

The Sex Economy

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Supply and Demand: The Market

- Indiscriminate demand for fresh supply of girls and young women
- Girls, women, migrant and trafficked regarded as “interchangeable” goods (5)
- Ireland: 87%-97% migrant indoors - 10% fit the ‘definition’ of trafficked*
- Reflects European figures-increase in women from new MS of the EU



Recruiters, pimps,
traffickers – intentional

Markets and profit: Pimps,
(escort) agencies
organised crime

Locations: streets,
brothels, hotels, private
apartments, call outs



Indiscriminate buyers

* *Monzini, 2005; Kelleher et al., 2009*

Women 'choose' to enter prostitution

- Driving forces: Intersection of socio-economic and personal risk factors including poverty, lone parenthood, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, physical/emotional abuse and early home leaving
- Direct targeting: diverse tactics employed: groomed, enticed, persuaded, recruited, coerced and exploited
- Constrained and circumscribed choice* within a severely restricted realm of choices
- Coercion not necessary when economic desperation and hope collide

(Kelly et al., 2008; O'Connor, 2017).

Women have ‘sexual autonomy’ and control within the ‘safe’ indoor sex trade

- Street prostitution recognised as a high risk setting but evidence of **prolonged** abuse and severe sexual violence in “safer” indoor venues*
- Privatised environments are dangerous : brothels, apartments, “call outs” to hotel rooms and homes
- Regardless of location - impact of multiple degrading and abusive sexual acts on women’s well being*
- Estimated 700 sexual acts per year 1200 for ‘mobile’ women in indoor locations *

Women are giving “consent”

- Consent in prostitution is better defined as acquiescence (*Mac Kinnon 1987*) to “unwanted sexual intrusions” (*Stanko, 1985*)
- Adult consensual sex: mutual, reciprocal, desired
- ‘Consent’ absolves buyers (and society) of responsibility for harm
- Payment of money does not obviate harm nor indicate meaningful consent

Market where new and young ‘merchandise’ is prized

Each time she advertised me as new to the business on the phone, they came in one after the other, after the other and they knew I was inexperienced because they knew I didn't know what I was doing

I'd never experienced the cold like that, I was freezing...I was barely covered and I was shaking, I was standing there with my luggage...crying....the man took me and I tell the man I was scared this time and he said he was not going to hurt me that he is only doing what he's paying for

(Beth 17, trafficked from West Africa in Sligo)

The Internet: a buyers market

- Highly profitable for prostitution agencies – control and dominate advertising
- Easily accessible, invisible, anonymous and privatised for buyers
- Pictures and details of the bodily attributes of women to choose from with detailed menu of sex acts she will perform.
- Punter review sites where buyers can share views on women
- Consumerist language of buyers-

▪ (*Farley, Bindel & Golding 2009*).

‘Ethical’ consumerism?*

Punter review studies indicate the inherent unethical and abusive attitude of buyer:

Plenty of choice these days and, with a general slowdown in the economy, better and better punts are becoming available at a more affordable price. A breeze of fresh air in otherwise saturated market

She did advertised services but without any enthusiasm... felt she was not at this very long, very withdrawn... made a bad career choice...no feeling, very mechanical... I think she is past her sell-by date... a total waste of money –demand the Girl Friend Experience (GFE)

**(Tyler, 2012)*

Legalisation delivers safe conditions of employment

Sweden

- Prostitution as a form of GBV - harmful sexual exploitation
- Criminalised the purchase of sex & sellers decriminalised
- Integrated approach addressing both prostitution and trafficking
- Declarative and normative in terms of gender equality

The Netherlands

- Prostitution defined as sex work/sexual service
- Legalisation/regulation of a legitimate business sector
- Remove coercion, pimping, minors and trafficking -
- Discourse of individual choice, labour and sex workers rights

Legalised regimes: Failed experiments

Attempts to frame prostitution as legitimate ‘sex work’ in Germany with the legal entitlements and protections that go with that, have utterly failed – Conditions have worsened as the “market” grows with mega-brothels*

Example:

Paradiso ‘male wellness centres’ (brothels) reveal the extent of exploitation

– cater for 1000 buyers – entry fee -€69 -a beer, burger a bathrobe and slippers – any woman and sexual acts €50 –girls and women naked except for high heels....

Police could only prosecute after 2 years investigating trafficking – the above was legal

**(Kavemann and Rabe, 2007).*

Sweden: Reducing the scale of exploitation

Germany 40 – 60 times larger sex trade *(Walby et al., 2017)*

Member state	Approximate scale of prostitution in the period 2006-2014	Population in 2014	Approximate number of prostitutes per 100, 000 population
Sweden	650 - 1 500	9 760 142	6.65 - 15.4
Netherlands	9 000 - 20 000	16 926 400	53.2 - 118.2
Germany	150 000 - 400 000	81 083 600	185.0 - 493.3

Challenges and wider implications of legalisation

Commodification, marketisation of the female body, sex and sexuality and the pornification of sexuality:

“Mc Sexualisation” : “the mainstreaming and industrialisation of sex as business(es) and the commercialisation of bodies, sex and sexualities.....Prostitution re-produces and (re)constructs sexualities and understandings of gender/sex relationships”
(Jyrkinen, 2012)

Going forward

Reject the commodification and marketisation of sex, sexuality

Ensure prostitution is included in the #Me Too movement –
prostitution **is** sexual harassment*

Reclaim the moral and ethical ground - progressive sexual law

Confront sex work organisations using sex workers rights to
demand legalisation and de-criminalisation

Build alliances across the countries adopting the Nordic/Equality

(Farley, 2018)