

## The Crusade of the Pro-Prostitution Lobby

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The OECD estimates that every year at least 500,000 persons are sold into prostitution in Europe. At the moment, the discussion in many countries centres on strategies for fighting violence against women, prostitution, and organised crime, especially since prostitution was legalised and declared to be common “sex work” around the turn of the millennium. This legalisation took place in Austria and Greece in 1998, in The Netherlands in 2000, and in Germany in 2002. In Europe, the liberalistic model—in which women from less developed countries are imported to a country alongside other goods—has been promoted by The Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.

But legalisation as a means to control and regulate the sex industry has not had its intended result. Instead, a large illegal industry, hiding behind the legal brothels, has been created. To define prostitution as an occupation like any other does not help secure the rights of prostitutes, but rather bolsters the income of procurers and human traffickers. Now the Nordic model—criminalising the act of buying, but not selling, sexual services—is being discussed in France, Albania, Finland, Scotland, and Ireland. Even in liberal Denmark, strong forces are working toward following the example of Sweden, Norway, and Iceland in their legislation, as trust in the German/Dutch model is eroding. The empirical evidence is clear: a ban on buying sexual services does have its intended results.

### **The Fall of Legalisation**

According to the German Health Department there were close to 400,000 prostitutes in Germany in 2012. Arnold Plickert, deputy chairman of the German Police Association, tells RP online that “the politicians have shot themselves in the foot by implementing this law. Even though it was well intended, it has only strengthened the criminals.”<sup>1</sup> According to police authorities, prostitution is an enormous market, its yearly turnover about €14.5 billion. Before brothels and procuring prostitutes were made legal, supporters of legalisation claimed the prostitutes’ lives would improve through workers’ rights, unions, and access to health insurance. But none of these promises has come true. Both before and after legalisation, more than 80% of the women working in the brothels were Eastern European or Asian, most of them illegal immigrants.

Der Spiegel published a long article in May 2013 describing how legalisation has resulted in fewer rights and lower rewards for prostitutes in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Munich Police Chief Wilhelm Schmidbauer tells about an explosive increase in trafficking from Romania and Bulgaria. In 2006, five years after legalisation was implemented, the German ministry of family politics evaluated the law. According to Der Spiegel, the report concluded that the law had led to no noticeable improvement for the prostitutes. Nor was there any evidence that deregulation had led to any reduction in crime. German police officers complain that they are no longer given permission to investigate brothels. Germany has become a “centre for sexual abuse of young women from Eastern Europe, and a playground for organised criminals from all over the world,” a retired police officer tells Der Spiegel.

The Netherlands legalised prostitution in 2000 by repealing the ban against brothels and procuring. The reasoning behind the move was that, as prostitution is impossible to fight, the conditions for people in the prostitution business would improve if there were no legal sanctions. The goal of the legalisation policies was to gain control over the prostitution industry through municipal licensing in order to hinder forced prostitution, to protect minors from sexual abuse, to improve the circumstances for people working in prostitution, to weaken the link between prostitution and criminal environments, and to reduce the scope of trafficking.

In 2008 the Dutch police department conducted a survey which concluded that the legalisation policies had failed completely. The report estimated that 50–90% of the women in the legalised prostitution industry were “working involuntarily,” that one way or another their labor was forced. The Daalder report from 2007<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rp-online.de>

<sup>2</sup> *Der Spiegel* 22/2013 (May 26, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> *Prostitution in The Netherlands since the lifting of the brothel ban*, A.L. Daalder (2007).

examined the circumstances in prostitution in 2006 vis-à-vis government goals and concluded that the legalisation policies had been a fiasco. The goal to regulate “voluntary” prostitution had not been achieved, and the researchers found that most of the sex industry was still operating illegally. Legalisation has made prostitution more common and acceptable, while the profit for the facilitators increases when they can avoid taxes, labour inspections, and health controls.

