

## What are Lithuanian children doing in Norway?

I am Kristina Misiniene and I work for NGO Caritas Lithuania. There I have been leading trafficking and prostitution victims support services for the past 10 years.

Every year we help about 100 persons, 40% of which are under 18. The youngest girl we provided help for was 11. In general we offer the standard package of support: safe shelter, psychosocial consultations, jobs skills training, legal advice for those who testify against the pimps and traffickers and a follow-up program for those who live in the community on their own.

Lithuanian traffickers and smugglers aren't numerous but they take stable positions in the international organized crime. The routes of their criminal activities reach as far as Japan.

The theme of my presentation "What do Lithuanian children do in Norway?" would have been more appropriate in the yesterday's curriculum of the conference, when speakers from Norway described quite eloquently and in a sensitive manner what happens to our children in this country. Stealing, drug dealing, selling sex... Some words concerning these events. The stories of these children do not start the day they step into Norway and do not end when they leave your country. Most of them are coming from a remote region that is called the capital of smuggling in Lithuania. In some sense these children are nobody's children though almost all of them have families or at least a single parent. When we visited the families we saw alcohol abuse, neglect of the children, hopelessness in the eyes of the adults. Nothing have changed when children started to return from Norway.

Hoping to make the local Lithuanian authorities reflect upon these cases, to take some responsibility, in April 2011 we organized a round table in one of the local municipalities inviting representatives from prosecutor's office, police, social services, NGOs. The result was quite shocking – the officials stated almost unanimously that nobody can stop migrating children, if the criminals use these children – we can't do anything about it.

Yesterday listening to the Norwegian officers I admired their humanistic approach and willingness to help everybody. Still this is not enough .

What are the biggest driving forces of trafficking? Why the states can't cope with it for decades, having at their disposal law enforcement system? What is beneath the surface of the situation when the bad guys exploiting vulnerable people? I'm sure we'll find poverty in all its forms. And poverty for the large part of the world is too big of a challenge.

Sure you can go not that deep and for example call trafficking an expression of culture. But I don't believe it will explain us much.

Looking from the other side – for years we, countries of origin of the victims, try to understand why Western well-developed countries have this constant demand for fresh bodies for their brothels and streets. Is it culture? Or crime? Citizens of well-developed countries like cheap workers in their household, farms and factories. Is it culture? Or maybe crime?

Finally I would like to encourage us all to have reality-based cooperation, for example more field visits, meeting professionals that work at the grass-root level, it could enable

us to understand why Lithuanian, Romanian, Polish children steal and prostitute themselves in Norway, Sweden, Denmark..