

# Fempower.

Magazine published by the European Information Centre Against Violence / WAVE Office – a DAPHNE Programme Project

## FOCUS

### Slavery in the 21st Century

## NGO ACTIVITIES

### V-Day 2001: Halt Violence

## NEW PROJECTS

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## FOCUS

### Slavery in the 21st Century

It is not all that important to know precisely how many women have fallen victim to trafficking. Nevertheless, even conservative estimates of the current figure show that this is one of the most frequently committed human rights violations. According to the EU Commission, 500,000 women in Western Europe alone have been subjected to trafficking. Estimates of the global total of victims of trafficking in persons vary widely, from 4 to 40 million people. Most of them are women.

Trafficking in human beings is a modern-day form of slavery and constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights. This does not deter most countries from consigning it to the area of "organised crime", with the result that the women concerned become multiple victims. They fall into the hands of unprincipled traffickers who generally entice them to the West with fraudulent promises and then earn vast sums of money with their "merchandise". Most of the victims are then forced into prostitution but see none of their earnings, which are kept by the trafficker or pimp "in partial payment of their debts". In many countries prostitution is pro-



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# Editorial

The WAVE Network's co-ordination office is undergoing a major transformation. Under the auspices of a two-year DAPHNE project it will be turned into a European Information Office against Violence. The focus will continue to be on mutual assistance, co-operation and networking among the various women's support organisations and on the prevention of male violence against women. However, the services provided by WAVE will also be made available to new target groups like women survivors of violence, research scientists, the media and state bodies and institutions.

In our capacity as a European Information Office against Violence we will be publishing a newly designed Magazine three times a year and will be inviting experts, staff members of women's support organisations, research scientists and survivors to submit articles on special topics or selected themes. The magazine's title, FEMPOWER, reflects its underlying thrust: to empower women.

The first issue is devoted largely to the issue of trafficking in women, a problem whose alarming dimensions call for international action.

*Verena Kaselitz*  
*Birgit Appelt*  
The Editors

hibited by law, so that the women find themselves branded as criminals. They usually live illegally in the destination country and have neither papers nor residence permit, let alone the right to work. If the police pick them up, they are charged and/or deported. And when they return home, they are in most cases rejected by their families and social environment because they no longer rank as “respectable”.

How is the international community responding to this violation of human rights? And what is the European Union doing in view of the fact that in recent years trafficking in women, far from decreasing, has been sharply rising in Europe? Very gradually – and largely thanks to the tireless PR work and lobbying of NGOs in the women’s and human rights fields – human trafficking and trafficking in women are coming to be perceived as a human rights violation and not merely as organised crime. Slowly but surely people are realising that alongside the perpetrators there are victims. Nevertheless, it is still a fact that the victims are apprehended but the perpetrators usually go free. Restrictive immigration laws not only exacerbate the plight of the victims but indirectly lay the foundations for human trafficking and trafficking in women.

Both the protection of the victims and strategies to deal with the problem should have featured on the political agendas of many countries years – if not decades – ago. Since the year 1949 the international community has been passing one convention after another designed to halt this form of slavery (see the sidebar). Many states have become signatories to these conventions, thereby pledging to take effective action.

Finally, as the third millennium gets under way, it looks as if initial steps are being taken. In September 2000 the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings was established as part of the EU Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe (<http://www.stabilitypact.org>). In 1999 the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) drew up a Global Program against Trafficking in Human Beings ([http://www.undcp.org/trafficking\\_human\\_beings.html](http://www.undcp.org/trafficking_human_beings.html)).

On March 8, 2001, to mark International Women’s Day, EU Commissioner António

Vitorino published a “Comprehensive European Strategy on Trafficking in Women” ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice\\_home/news/8mars\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/8mars_en.htm)). The EU’s activities have hitherto focused on legal and police action, but in future the Union plans to turn its attention more to prevention and will thus provide greater support for agencies and NGOs. The EU Commission has issued a statement containing the noteworthy observation: “There is also a clear need to tackle this problem from the angle of promoting gender equality.”

