

FEMINIST CURRENT



Feminist Current was founded by Meghan Murphy, a freelance writer and journalist who has been actively engaged in the feminist blogging community since 2010 and has been producing feminist radio since 2007. Meghan is from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, holds a Masters degree in Women's Studies from Simon Fraser University and is completing a graduate degree at the University of British Columbia's School of Journalism. You can find more of her writing in Ms. Magazine, Herizons Magazine, The Tyee, Megaphone Magazine, Good, and at rabble.ca.

EU Parliament passes resolution in favour of the Nordic model

BY

MEGHAN MURPHY

| FEBRUARY 26, 2014

<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/feminist-current/2014/02/eu-parliament-passes-resolution-favour-nordic-model>



EU Parliament **passed a resolution today in favour of the Nordic model**, which criminalizes the

purchase of sex, while decriminalizing prostituted people.

The resolution passed by 343 votes to 139, with 105 abstentions.

This is thanks, in large part, to the work of Mary Honeyball, London MEP and Labour spokeswoman for women, who drafted the resolution.

"The yes vote formally establishes

the EU's stance on prostitution and puts pressure on member states to re-evaluate their policies on sex work," **writes Maya Oppenheim in The Guardian**.

The Nordic model is not simply legislative, but calls on countries who adopt the model to set up exiting programs in order to support women who want to leave prostitution and help them find affordable housing and other employment. "Better education and reducing the poverty that forces women and children into prostitution, are needed to prevent prostitution," **MEPs add**.

This model has been extremely successful in Sweden, where the law was enacted in 1999, after 30 years of research into the reality of prostitution. Prostitution has decreased drastically in Sweden and while one in eight men used to buy sex, that number has now been reduced to one in 13. Norway and Iceland have both adopted the legislation (Finland has a lighter version of it), and France recently passed a bill in Parliament in support of the model (which still needs to pass the Senate).

This resolution shows a clear position on prostitution -- one that supports human rights and gender equality and acknowledges that prostitution happens because of marginalization and systems of power -- not "free choice."

We've learned from other countries that have experimented with legalization, such as Germany and Holland, that the result is increased trafficking, exploitation, and violence. The illegal industry has thrived under legalization, to the point where many brothels and "windows" in the famous red-light district of Amsterdam have been shut down after having been taken over by organized crime. The myth of a "safe, legal industry" as been shown to be nonexistent, as prostitution is exploitative by nature and promotes power imbalances between men and women.

Not only a gender issue, prostitution is something that impacts marginalized women of colour and poor women in particular, both in first world countries like Canada, as well as globally. Prostitution builds on Canada's legacy of colonialism, as **European men were the first to establish brothels in what is now known as Canada**, filling them with Indigenous women. The sex industry, in general, profits from and maintains racist and sexualized stereotypes about women of colour and preys on impoverished women and girls, in particular those who come from abusive homes and are **groomed for prostitution since they were young**. Canada, as well as other countries, should take note -- there are no excuses for ignoring this abhorrent abuse of the human rights of women and girls.