

**Monthly Migration Movements**  
**Afghan Migration to**  
**Europe - the role of smugglers**  
**January 2018**

**Introduction**

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Initiative (4Mi) in Asia region aims at gathering data on regional mixed migration flows. Data is currently collected in Afghanistan and with Afghans on the move toward the East and West and analysis are produced on a monthly basis. The purpose is to increase knowledge about drivers of movement and protection risks faced by Afghans on the move.

This report is focused on the role of smugglers when it comes to migration towards Europe. The findings are based on a sample size of 99 interviews with Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers in Germany, interviewed during September-December 2017.

All interviewees used migrant smuggling networks to get to Germany and the first contact was established by the migrants themselves or through family or friends. Smugglers were the main source of information both prior to and during the migration although the data also shows that smugglers appear as one of the main perpetrators of protection violations to migrants.

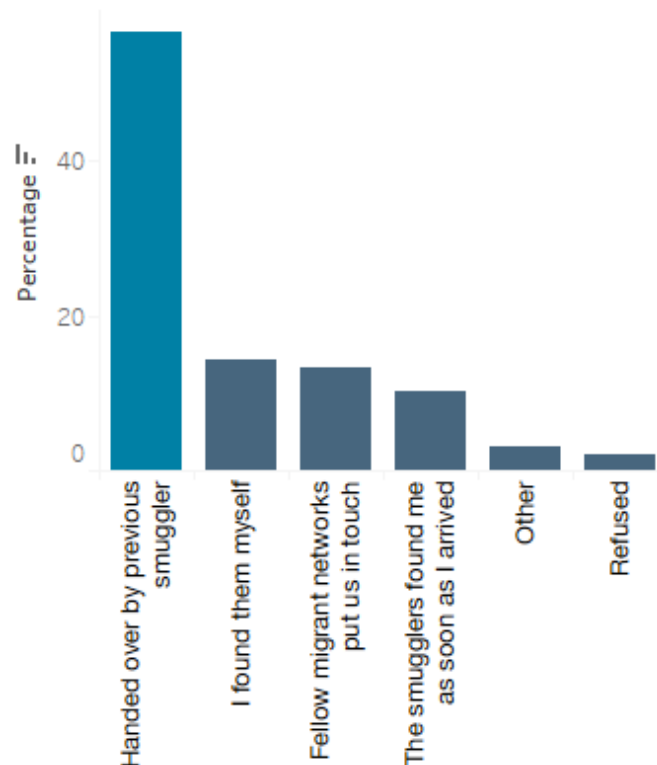
**Establishing contact to smugglers**

All interviewees used migrant smuggling networks for the entire or part of the journey. 46% of the interviewees mentioned that prior to departure they personally contacted a smuggler while the rest asked family members or friends to put them in touch with a smuggler.

After the first contact is established, almost 90% of the interviewees responded that they used the help of several smugglers on route to get to their destination. New smugglers are found in the main transit countries notably Iran, Turkey, and Greece. In more than half of the cases, it's the previous smuggler who takes part in identifying the new smuggler. In other cases, fellow migrant networks and the migrants themselves find new smugglers.

**Graph 1: Establishing contact to smugglers in new locations**

**Establishing contact to smugglers in new locations (n=99)**



As most of the interviewees used several smugglers, naturally the main payment arrangement was continuous payment throughout the journey. Some paid the cost of journey after successful arrival at destination while a few pay in advance. For those who pay upon arrival, unofficial intermediary (Hawala) and guarantee in Afghanistan are the main means to release the money. The average amount of money that was paid by interviewees to smugglers was 7900 USD.

