

Chapter 1

Profile of Latin American SWs, including victims of trafficking

1. Context and developments

Historically, **sex work** carried out by Latin Americans has existed in Belgium **since the 1980s and 1990s**, both in Antwerp and in other cities¹⁵. There was already talk of trans people in the Belgian sex industry as far back as the 1990s. However, the last few decades have seen an increase in Latin American sex work in Belgium, as well as in the international sex industry, due to the globalisation that has led to the increased migration of women and sex tourism¹⁶. However, the phenomenon of **human trafficking** for the purpose of the sexual exploitation of Latin American victims is new.

There is a striking **over-representation of women** compared with other gender identities among **Latin American SWs** in Belgium¹⁷, and it is particularly flagrant in the case of Latin American **victims** of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. All victims in the case law decisions are cisgender or trans women, and account for the majority of the support provided by the specialised reception centres (see Table 1 below).

The field organisations that Myria met confirmed the less visible presence of **cisgender men among Latin American SWs**. Moreover, they never appear in the case law relating to trafficking, and **only exceptionally among the victims of trafficking** for the purpose of sexual exploitation supported by the specialised reception centres (see Table 1 below). The under-representation of this group among the victims of trafficking can be explained by the fact that they are a minority of the general SWs population, and by the fact that they are less visible, although just as vulnerable.

Trans people, who are strongly represented in Latin American sex work¹⁸, are clearly affected by trafficking. This finding is supported by various players that Myria interviewed, as well as by case law and the case analysed later in this report¹⁹.

Trafficking for the purpose of the sexual exploitation of Latin Americans in Belgium almost exclusively involves people **of legal age**, ranging from their 20s to their 50s. As far as Myria is aware, there is no information to suggest that any of these victims are minors, with the exception of information obtained from interviews with the police, according to which minors have sometimes been identified.

15 See J. Rausenberger: "¿Mi cuerpo? ¡Mivida! Voicing Latin American transgenders in Antwerp's sex industry" in *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology*, 2016, vol. no. 7, n° 2, pp. 125-142.

16 See in particular for the Netherlands: M.-L. Petra Catharina Janssen, *Reizende sekswerkers, Latijns-Amerikaanse vrouwen in de Europese prostitutie*, 2007, p. 7; and for France: F. Guillemaut, "Prostitution et immigration : une histoire conjointe" in *Vacarme*, 2009/1, n° 46, pp. 40-41; see L. Oso, "Money, Sex, Love and the Family: Economic and Affective Strategies of Latin American Sex Workers in Spain" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, janvier 2010, vol. n° 36 (1), pp. 47-65.

17 According to interviews conducted by Myria; see also the hearing of the judicial commissioner, head of the DJSOC's 'Human trafficking and smuggling' unit concerning the ratio of approximately 12 women to 1 man among people who prostitute themselves or offer sexual services on the internet: [Report of the Special Commission responsible for evaluating legislation and policy on human trafficking and smuggling](#), 12 June 2023, *Parl. Doc.*, Chamber, DOC 55 2530/002, p. 31.

18 See the hearing of the judicial commissioner, head of the 'Human trafficking and smuggling' unit, of DJSOC: [Report of the Special Commission responsible for evaluating legislation and policy on human trafficking and smuggling](#), 12 June 2023, *Parl. Doc.*, Chamber, DOC 55 2530/002, p. 31.

19 See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1: two trans people were considered to be victims of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution.

The lack of any general observation of underage victims in Belgium²⁰ can certainly be explained by their absence from Latin American sex work in general, due to European migration controls²¹.

Latin Americans often obtain Spanish or Portuguese nationality within the context of their migration²². This is why the various tables in this focus include these nationalities. However, no Portuguese victims of trafficking received support from the reception centres between 2019 and 2023. Consequently, the tables on support for victims of trafficking do not include Portuguese nationality.

