

# Criminal exploitation of North-African UMAs and young adults

Strategic Intelligence Report



Centre of Expertise  
on Human Trafficking  
& Migrant Smuggling

- Indications of criminal exploitation
- Research period 1 January 2019 to 31 July 2021
- Classification: open publication

# Criminal exploitation of North-African UMAs and young adults

Strategic Intelligence Report

Zwolle, 8 July 2022

Colophon

The Centre of Expertise on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (Expertisecentrum Mensenhandel & Mensensmokkel, EMM) is a collaboration between the Netherlands Police, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Netherlands Labour Authority, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, and the Public Prosecution Service.

At the EMM, indications and criminal investigations into human trafficking and migrant smuggling converge and are subsequently translated into operational, tactical, and strategic products based on which the partner organizations can apply their criminal or civil law authorities.

The EMM uses stock photography; the persons depicted in the images are not part of the cases discussed in this report.

Copyright © 2022 EMM  
All rights reserved

## Summary

At the end of 2020, the EMM received information that minor aliens who caused disturbances by traveling through Europe and committing common crimes such as burglaries and theft, may be victims of criminal exploitation. There were indications of an organised international structure and victimhood of human trafficking. In response, the EMM carried out a study through data-analysis, interviews and literature research in order to determine the extent of criminal exploitation involved in common property crime committed by Northern African unaccompanied minor aliens (UMAs) and young adults in the Netherlands.

For the purpose of the data analysis, a research population of about 3000 persons was established based on data of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). This research population was queried in the registration systems of the Netherlands Police, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Netherlands Labour Authority on a 'hit/no hit' basis. The vast majority of the population is male (97%), with Moroccan as the most common nationality (52%). Most of the young adults are 17 or 18 years old. They often pretend to be minors in order to be assured of housing and care in the Netherlands.

The research shows that the opportunity to build a better future in Europe is an important reason for leaving the country of origin. The young adults are influenced by unrealistic videos on social media about a beautiful future in Europe. An additional reason to come to the Netherlands is the presence of family, friends and acquaintances here. Most of the young adults state that they travelled from North Africa to Europe by boat. Once in Europe, they face major disappointment when they discover they have little chance of a residence permit and their prospects are much bleaker than portrayed on social media. However, this disappointment is hidden from their family to prevent loss of face, since often large amounts of money have been borrowed for the trip to Europe.

The data analysis shows that 59% of young adults have committed one or more criminal offences, most often theft. One of the reasons why thefts are committed, is revealed by the interviews. As it turns out, the weekly allowances that they receive are often sent to the home country, leaving no funds to provide for themselves. They then resort to stealing various goods, such as clothing and food.

The respondents indicate that the minors are directed and/or forced to commit offenses by a person or a group of people. Adults take the minors with them and teach them how to steal. The respondents are under the impression that these adults also order the minors to steal and commit other crimes, which means that indications of criminal exploitation are present as, in the case of minors, it only needs to be proven that a criminal act was committed by order of an authority figure for it to be classified as human trafficking. The data analysis confirms this observation, since adults aged 24 to 31 are often involved in property crimes in which a minor is also involved.

To date, these indications of criminal exploitation have not yet resulted in criminal investigations into the exploitation of Northern African unaccompanied minors and young adults in the Netherlands. This is due to the fact that investigating officers tend to concentrate

on solving the committed property crime, and do not yet sufficiently focus on identifying criminal exploitation when encountering Northern African unaccompanied minors and young adults. For this reason, they do not or hardly ask questions to uncover indications of human trafficking. In short, the interrogations focus on proving that the arrested suspect has committed the crime and not whether they might be a victim too.

