

Submission in support of Mary Honeyball's Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality

We write as a global network of researchers in support of Mary Honeyball's motion for a resolution on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality (2013/2103(INI)).

We do this on the basis of deep and systematic expertise in researching the dynamics of prostitution and the sex industry, trafficking and violence against women. Our research draws on contemporary evidence, on historical and philosophical inquiry, and importantly on the testimony of survivors of the prostitution system. Many of us have worked directly with prostituted women. We have individual and collective links with a wide variety of organisations working for the abolition of prostitution as an institution of gender inequality and exploitation. We draw on both our practice-based evidence and our academic studies to strongly endorse the Honeyball report and its recommendation to adopt 'the Nordic model' as a pan-European approach to prostitution.

We believe it is important to signal that our position on prostitution is not grounded in a moralistic approach, or in any kind of hostility to women in the prostitution system. Nor is our position linked to considerations about maintaining 'public order'. Our concern is centrally with the human rights of women in protecting the dignity of all women equally, and with an end to all forms of the subordination and degradation of women.

The Honeyball Report calls attention to a number of key issues:

- the gender asymmetry of the sex industry, that is, men are overwhelmingly the majority of those who buy sexual acts, and women and girls those whose bodies are bought;
- countries where buying sexual acts has been criminalised have seen sex markets shrink, and trafficking reduced. This is a success for these countries as nation states, and the European Parliament adoption of the Nordic model offers the potential to replicate this progress across Europe;
- attitudes shift where the purchase of sexual acts is criminalised, with surveys in Sweden for example consistently showing that a large majority now think the purchase of sexual acts is unacceptable.¹ Law is a powerful tool in defining and changing what is, and is not, socially acceptable behaviour.

While we recognise that some women say they find selling sexual acts to be personally and economically empowering, these individual stories are not testament to the legitimacy of prostitution as a social institution. The prostitution system is a reminder of continuing inequalities between women and men: the gender pay gap; the sexualisation of female bodies in popular culture; histories of violence and abuse in both childhood and adulthood that underpin many women's entry into the sex industry. The persistence of these economic and social inequalities in every European country (and globally) is well documented in a wealth of academic research. Together these layers of disadvantage experienced by women mean that so-

¹ See data and analysis in Max Waltman (2011) Sweden's Prohibition of Purchase of Sex: The Law's Reasons, Impact, and Potential *Women's Studies International Forum* 34: 459-460.

called 'free' choices are actually decisions made in conditions of already existing inequality and discrimination. Women's choices should not be measured simply by where they end up (in prostitution), but by the circumstances in which these choices must be made. Choices made in conditions of being unequal cannot be considered 'free'.

The Honeyball Report is a landmark because it shifts focus to the choices that men make to purchase sexual acts. Systematic research from Finland² and the UK³ in particular reveals that men who pay for sexual acts do so because they believe that biological urges lead them to 'need' sex from a variety of different women. Some men explicitly report that they buy sexual acts because it is a context where they do not have to think about women as equal human beings with their own feelings, wishes and desires. Men's own experiences of prostitution, as collated on sites such as The Invisible Men,⁴ provide a chilling picture of the reality of prostitution for women: of violence, desperation, subordination and despair.

This is why the Honeyball Report is clear that the idea and the reality that women's bodies can be bought – and sold – by men, to men, both creates and perpetuates relations between women and men as a hierarchy.

Prostitution is, as the Honeyball Report states, a form and a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. Achieving gender equality means taking steps towards a world where progress goes beyond improving the status of individual women in conditions of discrimination, but addresses those conditions. Criminalising the purchase of sexual acts, decriminalising those who sell, and providing specialist support to women to be able to leave prostitution, are measures that directly address gender inequalities.

The decision for your vote this week is whether or not to challenge the fiction that it is natural and inevitable for men to buy access to women's bodies for sexual release, and whether or not to challenge this as a deeply-rooted form of gender inequality.

The European Parliament has an historic opportunity to act as a global beacon on gender equality, following the pioneering example set by the Nordic countries. We urge you and your party members not to waste it, and to vote for the Honeyball motion.

24th February 2014

[Please note: The institutional affiliations of the signatories are provided for identification purposes. The views, opinions and positions expressed by the signatories do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or positions of those institutions.]

1. Dr Maddy Coy, Reader in Sexual Exploitation and Gender Equality, London Metropolitan University
2. Dr Helen Pringle, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Australia

² Marttila, A.-M. (2008) Desiring the 'Other': Prostitution Clients on a Transnational Red-Light District in the Border Area of Finland, Estonia and Russia *Gender, Technology and Development* 12: 31-51.

³ See for example: Coy, M, Horvath, M.A.H., Kelly, L. (2007) *'It's just like going to the supermarket': Men buying sex in East London*, London: Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, available at www.cwasu.org; Farley, M., Macleod, J., Anderson, L., & Golding, J.M. (2011) Attitudes and Social Characteristics of Men Who Buy Sex in Scotland, *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 3(4): 369-383.

⁴ <http://the-invisible-men.tumblr.com/>.

