

**MERCHANTS OF LIVING SOULS: TRAFFICKERS OF HUMAN  
BEINGS IN ROMANIA**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the importance of empirical methods to delineate the profile of the traffickers in Romania, and the need to understand the factors that influence the behavior of traffickers. Studying and responding to trafficking in human beings has been flawed by the vagueness or inaccuracy of the research tools deployed, making it difficult to satisfy the normative component of the political objectives of legal regulation to criminalize trafficking activities. The trafficking of human being needs a research approach more focused on all the key actors, and more rigorous in methodology.

Due to the criminal “hidden” nature of the trafficking operations and the scarcity of empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative analyses have been deployed. I conclude that traffickers are increasingly mobile, adaptable in terms of trafficking schemes and routes, are well connected to the environment from which the victims are recruited. Recently Romanian legislation is combating trafficking against a backdrop of increasing demand for trafficked victims, as well as social norms that favor irregular migration. Budgetary restraints and a lack of institutional coordination hamper the efforts of the government to more efficiently prosecute traffickers, thereby allowing them to persevere with impunity.

The paper urges the need for a comprehensive anti-trafficking policy in Romania that addresses the following questions: Who are the traffickers of human beings in Romania? How do they organize their trafficking operations? What are the incentives that influence their activity? and What is the role that law and social norms play in regulating their behavior?