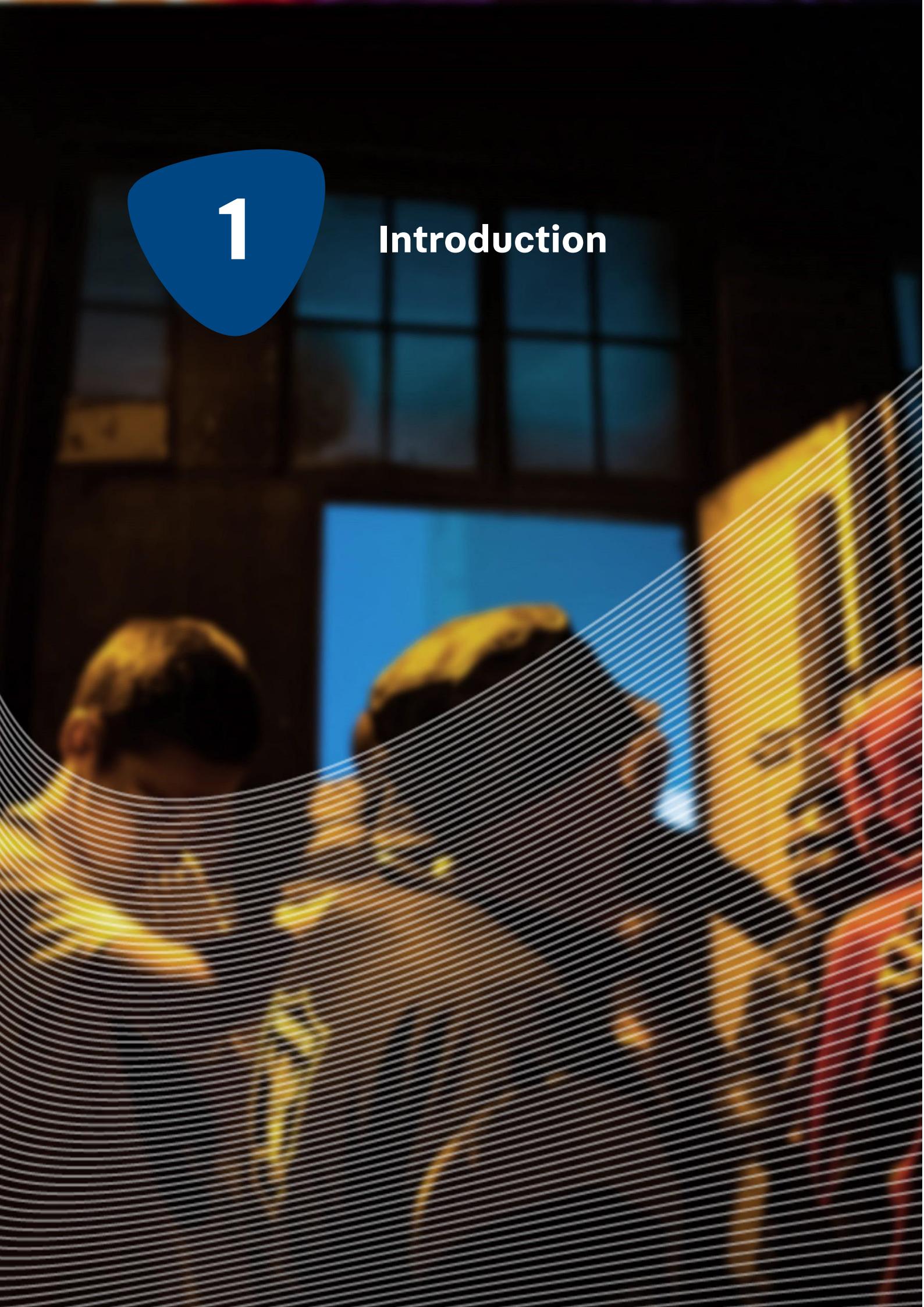
Given the indications of criminal exploitation, it is recommended to invest in raising awareness about victimhood. Education should be focused on unaccompanied minors and young adults, as well as investigating officers and staff members of COA and Nidos. Moreover, it is important to invest in European cooperation to gain more insight into indications of human trafficking and the identity of traffickers. Finally, it is recommended to provide the unaccompanied minor aliens with provisions rather than a weekly monetary allowance to eliminate their need to steal and reduce the accompanying vulnerability.

# Contents

Summary.....	3
1. Introduction.....	2
1.1 Reason for the study.....	2
1.2 Objective .....	2
1.3 Research questions .....	3
2. Research method.....	5
3. Research findings .....	7
3.1 What are the characteristics of North-African UMAs and young adults? .....	7
3.1.1 Personal characteristics.....	7
3.1.2 Push and pull factors .....	7
3.1.3 Travel routes.....	8
3.1.4 Stay in the Netherlands .....	8
3.2 Are there any indications that the young people were involved in criminal activities in the Netherlands?.....	9
3.2.1 Number of registrations.....	9
3.2.2 Criminal offence categories .....	9
3.2.3 Where do the criminal offences take place?.....	10
3.2.4 Handling stolen goods.....	10
3.2.5 Suspicious transactions.....	10
3.3 Are there any indications that others directed or forced the young people to carry out criminal activities? .....	11
3.3.1 Direction/Coercion .....	11
3.3.2 Medication and drugs use.....	11
4. Conclusion .....	14
5. Recommendations .....	16
Bibliography .....	18

# 1

## Introduction



# 1. Introduction

A teenager who is pressured into selling drugs by youth gangs, a girl who is forced to take out telephone plans for her boyfriend and his friends, an immigrant who is ordered by human traffickers to cut cannabis buds to pay back the costs of his journey, and a minor who is forced to steal across Europe. These are all examples of exploitation in which victims are forced to commit criminal offences.

