

## EU urged to abolish prostitution

By Martha Moss - 17th June 2011

**Gender equality campaigners are calling on the EU to abolish prostitution and raise awareness of the practice as a form of violence against women.**

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) launched its campaign to end prostitution at a press conference in Brussels on Friday.

The launch came as the organisation unveiled a hard-hitting video clip depicting a male prostitute at work, aimed at raising awareness of the issue.

Alexandra Jachanova Dolezelova, a member of the EWL executive committee, said the lobby has "for years been delivering a clear political statement committed to working towards a Europe free from prostitution".

"We believe that the prostitution of women and girls constitutes a fundamental violation of women's human rights," and Dolezelova, who also works for the Czech women's lobby.

"It is a serious form of male violence against women and a key obstacle to gender equality in our society.

"I would consider that prostitution is a violation of the fundamental human right to dignity and perpetuates the domination of men over women through the use of money."

She claimed that society still tolerated violence in the form of prostitution, saying that the EWL chose to advocate a Europe-wide campaign "because we think that the tolerance of prostitution is a European issue".

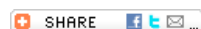
Cécile Gréboval, the secretary general of the EWL, which represents more than 2500 organisations across Europe, stressed the importance of "tackling the root causes of prostitution", stemming from economic and gender inequality.

"Prostitution exists because some men have more money than some women and are in a position to buy them,"

"Prostitution is a serious form of male violence against women and a key obstacle to gender equality in our society"  
Alexandra Jachanova  
Dolezelova, member of the  
EWL executive committee

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she said.

The director of the video, Patric Jean said he hoped it would challenge "certitudes about prostitution", with many men claiming that it is a matter of choice for a woman to use her body as she chooses.

For Pierrette Pape, EWL policy officer and project coordinator on violence against women, it is a question of tackling the violence that exists through prostitution.

"We also fight for women in prostitution to be considered as victims," she said.

Pape dismissed arguments in favour of legalising - or "decriminalising procuring" - prostitution, pointing to figures showing that "tolerance of prostitution has an impact on society and the way we see the relationship between women and men".

Grégoire Théry, who works with prostituted persons on the ground in France and Belgium, said, "The issue is not only the violence in and around prostitution, but prostitution as violence in itself. We consider that when men pay for sex, they impose it."

Théry, who is also employed by the International Federation for Human Rights as permanent representative to the EU, called for "the abolition of the system of prostitution", saying that this would require "setting a new norm" in which it is unacceptable to pay for sex.

Commenting on the launch of the campaign, Irish Socialist MEP Proinsias de Rossa said, "I am very pleased that the EWL has had the courage and foresight to initiate this campaign.

"It is high time for us to open our eyes to the reality of prostitution in our societies, and to its absolute incompatibility with the values of gender equality and human dignity that the European Union espouses and to which it is legally bound."

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