After 13 years of full legalisation, Dutch authorities have no idea of the number of minors in prostitution. Police controls have decreased the presence of minors in the legal part of the industry, but the number of minors working in the illegal part of the prostitution industry is unknown.<sup>4</sup> The primary goal of legalisation was to improve working conditions for the prostitutes, but the reports are devastating on this point. After six years of legalisation, the emotional well being of the prostitutes was significantly lower than before, and the use of sedatives had increased. Many sought help in leaving the prostitution industry, but only 6% of municipalities offer such help.

The problems that The Netherlands and Germany are facing in their struggle to regulate the aggressive prostitution industry are never mentioned by those who wish to facilitate for prostitution. On the contrary, they are spreading lies about the Nordic model internationally, lies that we need to refute over and over again. Since the Swedish Sex Purchase Act was implemented in 1999, the pro-prostitution lobby has been spreading propaganda globally, claiming the law hasn't had its intended effect. Since Norway and Iceland followed Sweden's lead in 2009, they have increased their efforts in this field. The Nordic model has become a very real threat to the international trafficking industry, an industry that each year brings in billions of Euros.

Unfortunately, the Nordic model not only faces resistance from the international pro-prostitution lobby. In September 2013, Norwegian political parties such as the Liberal Party (Venstre), the Conservative Party (Høyre), the right-wing, populist Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet), and the Green Party (Miljøpartiet de grønne) made repealing the Sex Purchase Act part of their election campaign. As we write this, a majority of the seats in the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) are held by parties wishing to repeal a law we consider to be an excellent tool for reducing prostitution, trafficking, and other organised crime. And this is happening only five years after the law was implemented.

Iceland not only placed a ban on the purchase of sexual services in 2009; they also banned strip clubs. The Icelandic government at the time even looked into developing an Internet porn filter in Iceland when they had to leave the cabinet last year. With the new Icelandic government, the porn filter is not going to happen, and the feminist movement is still fighting for the police to use the law against the johns.

In 2011, the majority of the current government coalition in Denmark made criminalising the purchase of sexual services an election promise, but only a year later, the Social Democratic Party changed their position on this topic and put the blame on one of the smaller coalition parties. As we can see, the opponents of the Nordic model have had their share of victories over the last five years. Why, and how, are the cheerleaders of prostitution now gaining ground in the Nordic countries?

### **Evaluation of the Swedish Sex Purchase Act**

Among the goals of the Swedish Sex Purchase Act that was implemented in 1999 were to prevent and reduce trafficking, to decrease the number of sex buyers, and to heighten public awareness. One also hoped the ban would help decrease men's sexualised violence against women and give the police an extra tool in their fight against trafficking and the prostitution industry.

In November 2010, the Swedish government's evaluation of the Sex Purchase Act was released: “Förbud mot köp av sexuell tjänst. En utvärdering 1999–2008” (“Ban on Buying Sexual Services. A Survey, 1999–2008”). The evaluation was conducted by a committee led by Swedish Attorney General Anna Skarhed. The rest of the committee consisted of various experts on the field. The evaluation concerns the effects of the ban during its first nine years.

The main conclusion is that the law has had its intended effect and is an important tool in preventing and reducing prostitution. Today there is broad political unity on the importance and effects of the law. Police representatives state that Sweden has become a less attractive country for human traffickers as a result of the law. Street prostitution has been reduced by 50%, and there are fewer men buying sex than before. In 2013, 8% of Swedish men responded that they had bought sexual services; the figure for 1996 was 13%. This decline is

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<sup>4</sup> *On legalised prostitution in The Netherlands*, Karin Werkman (2011).

attributed first and foremost to an increased awareness among Swedish men that buying sexual services is fundamentally wrong.

Despite the propaganda efforts of the pro-prostitution lobby internationally, there are no signs that violence against prostitutes has increased, or that prostitutes are experiencing worsened living conditions. Prostitutes are experiencing a situation in which they have more power over their own lives, as they are now able to report threatening customers to the police. The law has also made it easier for the women in prostitution to seek help to get out of their situation. It has not become more difficult for social services to establish contact with prostitutes, contrary to what many opponents of the law claim.