## 1.1 Reason for the study

In November 2020, the EMM received information that minor aliens who caused disturbances – often originating from Morocco and Algeria and under 24 years old – may be victims of criminal exploitation. This group travels through Europe and commits common crimes such as burglaries and theft. There are indications that many of them are minors, and of an organised international structure and victimhood of human trafficking. In response to this issue, the EU project EMPACT started a sub project on North-African human trafficking. The Netherlands also participates in this sub project. In this context, a need arose to gain more insight into the victimhood of human trafficking of this group from a Dutch and European perspective.

## 1.2 Objective

The objective of this study is to establish the extent to which criminal exploitation is involved in common crimes, such as burglaries and theft, committed by North-African unaccompanied minor aliens (UMAs) and young adults in the Netherlands.

An UMA is a minor alien who arrives in the Netherlands from a non-EU country, is under 18 at the moment of arrival, and was not accompanied by parents or a legal guardian during the journey. In this study, young adults refers to persons under the age of 24. North-African persons here refers to persons from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

Criminal exploitation is a form of human trafficking. It differs from other forms of human trafficking because the victim is forced to commit criminal offences. Criminal exploitation is defined as follows: a person who is forced to steal, pickpocket, sell drugs, or commit other criminal offences and surrender the full or partial loot to the exploiter. The pressure exerted on the victim may be physical or psychological in nature, for example by misleading the victim, abusing the victim's vulnerable position, or by threatening to exclude the victim from a group that – in the eyes of the victim – takes care of him or her by providing for example housing. To recognise criminal exploitation it is important that investigating officers are aware that suspects may also be victims of human trafficking. If it can be proven that a person was forced to commit criminal offences, no sentencing may take place pursuant to the non-punishability principle. In case of minors, coercion is not even required, it only needs to be made clear that there is a relationship of authority. In other words, proving that the minor committed the criminal offence by order of an authority figure is sufficient.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The main research question of this study is:

What is the nature and extent of criminal exploitation of North-African UMAs and young adults who were living in the Netherlands between 1 January 2019 and 31 July 2021?

To answer this question, the following sub-questions were drawn up:

1. What are the characteristics of North-African UMAs and young adults?
2. Are there any indications that they were involved in criminal activities in the Netherlands?
3. Are there any indications that others directed or forced them to carry out these activities?

# 2

## Research method

## 2. Research method

To answer the research questions, interviews, a literature study and data analysis were conducted. Firstly, six employees of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) and Nidos were interviewed to gain more insight into the phenomenon for the benefit of the data analysis. COA is responsible for providing asylum seekers with accommodation. Nidos is the national guardianship institution for UMAs in the Netherlands. Secondly, background information in the form of newspaper articles, scientific research reports and other knowledge documents was studied, paying special attention to cultural aspects, travel routes, accommodation in the Netherlands and the various methods of influencing or coercion.

For the benefit of the data analysis, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and COA were asked to provide the following data to serve as a starting point for the analysis:

- IND: personal details and status of all persons who originate from or are a national of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia or Egypt, are 12 to 23 years old and who applied for a residence permit in the Netherlands between 1 January 2019 and 1 September 2021;<sup>1</sup>
- COA: personal details of all UMAs aged 12 to 18 who originate from or are a national of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia or Egypt and who were living at a COA facility between 1 January 2019 and 1 September 2021.

The files provided by the IND and COA were combined and deduplicated, resulting in a starting population of approximately 3000 persons. This starting population was queried in the law enforcement and criminal investigations registration systems of the Netherlands Police (NP), the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (KMar) and the Netherlands Labour Authority (NLA) on a ‘hit/no hit’ basis. In case of a hit, the information from the registration systems linked to the person in question was added to a database. This information included addresses, incident data together with related documentation, and links to other persons, as registered in these systems. Subsequently, the information was examined to establish whether criminal exploitation may be involved. Additionally, attention was paid to special circumstances, such as alcohol or drug use.

The reason for requesting data from COA as well is that not all UMAs apply for asylum when they arrive in the Netherlands. However, they are entitled to accommodation from COA because they are minors. This means that there could be UMAs staying at COA facilities who are not known to the IND. To obtain information on the full target group, data was requested from both organisations.

---

<sup>1</sup> The research period ran until 31 July 2021. Due to data processing intervals used at the IND, data was requested until 1 September 2021. For the same reason, COA was requested to provide data until 1 September 2021.

