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Barbara Vittucci
Austrian Round Table/ Way of Reconciliation
Forum for Civic Responsibility
Boltzmanngasse 9,
A-1090 Vienna, Austria
<http://www.wegdersoehnung.at/>

"Combating Trafficking in Minors for Sexual Purposes"

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Ms. Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In working closely with a Non Governmental Organization which regularly works one-on-one with hundreds of victims of human trafficking on the streets of Vienna Austria, many of whom are under age, we share their deep concern for the abuse of the weakest members of society, abused by the "end-user" as objects to be consumed for a momentary "high" and abused by the traffickers as objects of monetary gain.

Many of the international organizations, which work against human trafficking take a serious look at the **root causes** from the 'marketing perspective' of '**demand**'. In the area of women and children abused for sexual purposes the attention is drawn to "the demand for sexual services", which refers of course to the "end-user", or in the case of trafficked minors, the "end-abuser."

Although the legal age of prostitution in many countries is 18, it is likely **that minors of 14 - 17 will be slipped in by traffickers**. When this is the case programs aimed at the root causes of trafficking will also hinder the trafficking of minors.

A "best practice" that targets the root causes of demand is the Swedish law:

After several years of public debate initiated by the Swedish feminist movement, the Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services came into force on January 1, 1999. **Sweden considers prostitution a form of violence especially against women and girls**, so the crime consists in the customer paying for sex, not in the prostitute selling sexual services.

The Law is the first attempt by a country to address the **root cause of prostitution** and trafficking in human beings: **the demand, i.e. the men who assume the right to purchase persons for prostitution purposes**. This groundbreaking law is a cornerstone of Swedish efforts to create a **contemporary, democratic society where women and girls can live lives free of all forms of male violence**. In combination with public education, awareness-raising campaigns, and victim support, the Law and other legislation establish a zero tolerance policy for prostitution and trafficking in human beings. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/laws/000164.html>

Although continued monitoring of the effects of the Swedish law will be necessary, what prospects and trends can the official Ten Year Evaluation of the Swedish government of July 2010 (<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/13420/a/151488>) give us for the reduction in human trafficking for sexual services, which can also have a positive effect on reducing trafficking in minors?

Here are points to consider, which give us reason to hope that measures can be taken to effectively reduce Trafficking in Human Beings, including our particular concern for minors trafficked for sexual purposes:

- Sweden sees a clear link between the existence of prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.
- Street prostitution in Sweden has been approximately halved. This reduction may be considered to be a direct result of the criminalization of sex purchases. Criminalizing purchasers has a chilling effect on demand.
- The ban on the purchase of sexual services has counteracted the establishment of organized crime. Swedish police have stated that they have signs that Sweden is no longer an attractive destination for traffickers.
- The aim of the law is a human rights approach to aid the victims and punish the consumers and traffickers
- The law is accompanied by public awareness campaigns beginning at school age. Public awareness of the human rights perspective that persons should not be bought as objects for sexual consumption is growing. The law enjoys wide public support in Sweden. A recent survey shows that at least 70% of Swedes "support the law and the principles behind its development".
(<http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:CkcbG100gNsJ:www.ruhama.ie/easyedit/files/analyzingtheswedishmodelonprostitution.doc+%22Analyzing+the+Swedish+Model+on+prostitution%22&hl=ro&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=ro>)
- The percent of Swedish men who buy sex has decreased from 13.6% before the law took effect to 7.9% in 2008, almost a 50% reduction.
- Other countries are following suit. Similar laws were adopted by **Norway (in 2009)** and by **Iceland (in 2009)**. In Finland, a ban on purchasing sexual services from victims of human trafficking was introduced in 2007.

Recommendations to Participating States

- To continue to seek out and consider "best practices" of other countries, particularly of Sweden, with emphasis on a human rights approach of protecting victims.
- To vigorously prosecute, convict and punish labor and sex traffickers.
- To improve well-prepared return of children to families of origin, assuring that these are safe situations with monitoring and the aid of social services.
- To consider the **raising of the age of legal prostitution to 21 years of age**, as is being considered in Netherlands, backed by Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin. Minors are particularly vulnerable to manipulation by so-called "lover-boys", pimps involved in the chain of traffickers. Raising the legal age would lessen the vulnerability of 14-17 year olds.
- To draft laws and programs which offer urgently needed refuge, restoration and reintegration programs to the most often deeply traumatized victims of coercion and abuse, rightly handled as an urgent human rights issue.

Recommendations to the OSCE

- To improve data gathering and monitoring of the phenomena of trafficking in human beings (THB) in its correspondence to trafficking in minors.
- To research the effects of existing laws upon the prevalence of human trafficking so as to ascertain, which "best practices" really are "*best*" in reducing THB.
- Continue to emphasize a human rights approach to victims and their restoration, to research and report on best practices for victim restoration.

Thank you for your attention.