

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



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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.

Source: UNODC 2009 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, and UNODC Preliminary findings of the human trafficking database (2003)



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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.



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**To tackle trafficking
in women, we have
to tackle the system
of prostitution**



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Trafficking for sexual exploitation

→ 79% of reported trafficking in human beings is for sexual exploitation.

Source: UNODC 2009 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, UNODC Preliminary findings of the human trafficking database (2003), Europol Mai 2007



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Trafficking for sexual exploitation

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

Source: Europol Mai 2007



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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



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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**

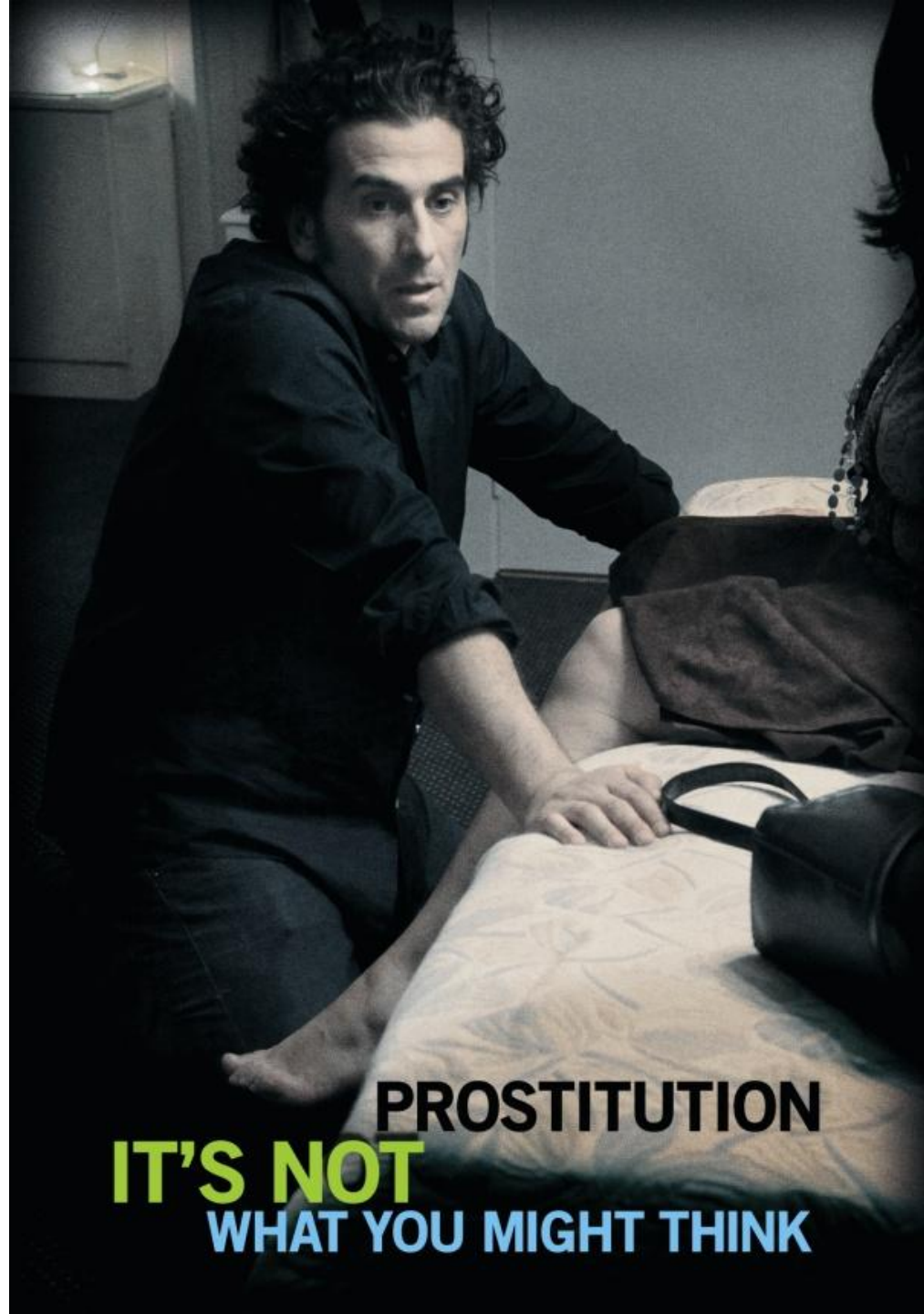


What is the reality of prostitution for the women involved?

- 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



PROSTITUTION
IT'S NOT
WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK

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



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The role of the media when addressing trafficking and prostitution



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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



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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>

Baron & Straus (1984), in Mary Anne Layden, 'Pornography and Violence: a new look at research', 2009



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!



The importance of framing...

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...



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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



ENSEMBLE POUR UNE EUROPE
LIBEREE DE LA PROSTITUTION



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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!

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