

Prostitution, and the law in the EU, notes for RWF April 15-17 2016

- 1) In the majority of the countries of the EU prostitution is legal, except with some conditions like in the UK. (Currently it is illegal here to kerb crawl, solicit or keep a brothel.) Since a recent change it is now illegal just in Northern Ireland to pay for sex, the “Nordic model” which also applies to some of the Scandinavian countries
- 2) The “Nordic model” only criminalises the customer, and is based on the view that all prostitution is abuse of male power in a patriarchal society.
- 3) The “Dutch model” where the red light district is seen as a tourist destination, sees prostitution as a business like any other, but does assume that “sex workers” have chosen that profession.
- 4) A form of the Dutch model has been adopted in Leeds where a specific zone where soliciting and kerb crawling are not illegal has been in force since 2012.
- 5) Decriminalising “sex work” completely has not been adopted in the EU, although Jeremy Corbyn recently suggested this, but has been the case in New Zealand since 2003.
- 6) Undoubtedly there is a big problem with trafficking of young women, particularly from Eastern Europe for the sex trade, and this is a very lucrative business for some. What model would be best way of eliminating this?
- 7) Speaking philosophically perhaps we should ask what purpose the law should serve in a civilised society, is it protection for the prostitutes, the punters or the local community?
- 8) Also do we believe that the “oldest profession” should continue to exist, it is interesting that even though a minority of sex workers are male these are mostly used by male punters.