# 3

## Research findings



## 3. Research findings

This chapter answers the research questions mentioned above. To start, the characteristics of North-African UMAs and young adults are described. Next, the push and pull factors, the travel routes used and the course of their stay in the Netherlands are discussed. Then it is examined whether there are any indications that this group committed criminal offences in the Netherlands, paying special attention to the types of offences committed. Finally, it is explored whether there are any indications suggesting that others directed and/or forced them to commit such offences.

### 3.1 What are the characteristics of North-African UMAs and young adults?

#### 3.1.1 Personal characteristics

In terms of the personal characteristics of the young people, the following was noted. The large majority of them are male, 97% in fact.<sup>2</sup> Most are 17 or 18 years old, only 8% is aged 14, 15 or 16. In respect to age composition, it should be noted that their age is registered based on a visual assessment by IND employees if the person in question cannot provide identification documents. Sometimes, an age assessment is conducted and – if the results justify this – the date of birth of the person in question is amended in the IND systems. The interviews revealed that the young people frequently claim to be minors in order to be assured of accommodation and care in the Netherlands. It is also possible that one person occurs in the IND systems multiple times under different names and dates of birth. The reason being that they regularly leave the COA facility where they are staying to travel to another (European) country for an extended stay. When they then return to the Netherlands, they identify themselves with another name and date of birth than they used before. This new name and/or date of birth is subsequently added to the IND systems. Investigation may later reveal that the person was already recorded in the IND system, at which point the various entries are linked.

The most prevalent nationality in our research population was Moroccan (52%), young people with Algerian nationality formed a third of the research population (33%), and 15% originated from one of the other three countries: Libya, Tunisia or Egypt.

#### 3.1.2 Push and pull factors

The interviews showed that the young people lived in bad circumstances in their countries of origin. Often, they grew up in broken families or on the streets. They had few opportunities to get an education, and if they did have such opportunities, there was little chance of finding a job at a suitable level. Moreover, salaries are often not high enough for people to support themselves. Thus the possibility of building a better life for themselves in Europe was an important reason to leave their countries of origin. The interviews further showed that young people are being influenced by videos on social media platforms like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok that paint a picture of a wealthy life in Europe, where money ‘seems to grow from trees’. The documentary ‘Verloren Jongens’ (Lost Boys) confirms this; it

<sup>2</sup> Information related to gender was only included in COA data, not in the IND data.

shows that young people told investigating officers that the presence of family members, friends and acquaintances was a reason for them to come to the Netherlands.

### 3.1.3 Travel routes

The registrations show that young people spoke of various travel routes in their statements. Most of them stated to investigating officers that they travelled by boat from North-Africa to Europe – mostly Spain – without an entry visa, i.e. illegally. They stated to then have travelled by bus or train to France and to have taken the train and/or bus to the Netherlands from there. A different route runs to the Netherlands via Italy, France and Belgium and/or France and Germany. From Libya there is a route to Greece, Italy and then France.

The interviews also confirmed that the young people often travel via Spain and/or France. Respondents indicated that life on the streets of France and Spain is very hard. In Spain and France, accommodation for UMAAs is not arranged in the way it is arranged in the Netherlands and Belgium, resulting in many of them being forced to live on the streets in Spain and France. They often stay in a country for a short period of time and then travel to another European country, in search of a better life. In Belgium and the Netherlands, they often receive accommodation, decreasing the need to live on the streets. The interviews and literature study further showed that the reasons for travelling through Europe are diverse. One of the reasons mentioned was the season: in winter the young people prefer not to live in the streets and thus often travel (back) to Belgium or the Netherlands.

According to the respondents, the young people stated that they mostly arrange their journey themselves by travelling to the well-known crossing towns of Ceuta and Melilla and cross to Spain from there. Considering their young age, it is, however, deemed near impossible for them to reach the European mainland without help. Thus it may be assumed that they frequently employ help at departure, transit and arrival. The registrations barely contain any substantial information about migrant smuggling. The EMM database set up for this research only includes 50 registrations in which the term ‘migrant smuggling’ is included. These registrations often describe that a minor tried to travel from Hoek van Holland (the Netherlands) to the United Kingdom in or under an articulated lorry. Many cases mention help of migrant smugglers who were paid to arrange the minors’ journey from North-Africa to various European countries.

