



Brussels' Call

Together for a Europe Free from Prostitution

TOGETHER FOR A EUROPE BRUSSELS' CALL FREE FROM PROSTITUTION

We, the signatories to the Brussels' Call, come Together for a Europe free from prostitution.

This is crucial to realising a Europe where justice, equality, non-discrimination and freedom from oppression are the norm; where all sexual relations are consensual and those who coerce, exploit and commit violence are held to account for their actions.

To realise this vision for the Europe we want we must take critical legal and social actions and we must commit resources to delivering these changes. We must ensure that no person affected or exploited by prostitution is criminalised, or faces negative consequences as a result of her actions to survive. This includes decriminalising those affected by prostitution and delivering health, education, legal and financial support. We must also ensure pimps, traffickers and punters are sent a clear message that their entitlement and exploitation is unacceptable in a progressive society and that they will be held to account for their actions – through criminalisation. This must also be combined with education and promotion of positive consent; social collective freedom; raising awareness on why the purchase of sex drives demand for violence against women; challenges to male entitlement and critiques of all forms of enduring social oppression.

When society and all its citizens come together at local, national and European levels, we can achieve change. We must align with European values of respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. We will continue the growing momentum and drive for reforms to the transnational system of the sex trade.

Whereas through our core principles we stand with survivors and recognise:

Prostitution is a form of violence

- The vast majority of those affected by prostitution are victims of many forms of violence while in prostitution (physical, verbal, sexual, psychological violence).
- The repetition of sexual acts without physical desire, but instead experienced as a result of financial need, inequality and/or as exploitation of vulnerability, constitutes in itself a form of sexual violence. Engagement in prostitution drives lasting physical and psychological harm from violence, dehumanisation and objectification.
- Consent must be freely given - it cannot be bought and sold. Holding a person's need for economic stability as a means to gain access to their body is coercion and sexual violence.

Prostitution is a form of exploitation of inequalities

- Entitlement to sexual gratification exploits a huge range of minority groups, oppressed and excluded persons in society.
- Prostitution is a part of a long patriarchal tradition of men's oppression of women, and an acceptance or making women's bodies available for men's benefit.
- Capitalism's promotion of free markets in the context of patriarchal societies enables commodification of women's bodies and thus makes acceptable the commercial sexual exploitation of women.
- The majority of those in prostitution within the EU come from countries with greater levels of poverty. When they come from EU Member States, there is an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities.
- Other social ills are abused by those who feel entitled to sex: xenophobia drives trafficking of asylum seeking women and girls; poverty drives coercion of women in poverty; social exclusion of LGBT+ communities leaves many vulnerable to exploitation.

Prostitution is a violation of human dignity

- Prostitution is an obstacle to establishing truly free, respectful and egalitarian sexuality in society.
- The system of prostitution and men's demand for commercial sex fuels and perpetuates trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation.
- Prostitution encourages the hypersexualisation of all women and drives sexualisation of young women and girls in particular, driving experiences of violence and harassment.
- By placing the human body and sex into the realm of the marketplace, the system of prostitution reinforces the objectification of all women and their bodies. It is a direct violation of the physical and moral integrity of people in prostitution.
- Prostitution reinforces the domination of men over women, in particular the attitude that women's bodies are available and accessible, which is present in other forms of violence against women such as rape, sexual harassment and intimate-partner violence.

What is the Equality Model?

First introduced in Sweden in 1998, the Equality Model is a legal model for responding to the sex trade. It recognises the inequality of power and privilege at the core of the sex trade, as set out in the core principles of the Brussels' Call.

The Equality Model is based on the adoption of laws, policies and resourcing which would guarantee:

- **Decriminalisation of all those directly affected by prostitution;**
- **The development of real alternatives and exit programmes for those in prostitution;**
- **The criminalisation of all forms of coercive control and exploitation including pimping and trafficking;**
- **The prohibition of the purchase of a sexual act;**
- **A recognition of the interconnectedness of prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation, including ensuring those exploited in both system receive equity of supports;**
- **The implementation of policies of prevention and education, to promote equality and positive sexuality both in EU destination countries and countries of origins.**

We are seeking the introduction and implementation of the Equality Model in all EU Member States, and by the European Union as a whole – to support all women and girls, towards a Europe Free from Prostitution.



What is the reality of prostitution in Europe today?

