

Thanks for inviting me to this seminar. I am a Swedish citizen who lives here in Dublin and everything I say here are my personal views. I do not represent any organisation at this seminar.

I am neither an expert on the issue of human trafficking, nor on the main themes of the psychological and the Irish legal issues.

So why am I here? I think I was invited to this seminar by the APT because I made some comments from the floor at an earlier seminar on trafficking and prostitution organised by the Immigrants Council of Ireland, where I described the successful campaign in Sweden for the legislation to criminalize the buying of sex that was adopted ten years ago. In Sweden today it is illegal to buy sex, but it is not illegal to be a prostitute.

I became involved in the campaign for this legislation since the political party of which I am a member took up this position in 1987. Perhaps I can be identified as representing progressive men in Sweden who were and are engaged in the work against trafficking and prostitution in Sweden - but from an understanding that the main problem concerning trafficking and prostitution are not the prostitutes, nor even the traffickers.

The main problem as we see it; is the men demanding to buy sex. Men that buy sex believe that they have the right to buy sex from women, without questioning why these women are selling sex or under what conditions these women are forced to live.

These men and their demand is the main problem.

Listening to Eimear Burke's presentation was very interesting, but also very painful. It is painful to hear of the horrifying experiences of these young women coming from Eastern Europe and the Global South. They have been forced into prostitution for many different reasons ó but poverty is one of the main reasons. Most of these women were promised something else when they agreed to be brought, trafficked, to Ireland or other western countries. To save and protect these women when they have succeeded to escape or get away from the criminal traffickers is of utmost importance and in Hilka Becker's introduction we heard that the Anti Human Trafficking Unit together with other authorities and NGOs in Ireland are developing their work on this issue. Hilka also gave examples on how this work can further develop in the future.

The criminal networks and pimps who are organising the trafficking of women must be exposed, prosecuted and severely punished for their crimes against these women . But they are still not the main reason for the existence of trafficking and this modern kind of slavery. The main reason is men's demand.

Therefore we also have to act against the demand. We have to influence and change this male behaviour. We have to establish new and better norms in society. Norms that says no to trafficking and respects all women's right to a decent life.

And let me make it clear, I am not saying this from a moralistic perspective. I am talking from a gender equality perspective. To work for gender equality means to challenge patriarchal power structures, or in other words; to try to change a world that has been dominated, ruled and defined by men for thousands of years.

For me, gender equality is one of the main goals in the ongoing struggle to create a better world. One reason why the Nordic welfare societies have achieved some degree of success in creating more socially equal societies is because one of the main objectives is to promote gender equality: This has been achieved:

By ongoing research and debates on gender roles and how we can change them,

By guaranteeing free or highly subsidised professional standard child care,

By ensuring shared parental leave, and initiatives to encourage men also to use their right to paternal leave.

By quotas to ensure 50% women in the boards of several main political parties and various organisations. Thanks to gender quotas in Sweden 47% of the members of the national parliament today are women, which in itself contribute to more gender equality decisions.

Gender equality is not only needed to ensure women's rights in the society.

It is needed to create a better society for all; also men achieve a better quality of life.

It is in this context that I see the question of trafficking and prostitution. The existence of prostitution is one of the clearest examples of a patriarchal and oppressive class society.

It is patriarchal because it is built on the idea that it should be a man's right to buy sex whenever he thinks he needs it.

It is obviously oppressive; Eimear Burke's presentation here and many other scientific studies make that very clear.

It is also an example of a class society. Most men, but not all, who buy sex have a high income and an important social position in society, while most of the prostitutes are women who grow up in poverty and under difficult social circumstances.

It is important to support the victims of trafficking and prostitution.

It is also important to develop strategies and actions to stop trafficking and punish the organised crime that is behind it.

But the most important is to create a new norm in society that says that it is not *öökö* to buy sex. Not from a moralistic point of view, but from a principle which is based on equality and solidarity.

The Swedish legislation that criminalises the buying of sex is society's way to say that *öthere is a new norm nowö*. It is wrong to buy sex because it contributes to making society unequal and oppressive.

The main objective is not to punish men who buy sex, but by law define a norm that promotes gender equality and global solidarity.

And it works ó the popular support for this law has increased all through the ten years since it was adopted. It has today the majority support of both genders and all age groups of society. It is also interesting to note that sex trafficking to Sweden is very low compared to our neighbouring countries Denmark and Finland, where there is no legislation against the buying of sex.

For many years Sweden was the only country in the world with this kind of legislation. But the good news is that Norway and Iceland recently also have adopted similar legislation, and I am sure that more countries will follow the same way.

When we campaigned for this law some people, usually men were, and some still are, very provoked. They usually say that this is a business deal between two adults and society should not interfere in that. Our answer is that it is not a deal between equals.

They also said that prostitution is the oldest profession in the world. We argued that the length of oppression does not give it validity. And we added; in fact the oldest profession in the world is not to be a prostitute ó but to be a midwife.

It is normal that some people were provoked because we challenged thousands of years of patriarchal power structures and patriarchal understandings of life. To challenge power structures will always be provocative. Throughout history it has been the same.

It was very provocative to question slavery.

It was very provocative to question colonialism.

It was very provocative to raise the demand for political democracy, especially women's right to vote.

So in the end, this issue is about what kind of society we want to live in.

For me that is the first question to be answered.

And my personal answer to that question is that I want to live in a society which is based on the principles of equality and solidarity.