

How to Prevent and Combat Sex Trade in Finland

In the Light of Practical Experiences from Other European Countries

Seminar at the Parliament Annex Auditorium (Pikkuparlamentti), Arkadiankatu 3, Helsinki.

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Public Place and Sex Trade (Theme 1)

Prostitution in streets and restaurants forms only a small part of the whole prostitution scene in Finland. The Public Order Act gives authorisation to the police to interfere in purchasing sexual services as well as in offering sexual services against payment in public places. In practice, the police find interfering very challenging, particularly in respect to gaining evidence for sex trade in public places. Sex sellers and buyers very seldom directly admit to the police being involved in sex trade action.

Prostitution in the streets and restaurants is reported to the police mainly in the capital area where it is clustered in certain areas. The main focus in policing, especially in Helsinki, is in prevention of this particular type of prostitution; the police attempt to send off prostitutes met at the streets primarily through advice, requests and orders as well as to make clear for both sellers and buyers that prostitution in public places is not acceptable. Also in this kind of policing, the general aim is to expand the attitude against human trafficking. The police inform openly and actively about the monitoring of street prostitution. In 2011, the Helsinki Police Department imposed 37 fines for purchasing or offering sexual services in a public place.

This kind of policing will result in reduction of disturbing or deplorable prostitution in public places, such as restaurants and their neighbourhood. However, it will neither reduce prostitution as such or its by-products, such as pimping or human trafficking. It will result only in changes in means and areas of operation.

It has been suggested that for example purchasing of sexual services should be prohibited as a whole. Also prohibiting selling sex has been discussed. In respect to criminalisation, the aims must be thoroughly thought over and whether achieving these aims would be possible only by criminalising certain actions. Protection and realisation of the sex sellers' human rights must remain as the most important issues in this respect.