

## **Elena Balan's Abstract**

### **At The Edge of Europe in the Century of Slavery Case Study on Moldova**

Moldova is the second smallest of the former Soviet republics and the most densely populated of them. Moldova has experienced economic difficulties, like many other former Soviet republics. Since its economy was highly dependent on the rest of the former Soviet Union for energy and raw materials, the breakdown in trade following the breakup of the Soviet Union had a serious effect, exacerbated at times by drought and civil conflict.

In search for better opportunities, many Moldovans choose to go abroad, either legally or illegally, running into dangerous risks of smuggling, exploitation and trafficking. Labor migration profoundly affects the economic and social development of Moldova. As of mid-2006, approximately one quarter of the economically active population was occupied abroad. Remittances from migrant workers to their families in Moldova amounted to one third of Moldova's gross domestic product. According to official data (Labor Force Survey), the number of migrants grew from less than 100,000 in 1999 to more than 400,000 at the end of 2005.

Moldova is a primary country of origin for trafficking in women and girls, mainly for sexual exploitation. Moldovan victims are trafficked to destinations throughout Southeastern Europe as well as the European Union. In addition, Moldovans are trafficked abroad for labor exploitation, begging and delinquency. According to some sources, Moldova is also a transit country for traffickers from Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union. As well, a handful of foreign victims have been assisted in Moldova.

The root causes of trafficking lie in the poor socio-economic conditions, which include high levels of unemployment of women and youth, gender discrimination and domestic violence. Reliable data on the total number of trafficked persons from Moldova is not available mainly because there are no standard identification procedures in countries of origin, transit and destination. It is estimated that between 600.000 and 1.000.000 Moldovans are living/working abroad under a variety of auspices and circumstances.