Table 1²³: Number of Latin American or Spanish victims of sexual exploitation receiving support from the centres, according to legal or perceived gender²⁴ (source: specialised reception centres)

	Total	Women	Men	X	Nationality
2019	9	7	2	/	Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela
2020	9	8	1	/	Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Spain, Venezuela
2021	9	8	1	/	Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Suriname, Venezuela
2022	17	16	0	1	Brazil, Peru, Spain, Venezuela
2023	14	12	2	/	Brazil, Colombia
Total	58	51	6	1	Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela

The **most common nationalities in Belgium among Latin American SWs** are Brazilian and Colombian, and to a lesser extent Venezuelan and Dominican. This finding is based on various interviews and on the statistics provided by the Central Directorate of the for Combatting Serious and Organised Crime (DJSOC)

within the Federal Judicial Police, indicating the number of adverts for sexual services placed by Latin Americans on a given internet platform, according to their nationality (see Table 2 below).

20 On an international level, the exploitation of young Colombian boys has reportedly been reported to Europol as part of a Colombian smuggling network that was transporting them to the United States, South America and Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Europol, situation report, *Criminal networks involved in the trafficking and exploitation of underage victims in the European Union*, The Hague, October 2018, pp. 21-22).

21 This absence is apparent from the case law analysed and various interviews conducted by Myria, as well as data from the MyEldo system indicating that the Latin American individuals supported between 2019 and 2023 by the specialised reception centres for sexual exploitation were all of legal age when the support began.

22 See hereafter Part 1, Chapter 1, point 4 for more information on the migration trajectory.

23 Comment regarding tables 1 and 3 and graph 1: the presentation of the figures for support in 2023 is taken from the MyEldo data management system and Myria's 2023 annual report, while the breakdown for 2021, 2020 and 2019 is taken from the figures presented in Myria's previous annual reports: *Annual report 2020 - Trafficking and smuggling of human beings, Behind closed doors*, *Annual report 2021 - Trafficking and smuggling of human beings Visibly invisible*, *Annual report 2022 - Trafficking and smuggling of human beings, Bound by debt*, *Annual report 2023 - Trafficking and smuggling of human beings, A chain of responsibilities* and *Myria's website*. Thanks to the new computer system introduced in 2023, reporting is much more accurate. The figures relating to reports of potential victims that have not been followed up in sufficient detail in recent years cannot be presented.

24 X corresponds to non-binary people. Since 2023, it has been possible to choose between legal gender and perceived gender in the MyEldo system. The choice of perceived gender was not provided for in previous years in the old system and to date, there is no clear directive regarding the entry of trans people in the MyEldo system.

Table 2: Number of adverts for sexual services with Latin Americans or Spanish/Portuguese persons, according to nationality (source: DJSOC)

	2022	2023	January-June 2024 ²⁵	Total
Brazil	2.614	2.317	1.344	6.275
Colombia	1.270	1.373	903	3.546
Venezuela	363	407	334	1.104
Dominican Republic	123	86	65	274
Cuba	104	76	63	243
Argentina	71	79	47	197
Peru	53	53	49	155
Paraguay	35	24	14	73
Chili	14	13	13	40
Panama	17	18	10	45
Ecuador	11	13	11	35
Bolivia	11	8	3	22
Total (Latin Americans)	4.686	4.467	2.856	12.009
Spain	1.136	864	563	2.563
Portugal	432	334	171	937
Total (Spanish and Portuguese persons)	1.568	1.198	734	3.500

The same applies to **Latin American victims** of human trafficking. In the past, specialised reception centres provided support for Latin American people, mainly Brazilian men who were victims of labour exploitation, whereas in recent years a greater number of women and trans people who were victims of sexual exploitation, mainly Brazilian and Colombian, have been provided with support (see Table 1 above and Table 3 below). It often happens that several victims who are receiving support are involved in the same case.