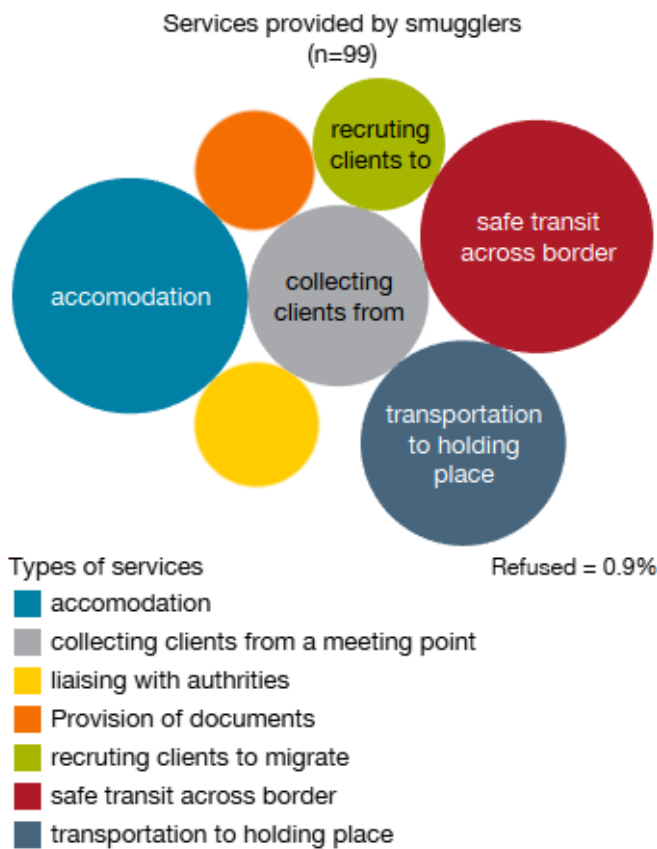
Approximately 70% of the interviewees used their own savings to pay. Others asked for support from family, friends and their

ethnic community in Afghanistan. The diaspora did not seem to play a large role compared to sources in country of origin.

**Services provided**

The smugglers offer a variety of services; provision of documents, safe transit across borders, collecting clients from meeting points, transportation to holding places, liaison with authorities, and recruitment of clients. As illustrated in graph 2, accommodation and safe transit across borders are the main services offered. Based on anecdotal information from the monitors, some networks provide a package of services while others only provide few selected services.

