

Purchase of sexual services

In January 2010 it was 11 years ago since Sweden introduced a law banning the purchase of sexual services. Through the ban, Sweden has marked a clear rejection of the purchase of sexual services and the phenomenon of prostitution.

The rule means that it is forbidden to consider getting a temporary sexual relationship. Punishment is a fine or imprisonment for six months. With compensation means financial compensation as well as consideration of other forms like alcohol or drugs. The rule is gender neutral, both buyers and sellers can be male or female. While attempting to purchase sexual services is criminalized. Selling sexual services is however not punishable, and the seller, nor subject to the rules of abetting crime.

The ban on the purchase of sexual services demonstrates social disapproval of prostitution, without to reduce prostitutes' ability to seek help and support.

When the ban came into force for over 11 years ago, it was a long-debated question. Several parties in parliament questioned whether the ban would become effective.

Today we know more about the effects of the ban. Including reports from the National Board and National Bureau of Investigation suggest that the law has had positive effects. We also know that Sweden has a reputation for being a country that is difficult to engage in prostitution, which can act as a deterrent to those engaged in trafficking in persons.

The evaluation of the ban on the purchase of sexual services

How prostitution and their development is affected obviously by a variety of factors. Globalization, development of the Internet, drug abuse and measures to reduce such abuse, and various social assistance and support efforts for people in prostitution, change the picture all the time. The question is what role the ban on the purchase of sexual services has for this development?

There are many different opinions about the Swedish law, its implementation and effects but no comprehensive analysis. Even internationally is the interest in our experience great.

Therefore, the Government decided in spring 2008 on an evaluation of the ban on the purchase of sexual services and the impact the legislation has received.

This evaluation is to examine how the rule works in practice and what impact the ban has had on the prevalence of prostitution and sex trafficking in Sweden.

The investigator is free to the light of the evaluation to propose legislative changes or proposals for other measures. A starting point is that the purchase of sexual services should still be criminalized. The mission will be reported at the 30th of April 2010.

The link between prostitution and trafficking

Prostitution is not a homogeneous phenomenon. The underlying reasons why people sell sex vary. But what is primarily maintained prostitution is the demand, that people buy sex.

The development has recently shifted towards an even stronger link between prostitution and transnational crime. There is a clear link between prostitution and sex trafficking, although prostitution itself also may have other root causes.

The trafficker's cynical exploitation of human beings for sexual exploitation is, in addition to the trade in weapons, alcohol and drugs, some of the activities constituting serious organized crime.

That people, especially women and children become recruited for the purpose of exploitation is unacceptable. Combating human trafficking is an important part in the government's long-term strategy to create a safer and better society.