### 3.1.4 Stay in the Netherlands

UMAs originating from North-African countries generally do not qualify for a residence permit, as Morocco and Tunisia are on the list of safe countries. Algeria, Libya and Egypt are not on this list, so asylum seekers from these countries have a better chance of receiving an asylum residence permit. Having been convicted for committing a crime may pose a contra-indication for receiving a residence permit. The limited chance of being granted an asylum residence permit is often an unexpected disappointment for these young people, as it goes against the stories of ‘Walhalla’ Europe that are being told on social media. The interviews show that these young people unduly want to keep up appearances with their family and friends at home. They say that they live a good life in the Netherlands and everything is provided for them. In reality, they have had to face a major disappointment because they will not receive a residence permit and their prospects are much bleaker than was portrayed on social media. However, they hide this disappointment from their family and friends to prevent loss of face, since often large amounts of money have been borrowed or saved up for the trip to Europe. The young people are

expected to quickly pay back this money, as it is thought that they will quickly earn a lot of money in Europe. When this turns out not to be the case, it is a major disappointment to them.

Registrations show that these young people mainly travel on public transport in the Netherlands, often without a valid ticket. They travel around to sell stolen and other goods, or to buy these from others. They also travel from the COA facility where they are housed to other COA facilities where they sometimes spend the night without having been registered. The reason given for these trips in the interviews and registrations is that they have ‘friends or acquaintances’ at the other COA locations. This also explains the many registrations about missing persons and reports that a young person has left for an unknown destination.<sup>3</sup> Related to this are registrations of missing persons being found. Regularly, the missing young persons return to their own COA facilities after a number of days, and turn out not to really have been missing after all.

### **3.2 Are there any indications that the young people were involved in criminal activities in the Netherlands?**

#### **3.2.1 Number of registrations**

To determine whether there are indications that these young people are involved in committing crimes, we examined registrations of the police, KMar and NLA. The database of registrations connected to the starting population of 3,000 persons contains 14,400 registrations in total. A person may be linked to a registration in various capacities, such as witness, victim and/or suspect. This analysis only includes the persons who were qualified as ‘suspect’ in a criminal case, all others were ignored. A person qualified as a ‘victim’ in a criminal case could be a duped shop owner, for instance.

Out of the approximately 3,000 persons in the starting population, 59 percent was qualified as ‘suspect’ in one or more registrations. The other persons are not included in any registrations. Of the persons who occur in at least one registration, 56 percent was marked as a suspect. In total, over 400 persons are qualified as suspects in two or more registrations (26%). Three persons were marked as suspects in at least 25 registrations (0.2%).

#### **3.2.2 Criminal offence categories**

The data analysis shows that the vast majority of registrations are for theft. Theft includes the following criminal offences: shoplifting, theft from homes and cars, and pickpocketing. The interviews confirmed this picture, as respondents indicate that they have noticed minors suddenly being in possession of expensive clothing and shoes, bicycles and e-bikes, or one or more mobile phones. Other registrations include destruction of property and making threats, but also missing person cases and unauthorised departures from COA locations.

---

<sup>3</sup> An inhabitant is administratively deregistered with ‘having left for an unknown destination’ as departure reason when they have missed two reporting appointments without explanation. It is possible that an inhabitant did not appear for relocation to another COA location, and is then automatically deregistered 48 hours after the agreed arrival date. It is also possible that an inhabitant of an asylum seekers’ centre did not appear at the weekly reporting appointments twice in a row.

### 3.2.3 Where do the criminal offences take place?

The data analysis revealed that many of the young people committed criminal offences in several police regions. The majority of them is active throughout the Netherlands. In nearly all registered cases, they have friends, acquaintances and/or fellow villagers who are staying at a different COA location. It appears that these young people visit one another at the various COA locations. It is possible that these visits are for the purpose of committing crimes together, but this is not certain, as the statements included no information about this. However, the data analysis shows that offences were also committed in groups.

### 3.2.4 Handling stolen goods

In respect of the sudden possession of expensive items or branded clothing, the interviews revealed the following. If a supervisor/mentor of a young person asks where they got these items, they often reply that they have received them from a friend or acquaintance or that they borrowed them. In rare cases, they say they have bought the items. It is difficult for both mentors/employees and the police to act on this. If the items in question have been stolen, there needs to be an official report and a reasonable suspicion that the items truly were obtained unlawfully. Usually, there are only suspicions that the items are stolen, and it remains unclear whether the young person in question was even involved in the theft.

Registrations show that stolen goods are often sold on. How the money obtained from these sales is spent, cannot be determined from the data analysis as investigating officers often do not inquire about this. The interviews do reveal why the young people steal. An example given by two respondents is that the weekly allowance was sent to family in the country of origin, leaving no money for food, which resulted in the young people stealing it.

