



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Legalized Prostitution and its Impact on Sex Trafficking in the Netherlands

Sarah Goodstine, Ariel Leichter-Maroko, Brett Perala, Melanie Zatarski

“That prostitution exists is a given fact, even for the government. That requires a realistic approach, without moralism.” --Dutch Minister of Justice, 2000.

I. Introduction

Our research has focused on the central question of whether legalized prostitution reduces the incidence of sex trafficking in the Netherlands. We took a two-pronged approach to assess this issue: First, we asked how the legalization and regulation of prostitution impact the Netherlands’ status as a destination country for trafficked women and, further, whether Dutch enforcement mechanisms are effective in preventing trafficked women from entering its sex industry. Second, we asked about the Netherlands’ role in global organizations such as the European Union’s and the United Nations’ fight against sex trafficking.

Our research strategy included conducting interviews with former prostitutes, senators, journalists, prosecutors, heads of support groups for trafficked women, professors and city officials. We found that pragmatism, rather than morality guide the Dutch prostitution laws, and that these laws in fact enable resources to be efficiently allocated to the reduction of sex trafficking.