Case law, figures from the specialised reception centres and various interviews corroborate this observation, as does the presence of a smaller number of victims from Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Argentina. In addition to Latin Americans, some court decisions include other nationalities among the victims (in particular Romanians, Moroccans and Nigerians)²⁶.

Table 3: Number of Latin American or Spanish victims of sexual exploitation receiving support, according to nationality (source: specialised reception centres)

	Brazil	Colombia	Venezuela	Peru	Spain	Ecuador	Suriname	Dominican Republic	Cuba
2019	7	/	1	/	/	/	/	/	1
2020	2	3	2	/	1	/	/	1	/
2021	1	2	2	/	1	2	1	/	/
2022	12	/	1	3	1	/	/	/	/
2023	8	6	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Total	30	11	6	3	3	2	1	1	1

²⁵ This data is limited to the period from 1 January to 1 July 2024, corresponding to half of 2024.

²⁶ See Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: a decision concerning Latin American victims and a Moroccan trans person (Limburg Crim. Court, Tongeren division, 4 January 2024, ch. 9K3R); a case concerning both Nigerian and Latin American SWs (Brussels Dutch-speaking Crim. Court, 29 March 2023, 13th ch.); and another case on the exploitation of Latin American and Ukrainian victims (Limburg Crim. Court, Hasselt division, 1st December 2023, ch. 18A). See also a decision concerning a dual Brazilian and Colombian prostitution network: Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 27 May 2022, 47th ch. (unpublished).

2. Vulnerabilities and reasons for migration

The SWs generally come from the same **poor regions** of Latin America²⁷, in countries where the economic situation is fragile²⁸. Some of them also have less vulnerable profiles, such as a university education, but this is not a general rule. The majority of Latin American **SWs** are economically vulnerable people, whose **reason for migrating** is generally to **find money** to send home to their families, to use for their own studies, to make their own lives more comfortable or to pay off a personal debt²⁹.

In some cases, SWs are already **active** in their country of origin or in another Latin American country³⁰. The **sex work market in Europe** is more appealing than that in Latin America: on the one hand, it is more attractive in terms of income for these people and, on the other, it is more accessible for cisgender Latin American men³¹.

The interviews conducted by Myria show that the majority of Latin American **SWs**, as well as most of the **victims** concerned by the trafficking decisions analysed, are in an **irregular or precarious** situation in Belgium.

The precarious status of SWs, owing to the lack of recognition and the stigma attached to sex work and, for some, to their illegal residence status, severely restricts their **access to housing, social rights, regular work and healthcare**, and opens the way to their exploitation by others. This lack of access was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic³². As for the difficulties in accessing housing, they often have no choice but to accept **high rental prices**.

Latin American SWs are also particularly at risk of exploitation due to the many forms of **violence and discrimination** to which they are subjected³³. The **risk of rape and theft** are also among the many factors that make **Latin American SWs** vulnerable³⁴.

In addition, **trans Latin Americans** are a particularly vulnerable group, regularly facing multiple forms of violence **in their countries of origin**³⁵. **Transphobia** can take the form of institutional violence, particularly by the police³⁶, as well as verbal and physical aggression, sometimes even from their families. These people have to bear the "(...) brunt of the social structure of their background, and particularly that of gender norms in working-class environments (heteronormativity, homophobia, punishment of deviant masculinity). This interweaving of class and gender places people in the marginal and stigmatised social position of prostitution"³⁷. For **political reasons**, they are forced to enter the informal sex industry to gain **financial independence**.