### 3.2.5 Suspicious transactions

It is possible that the relatively small sums of weekly allowance that were sent to the country of origin are considered suspicious transactions by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) in the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> When the FIU marks unusual transactions as suspicious transactions, a criminal offence such as terrorism, money laundering or human trafficking is linked to the transaction. It is difficult for the FIU to determine whether transactions are made to finance human trafficking and human smuggling. In the research period, the FIU only linked a few of the registered suspicious transactions from people with the relevant nationalities – not just UMAAs but also adult aliens – to human trafficking or human smuggling. In total they linked eleven suspicious transactions to human smuggling and five to human trafficking.

---

<sup>4</sup> Businesses and organisations report unusual transactions to the FIU. The FIU then determines whether the transaction should be considered suspicious, i.e. whether the transaction seems fraudulent and needs to be investigated by an investigation service or security service. Suspicious transactions are entered into the BlueView police registration system by the FIU, as the FIU operates administratively under the Netherlands Police.

### **3.3 Are there any indications that others directed or forced the young people to carry out criminal activities?**

#### **3.3.1 Direction/coercion**

The interviewed COA and Nidos employees painted a picture of young people being directed and/or forced to commit criminal offences by a person or group of people. Minors are taken from COA locations by adults and return with items that they most likely would not have been able to pay for themselves considering their weekly allowance. Allegedly, these adults teach the young people how to steal. The respondents are under the impression that the adults also order the young people to steal. In case of minors, when there clearly is a relationship of authority, evidence of coercion is not needed to prove that the young person is a victim of human trafficking. This means that there are indications of criminal exploitation in this case.

One respondent stated that a stolen iPhone on which tracking software had been activated (Find My iPhone) was seen to be in Brussels within 24 hours. This way, the COA was able to establish several times that stolen phones ended up in Belgium, particularly in Brussels, according to the respondent. This could mean that the young people are directed from Belgium. However, this is not supported by information from the registrations or the other interviews.

Indications of criminal exploitation also come to the fore in the data analysis. Registrations show that adults between 24 and 31 years old are often involved in criminal offences such as shoplifting in which minors are involved as well. While the distribution of roles cannot be determined based on the registrations, it seems that there is a relationship of authority, which is an indication that they may be victims of human trafficking.

Investigating officers are not yet sufficiently focused on recognizing signs of criminal exploitation. They do not or hardly ever ask questions to uncover the elements needed to prove human trafficking, as they focus mainly on solving the crime. In many cases, the property offences seem simple to solve: the suspects were seen by the witness(es) and their description was reported to the police. Initially, there seems to be little reason to conduct further investigations or inquire about the suspect's underlying circumstances. Hardly any questions are asked that could provide insight into potential criminal exploitation. For this reason, indications of criminal exploitation have not yet led to investigations into the criminal exploitation of North-African UMAs and young adults.

#### **3.3.2 Medication and drugs use**

The registrations suggest that the young people may have been under the influence of certain medications while committing criminal offences, for example Rivotril (active substance: clonazepam) and Lyrica (active substance: pregabalin). These medications, prescribed to treat epilepsy, suppress feelings of fear and anxiety, eliminate inhibitions and are highly addictive. Often, investigating officers asked the young people whether they were addicted and what medications they used. In nearly all cases, only the addictive substances and medications were recorded, but the young people were not asked whether they were prescribed the medication by a doctor, what ailment the medications were intended for, or how long they had been using the medication. Some registrations state that two jars with over 50 pills each were found on a suspect during a search, but it was not asked or investigated what medications these were,

whether the medication was prescribed or received from third parties, and whether the amount found constituted a normal dose.

Particularly the use of Rivotril stands out. In one of the interviews, a respondent claimed to have seen young people arrive at a COA location while it is known that they do not live there. It is thought that these young people visit various COA locations to sell Rivotril. In another interview, it was mentioned that COA employees took action once to confirm their suspicions. The young person in question then had several jars of Rivotril pills with him, as well as a large sum of money that far exceeded the weekly allowance. Respondents said that Rivotril is not freely available in the Netherlands, but it is in Belgium. It appears that the young people mainly buy it in Liège, Brussels and Antwerp and subsequently sell it in the Netherlands. They travel by train without a ticket to pick up the Rivotril pills. The young people regularly receive fines for travelling without a valid ticket. As the UMAs have a limited budget and limited payment options with a money card (the bank card that allows them to spend their weekly allowance), they are often not able to pay the fine on time, so COA helps them pay it. The sum is advanced by COA and deducted from their weekly allowance in instalments. The UMA's mentor discusses the fine with them to prevent repeat fines.