3. Dr Esohe Aghatise, Visiting Lecturer, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Turin and Faculty of Law, University of Turin (Master of Laws in International Crime and Justice Programme), Italy
4. Professor Ivana Bacik, Law School, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
5. Professor Kathleen Barry, PhD, Professor Emerita, Penn State University, US
6. Dr Karen Bell, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, University of Bristol, UK
7. Janine Benedet, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia, Canada
8. Ciaran Benson, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University College Dublin, Ireland
9. Dr Oona Brooks, Lecturer in Criminology, The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, University of Glasgow, UK
10. Thema Bryant-Davis, Associate Professor of Psychology, Pepperdine University, US
11. Lisa Carson, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
12. Heather Cole, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
13. Dr Emma Dalton, Lecturer, Japanese Studies Research Institute, Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan
14. Professor Michelle M. Dempsey, Professor of Law, Villanova University School of Law, US
15. Dr Gail Dines, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, Wheelock College, Boston, US
16. David Duriesmith, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
17. Helen Easton, Senior Lecturer and PhD candidate in Criminology, London South Bank University, UK
18. Gunilla S. Ekberg, international human rights lawyer, PhD in Law candidate, University of Glasgow, UK
19. Fiona Elvines, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
20. Professor Maria Eriksson, Professor of Social Work, School for Health, Care, and Social Welfare, Mälardalen University, Sweden
21. Dr Elizabeth Evans, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, University of Bristol, UK
22. Dr Karen Evans, Senior Lecturer, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, University of Liverpool, UK
23. Dr Matthew Ezzell, Assistant Professor in Sociology, James Madison University, US
24. Kate Farhall, doctoral researcher, University of Melbourne, Australia
25. Dr Melissa Farley, Prostitution Research and Education, US
26. Maria Garner, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
27. Professor Gene Feder, Professor of primary health care, School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, UK
28. Dr Aisha K. Gill, Reader in Criminology, University of Roehampton, UK
29. Professor Victor Goode, Professor in Law, CUNY Law School, US
30. Dr Kieran McGrath, Visiting Research Associate, Dept of Social Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
31. Professor Marianne Hester, Chair in Gender, Violence and International Policy, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK
32. Dr Miranda Horvath, Reader in Forensic Psychology, Middlesex University, UK
33. Donna M. Hughes, Professor & Eleanor M. and Oscar M. Carlson Endowed Chair, Gender and Women's Studies Program, University of Rhode Island, US

34. Professor Sheila Jeffreys, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia
35. Dr Robert Jensen, Professor, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, US
36. Helen Johnson, Doctoral Candidate in Criminology, University of Kent, UK
37. Patricia Kelleher, PhD, Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Social Exclusion, University of Limerick, Ireland
38. Professor Liz Kelly, Director, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University, UK
39. Dr Christopher Kendall, Barrister, John Toohey Chambers, Honorary Research Fellow, Law School, The University of Western Australia
40. Dr Mark P. Lagon, Professor in the Practice of International Affairs, Georgetown University, and Former U.S. Ambassador at Large to Combat Trafficking in Persons, US
41. Dr Ronit Lentin, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
42. Dr Nancy Lombard, Lecturer of Sociology and Social Policy, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
43. Dr Julia Long, Lecturer in Sociology, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
44. Jo Lovett, Senior Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
45. Professor Kathleen Lynch, UCD Professor of Equality Studies, Head of the UCD School of Social Justice, University College Dublin, Ireland
46. Dr Finn Mackay, Centre for Gender & Violence Research, University of Bristol, UK
47. Catharine A. MacKinnon, Elizabeth A. Long Professor of Law, University of Michigan, James Barr Ames Visiting Professor of Law (long term), Harvard Law School, Special Gender Adviser to the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court, 2008-2012 (affiliations for identification only)
48. Professor Jeffrey Masson, New Zealand
49. Kristina Massey, Lecturer in Criminal Psychology, Canterbury Christchurch University, UK
50. Professor Roger Matthews, Professor of Criminology, University of Kent, UK
51. Dr Melanie McCarry, Guild Research Fellow, School of Social Work, University of Central Lancashire
52. Professor Hiroshi Nakasatomi, University of Tokushima, Japan
53. Dr Izabela Naydenova, Lecturer, School of Physics, College of Sciences and Health, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland
54. Dr Caroline Norma, Lecturer in Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Australia
55. Dr Monica O'Connor, Independent Researcher, Ireland
56. Ruth Phillips, doctoral researcher, London Metropolitan University, UK
57. Dr Jane Pillinger, Independent Researcher and Policy Advisor, Ireland
58. Professor Keith Pringle, Professor in Sociology with a specialism in social work, Uppsala University, Sweden; Adjunct Professor, Aalborg University, Denmark; and Honorary Professor, University of Warwick, UK
59. Dr Kaye Quek, Lecturer in Political Science, University of Melbourne and RMIT University, Australia
60. Jody Raphael, Visiting Professor of Law, De Paul University College of Law, US
61. Professor Janice G. Raymond, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, US

62. Dr Emma Rush, Lecturer in Ethics and Philosophy, Charles Sturt University, Australia
63. Nicola Sharp, Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
64. Professor Helena Sheehan, Professor Emerita, Dublin City University, Ireland
65. Dr Olivia Smith, Lecturer in Criminology, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
66. Dr Mary Sullivan, Independent Researcher, Australia
67. Dr Jackie Turner, Research Fellow, London Metropolitan University, UK
68. Dr Meagan Tyler, Lecturer in Sociology, Victoria University, Australia
69. Dr Bridget Vincent, McKenzie Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, Australia
70. Max Waltman, PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden
71. Professor Nicole Westmarland, Co-Director, Centre for Research on Violence and Abuse, Durham University, UK
72. Dr Rebecca Whisnant, Associate Professor in Philosophy and Director of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Dayton, US
73. Dr Emma Williamson, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Gender and Violence Research, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, UK
74. Nusha Yonkova, doctoral researcher, School of Social Justice, University College Dublin, Ireland
75. Dr Eileen Zurbriggen, Professor of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz, US