

How to Prevent and Combat Sex Trade in Finland

In the Light of Practical Experiences from Other European Countries

Seminar at the Parliament Annex Auditorium (Pikkuparlamentti), Arkadiankatu 3, Helsinki.
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The Swedish Approach: Laws, policies, and practices to prevent and combat prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

In my intervention I will talk about the situation concerning trafficking in human beings in and to Sweden and in particular about our efforts to prevent and combat this type of organized crime.

One important initiative—the groundbreaking Swedish legislation from 1999 that criminalizes those who attempt to or have purchased a sexual service—has gained international attention as a viable and effective tool to prevent prostitution and trafficking of human beings.

I will also summarize the tasks of the National Rapporteur in Sweden, which are:

- to monitor, analyze, and present data about the state of trafficking in human beings within and to Sweden
- to evaluate the effectiveness of law enforcement actions as well as legal, policy and practical measures and initiatives
- to ensure that the Swedish police forces are given continuing training in how to investigate these crimes

and some of the most important conclusions from the government-appointed Special Inquiry that looked into the effects of the offence that prohibits the purchase of a sexual service:

- The number of persons exploited in street prostitution has halved since 1999.
- The neighbouring countries, Denmark and Norway have three times as many individuals (read women) in street prostitution.
- The concern that prostitution should move to other arenas has not been fulfilled.
- Prostitution through the Internet has increased in Sweden as it has in other countries. This is not due to the law but due to the development generally of online technology.
- The numbers of individuals that are sold via Internet web pages/ads are much larger in similar neighbouring countries such as Denmark and Norway.
- There is no evidence of an increase of indoor prostitution.
- Despite a significant increase in prostitution in the neighbouring countries during the past 10 years, there is no evidence of a similar increase in Sweden. It is reasonable to believe that this is due to the criminalization of the purchase of a sexual service in Sweden.
- The prohibition has deterred the establishment of organized crime networks/groups in Sweden. As earlier has been concluded by the National Police, the law functions as a barrier against the establishment of traffickers and pimps in Sweden.

- The law has strong support in Sweden among the public, and the law has led to significant positive change in attitudes, hence has had normative effects as well as a direct effect on the reduction of crime.
- The prohibition acts as a deterrent for the buyers of a sexual service. Person with experience in prostitution, police, and social workers conclude that the buyers are becoming more careful and the demand has decreased considerably since the prohibition came into force.
- Only 7.8% of Swedish men have bought someone for prostitution purposes - compared to 13.6% before the law came into force (study 2008).
- Despite misgivings that it would e.g. be more difficult to reach women in prostitution, that prostitution would "go underground", and that the conditions of prostituted individuals would worsen, there is no evidence that the prohibition has had negative effects for individuals exploited in prostitution.
- Good enforcement depends on resources available, and what priorities are made by the justice system.
- The enforcement of the law works generally very well, and police and prosecutors do not see any administrative or difficulties to enforce the law.

I also wish to inform about how the Swedish police use the legislation in anti-trafficking operations:
Targeting street prostitution and internet surveillance

And how victim identification can be improved and become more efficient within the police work:

- Victim identification starts at an early stage and is built upon training and knowledge about THB (Where do victims and traffickers originate from? Countries and nationalities involved? Travel routes? Modus operandi? What is typical in these cases? Etc.)
- Victim identification is built upon knowledge of people and a feeling that something is wrong.
- Use media in order to inform the public. This provides more information to the police.
- Advice to the police: Conduct regular training and do not assume that a person is not a victim of trafficking – find out!

Finally I would like to share with you some of the most frequently asked questions/myths - (and my answers) about the offence that prohibits the purchase of a sexual service and the impact on individual men of the ban.

- "The law drives prostitution underground"
- "More violence against women in prostitution because of the law"
- "Swedish men go abroad to buy sex because of the law"
- "Prostitution is now on the Internet because of the law"
- "More rapes in Sweden because of the law"
- "Buyers can not testify in court because of the law"
- "Buyers can't give information to the police because of the law"
- "Swedes are moralistic"
- "The purchase of a sexual service is hard to prove"