#### The following EU programmes support measures to combat trafficking in women:

- **STOP**  
([http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice\\_home/project/stop\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/stop_en.htm))
- **DAPHNE**  
([http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice\\_home/project/daphne/en/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/daphne/en/))
- **Phare**  
(<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/index.htm>)
- **Tacis**  
([http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/tacis/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/index.htm))
- **EQUAL**  
([http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/equal/index.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index.cfm))
- **European Social Fund**  
([http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/esf2000/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf2000/index.htm))

#### The following organisations are at the forefront of the fight against trafficking in women / human beings:

- **International Human Rights Law Group**  
(<http://www.hrlawgroup.org>)
- **Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV)**  
(<http://www.bayswan.org/FoundTraf.html>)
- **Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women**  
(<http://www.inet.co.th/org/gaatw/>)
- **La Strada**  
(<http://www.ecn.cz/lastrada/> and <http://www.brama.com/lastrada/>)
- **Foundation for Women**
- **Asian Women’s Human Rights Council**  
(<http://web.tiscalinet.it/WIN/044.html>)
- **Ban ying** (<http://www.ban-ying.de>)
- **Fundación Esperanza**  
(<http://www.fundacionesperanza.org.co>)
- **KOK – German NGO Network Against Trafficking in Women**  
([kok.Potsdam@t-online.de](mailto:kok.Potsdam@t-online.de))
- **International Organisation for Migration**  
(<http://www.iom.int>)
- **Anti-Slavery International** (<http://www.antislavery.org>)

### **UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949)**

Article 1: The Parties to the present Convention agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passions of another:

(1) Procures, entices or leads away, for purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person;

(2) Exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person.

Article 2: The Parties to the present Convention further agree to punish any person who:

(1) Keeps or manages, or knowingly finances or takes part in the financing of a brothel;

(2) Knowingly lets or rents a building or other place or any part thereof for the purpose of the prostitution of others.

Weaknesses: prostitution is depicted as fundamentally immoral and impermissible; the Convention fails to cite other forms of exploitation such as domestic staff or trafficking for the purposes of marriage. Very weak enforcement mechanisms.

### **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)**

Article 6: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

#### **General Recommendation No. 19 of the CEDAW Committee**

Article 6 Para 13: States Parties are required by article 6 to take measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of the prostitution of women.

### **UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)**

Article 2 lists "trafficking in women and forced prostitution" as a form of violence against women.

### **UN Platform for Action / Beijing Declaration (1995)**

§ 131 lit b calls on governments to "take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialised sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures;"

### **UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime / Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)**

This is the first internationally applicable definition of trafficking in persons:

Article 3 (a): "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) (...) shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used; (...)

NGOs have criticised this protocol primarily on the grounds that it does not require governments to provide any support to the victims of trafficking in persons. It also fails to state that trafficked persons should be treated differently from undocumented migrants.

### **Interpol Resolution on Traffic in Human Beings and the International Exploitation of Prostitution (1996)**

Member states are called on to make improvements to the exchange of information on persons involved in international trafficking in human beings and on illegal activities which facilitate prostitution.

Weakness: at the national level, Interpol's effective structures are barely exploited in combating trafficking in persons.

### **European Social Charter (Council of Europe, 1996)**

Article 1: Right to work

Article 2 und 3: Right to equitable, safe and healthy working conditions

Article 4: Right to equitable remuneration

Article 12-14: Right to social security, welfare and the availability of social services

Article 19: Right of migrants and their families to protection and support

### **EP Resolution on Trade in Women (1993)**

Calls for an improvement in the legal status of the victims and emphasises the need for international co-operation.

### **EP Resolution on Trafficking in Human Beings (1996)**

Point 18 refers to a key demand being made by NGOs: "[The European Parliament] believes that granting immigrant women the right to residence permits distinct from those of their spouses and work permits for the territory of the Union is a means of helping to prevent the traffic in women."