Interviews conducted among individuals who are still in prostitution and individuals who have gotten out of prostitution show that those who are still in prostitution are sceptical about the Sex Purchase Act and believe that their opinions go unheard. They also feel stigmatised as a group and need the protection of society. Those who have gotten out of prostitution have a consistently more positive opinion on the ban and believe it has given them the strength to leave prostitution, eliminating the blame for all the abuse they might have experienced.

As for the scope of prostitution, the evaluation states that, unlike in most other European countries, the prostitution trade in Sweden has stagnated, or even decreased slightly. Prostitution has been reduced by 50%, and there is no evidence pointing in the direction of it having moved to different arenas such as the indoor market. Further, there has been no increase in the number of brothels. All in all, there is nothing to suggest that the prostitution market has moved underground, and the police report having a good overview of the prostitution scene. The Sex Purchase Act gives the police better opportunities to take action against brothels, against human trafficking, and against the prostitution of minors.

### **The Swedish Debate**

Even though 70% of the Swedish population supports the law, and the support is highest among the youngest segments of the population, it also has its enemies. Sweden has their own pro-prostitution lobby, represented by SANS (Sex Workers and Allies Network in Sweden), and the Rose Alliance (Sweden's national organisation for sex and erotic workers), who are part of the international pro-prostitution organisation Network of Sex Work Projects. Together with researchers such as Susanne Dodillet and pundits such as Petra Östergren, they energetically claim that sex work is like any other occupation. This position is also held by several right-wing politicians, as well as the think tank Timbro and the postmodern, left-wing journal Arena. The youth organisations associated with the Centre Party (Centerpartiet) and the liberal People's Party (Folkpartiet) have also embraced the idea that prostitution is really just another exciting occupation.

Östergren and Dodillet are very active in the Nordic prostitution debate and are working with pro-prostitution activists all over Europe to hinder the spread of the Nordic model. The Swedish writer Kajsa Ekis Ekman writes about how Petra Östergren's book *Pornography, Whores and Feminists*<sup>5</sup> pits "whores" and "feminists" against each other—the "whore" as the active subject, and the feminist as the puritanical oppressor.<sup>6</sup> Östergren interviewed 13 women in her book, all of whom claim to "love the role of the whore," have chosen to get into prostitution to avoid "dependency on men," "are breaking with the old female (gender) role," take "command over men," and have "a well-developed power analysis," according to Östergren. She claims that feminists, on the other hand, only want to protect and punish, and the resistance against the sex industry is only "about censorship and control."

According to this perspective, the prostitute is not a victim—she is a strong person who knows what she wants. This view of prostitution builds the foundation for Susanne Dodillet's 2009 PhD thesis in the History of Ideas, *Är sex arbete? (Is Sex Work?)*. Dodillet believes that "the ban on buying sexual services gives sex sellers the role of passive victims, without the ability to make independent choices." Dodillet quotes Kirsten Frigstad, Norwegian PION's leading spokesperson, who says: "Most prostitutes are strong women who have taken responsibility for their situation, and they don't want to be described this way, for they are not victims in a traditional sense." Dodillet's claim is that in Sweden, unlike in Germany, "it is not the prostitutes themselves who have described their role," but politicians and social workers who have seen the prostitutes as "more or less helpless."

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<sup>5</sup> *Porr, horor och feminister*, Östergren (2006).

<sup>6</sup> *Varat och varan: prostitution, surrogatmödraskap och den delade människan*, Kajsa Ekis Ekman (2008).

Östergren and Dodillet collaborated on the article “The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects,” which they have presented at several international conferences on prostitution. They dismiss existing research on the causes and effects of prostitution and instead continue their drama of good against evil. On one side they place “those women who have sexual relations with many men, and who sell their bodies for money,” and on the other side they place “radical feminists and politicians.”<sup>7</sup> They conclude that the law “has to do with a desire to create and uphold a national identity of being the moral consciousness in the world; with notions of “good” and “bad” sexuality; with the whore stigma; with creating new forms of sexual deviancy; with a communitarian, rather than liberal, political culture; and perhaps above all, a stereotypical and uninformed understanding of prostitution.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, they are incapable of showing where the Sex Purchase Act fails, and instead choose to question the motivation behind it.

