

# Child Trafficking in Football: Forms, Factors, and Dynamics

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# Contextualisation of the child trafficking in Football

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July 28, 2017

Football Italy human trafficking match fixing FIFA Corriere della Sera

## Human trafficking in football players under pretenses of fake family reunions

Young African players are being illegally brought into countries for profit. (Photo: Getty Images)

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## Teenage footballers as young as 14 being 'trafficked' to Laos

Millions of people are victims of human trafficking at any given time

Kashmira Gander | @kashmiragander | Tuesday 21 July 2015 22:35 | 0 comments

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SPORTS

## Alone in Europe: Football business with Africa's

African footballers are in high demand in Europe. Importantly, inexpensive. Shady football agents unable to cough up the cash are left behind.

Belgian corruption scandal: Agents, officials and referees arrested after police raids in seven countries

FIFA launches first-ever global strategy for women's football

Prince Ali goes worldwide with newly expanded AFDIP project

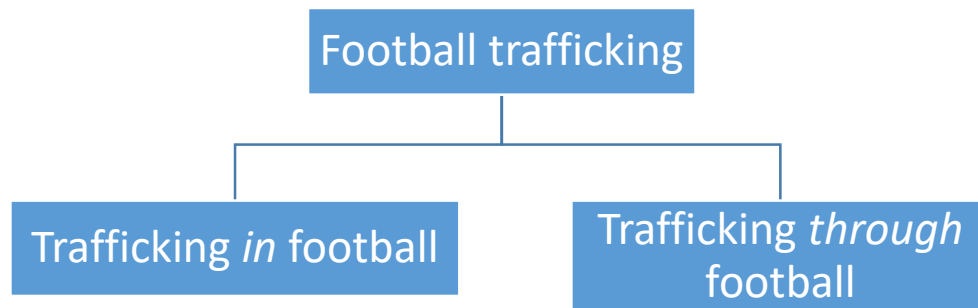
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# Contextualisation of child trafficking in Football

- Arrest of 24 Brazilian football players in Aruba (David, 2004)
- 422 cases of African soccer slaves in Belgium (Lindberg, 2006)
- Traffic African minors in Belgium football (Darby et al. 2007)
- Trafficking in Latin America (Meneses, 2013)
- So, there is still a significant gap in our understanding of the phenomena & more research is needed in particular with a view to develop empirical bases (about numbers, demographics, perceptions, actors, institutions and etc.)

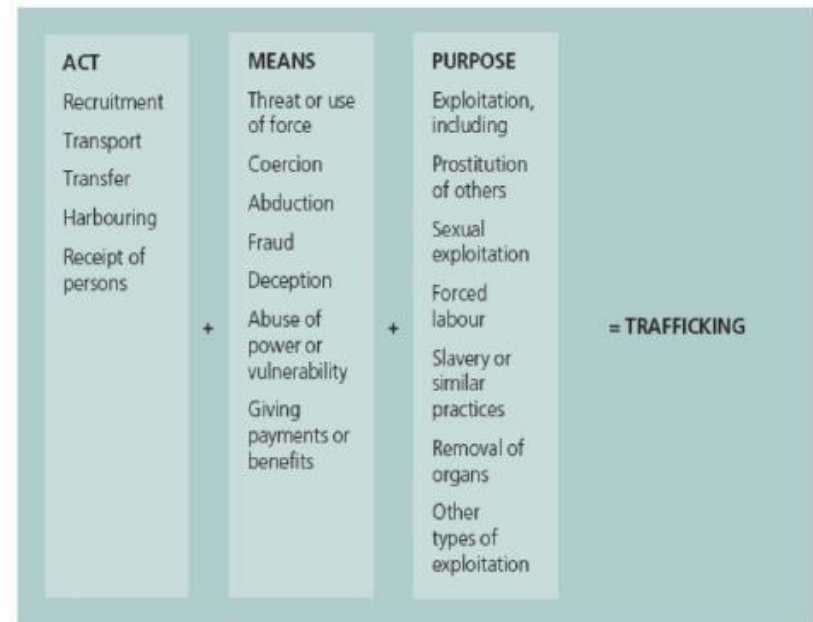
# Conceptualisation of child trafficking in football

- The phenomenon of football trafficking is actually two phenomena:



[Esson (2015)]

- Where do these practices fit within the legal definition of trafficking?



[Art 3, para (1) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons]

# Conceptualisation of child trafficking in football

1. An intermediary claiming to be a football agent or talent scout identifies a player in a match or trial and offers him the opportunity to be signed by a foreign club. In some rare cases, the intermediary does not physically meet the player, as recruitment takes place via the Internet.¶
2. The intermediary asks the player for money in exchange for securing this opportunity akin to a 'finders fee'. Additional funds are also asked for to cover living costs and spending money in the destination country.¶
3. The player's immediate and extended family often sell family possessions, remove siblings from schooling or take out a loan to meet the costs. This is typically in the region of €3-5,000.¶
4. The player arrives in a destination country often on a short-term tourist visa. Contrary to popular media reportage the travel conditions are not always illegal and/or dangerous. Players often arrive using legal channels, and in the instances where they do not, it is often using conventional modes of transportation with false travel documents.¶
5. On arrival in a destination country, the intermediary often takes the player's documents and any spending money for 'safe-keeping'.¶
6. While in a destination country the player may or may not attend a trial with a club. In some cases, the agent abandons the player on arrival in a destination country.¶
7. If the player is not abandoned on arrival, they might be taken to multiple trials until a contract is offered and the agent is satisfied with the terms.¶
8. If the trials are successful the player signs a contract with the club. Problematically, the contract is typically exploitative with unfavourable terms for the player.¶
9. If the player is unsuccessful at his trials or his contract is not renewed and another club cannot be found, the intermediary abandons him. In most cases the intermediary will also take his 'finders fee', the player's documentation and any remaining money with him.¶
10. Once the player realises the precarious nature of his situation he is often reluctant to return to his country of origin, and may decide to remain in the destination country illegally without any means of subsistence.¶

[Esson and Drywood (2018)]

# Conceptualisation of child trafficking in football

- **Complexity of phenomenon**

- Cross-border phenomenon: multi-jurisdictional, transitioning between different legal systems (incl. EU/international)
- Part-regulated by sports governance, but also engages state responsibility
- Engages a number of areas of law: child protection, criminal, immigration, trafficking
- Impacted by a range of socio-economic factors: poverty/global inequalities, masculine identities, global reach of football

# Can the EU intervene?

- **Bases for EU intervention**

- From children's rights
  - Article 24 Charter
  - EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child
- From sports policy
  - Art 165 TFEU
  - White Paper on Sport
- From immigration and free movement
  - Free movement of persons: Bosman, xxx

- **What would the intervention look like?**

- Most of the achievements in relation to both children's rights and sports policy have come via soft-law initiatives (examples)
- Particularly dovetailing soft-law measures with legislation (examples)
- Importance of children's rights mainstreaming in the sports policy arena



# Future research agenda

- Developing coordinated and collective responses

How can we develop more effective systems (responses/frameworks) to tackle the issue (transnational and multi-sectoral)?

- Putting the best interest of children at the core of solutions

How can we incorporate a robust right-based approach within sport in order to safeguard the rights of children?

- Ensuring good practices widely adopted within the industry

Can we identify good practices within the sport industry?

What methods are required to transfer the good practices from one sport discipline to another?

# Thank You

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