# La Strada: Prevention of Trafficking in Women

by Iveta Bartunkova

In the early nineties countries like the Czech Republic served primarily as countries of origin for victims of trafficking in women. The long border with the EU countries is very attractive for traffickers planning to sell women from Eastern Europe. In the course of the nineties the situation has changed somewhat. The Czech Republic became a country of origin, transit country and destination country. There is a growing number of women from Ukraine, Bulgaria and countries of the former Soviet Union who pass through our support programme. The Czech La Strada team has developed wide experience with multi-disciplinary policies to prevent and combat trafficking in women.

La Strada ČR, o.p.s., is a Czech non-profit organisation focusing on the prevention of trafficking in women, support of victims of trafficking in women, influencing legislation and disseminating information on the issue. La Strada began its work in the Czech Republic in 1995 as a project of the ProFem foundation (Central European consultation centre for women's projects) and was registered as an independent organisation in 1998.

**La Strada regards trafficking in women as a crucial human rights issue and as a violation of women's rights.**

La Strada ČR is part of an international programme, La Strada – prevention of traffic in women, which also operates in the Netherlands, Poland, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

## Prevention or “Your body belongs to you”

Our prevention strategy is to combine two key approaches: training and informing those who are actually endangered and are possible victims of trafficking in women, and at the same time involving professionals and future professionals in the prevention process.

The prevention campaign “Your body belongs only to you” is based upon the perception

that women already have a great deal of information at their disposal but do not always use it, because many are unaware of their rights or do not know how to assert their human rights. This suggests that it is not enough to raise the level of information among women and girls. It is extremely important also to involve women in the prevention process and provide them with new skills. We encourage young girls and women to be able to act independently and make their own decisions on the basis of the information they have. We aim to strengthen their self-confidence and to inform them about the risks connected with work abroad and work in prostitution.

To bring about a real and sustainable change, we have to see prevention as a long-term activity and also involve governmental institutions and agencies in this process. La Strada trains professionals (employees of district councils, shelters, street work organisations, NGOs, education, the police and so on) who work with risk groups so that they can further spread information on the prevention of traffic in women or can give qualified support to victims. I am convinced that activities focused on improving knowledge of traffic in women among teachers, social workers, police and officials at all levels will most probably be the main thrust of prevention in the future.

## Social assistance for victims

It would be too simple to explain the mass phenomena of trafficking in the nineties only by reference to the poor economic situation in which many women in Central and Eastern Europe live. We also have to take into account the following factors:

- **Weak social systems**

In most cases, trafficking is not the first element of violence in the biography of our clients. Cases of kidnapping are rare in our work. Our clients knew their traffickers

personally beforehand and lived in a criminal environment for a period of time. Their social background was fragile – orphanages or broken families, for example.

- **High tolerance of structural violence against women**

Structural violence against women, especially in the non-public or semi-illegal sphere like prostitution is still socially quite accepted and its prosecution is not among the highest priorities of law enforcement bodies.

- **Lack of legal protection for prostitutes and foreign prostitutes**

Women working in prostitution are in most European countries not protected by labour law regulations. Foreign prostitutes, who have only a tourist visa, are in addition not allowed to work in prostitution; they are regarded as violating the migration laws and are deported. Traffickers also make use of the lack of protection for prostitutes under civil law.

Women who return from the country of forced prostitution are mostly in bad physical and psychological condition, they receive no support from their families, and in most cases they are afraid to go back home and have no money. Many do not have identity documents and are forced to wait until new ones are issued. It is natural that they do not have a perspective for the future. Many of these women are socially stigmatised and discriminated. Victims without any support are in a very vulnerable position and have literally no protection against further abuse and human rights violations.