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- 27 According to interviews conducted by Myria, many Ecuadorian SWs are said to come from the city of Guayaquil, while Brazilian SWs generally come from the states of Minas Gerais and Goiás; see an ongoing investigation in Namur concerning a network based in the states of the Federal District and Goiás (G. Dupont, "Prostitution – "J'ai fui un réseau de prostitution brésilien à Namur", 1st July 2024, *DH Les sports+*, available at <https://www.dhnet.be/>).
- 28 Plunged into an economic crisis for the past 10 years, Venezuela suffers from hyperinflation and is subject to economic sanctions and a reduction in oil production, which has caused extreme poverty among its population (DAO migration, "Analyse migratoire: Amérique du Sud", Federal Police, August 2023). Concerning Colombia, see also the economic study carried out by the OECD in February 2022: "(...) both growth and social inclusion are hampered by the shortcomings of structural policies, which exclude more than half of the people in paid work from formal employment and social protection, while preventing companies from developing and becoming more productive" (OECD, Colombia Economic Snapshot, available at <https://www.oecd.org/en>).
- 29 According to various interviews conducted by Myria; see Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.; see the external contribution of field organisations at the end of this focus; see also a case in which Myria filed a civil suit: Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 4 October 2024, 47th ch. (final).
- 30 The police assume that the women have already worked in the sex work in their country of origin because of the stamps in their passports attesting to the fact that they have already travelled extensively in Latin America before coming to Europe.
- 31 An interview with field organisations revealed that the sex work market in Latin America is generally less accessible to men who have sex with men than to women and trans people. This may be explained by more pervasive social and religious discrimination in the country of origin.
- 32 See the external contribution from Johan Debuf, First Chief Inspector of Police, Brussels North Police Zone, in: Myria, *Annual report 2020 – Trafficking and smuggling of human beings, Behind closed doors*, p. 46.
- 33 See hearing of M. Guilhem Lautrec (Alias) concerning Latin American men involved in sex work: Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region, United Assembly of the Common Community Commission, *Report concerning prostitution in the Brussels-Capital Region*, hearings, 19 May 2022, pp. 48-56.
- 34 See the testimony of a victim as part of an ongoing investigation in Brazil and Namur: G. Dupont, "Prostitution – "J'ai fui un réseau de prostitution brésilien à Namur", 1 July 2024, *DH Les sports+*, available at <https://www.dhnet.be/>.
- 35 According to Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) of 2020, 353 murders of trans women were reported worldwide the previous year, half of which occurred in Brazil, and 62% of them were sex workers: TMM (Trans versus Transphobia), "*Update Trans Day of Remembrance 2020*", TGEU, 11 November 2020.
- 36 See the report of CGRA (CEDOCA) on acts of violence and/or discrimination by the police against LGBT+ people: CGRA, "*Colombia – Seksuele minderheden en transgenders*", CDI focus, 19 October 2020.
- 37 L. Gonzalez, "L'imbrication classe et sexe à l'œuvre: parcours identitaires et migratoires chez les personnes trans MTF latino-américaines" in *Genre, sexualité & société*, 2018, vol. n° 20.

Sometimes the economic motivations of trans people are also guided by the aim of being able to pay for their gender transition. In their pursuit of this independence, the search for a higher income drives them towards the European sex work market. In **Europe**, Latin American trans people, **whatever their gender expression**³⁸, nevertheless face violence, stigmatisation and social discrimination, just like other Latin American SWs, particularly in terms of **access to healthcare, housing and employment**³⁹.

Latin American sex work in Belgium is **less visible** as it is concealed and its community is closed and itinerant, making it difficult to make contact with those concerned, thus increasing the risk of vulnerability. As these people generally do not speak or understand French, Dutch or English, the **language barrier** also plays a role in their social isolation. This results in a certain powerlessness when dealing with clients or renting flats in a language they do not understand, which can lead people to resort to phone operators or intermediaries. Owing to their linguistic isolation, Latin American victims of trafficking generally have their exploiters as their only point of contact when they arrive in Belgium, which reinforces their dependence on them⁴⁰.

Belgian courts and tribunals regularly base the vulnerability of Latin American victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Belgium on the fact that they are controlled by their exploiters, and on the fact that a large proportion of their income is handed over to them⁴¹. The vulnerability of this group also lies in the fact that they have no means of subsistence other than that derived from sex work. Some case law decisions mention a certain amount of violence, either physical or through threats, used by exploiters against victims of trafficking, but the control exercised by the perpetrators is generally more subtle⁴². In a decision involving a double network, the Colombian victims said they felt threatened and feared reprisals, while the Brazilian victims said they agreed with the system in place⁴³.