**Graph 2: Services provided by smugglers**

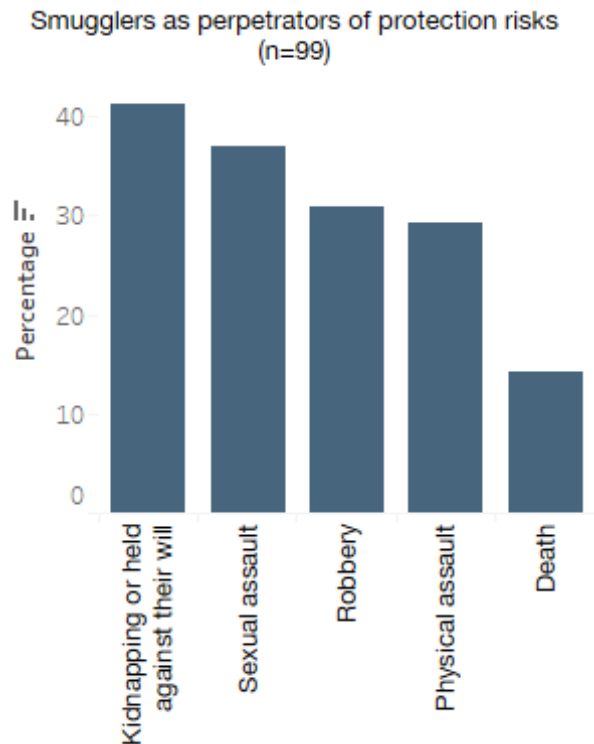


**Smugglers as information providers and perpetrators**

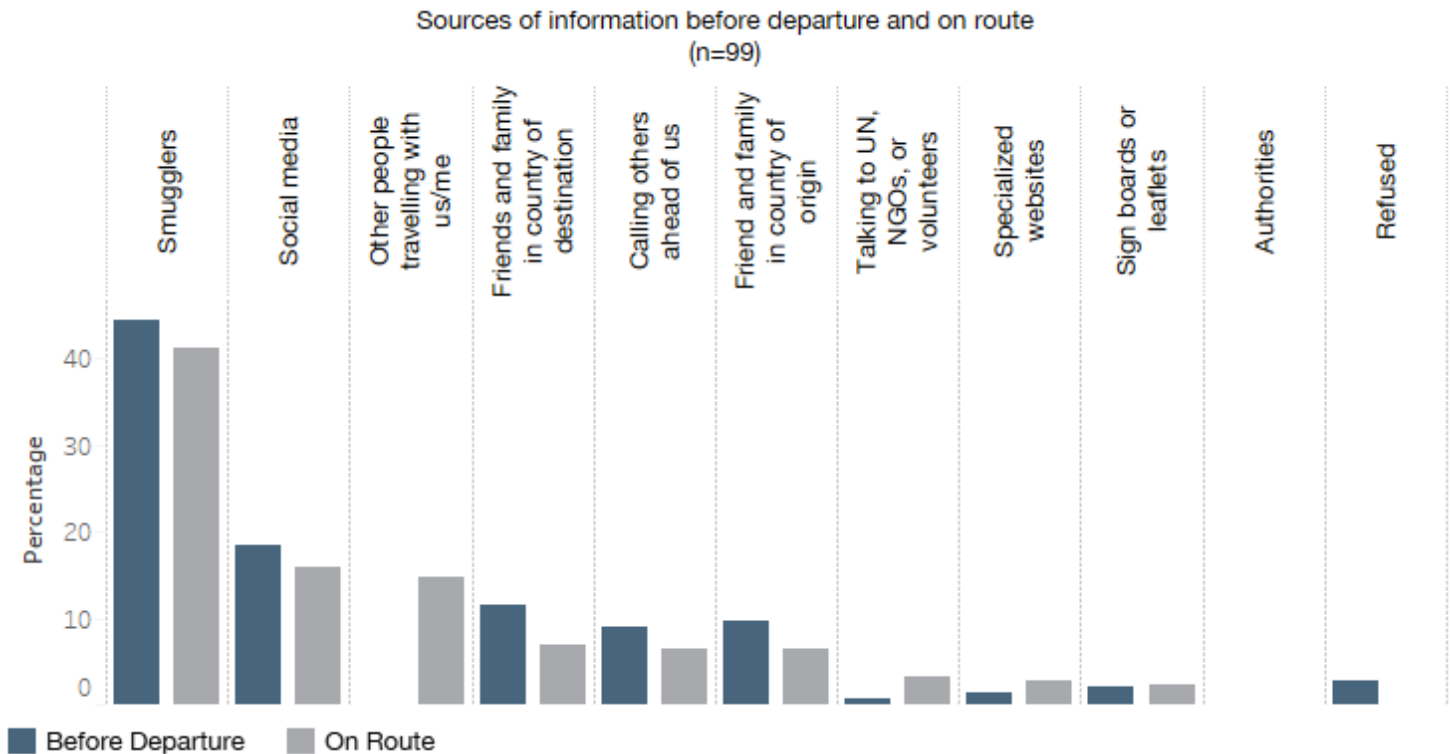
Apart from the above mentioned services, smugglers also seem to be the main information provider about the migration journey both prior to and on route (see graph 3 on next page). Social media and other migrants on route also seem to play an essential role during the migration journey.

Smugglers do however also appear as one of the main perpetrators of protection violations to migrants (see graph 4 below). As illustrated in previous regional 4Mi reports, Afghan migrants face severe protection risks on route, especially in border areas. Among our interviewees in Germany several risks were reported: Witnessed migrant death (23 cases), sexual assault (13), physical assault (31), kidnapping or held against the will (9) and Robbery (30). As shown in graph 4, smugglers seem often involved especially in cases related to kidnapping or holding migrants against their will potentially because the payment for the migration journey is still pending. It can be assumed that detainees are further vulnerable to other protection violations such as sexual and physical assaults.

**Graph 4: Smugglers as perpetrators of protection risks**



**Graph 3: Sources of information before departure and on route**



**Disclaimer**

4Mi data, graphics and analysis are based on the accumulated, ongoing data collection by 4Mi field monitors through direct interviews with migrants/refugees on the move. Sample sizes are clearly indicated and represent a limited section of those on the move. All findings derive from the surveyed sample of migrants/refugees and should not be used to make any inferences about the total population of any mixed migration flow.

**Profiles of the interviewees**

The Afghans interviewed by 4Mi monitors in Germany, which form the basis of analysis in this report, were mainly single Tajik and Hazara men coming from urban areas in Afghanistan (Kabul and Ghazni). The majority were asylum seekers with pending applications (65%) or registered refugees (29%). 65% had a primary, secondary or high school level education before departure and were working in low skilled jobs or were unemployed (55%). The majority said they left Afghanistan due to insecurity and lack of rights.