### **The Norwegian Debate**

We could never have imagined how strong the opposition to the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act would be when it was first implemented on January 1, 2009—by the police, who hardly enforce it; by politicians, who have made lifting the ban part of their election promises; and by the media, who are providing a platform for opponents of the act and for those who praise prostitution.

Again and again, articles reproduce the myth of “the world’s oldest trade,” “the happy hooker,” and the prostitute as a “sex worker.” In June 2013, Norway’s largest newspaper, VG, presented the “sex worker” as an intelligent woman who has chosen everything herself.<sup>9</sup> She is safe and sound, her work is exciting and lucrative, there are no problems what-so-ever, and she can easily earn a lot of money! She practices good hygiene as well, and she dreams of future bliss with children and a faithful husband. What more can any sex buyer dream of, other than that once again it will be as legal to buy a woman as any other product?

### **The Politics: Leadership and Grassroots Movements**

The Red/Green government coalition of 2005–2013 can at best be characterised as political paralysis, and at worst as downright sabotage of the Sex Purchase Act. It is no secret that the Sex Purchase Act was implemented against the will of the leaders of both the Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party. Minister of Justice at the time, Knut Storberget, was a strong opponent of the new act and the one who was set to implement it. Knowing this, it might not come as a surprise that the law has been enforced in a very lax manner. The result of this is that the situation in some cities and municipalities is about the same as before, whereas the situation in others has actually worsened since the act’s implementation.

Strip clubs and various “massage parlours” are now opening up in locations around the country. Advertising online is increasing, and trafficked women from Nigeria are a common sight on many Norwegian streets. The current situation, in which the purchase of sexual services is common and the police rarely interfere, creates contempt for the Sex Purchase Act and has led leading local politicians in Stavanger, one of Norway’s largest cities, to claim that the act is ridiculous, and that it does not work. The front pages of newspapers scream about “the whore shock in Stavanger” and that “the whore traffic is back,” while the role of procurers and sex buyers goes nearly unmentioned in the discussion. Several debaters are speaking up for banning not only the act of buying sexual services, but also selling.

This is in contrast to the position of many national politicians who wish to legalise prostitution. They are led by the “facts” presented by the Pro Centre, the Norwegian authority on prostitution, and research reports from Fafo, the unions’ research institution. Most of the information on the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act that is spread internationally is coming from one of these two institutions. Because of this, it is important for the international public to know a little bit more about these two actors.

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<sup>7</sup> *Varat och varan*, Ekman (2008).

<sup>8</sup> *The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects*, Östergren and Dodillet (2011), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> VG, May 4, 2013.

### **Ideological Research and Other Propaganda**

Fafo is the Norwegian unions' research centre that mostly engages in research on labour and international solidarity. The sociologist May-Len Skilbrei has been a central part of Fafo's efforts to build up an academic environment within the organisation, where they also research the sex industry from a labour perspective. To Fafo prostitution is work, not violence.

All reports on stripping and prostitution coming from Fafo have a very clear political agenda. In 2009, only a few days after the act was implemented, May-Len Skilbrei concluded that the Sex Purchase Act had failed. She wrote a column for the newspaper *Klassekampen* in which she noted that the act was ineffective. Skilbrei is not the only researcher at Fafo who holds this opinion. During a panel discussion in 2008, Guri Tyldum at Fafo drew the same conclusion. But these researchers had arrived at their conclusion a long time before. Already in 2006, Guri Tyldum and May-Len Skilbrei, together with Anette Brunovskis, had concluded that the Swedish Sex Purchase Act had no effect, and thus should be overturned.<sup>10</sup>