3. Recruitment methods

This point concerns both Latin American SWs in general and victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Latin American **SWs** often know that they will be working in prostitution in Europe but are unaware of the exact conditions. In rare cases, they are offered jobs in childcare, domestic work, hospitality, hairdressing or nail salons. **False promises** are sometimes used to recruit Latin American victims of trafficking⁴⁴. This is also the case in an investigation currently underway in Namur, in which Brazilian female influencers and models were initially recruited for a decent job⁴⁵. Case law shows that recruitment is generally carried out **in the country of origin** over the internet, and more rarely in Belgium.

During various interviews, Myria learned that, in general, the **Latin American community** in Europe is very active on **social media** and **instant messaging applications**. Information is exchanged through numerous groups on social media, which sometimes have thousands of members and deal with a variety of subjects. This is a practical and accessible way for newcomers to create a network and obtain information.

SWs from Latin America who want to work in Europe also use social media and instant messaging applications such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, WhatsApp Business, Signal and Telegram. For instance, there are WhatsApp groups for people needing accommodation or somewhere to stay, for explanations on how to obtain residence documents, for beauty advice, for private taxis, for contacts, for prostitution-related activities, etc. Advice and tips are shared and contacts are made⁴⁶. It is a way for SWs to quickly find their feet in another town or country.

38 Including“(…) but not limited to: men and women with a transsexual past, and anyone who identifies as transsexual, transgender, transvestite, androgynous, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant or with any other gender identity and/or expression other than the standard man or woman and who expresses their gender through their choice of clothing, their presentation or body modifications, including the use of multiple surgical procedures” (Institute for the equality of men and women, *op.cit.*, p. 26).

39 According to case law and interviews conducted by Myria; see the hearing of Guilhem Lautrec (Alias), *op.cit.*

40 According to the interviews conducted by Myria; see Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.

41 See hereafter Part 1, Chapter 2, point 3.4. for more details on the notion of control.

42 See Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Brussels Dutch-speaking, 29 March 2023, 13th ch.

43 Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 27 May 2022, 47th ch. (unpublished).

44 According to the interviews conducted by Myria; see also a decision concerning a job in a nail salon in Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Limburg Crim. Court, Hasselt division, 1 December 2023, ch. 18A.

45 See G. Dupont, ‘Prostitution – “J’ai fui un réseau de prostitution brésilien à Namur”’, 1 July 2024, *DH Les sports+*, available at <https://www.dhnet.be/>.

46 See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.2.3.

This then allows them to move around quickly and easily from one place to another and to find a place to stay. SWs thus learn about the areas known for sex work and the customs and prices in force in a specific country or town.

The **sexual exploitation** cases also reveal that SWs sometimes come into contact with a **facilitating organisation** through the use of social media and instant messaging applications⁴⁷.

One case revealed that a Brazilian trans SW had travelled from Brazil to Italy, had worked there independently for several weeks before travelling to Denmark. Through a WhatsApp group, she learned that it was possible to earn a lot of money in Belgium, so she went to Charleroi. After a few weeks, she headed back to Italy before returning to her family in Brazil. She returned to Europe when she realised, after several months, that she needed money⁴⁸.

Word of mouth also plays an important role. Knowing someone who does sex work in Europe and earns a lot of money can be a starting point for subsequent contact via social media and instant messaging applications. In addition, although this is not a recurring method of recruitment, the **loverboy** method was used in two cases, where the defendant used his power of seduction to recruit the victim⁴⁹.