- ▶ **9 in 10 women in prostitution** would **leave** the sex trade if they could
- ▶ **14: the average age** of **entry** into prostitution
- ▶ **96% of victims** of sex trafficking are **women and girls**
- ▶ **More than 2/3 women in prostitution** reported **trauma** on par with soldiers returning from war
- ▶ **54% of punters (sex trade users)** recognised having had **aggressive sexual behaviour** towards their partner[s]
- ▶ In Germany, where brothels are **legalised** and pimps of “entrepreneurs” **57 murders** of those in prostitution have been recorded between 2002-2018 – this compares to **zero murders** women in prostitution by punters in Sweden, where there is the **Equality Model**
- ▶ **62% of women in prostitution** have reported having been **raped** since entering prostitution
- ▶ In Europe, **a pimp is estimated to earn 110 000 euros per year and per woman** they are exploiting in prostitution
- ▶ **Up to 98% of buyers are men**, most are in relationships, are well educated and have a profession
- ▶ **937 punters were arrested in France** within one year of the adoption of the **Equality Model**

From Words to Action

Timeline of progress towards the Equality Model in Europe

The **UN Convention of 1949** for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others is the founding international abolitionist text which states that people affected by prostitution should not be criminalised and should be protected, and that procuring and trafficking in human beings should be criminalised. The Convention states: "Prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person."

The **UN Convention of 1979**, Article 6 states: "States parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women."

In **1998 Sweden introduced the first neo-abolitionist legislation**, now known as the Equality model. Recognising prostitution as a form of violence against women, the law ensured criminalisation of pimping, trafficking and paying for sexual acts while decriminalising those directly affected.

In 2009 Article 83 of the **Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union recognised "trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children"** as a European crime ensuring "minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the areas of particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension resulting from the nature or impact of such offences or from a special need to combat them on a common basis". Specific legislation covering the issue of sexual exploitation of women and children is still lacking across Europe.

In 2014 **the European Parliament Resolution on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality was passed by a strong majority**. This resolution:

"Recognises that prostitution, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation are highly gendered issues and violations of human dignity, contrary to human rights principles, among which gender equality, and therefore contrary to the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including the goal and the principle of gender equality. [and]

"Stresses that there are several links between prostitution and trafficking, and recognises that prostitution – both globally and across Europe – feeds the trafficking of vulnerable women and under-age females, a large percentage of whom are between 13-25 years old; stresses that, as shown by data from the Commission, a majority of victims [62 %] are trafficked for sexual exploitation, with women and under-age females accounting for 96 %

of identified and presumed victims, with the percentage of victims from non-EU countries showing an increase in the past few years”.

The **2014 the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly resolution of 8 April 2014 on Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe** calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, Parliamentary Assembly observer States and partners for democracy, to:

As regards policies on prostitution:

- **consider criminalising the purchase of sexual services, based on the Swedish model, as the most effective tool for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings;**
- ban the advertising of sexual services, including forms of disguised advertising;
- criminalise pimping, if they have not already done so;
- establish counselling centres providing prostitutes with legal and health assistance, irrespective of their legal or migrant status;
- **set up “exit programmes”** for those who wish to give up prostitution, aimed at rehabilitation and based on a holistic approach including mental health and health-care services, housing support, education and training and employment services;

As regards awareness raising, information and training:

- increase awareness through the media and school education, particularly among children and young people, with regard to **respectful, gender-equal and violence-free sexuality;**
- **raise awareness of the link between prostitution and human trafficking** by means of information campaigns targeting the general public, civil society and education institutions.

Since 2014, momentum has grown towards realising a Europe free from prostitution, with Northern Ireland (2015), France (2016) and the Republic of Ireland (2017) joining Nordic countries by introducing versions of the Equality Model.

As of 2019, multiple European Member States have an active political consideration of adoption of these laws, and our partners are campaigning to ensure this becomes a reality for women and girls across Europe.

As this momentum continues, we now call on European leaders to take a stand, and bring these past commitments to progress through the realisation of European legislative action on sexual exploitation.



Brussels' Call

Together for a Europe Free from Prostitution

The Brussels' Call is a collaboration of dozens of Members of the European Parliament and more than 200 civil society organisations, working together to combat violence against women and girls through seeking to end the system of prostitution. Founded in 2012 by the European Women's Lobby, Foundation Scelles and Movement du Nid, we are committed to working at international, European, Member State and local level to achieve the abolition of prostitution while ensuring accountability of procurers and sex buyers and effective supports are provided to those directly affected.

#EndDemand #BrusselsCall

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