In May 2013, Fafo presented a report entitled "Organisation, Conditions and Everyday Life in Norwegian Strip Clubs" that is representative of the kind of ideological "research" that has been conducted by them in the last five years. We will now take a closer look at this report, which was ordered by the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion as part of a study on a possible ban on strip clubs, and was written by Ingunn Bjørkhaug, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kristin Alsos. Over a period of seven months, the researchers questioned 30 informants—both strippers and other participants—in the Norwegian strip industry. They concluded that the strippers are resourceful "dancers" who are not suffering any kind of exploitation; quite to the contrary, they make good money and live very well during their stay in Norway. The authors did not see any link between the strip clubs and prostitution.

The researchers at Fafo say they have not studied the strip clubs from a social perspective, and they have chosen not to ask about, or research in any other way, where the money from the strip clubs goes. When they also chose not to ask about or research how close the private dancers are to prostitution, what kind of individuals make up the customer base, which long-term effects the strippers experience, and what it means for those involved and those around them that women's bodies and sexuality are turned into sexual entertainment for men, it burdens their research with a major weakness. We know absolutely nothing more about Norwegian strip clubs since this report was presented. In addition to the above-mentioned weaknesses, the researchers continuously use politically charged language by which strippers are rewritten as "dancers" and facilitators are called "agents," and whereby the nomadic life of a stripper, because of the clients' demand for a constant stream of new women, is a consequence of tax conditions. All of these factors combine make the report a political document rather than a well-crafted piece of research.

The report "Experiences from Five Prostitution Measures During Six Months"<sup>11</sup> by Fafo's Anette Brunovskis continues on the same track. On page 35 the report describes how vulnerable women in prostitution are—not because they are exploited by procurers and customers, or because prostitution in general might be bad for them, but because the police are fighting the sex industry and arresting procurers and facilitators. And now the Sex Purchase Act is no longer the only law under attack. The Procuring Act, which is more than 100 years old and which makes profiting from other people's prostitution illegal, is being attacked. According to the report, violence against prostitutes in Oslo has spiked as a result of strong police enforcement of the Procuring Act, and the report concludes that the act thus should be "softened up." Brunovskis claims that not only should women be prostituted at the brothels; they should be able to live there, too. This gives Fafo's critique of the act an almost racist tone. Most prostitutes in Norway are not Norwegian but are rather trafficked in from poorer countries. Instead of suggesting the government come up with better assistance strategies to help those who want to leave prostitution, as well as measures such as housing, social benefits, and job placement assistance, the demand from this research institution is that the police should leave these women in peace at the brothels.

### **The Norwegian National Centre of Expertise: The Pro Centre**

The Pro Centre is both a national authority on prostitution and a low-threshold centre for people in prostitution. Their role in spearheading the Norwegian pro-prostitution lobby is thoroughly documented in several chapters in this book, but judging from propaganda that we observe being spread internationally, we feel compelled to write

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<sup>10</sup> *Aftenposten*, June 23, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Fafo-rapport 2013:29.

something about their 2012 report, “Dangerous Liaisons, A Report on the Violence Prostitutes in Oslo Are Subjected To.”<sup>12</sup>

It is natural to assume that as a national centre of expertise, designed to be a governmental tool in this area, the Pro Centre would evaluate their priorities when the act that prohibits buying sexual services became law. But in this case, the institution continued on the same track as before. The Pro Centre does not seem to think it is their main task to help women leave prostitution, but rather to fight Norwegian legislation.

Ulla Bjørndahl at the Pro Centre delivered the “Dangerous Liaisons” report in June 2012. Several newspapers made room for this on their front pages, with the claim that “the Sex Purchasing Act is to blame,” and the Conservative Party made it clear that they would start to work toward repealing the act. The headline declared that violence against prostitutes had increased after the act was implemented. The report had already been distributed to many countries as the truth about the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act, even before we were given the chance to read it and debunk it. The entire report is humbug and unscientific through and through. The Pro Centre was met with facts and arguments, and in Norway the report fell to the ground without making much of an impression on public opinion. It has, however, done much harm internationally. In many countries, “Dangerous Liaisons” is still portrayed as the truth about the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act.

