Women’s rights or wrongs?
The EWL’s approach to trafficking in women and prostitution

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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
Trafficking in human beings is a gendered issue.
THB is gendered

- In more than 80% of THB cases, the victims are women.
- Women constitute 85% of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

THB is gendered

+ domestic and care work
+ begging / street sales
+ organs / eggs

Many women victims face several forms of exploitation
THB is gendered

→ 95% of female victims said they experienced physical and sexual violence during trafficking.

Source: Stolen Smiles: A summary report on the physical and psychological health consequences of women and adolescents trafficked in Europe, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
To tackle trafficking in women, we have to tackle the system of prostitution
79% of reported trafficking in human beings is for sexual exploitation.

The profits generated during the exploitation of victims of sexual exploitation reach US$ 27.8 billion.

Source: Europol Mai 2007
Trafficking for sexual exploitation

Prostitution-use is on the increase.

→ Increasingly consumer-oriented society
→ Pushback against changing gender roles
→ Greater mobility of populations
→ Greater income disparities
→ Greater access to prostitution as a result of the internet + boom in prostitution and sex-related venues

Source: Marttila, 2003 & 2007
The system of prostitution

✓ The act of engaging in sexual relations for money → Traditional image of the person in prostitution
✓ But it also implies prostitute-users, procurers and networks, the State and society → Several actors involved → System of prostitution
What is the reality of prostitution for the women involved?

- Between 80 and 95% of persons in prostitution have suffered some form of violence before entering the system of prostitution (rape, incest, pedophilia)
- 62% of women in prostitution report having been raped
- 68% of women in prostitution meet the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder like victims of torture
The repetition of a sexual act without any desire is a form of violence.
How do men perceive prostitution?

✓ For 25% of men, the concept of ‘rape’ for women in prostitution is ‘ridiculous’...
✓ “She gave up her rights when she accepted my money”
✓ Around 50% of buyers have paid for sex in other countries. They cite a variety of reasons for traveling to other countries for prostitution, including price, variety and exoticism.
What is the impact of societal tolerance for prostitution?

✓ For 10% of girls and 37% of boys interviewed, it is normal to receive money or gifts in exchange of a blow job.

Source: Danish social services, 2008
The role of the media when addressing trafficking and prostitution
Avoid clichés... Get informed!

- Women choose prostitution
- Prostitution is about sex, it is glamorous and sexy
- Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world
- Prostitution will never disappear
- Prostitution is a job like any other, and it brings freedom to women
- The sex industry is a business like any other
- Without prostitution, there would be more rapes
‘Their choice’?

✓ The average age of entering prostitution is 14 years old
✓ Up to 95% of women in street prostitution are problematic drug users
✓ 9 out of 10 women in prostitution would like to exit the system of prostitution but feel unable to do so

Source: UK Home Office, Paying the price, 2004
A way to reduce rapes and violence against women?

✓ Nevada, where procuring is decriminalized, sees the highest rates of rape compared to all US states

✓ The states with higher circulation rates of pornographic magazines have higher rape rates

Source: http://www.prostitutionetsociete.fr/politiques-publiques/legislations-nationales/nevada-les-bordels-exemplaires-d
Example of news coverage...

✓ ‘A 20-year old man has been arrested after having robbed a prostituted woman and procuring a free sexual service by threat of a knife’

La Dépêche du Midi, 13 April 2009

→ ‘A free sexual service by threat of a knife’
   = RAPE!
What it is about / What the sex industry wants us to believe...
✓ Woman in prostitution / Sex worker
✓ Pimp, Procurer / Manager, Loverboy, Sex entrepreneur
✓ Prostitute-user, sex buyer / Client
✓ Prostituted man / Gigolo
✓ Forced sexual exploitation → Is there any free sexual exploitation?

Think again about the words you choose!
Talking about prostitution policies:

Three main approaches to the system of prostitution:

- **Regulationism**: prostitution is a job, procuring is decriminalised (Germany, the Netherlands)

- **Abolitionism**: prostitution is considered violence against women, procuring and prostitute-users are criminalised (Sweden, Norway, Iceland)

- **Prohibition**: ‘Just hide it!’ Persons in prostitution and procuring are criminalised, sometimes also prostitute-users (Croatia)
Ten years of abolition (Sweden)

Impact on prostituted persons
- Reduction of street prostitution (halved)
- No evidence of Swedish sex tourism abroad

Impact on trafficking
- Decrease of trafficking and organised crime

Impact on society
- Increased support for the law (80%+)
- Decrease of the number of prostitute-users
Ten years of regulation (NL, DE)

Impact on prostituted persons
☑ Conditions still poor (NL & DE)
☑ Decrease of well-being (emotional, social, legal...)
☑ No alternatives: only 6% of cities provide help (NL)

Impact on trafficking
☑ Increase of trafficking and organised crime: half of the owners of legal brothels have a criminal record (NL)
☑ Increase of hidden prostitution: 83% of ads for prostitution relate to illegal brothels (NL)
☑ 50 to 90% of women in ‘legal industry’ being forced (NL)
To conclude...
NGOs expect journalists to...

- Research the reality of prostitution and trafficking, meet with NGOs working on the ground
- Avoid the happy prostitute (always the same few!) talking on behalf of all women → it’s very difficult to get a survivor to speak. Stop the story-telling, talk about society’s project
- Focus on all actors of prostitution, including the demand and the procurers
- Think twice about what human rights are about: is it a human right to pay for sex? To be exploited?
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
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...
Thank you!

[URL]Circle the link to provide easy access to the webpage.

[EMAIL]Include the email address for inquiries or feedback.

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