In addition to medication use, the interviews revealed that property offences are committed by the young people when they are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, especially cannabis and hash. The data analysis confirms this. It is suspected that some of the young people became addicted to drugs or medication such as Rivotril, as it takes away their inhibitions to commit criminal offences and strengthens the relationship of dependence. In the current study, these suspicions could not be confirmed or disproved.

# 4

## Conclusion

## 4. Conclusion

The interviews and the data analysis confirm that there are indications of criminal exploitation. Respondents said that minors are taken away from COA locations by adults and return some time later with goods that are suspected of having been stolen. These adults allegedly teach the minors how to steal and the respondents believe they also order the minors to steal. In case of minors, coercion is not required to prove victimhood of human trafficking if it can be sufficiently shown that there is a clear relationship of authority when committing these criminal offences. Data analysis showed that adults aged 24 to 31 were often involved in criminal offences such as shoplifting in which minors were involved as well, suggesting that there is a relationship of authority.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the young people feel forced to commit crimes because their weekly allowance is insufficient. They send money to their parents or other relatives abroad, resulting in them not being able to support themselves anymore. Moreover, most of the young people were found to have some type of addiction; particularly the use or abuse of medications against epilepsy stands out.

Indications of criminal exploitation have not yet led to investigations into the criminal exploitation of North-African UMAs and young adults. Investigating officers are not yet sufficiently focused on recognizing signs of criminal exploitation in this target group. They do not or hardly ever ask questions to uncover the elements needed to prove human trafficking, as they focus mainly on solving common property crime. For this reason, the interrogation is focused on proving that the arrested person is the perpetrator of the offense, and there is insufficient attention for the possibility that the perpetrator may be a victim too.

# 5

## Recommendations

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, we make the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1:**

Invest in education about criminal exploitation. This may raise awareness among young people that they are not only the perpetrator of a property offence, but also the victim of human trafficking. Education should be provided at asylum seekers' centres and residential locations for UMAs, as well as in the various countries of origin. In the countries of origin, posts on social media could be used to raise awareness about the fact that the chance of receiving an asylum residence permit in the Netherlands is very low and that their prospects in the Netherlands would be much bleaker than shown on social media now. It is worth considering whether education could be provided by people from the target group for optimal relatability and effect.

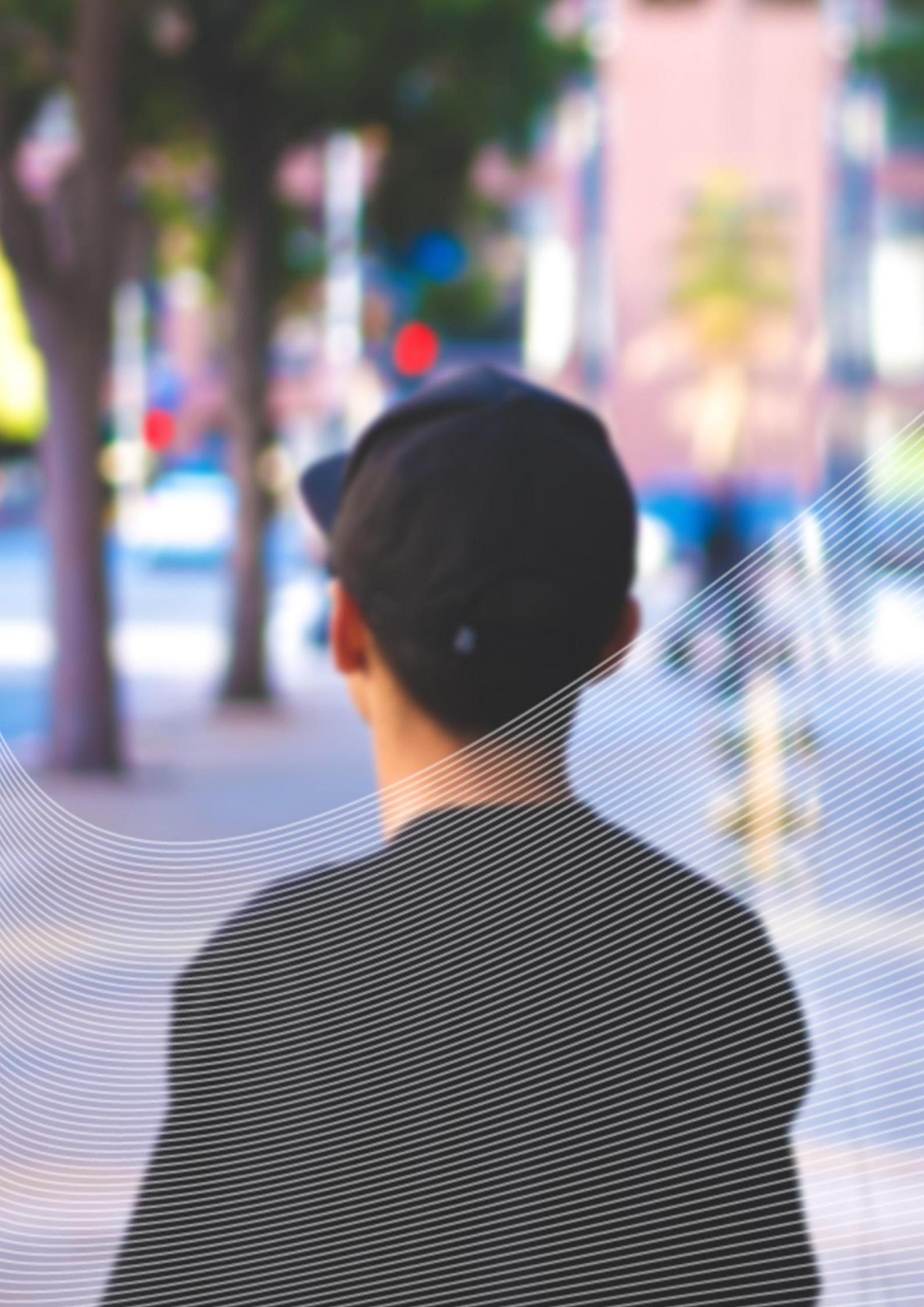
Furthermore, attention should be paid to increasing awareness of victimhood of human trafficking among this target group within the human trafficking training provided to police officers and COA and Nidos employees. For the benefit of conducting interrogations with members of this target group, it is important that an interrogation protocol for criminal exploitation is drawn up.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Invest in European cooperation with respect to combatting minor aliens who caused disturbances. Many young people are registered under various identities in the Netherlands and other European countries where they have committed criminal offences. Information exchange and cooperation in criminal investigations and other matters between these countries may provide more insight into the victimhood of human trafficking and the human traffickers. For this reason, it is important that the identity of aliens is incontrovertibly established by means of the prescribed ID pillar, designed to determine the identity of persons using documents, finger prints, and photographs.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Consider the replacement of the monetary weekly allowance provided to UMAs with the provision of food and other necessary goods in kind. This way, we can prevent that the weekly allowance is sent to the country of origin and that the young people feel the need to steal food, thus becoming more vulnerable to criminal exploitation.