What the report does show, however unintended, is that the Sex Purchase Act does, in fact, work. The report’s own data tell us that the incidence of grave violence has been reduced since the act was implemented. On page 26 of the report, one reads that rape has declined by almost half, down from 29% of prostitutes to 15%; “hit by fist” has decreased from 29% to 18%; and “hit by flat hand” has gone down from 27% to 19%. The increased violence the Pro Centre was referring to turns out to be in the categories “groped,” “called abusive names,” “pulling hair,” and “being spat at.” Either way, this is a curious way of tabulating violence, as prostitution has always been violent. The report also explicitly states that the reason why prostitutes are displeased is that there are fewer customers, and thus poorer conditions for prostitution.<sup>13</sup>

### **Iceland and the Porn Industry**

Iceland went further than the other Nordic countries when it implemented the Sex Purchase Act by also shutting down the strip clubs. The workers in the clubs were mostly foreign women who moved from country to country. So-called “agents” cashed large sums every month from the women, whom they held under strict control, and saw to it that they behaved; otherwise their salaries would not be paid.

The main source of income for these women was the private dances, where nobody controlled what happened between the customer and the woman. The women’s plane tickets and passports were taken from them, and they had to perform five free trial dances of the owners’ choice, and also sign a contract binding them to absolute confidentiality. In addition, the women lived under the threat of sky-high fines for any small mistake, and their rent was five times higher than that of the public. The women were given minimum wages at the end of their contracted period, and the rest depended on how satisfied the club owners and agent were with the woman’s behavior.

The porn industry is profitable, and a lot of creativity is required to get around the law. Recently three so-called champagne clubs have debuted in Reykjavik. The customers buy champagne for 20,000 Icelandic crowns—the same price as for a prostitute—and the price includes a private meeting with foreign women to have them sing or dance or have a chat, although many of the women speak neither Icelandic nor English.

The Sex Purchase Act in Iceland has, for the most part, gone unenforced. Since 2009 there has only been one conviction—of eight men who bought sex from the same woman. They were ordered to pay low fines, and the trial took place behind closed doors. In a TV interview, the leader of the police association stated that the act is so ambiguous and badly written that there is almost no point in trying to enforce it. Within the police force there is not a single officer who has been given the task of investigating prostitution. The important job of enforcing the act was given to the department that handles sexual abuse and which was already understaffed.

Judging from ads in newspapers and online, one can clearly see that the demand for prostitution is high. Nothing has been done to try to shut down the websites or to ban advertising in newspapers. After much pressure—and, most important, activism on the part of feminist groups—changes finally took place in 2011. The former Minister of Internal Affairs budgeted extra funding for the police group investigating organised crime to

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<sup>12</sup> Farlige forbindelser, en rapport om volden kvinner i prostitusjon i Oslo utsettes for. Ulla Bjørndal (2012).

<sup>13</sup> For a thorough analysis of the report, see Samantha Berg’s exquisite blog post on Feministcurrent.com.

enable them to focus on prostitution. In 2013, the police report that they have investigated more than 100 cases, and these are now with the state attorney. Although there has been progress over the last two years, we must reluctantly conclude that there seems to be a lack of political will to enforce the act in Iceland, as in Norway.

Unlike the other Nordic countries, Iceland has no pro-prostitution organisations of their own, nor any public spokesperson opposing the act. None of the political parties work toward repealing the act, although it must be said that much more could have been done to enforce it.

### **A Ban on Buying Sex Works**

Despite the fact that the Sex Purchase Act seems to have reduced the number of sex buyers and made Norway a less attractive country for traffickers, there is still much to criticise. Measures to help women find housing and work and to be recognised as victims of trafficking are still needed. A focus on sex buyers' use of violence is also crucial.

