

**Speech given by Mr Lars Back, Baltic Fem, Sweden at the conference  
“*Legal and institutional conditions for combating prostitution and trafficking  
for the purpose of sexual exploitation*  
– *Hungarian and international experiences* –  
In Budapest at the 9th of March 2010**

First of all, I and my organization, Baltic Fem, wish to thank the organizers for their initiative to arrange this very important conference.

But before I continue I will mention the history. Because it teaches us, that the decisions we take today will have a huge impact on which society we all will meet tomorrow.

Therefore I also want to remind us all - that the issues of prostitution and trafficking in human being isn't a new topic.

For example, the first conference dedicated exclusively to the struggle against the white slave trade, (as they named Trafficking in earlier days), was held in London in 1899.

Three years later, in 1902, an Austrian feministic pioneer, Bertha Pappenheim learned that emigrant women were lured, sold, kidnapped and forced into prostitution.

Two years later, in 1904, she founded in Germany an organization for Jewish women, *Jüdischer Frauenbund*. One of the cornerstones for the Organization from the beginning was to combat trafficking.

Of course Bertha Pappenheim and her organization were focusing on Jewish women and girls. The reason at that time was that a lot of the victims were Jewish and came from Eastern Europe. I'm sorry to say, but it sounds familiar to me, especially if we look on the surveys and the statistics about internal European trafficking that has been published during the last ten to fifteen years.

Before I return to the situation today I will give you a quote from a speech that Bertha Pappenheim gave at the second conference of the *Jüdischer*

*Frauenbund* held in Frankfurt am Main on the 7th of October in the year 1907.

She stated: *We know that a large number of Jewish girls are involved in the profession of prostitution; we know that in all brothels around the world one can find Jewish girls, and we know that in the white-slave trade—as traffickers and “goods”—the largest portion are Jewish.*

I choose this quotation because it shows us that even hundred years ago we found people who clearly saw the connection, the tight relation between the international trafficking and the so-called national market of prostitution.

Also the Swedish standpoint according to the issue of trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution is not new.

130 years ago, in the year 1878, a Swedish organization became a member of the “*The International Abolitionist Federation*”. At that time in Sweden a group of Swedish educated married women thought it was time to punish the man, the buyer.

Sweden had at that time like other countries a form of legislation, which aim was to control and regulates the prostitution. The prostitutes had to be reported and submitted to regularly medical inspections. If they don't accept that, the prostitutes were sent to spinning mills, a form of female prisons.

However, since then has it in Sweden been made a lot of national surveys about prostitution, the prostitutes, the buyers, mostly the men, during the 1970's, the 80's and the 90's decades.

They have showed us, that if we want to get rid of the prostitution, we have to focused on the issue of demand - in reality the men, the buyers, who think that they have some kind of rights to buy a woman, a young boy or girl, to get their own pleasure.

Beside the surveys in Sweden the women movement where active within the political parties and the parliament and without. You can describe it as a kind of “*Two front strategy*”, not in a formal way, but in reality.

Therefore it is not so strange that at the Swedish Social democratic (Labour) Party Congress in 1997, the Women League made a proposal about a new legislation. After a voting they won and the first step to criminalize the buyers (“the Johns”) was taken.

The year after that, the Swedish Parliament had a voting at the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1998. The result was a majority for the Government proposal to criminalize the so-called buyers.

At the 1st of January 1999 we finally got the legislation to prohibiting the purchase of sexual services.

So since 1999 it has been illegal to pay for casual sexual relations in Sweden. The penalty is a fine or imprisonment for up to six months. This applies both to those who pay for sexual relations and those who take advantage of casual sexual relations paid for by another person.

In connection with the sexual crimes reform of 2005, the Act was revoked and replaced by new legislation on the purchase of sexual services. (Chapter 6, Section 11 of the Penal Code).

*A person who, otherwise than as previously provided in this Chapter, obtains a casual sexual relation in return for payment, shall be sentenced for purchase of sexual service to a fine or imprisonment for at most six months. The provision of the first paragraph also applies if the payment was promised or given by another person.*

The term ‘sexual relations’ primarily refers to intercourse, but also encompasses other sexual acts. ‘Payment’ refers to financial remuneration and also any other payment in kind - for example alcohol or drugs. The legislation is gender-neutral, i.e. both buyer and seller can be male or female. Attempting to purchase sexual services has also been criminalized.

However, it is not a crime to sell sexual services. Nor is the seller covered by the rules on complicity in a crime.

The official reason behind the introduction of legislation on the purchase of sexual services was - and is - the importance for society of fighting against prostitution. Prostitution is considered to cause serious harm both to individuals and to society as a whole. Large-scale crime,

including human trafficking for sexual purposes, assault, procuring and drug-dealing, is also commonly associated with prostitution.

From a feministic perspective I also will remind us all about the structure of the society of today.

- In addition to the class structure that exists in today's society, there are other parallel structures, which rank individuals and groups.
- These structures are both formal and informal. The most obvious of these is the gender structure that exists and which is disassembled and segregated the sexes, men and women.
- It tells us: that men are the norm, women exception, that men are superior, women subordinate, and men has great power, women little power.

Therefore I also would like to remind all of us that the underlying causes of trafficking and prostitution is

- a patriarchal society,
- poverty due to unequal allocation of resources between men and women,
- other forms of social and economic differences between men and women,
- the feminisation of poverty,
- Rape, sexual abuse, incest and violence.

When the legislation was introduced, it was expected that it would act as a deterrent to those who purchase sexual services; the number of purchasers would therefore decline and the number of people in street prostitution and new recruits to prostitution would also go down.

It was also pointed out that criminalizing the purchase of sexual services could help make it harder for various groups or individuals in other countries to establish more extensive organized prostitution activities in Sweden or to carry out human trafficking for sexual purposes.

And according to the reports from the Swedish police, it seems that the criminalizing has had an impact.

*"At a crackdown in Sweden generally never more than 3-4 women are found at the same time. From telephone interception it appears that the*

*stream of sex buyers is not often as large as desired by the pimps. A probable explanation is that the law relating to purchase of sexual services works like a barrier as to the establishment of trafficking in human beings in Sweden.”*

Let me give you some more examples about the impact that the criminalization has had in Sweden. According to the latest National report No 10 from the Swedish Police in October 2009 about reported Crimes, there was;

	2006*	2007	2008
• Procuring inc. roughly	58	65	51
• The purchasing of sex Crime	162	189	167
• Trafficking (all forms)	37	50	23

(\* Statistics for year 2006 from report nr 8)

If we look at the statistics into different surveys we can all see that it has been a dramatic change in the Swedish men behaving before and after the new legislation. In the year 1996 it was 13,6 per cent of the Swedish men who had bought sex. Today after almost ten year with the legislation in the year 2008 it is 7,6 per cent of the Swedish men who has bought sex.

Also the public opinion has changed. Look at the answers that a Swedish scientist got;

Keep the legislation that prohibiting the purchase of sexual services

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>Men%</u>	<u>Women%</u>	<u>Total%</u>
Yes	59,9	78,7	70,7
No	26,6	11,5	18,0
No opinion	13,5	9,7	11,4

Thank you for your attention.