family" (165 - 13.6%), "surroundings" (151 - 12.4%), "consumption of prohibited substances" (10.7%) and "violence in the family" (10.3%). The other categories of reasons (alcohol consumption, video chat, matrimonial ads on the Internet) also meet significant percentages, but below 10%. There are no significant differences between the two genders in terms of identifying the causes of traffic.

Do you know institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking?

This item was addressed to see if people know the institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking, something that can highlight their work in today's society. This item was formulated as a dichotomous closed question.

Table 8. Do you know institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking?

	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Yes	94	50	144
No	68	30	98
TOTAL	162	80	242

A number of 144 respondents answered that they know which institutions are involved in the prevention of human trafficking, representing a percentage of over 59% of all respondents. The gender distribution of this information is relatively equal (58% women and 62.5% men).

If you answered YES, can you give an example of such institutions?

This item was addressed to see which of the state institutions are the most visible, in contemporary society, in the fight regarding the prevention of human trafficking.

Table 9. If you answered YES, can you give an example of such institutions?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Police/ M.A.I.	51	41,8%	37	62,7%	88	48,6%
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (A.N.I.T.P.)	37	30,3%	12	20,3%	49	27,1%
D.G.A.S.P.C./ NGOs/ Child Protection/ Other centers	21	17,2%	6	10,2%	27	14,9%
The church	9	7,4%	4	6,8%	13	7,2%
School	2	1,6%	0	0,0%	2	1,1%
Other	2	1,6%	0	0,0%	2	1,1%
TOTAL	122	100,0%	59	100,0%	181	100,0%

By far the majority of respondents identified the formal institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking (Police, A.N.I.T.P.).

How should human trafficking be reduced? What about the trafficking of human organs?

This item was addressed to see what solutions the respondents see for reducing human trafficking in general and, in particular, trafficking for the purpose of organ harvesting. This item was formulated as a closed question with fan-type answers, with the possibility of multiple choice.

**Table 10. How should human trafficking be reduced?
What about the trafficking of human organs?**

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
The collaboration of state and private institutions in order to prevent and combat this social and criminal phenomenon	123	29,1%	63	28,0%	186	28,7%
Information campaign through media, internet (social networks Facebook, Instagram)	118	28,0%	60	26,7%	178	27,5%
Socio-medical information campaign at international, national or local level	114	27,0%	59	26,2%	173	26,7%
Publicizing a case through all means of communication	67	15,9%	43	19,1%	110	17,0%
Involvement of the Church through the "liturgy after the liturgy"	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
TOTAL	422	100,0%	225	100,0%	647	100,0%

The most appropriate solution, according to the respondents, is the collaboration of state and private institutions in order to prevent and combat this social and criminal phenomenon. This solution was chosen by a number of 186 respondents (28.7%). A solution for the prevention of human trafficking is the realization of a socio-medical information campaign at the international, national or local level (almost 1 out of 3 participants, equally men and women).

Although in a previous question the Church represented an institution that can fight against the phenomenon of human trafficking, for this item the answer "The involvement of the Church through the "liturgy after the liturgy"" was not chosen by any respondent.

What do you know about the following methods of human trafficking:

This item was addressed to see what knowledge the respondents have regarding the methods most used by human traffickers. This item was formulated as a closed question with fan-type answers, with the possibility of multiple choice.

Table 11. What you know about the following methods of human trafficking?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Lover boy	129	47,6%	64	52,9%	193	49,2%
La Strada (smuggling of migrants for labor exploitation)	56	20,7%	32	26,4%	88	22,4%
Loving parents, we want children from Romania (pseudo-adoption / child prostitution)	49	18,1%	14	11,6%	63	16,1%
Bride traffic	37	13,7%	11	9,1%	48	12,2%
TOTAL	271	100,0%	121	100,0%	392	100,0%

Love boy is the method most known by the respondents (50% have heard of it), being the most chosen by the respondents, men knowing a little more about this method compared to women. La Strada is the second method known to the respondents, but only 1 out of 5 people have heard of it.

Is civil society involved in preventing human trafficking?

This item was addressed to see to what extent people perceive that civil society is currently involved, given that they are an integral part of it.

Table 12. Is civil society involved in preventing human trafficking?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Yes	14	8,6%	11	13,8%	25	10,3%
Not	33	20,4%	13	16,3%	46	19,0%
I do not know	48	29,6%	20	25,0%	68	28,1%
Sometimes	67	41,4%	36	45,0%	103	42,6%
TOTAL	162	100,0%	80	100,0%	242	100,0%

A number of 103 respondents believe that the society only sometimes gets involved in the prevention of human trafficking, representing a percentage of almost 43% of their total, and 28% answered that they do not know if the society gets involved. One out of 5 respondents believes that the society does not get involved and only one out of 10 claims that the society gets involved in the prevention of human trafficking.

How should civil society be involved?