The polices' lack of enforcement, as well as the partial sabotage of the act, are important shortcomings, and the same can be said for the lack of cooperation among the police, social services, and voluntary organisations to offer the women in prostitution an alternative. The lack of an exit program is part of what we in the feminist movement see as sabotage of the act. The Sex Purchase Act in Norway has been shaky from the start, hampered by massive opposition from the support services for people in prostitution, research institutions, and politicians. Even so, the act functions so well that Norway's new right-wing government dreads its repeal before they can identify a strategy for avoiding opening up Norwegian back streets to the international mafia.

It is because of the act's tenuous position in Norway that the pro-prostitution lobby generally uses Norway as the example when they want to illustrate that the Sex Purchase Act doesn't work. But we believe that even though we don't yet have a society free of porn, prostitution, and trafficking, a ban on the purchase of sex is an important step along the way. As the Pro Centre's data show, serious violence against prostitutes has decreased markedly, and the prostitution market in most Norwegian cities and municipalities has weakened slightly since the implementation of the act. Because the Norwegian act will not be evaluated for a few years, we still don't know how it has affected the number of Norwegian men buying sex, nor do we have any such data from Iceland. Icelandic feminists are complaining that the police aren't doing enough to enforce the act, but they have no strong spokespersons working to repeal the ban, and Iceland has little contact with the international pro-prostitution lobby.

The political will to repeal the Sex Purchase Act in Sweden is close to non-existent, and Sweden has also taken it upon themselves to promote the Nordic model internationally. The Swedish police give priority to enforcing the act and also willingly participate in international conferences to showcase their important work and encourage other countries to follow their lead. The above-mentioned evaluation of the Sex Purchase Act and the active role of the government neutralises many of the undocumented claims from the pro-prostitution lobby.

The evaluation of the Sex Purchase Act shows that since its implementation, Sweden has become less attractive to organised crime. Street prostitution has been reduced by 50%, and fewer men now buy sex. In the same way that the common Nordic ban on physical punishment of children has led to a collective awareness among Nordic parents that hitting children is unacceptable, the Sex Purchase Act has led to an increased awareness among Nordic men that buying sexual services is inherently wrong.

According to Interpol, illegal trafficking alone brings in around €11 billion yearly. Both Swedish and Norwegian police believe that the Sex Purchase Act is a good tool for fighting organised crime. The act expedites their ability to intervene in brothels and to wage the battle against human traffickers and the prostitution of minors.

We are fighting a patriarchal system, and a ban on the purchase of sexual services challenges the prevailing gender order. The Sex Purchase Act is part of a struggle against structures and attitudes that reduce women and our sexuality to a product, and it establishes the fact that prostitution is about the society's attitude toward women, social development, and gender equality. The Nordic model is an alternative to treating prostitution with a conservative double standard, that is, seeing it as a problem of public order, and to relegating the trade in humans to certain parts of town. The act is also unique in that it acknowledges the unequal power balance between supply and demand.

Many countries impose a ban on both buying and selling sexual services, but the sole result is that prostitutes become more helpless and lose yet more legal protection. Men being bothered by desperate and aggressive prostitutes can be a problem, but criminalising the victims of human trafficking is not the solution. A

ban on selling sexual services affects those who are already victims. This knowledge is the basis for the choice to ban purchasing of sexual services, not the sale of them, as reflected in the Sex Purchase Act implemented in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. The Nordic model stands in solidarity with all women, and it is based on human rights and the knowledge that prostitution is violence against women.

The Nordic model changes men's attitudes and actions and is thus an essential measure for ending prostitution. But an act alone is not enough. For the act to have its intended effect, the police need to enforce it, and it is critical that it be followed up by various measures to help the women in prostitution and to strengthen awareness campaigns directed toward men. In addition, the society as a whole needs to support the idea that women are not for sale. Prostitution and human trafficking are billion-Euro international industries, but they can be stopped if more countries follow the lead of Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, and discourage men from feeding the monster by buying the goods the industry offers.