# Bibliography

Centre against Child Trafficking and Human Trafficking (2021). *Daders van binnenlandse seksuele uitbuiting*.

Danish Immigration Service (2019, October). *Country of origin information: Morocco protection and assistance to victims of human trafficking*.

European Migration Network (2021, April). *Ad hoc query on measures to deal with those asylum seekers who are involved in disproportionate, disruptive and transgressive behaviour*.

Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (2020, May). *A rising tide: Trends in production, trafficking and consumption of drugs in North Africa*.

Inspectorate of Justice and Security (2015, July). *Identiteitsvaststelling in de strafrechtketen Een inspectie-onderzoek naar de toepassing van de Wivvg*.

International Monthly, Edition: Africa (2021, July).

Journal of Applied Youth Studies (2020, July). *Gangs, Methodology and Ethical Protocols: Ethnographic Challenges in Researching Youth Street Groups*.

Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving (2016). *Jeugdcriminaliteit onder migranten*.

L.B. Esser & C.E. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen (2017). *Van beginsel tot praktijk. Het non-punishmentbeginsel in mensenhandelzaken*, p. 412-434.

Ministry of Justice and Security (2021). *De staat van migratie*.

Ministry of Justice and Security (2021). *Incidentenoverzicht 2020*.

Ministry of Justice and Security (2020). *Incidentenoverzicht 2019*.

NRC (2020, November). *Jonge Marokkaanse asielzoekers: de straatjongens van Europa*.

Leiden University (2016). *Disturbing Poses: Policing Youth on Casablanca's Margins*.

VRT (2021, September). *De schrijnende realiteit van (tientallen) straatkinderen in Brussel*.

Research and Documentation Centre (2021). *Een onzekere toekomst. Kwalitatief onderzoek naar de ervaringen van afgewezen (ex-)alleenstaande minderjarige vreemdelingen en opvangouders met toekomstgerichte begeleiding*.

Centre of Expertise  
on Human Trafficking  
& Migrant Smuggling



Postbus 100  
3970 AA Driebergen

[www.emm-online.nl](http://www.emm-online.nl)



OPENBAAR MINISTERIE

POLITIE



Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie  
Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en  
Werkgelegenheid



Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst  
Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid



Koninklijke Marechaussee