In many cases, SWs come to Europe by their own means. Others use organised networks that act as **'travel agencies'**⁵⁰. They facilitate travel **to and within Europe**. They provide the necessary travel documents (including plane tickets). They also take care of the administrative procedures involved in obtaining a tourist visa. For instance, they provide them with cash (EUR 1,000 or EUR 2,000), to prove their solvency when crossing the border⁵¹.

This observation was made as part of an investigation carried out in Brazil and Namur into a prostitution network operating through travel agencies⁵².

According to an interview with police, this phenomenon is mainly – but not exclusively – seen among Brazilian **'tour operators'** who offer a complete package including the flight, the hotel in the case of a stopover/transit, a flat to start with, as well as other services.

4. Migration trajectories

This section first looks at the international trajectory of Latin American people before examining more specifically the situation of Latin American SWs and, in particular, Latin American victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The migration trajectories and residency status of **Latin Americans working in the sex industry** can take different forms: from legal migration with residence permits or tourist visas, to illegal stay.

According to various interviews, many Latin American nationals enter the Schengen area **via Spain or Portugal**. Historically, Brazilians arrive mainly via Portugal. People from other Latin American countries enter via Spain. Affinity with the language and culture certainly plays a role here. Certain countries in South and Central America have not been **subject to visa requirements** for several years. Their nationals⁵³ may, under certain conditions, travel freely within the Schengen area for a certain period⁵⁴. For instance, this has been the case since 2015 for Colombians and Peruvians wishing to enter the Schengen area. Brazilians have been able to travel freely within it since 2001.

47 See hereafter Part 1, Chapter 2, point 2.1. for more details on facilitating organisations.

48 See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.

49 See Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Liège Crim. Court, 22 November 2023, 19th ch.; see Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.4.

50 See M. Mariën, "Twee Brazilianen in cel voor mensenhandel in de prostitutiesector: 'Werden onder druk gezet en bedreigd'", *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 7 June 2024, available at www.hln.be and Belga, "Brazilianen blijven in de cel voor mensenhandel in de prostitutiesector", *Krant van West-Vlaanderen*, 11 June 2024, available at www.kw.be.

51 The migration service at the external border of the Schengen area can check whether a person has sufficient means of subsistence to travel in the EU. See Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Limburg Crim. Court, Hasselt division, 1 December 2023, ch. 18A.

52 See the testimony of a victim: G. Dupont, 'Prostitution – "J'ai fui un réseau de prostitution brésilien à Namur"', 1 July 2024, *DH Les sports+*, available at <https://www.dhnet.be/>.

53 For Latin America, this means Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Bolivia, Belize, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Surinam, for example, are not concerned. See also [L_2018303NL.01003901.xml \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A2018303NL.01003901.xml) for the exhaustive list [Applying for a Schengen visa – European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A2018303NL.01003901.xml).

54 This is 90 days over a period of 180 days.

They often obtain a **residence permit in** Spain and Portugal, or even the **nationality** of these countries, after a certain period of time. This residence permit allows them to move freely within the EU, but does not necessarily mean that they can stay, work or settle long-term in another Member State. The more flexible visa policy for nationals of Latin American countries has been identified by several experts as one of the main reasons why more people of certain nationalities have recently been staying in Europe, particularly Colombians and Venezuelans.

In some cases, people stay in the EU for three months and then **return** to their country of origin. In other cases, once their visa has expired, they **remain** in the EU illegally. Sometimes they apply for **international protection**⁵⁵. They may also be reluctant to be recognised as refugees, as this means that they are not allowed to return to their country of origin. The **COVID-19** pandemic also had a certain impact on the migration itinerary of Latin American SWs, as they were unable to return to Latin America during this health crisis.

Latin American SWs are known for their high level of **mobility in Belgium and Europe**. They spend only a few days or weeks in one town and then move on to another. **Domestic travel** seems to have a dual purpose. Commercial on the one hand, by virtue of the ‘**New in town**’ principle: a new SW in a specific region attracts more customers. At the same time, these relocations prevent SWs from building up a network at local level and enable them to remain under the radar of the authorities. The local police and organisations working in the field with sex workers say that it is difficult to establish a good understanding of the SWs and to build a relationship of trust with them⁵⁶.