This item was addressed to see what are the solutions that can be implemented at the societal level, according to the respondents. It was formulated as an open-ended question to leave the freedom of the respondent to offer solutions depending on the problems identified.

Among the answers we find both viable solutions and at least original solutions. We present some of these responses below.

- *Perhaps the subject of human trafficking should be studied in school.*
- *By informing the authorities when they are aware of such facts and by campaigns to help disadvantaged categories.*
- *By notifying the authorities if they see or hear about such cases in the immediate environment, by participating in campaigns related to human trafficking; by informing and preventing such cases, both for them and for those close to them.*
- *Victim protection, specialized programs for children, information campaigns and measures to disrupt the profitability of traffickers.*
- *Civil society should put more pressure on the state to toughen penalties for human trafficking.*
- *Campaigns in children's centers, legislative initiatives in support of his training in the field of work.*

- *By educating himself and all generations, by participating in campaigns related to combating these activities, to be preventive and take care of themselves and those close to them.*
- *To notify at the first observation of something wrong, to stop giving money to beggars, to be professionally integrated, to stop accessing prostitution services.*
- *civil society should provide victims with physical and psychological assistance and support for their integration into society.*

As we can see, the respondents offered solutions both for the integration of the victims and for the harsher punishment of the traffickers, but above all solutions for educational purposes to be carried out in schools and to produce beneficial effects for future generations. Empathy, involvement and information represent the most effective solutions according to the respondents.

There are also respondents who refrained from expressing their opinion.

What can be done at the national legislative & strategic social policy level to combat human trafficking?

This item was addressed to see what are the solutions that can be implemented at the legislative level, according to the respondents. It was formulated as an open-ended question to leave the freedom of the respondent to offer solutions depending on the problems identified.

Tabel 12. What can be done at the national legislative, strategic social policy level to combat human trafficking?

	Gender				Total	
	Female		Male			
Change of legislative framework	118	62,4%	64	66,7%	182	63,9%
Media/ information campaign	12	6,3%	8	8,3%	20	7,0%
Other	40	21,2%	17	17,7%	57	20,0%
I don't know/ No answer	19	10,1%	7	7,3%	26	9,1%
TOTAL	189	100,0%	96	100,0%	285	100,0%

Two thirds of the respondents (182) answered that it is very important to change the legislation by tightening the laws for punishing traffickers, with imprisonment, in the opinion of some, even for life.

A small number of respondents (20 cases - 7%) believe that publicized information campaigns can be solutions for social policies carried out in order to inform, prevent and combat trafficking, while a number of 57 respondents offered other answers (20%). Among the most interesting answers are:

- *Beggars should be punished more severely not only by a fine.*
- *Inter-institutional collaboration in order to initiate actions to combat human trafficking.*
- *Reducing the risk factors that lead to victimization, strengthening and diversifying measures to prevent human trafficking.*
- *Correct conviction.*

- *I would seek to change the activity of the perpetrator while he is in prison so that he does not repeat this criminal act;*
- *Arrests and detention, travel ban, deprivation of nationality, exorbitant fines.*
- *Prohibition of international adoptions.*
- *The inclusion in the national curriculum of hours on this topic starting from the 5th grade.*
- *How to protect labor during employment, to make it mandatory to protect against human trafficking in schools and at jobs.*
- *Less freedom for children.*
- *Parliament should be more open to the proposals for tightening the laws proposed by the empowered institutions. Restrictive sentences of life imprisonment and even capital punishment to be introduced. In these cases, rehabilitation is just a dream.*
- *I would ban and close social media sites.*
- *Patrolling and tracking suspicious persons.*

The conclusions of the research

To be able to answer the research question - *Is society sufficiently informed about human trafficking?* – we addressed items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10 to form an opinion regarding the answer to this research question. From the answers to item no. 1 shows the fact that the respondents have information on this subject from the mass media, internet or social networks for the most part, less information directly from specialists or from specialized studies. According to the answers from item no. 2, the majority of respondents do not know cases of trafficking, and those who declared that they have knowledge of such cases, heard from the mass media or from another person, do not know them personally. From the answers to item no. 3 it is understood that the respondents know all the presented forms of trafficking, only the trafficking carried out for the purpose of taking organs being the least known, but this too was recognized by almost half of the respondents. From the answers to item no. 5 it is understood, in the opinion of the respondents, that teenagers are the people most likely to be trafficked, usually for sexual purposes. From the answers to item no. 6 shows that the main determining causes of human trafficking are represented by poverty, lack of education and information, but also disorganized families, respectively the wrong environment. From the answers to item no. 10 shows that the respondents know all the methods used in human trafficking, especially the "Lover boy" method. Analyzing the answers related to the items that followed the first question, we can say that the phenomenon of human trafficking is known at the societal level, but the information is incomplete, but the respondents are eager to find out more information, a fact that encourages us in the steps that will follow.

