

Towards a European abolitionist movement: the EWL campaign 'Together for a Europe free from prostitution'

Sex trade without frontiers – How to strengthen the Swedish sex purchase law?
Stockholm, 26 September 2012



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Pierrette Pape
EWL Policy Officer and Project Coordinator

The EWL: the democratic voice of women at European level

- ✓ The largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the EU
- ✓ Promoting women's rights and equality between women and men in Europe
- ✓ Members in all 27 EU member states and 3 candidate countries, as well as 20 European-wide associations → representing over 2000 women's organisations



EWL's campaign on prostitution

Three main goals:

- ✓ Raise awareness, start the debate
- ✓ Support national activities
- ✓ Create a European abolitionist network, with NGOs and MEPs



ENSEMBLE POUR UNE EUROPE
LIBEREE DE LA PROSTITUTION



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Raising awareness

Film and clip **'Not for sale'**
(EWL-CATW, 2006)



Clip **'For a change of perspective'**
(EWL, 2011)

Clip **'Sport, Sex & Fun'**
(EWL, 2012)



Support to national activities

Conferences on prostitution and trafficking in women, with European speakers:

Portugal, France, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Cyprus, Spain...



EUROPEAN
CENTRE FOR
WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**Recent developments in
Europe:
Prostitution is high on the
political agenda!**



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Moving towards abolition...?

- ✓ **France:** parliamentary resolution, governmental programme
- ✓ **Ireland and Northern Ireland (UK):** consultation on a new legislation
- ✓ Active coalitions of NGOs (Abolition 2012 in France, Turn Off the Red Light in Ireland) + men against prostitution
- ✓ Legislative steps in **Israel, Albania**
- ✓ Positioning of NGOs in **Belgium**
- ✓ National events in **Cyprus, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain**
- ✓ **Finland and Denmark:** abolition back in the debate



Moves in the regulationist approach

Changes in the Dutch model

- ✓ Despite police and governmental reports portraying a bad situation for women and an increase in organised crime and trafficking
- ✓ New law proposal: criminalise non-registered women and buyers of non-registered women, 21 as minimum age

The logics of regulation in Europe

- ✓ Prostitution schools in Spain
- ✓ 'Pavement fees' for prostituted persons + threats on social benefits if refusing a job as prostitute in Germany
- ✓ Rewarding employees through prostitution in Hungary



**The key challenge:
framing the debate...
Renewal of the
abolitionist discourse**



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Challenges in the debate

- ✓ Attacks against the Swedish and Norwegian models
- ✓ Liberal/libertarian discourse, prostitution as a human right (to prostitute oneself, to buy sex)
- ✓ Male-dominated media
- ✓ Focus on trafficking cases/stories and the “happy prostitute” → perpetuate the distinction, dilutes the issue of pimping/procuring (also in EU policies)
- ✓ Hypersexualisation vs. policies on violence against women = antifeminist backlash?



Opportunities for an abolitionist framing

- ✓ Back to basics: prostitution as violence against women (repetition of sexual act without desire), obstacle to equality between women and men, violation of human dignity
- ✓ Global context: human rights for all women
- ✓ Deconstructing the argument of 'consent'/'choice'
- ✓ Questioning the scope of the market
- ✓ Demystifying the regulationist approach: they are utopic!
 - **Putting back the issue on the agenda with abolitionist framing and values**
 - **Transcending political divides: a universal issue**



Sweden and the European abolitionist movement: needs and expectations to strengthen each other



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Sweden and the European abolitionist movement

- ✓ We need a strengthened Swedish policy on prostitution
- ✓ Keep up the issue as a priority → resources, training, support to NGOs, alternatives/support for women, education
- ✓ More data on the impact of the law
- ✓ Broad perspective on prostitution (violence against women, equality) → NAP?
- ✓ Work on pornography, sexualisation, sex education



Sweden and the European abolitionist movement

- ✓ Sweden in the international scene: active and consistent diplomacy, in Europe but also towards third-countries
- ✓ Invest in /support the abolitionist academics/research
- ✓ Bring back the issue of procuring (vs. trafficking)
- ✓ Mobilise the private sector, be proactive
- ✓ Remobilise politicians and get men on board!



Thank you!

www.womenlobby.org



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES