

Ms Fatima Chohan-Kota
Chairperson of the Justice Portfolio Committee
of the South African Parliament

SALLI (United Sex Professionals of Finland) is an organization of sex workers in Finland. We are aware that there are a lot of problems around sex business and that many feel unhappy with prostitution and sex business. Therefore we aim at helping people to find solutions and to avoid problems. We feel that it is also our duty to advice politicians not to make laws which cause more harm than good.

The Swedish model of criminalizing the clients of sex workers has been introduced as a "unique solution" to the problems of sex business. It was also the basis for the Finnish government bill (2005) on criminalizing the purchase of sexual services.

We have studied all the arguments used in the bill and in the argumentation of the politicians in Finland and Sweden. We have found that the Swedish model is based merely on ideological assumptions. There is no real evidence on positive effects of this kind of law. For comments from academic writers, please look at following articles:

<http://www.salli.org/info/lib/self2005com.pdf>
<http://www.salli.org/info/lib/kulick-un-talkswe.pdf>
<http://www.petraostergren.com/content/view/44/38/>

Since it was evident that the proposed law was counterproductive and harmful the Finnish Parliament was not willing to pass the bill as such. It was amended so that purchase of sexual services is punishable only when there is trafficking or procuring involved.

From the point of view of trying to reduce and solve the problems in the practical realities of sex workers, this kind of partial criminalization of the clients does not help anyone. We are hoping that this "Finnish model" would be less harmful than the "Swedish model", but we do not recommend either of them.

Criminalizing of clients of sex workers makes sex workers more vulnerable and increases their problems. It becomes more difficult or impossible to rely on the protection of police and law enforcement. Moving from sex work to other lines of labour becomes more difficult.

Because of our own experiences and because of what we have learned from our colleagues in other countries, we are convinced that problems can be solved only by empowerment and making legal protection accessible to everyone.

We are worried and concerned about the introduction of criminalizing the clients of sex workers into the South African law. We urge you to take seriously the Submission produced and given to you by SWEAT (Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce) on 15th September 2006 about this issue.

Executive Committee of
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SALLI – United Sex Professionals of Finland

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