To be able to answer the second research question - *Is society involved in reducing this phenomenon?* - we addressed items 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. From the answers to item no. 4 it is understood that less than half of the respondents get involved in combating human trafficking by notifying the police or other institutions empowered in this field, either in prevention and combat, or in working with the victim or punishing the trafficking itself. Many respondents limit themselves to expressing their feelings towards the victim or towards the trafficker, but without taking other measures. Other people do not even react, either out of fear or ignorance, or because they believe that there are specialists and institutions that must deal with both the victim and the trafficker. From the answers to item no. 7 and no. 8 shows that the respondents know the institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking. From the answers to item

no. 9 shows that collaboration between state and private institutions is the best solution in preventing human trafficking. Information campaigns of any kind represent other viable solutions, according to the respondents. Unfortunately, in their opinion, the involvement of the Church is not a solution worthy of consideration. From the answers to item no. 11 shows that civil society sometimes gets involved, possibly or probably when that case is publicized. From the answers to item no. 12, it emerges that the society should be involved, first of all, at the level of prevention by informing the citizens, introducing courses in the school curriculum to discuss this problem, a solution being offered by them themselves (civic education classes). From these answers we can conclude that society either does not want or is afraid to get involved in combating trafficking and that it is better to "do another". As one respondent said, "Accustomed to the mentality of 'it's their business, don't meddle in other people's business', with the fear of being held accountable if they intervene, or with the thought that I am not able to intervene" do the vast majority of people to avoid getting involved, even if only to inform the competent institutions. In other words, unfortunately, in contemporary society the victim is "alone in a sea of people".

To answer the last question of the research - *Can legislative improvements be made regarding the fight against human trafficking?* - we addressed item 13. From the answers given to this item, we draw the conclusions that the legislation in this field is permissive or is not properly applied. Therefore, most respondents believe that the legislation in force in this field must be tightened, being people who would agree with life imprisonment or even the death penalty. Moreover, the corruption in the system that allows traffickers to easily escape charges must be reduced.

From all the questions to which we tried to find answers, we can say that civil society has vague knowledge in the field, as there is a need for information campaigns carried out by specialists in the field. Society must be educated to get involved, not just to feel. Without stronger social involvement, this phenomenon cannot be stopped, because no matter how well the institutions and specialists are prepared, social support is needed. Legislation must be tightened to deter traffickers, but above all, be it permissive or harsh, it must be enforced.

The social perception of human trafficking holds immense significance in the fight against this serious human rights violation. By challenging misconceptions, cultivating empathy, and promoting awareness, we can create a society that recognizes the magnitude of the issue and actively works towards its eradication. By shifting perceptions and focusing on victim-centered approaches, we can collectively contribute to a world where no one is exploited, and every person can live a life of dignity and freedom.

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Annex 1

**SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
IN THE DOBROGEA AREA, CONSTANTA COUNTRY**

1. What do you know about human trafficking?

2. Do you know of any cases of human trafficking?

3. Which of the following forms of human trafficking do you know?

- a) human trafficking for labor exploitation,
- b) human trafficking for sexual exploitation,
- c) human trafficking in order to recruit or coerce them to beg or steal
- d) human trafficking for organ harvesting
- e) child prostitution

4. How do you react to such cases?

5. Which of the following people are more prone to human trafficking?

- a) children up to 12 years old?
- b) teenagers
- c) adults,
- d) elderly people

6. What do you consider to be the main determining causes in human trafficking:

- a. lack of education and information
- b. poverty,
- c. disorganized family,
- d. domestic violence,
- e. entourage
- f. consumption of prohibited substances
- g. alcohol consumption
- h. Videochat
- i. matrimonial ads on the internet
- j. Other _____

7. Do you know institutions involved in the prevention of human trafficking?

- a) Yes
- b) No

8. If you answered YES, can you give an example of such institutions?

9. How should human trafficking be reduced? What about the trafficking of human organs?

- a. Socio-medical information campaign at international, national or local level

- b. Information campaign through media, internet (social networks, Facebook, Instagram)
- c. The collaboration of state and private institutions in order to prevent and combat this social and criminal phenomenon
- d. Mediating a case through all means of communication
- e. The involvement of the Church through the "liturgy after the liturgy"

10. What do you know about the following methods of human trafficking:

- a. Lover boy
 - b. Bride traffic
 - c. Loving parents, we want children from Romania (- pseudo-adoptions - child prostitution)
 - d. La Strada (smuggling of migrants for labor exploitation)
 - e. (If you know give examples - as always, they are LIFE LESSONS!)
-

11. Is civil society involved in the prevention of human trafficking?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know
- d) Sometimes

Following human trafficking, whether child, adult or elderly, the effects, the traumas, always remain.

12. How should civil society get involved?

13. What can be done at the national legislative, strategic social policy level to combat human trafficking?¹

Age:

Sex:

Occupation:

Locality:

¹ Do an imagination exercise: if you were in the legislator's shoes, what measures would you take?