The **Latin American SWs** (temporarily) move to other Member States from their point of arrival in **Spain and Portugal**⁵⁷. One decision involving a dual network is particularly representative of these trends among Latin American victims of trafficking: the Brazilian victims stated they lived and worked in Portugal, while the Colombian victims said they had lived in Spain⁵⁸. In general, they travel to Belgium by plane or car. SWs also sometimes reach Belgium via **Amsterdam or Paris**⁵⁹. In addition to Belgium, they are also present in France, the Netherlands⁶⁰, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Croatia⁶¹. These are generally the countries where customers pay the most and where they can earn the most money. They often operate in **areas bordering** the Netherlands⁶², France and Luxembourg. Interviews with police revealed that **Poland** used to be an important gateway, including for other groups such as Chinese SWs, but that since 2017, this gateway has slowly shifted towards Spain.

It is not uncommon for Latin Americans to **marry** someone from an EU Member State⁶³. In one case⁶⁴, several Brazilian victims of trafficking **married** in Spain before arriving in Belgium. One Brazilian victim also stated that they had come to work in Belgium in order to conceal their sex work activities from their entourage in Spain.

This is reminiscent of a decision concerning the organisation of a **marriage of convenience** in the Dominican Republic in order to bring a young Dominican victim of trafficking to Belgium to be exploited⁶⁵.

55 According to a migration analysis carried out by the Federal Police: "Since the beginning of 2023, Venezuelans, Colombians and Peruvians have been among the most represented nationalities in applications for international protection across Europe. According to the known data reported in Eurostat, they represent a total of 16% of all applications in the EU+ (VEN: 41,575, COL: 38,000 and PER: 12,875)" (Eurostat - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZM/default/table in DAO migration, "Analyse migratoire: Amérique du Sud", Federal Police, August 2023, p. 1).

56 According to the interviews conducted by Myria.

57 See the route taken by the Venezuelan civil party in a decision discussed in Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Liège Crim. Court, 22 November 2023, 19th ch.

58 Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 27 May 2022, 47th ch. (unpublished).

59 See also a case in which Myria filed a civil suit: Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 4 October 2024, 47th ch. (final); see also the analysis of a case (in Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.) in which several victims fled from their country of origin to Paris before arriving in Belgium.

60 See Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Limburg Crim. Court, Hasselt division, 1 December 2023, ch. 18A.

61 See M. Mariën, "Twee Brazilianen in cel voor mensenhandel in de prostitutiesector: 'Werden onder druk gezet en bedreigd'", *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 7 June 2024, available at www.hln.be and Belga, "Brazilianen blijven in de cel voor mensenhandel in de prostitutiesector", *Krant van West-Vlaanderen*, 11 June 2024, available at www.kw.be.

62 See a case in which Myria filed a civil suit: Brussels French-speaking Crim. Court, 4 October 2024, 47th ch. (final). In this case, the prostitution was organised in Utrecht and in several Belgian towns, in flats and hotels rented for this purpose. Myria received a decision relating to activities that took place both in the Netherlands and just across the border, in Limburg; see also Part 2, Chapter 3, point 2.2.2.: Limburg Crim. Court, Hasselt division, 1 December 2023, ch. 18A.

63 See M.-L. Petra Catharina Janssen, *Reizende sekswerkers, Latijns-Amerikaanse vrouwen in de Europese prostitutie*, 2007, p. 2, available at www.uva.nl.

64 See Part 2, Chapter 2, point 1.3.

65 See Myria, *Annual report 2023 – Trafficking and smuggling of human beings, A chain of responsibilities*, p. 99 (Leuven Crim. Court, 6 December 2022, ch. C2) as well as Myria's [website \(case law\)](#).