Social support for victims of traffic in women provided by La Strada is gauged to the real, individual needs of each of the women. The assistance we provide includes anonymous accommodation, psychological support, legal counselling and medical examinations. All of this is provided free of charge. During this period La Strada also offers assistance in finding work and accommodation. The goal of these activities is to help women to become independent. Clients supported by La Strada include both Czech women and foreign women trafficked into the Czech Republic.

### **Press & Lobbying**

Since the approach adopted by the Czech law on trafficking in women is confined to police investigation and prosecution of perpetrators on the basis of the criminal code, La Strada seeks to influence both Czech and international legislation in order to strengthen and ensure the protection of the rights of women working

in prostitution as well as those who have become victims of trafficking in women.

We aim to promote legal protection for trafficked women. We set out to formulate the problem of trafficking in women in political language, talk to political decision-makers, inform the media and seek for partners among other NGOs.

Even though there are now numerous conferences on trafficking, Europe still does not have a joint policy on the prevention of trafficking in women. As a result, the definitions of trafficking in women are becoming blurred: TIW is taken to refer to smuggling human beings, illegal migration, and illegal prostitution by foreigners. As a result, political measures tend to address different and sometimes contradictory issues.

We are convinced that effective measures against traffic in women can be found only if we focus on the situation of the victim and apply political instruments gauged to their needs. That means implementing political measures within the penal code but also and most of all under civil law. New cases of trafficking can be prevented not only by prosecuting criminal offenders but also by providing effective support to trafficked women, such as guaranteed resident status, access to health and other social services, and opportunities for safe repatriation.

We have also been building up an archive of legal and political documents related to the topic of traffic in women and forced prostitution. These materials are available to legislators, students and journalists.

### **Future plans**

As the oldest Czech NGO working in the field of the prevention of trafficking in women, we would like to use our expertise to continue working as a centre providing immediate social assistance to victims, giving lectures and information to women and girls at risk, and acting as trainer for NGOs and GOs. At the same time the Czech team will support and coach the activities of its new partner organisation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this co-operation, the main focus will be on supporting the partner country to develop and implement its own national programme of prevention of traffic in women.

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# Call on Governments to Take Action Against Trafficking

International Conference on Trafficking in Women and Prostitution in Stockholm, February 2-4, 2001

The speakers at the conference on trafficking in women and prostitution, organised by ROKS, did not mince their words. Trafficking and prostitution are inseparable, and both constitute a widespread form of violence against women that is still on the increase. Researchers outlined the results of the latest studies on the subject to document the extent and the urgency of the problem. These findings were supplemented by the experience of women activists working in the field.

Asta Håland of the Norwegian women's organisation Ottar presented some alarming facts and figures. In the Russian city of Murmansk close to the frontier with the Nordic countries, for instance, there are currently 190 brothels. Sex services are openly advertised on television and in the press. The participants of a round table discussion criticised that many governments – notably in the transition states of Eastern and

South-eastern Europe – were insensitive to the problem of sex industry, which further obstructed the work of the support organisations.

State policies came in for harsh criticism from the researchers who addressed the conference. Sheila Jeffrey reported that, although most Australian states had legalised brothels, the number of illegal brothels exceeded that of their legal counterparts. Julie Bindel of the University of North London (UK) was highly critical of the health policy pursued by the British government which, she said, showed no interest in helping women to get out of prostitution. The main thrust of its policy consisted in distributing condoms and clean needles (for the many drug addicts among prostitutes).

The conference closed with the reading of a declaration which we reproduce in abridged form below.

## Declaration of Stockholm

Adopted by the International Conference on Men's Violence against Women,  
Focusing on Prostitution and Trafficking in Women, Stockholm, February 2-4, 2001

hosted and organised by

**The National Organisation for Battered Women in Sweden (ROKS)**

The International Conference on Men's Violence against Women with the focus on Prostitution and Trafficking, attended by 300 participants from Europe and other regions of the world, which took place in Stockholm during the Swedish Presidency of the European Union, issues the following declaration:

Concerned that prostitution and trafficking are serious international crimes of male violence against women constituting severe barriers to women's equality and fulfilment of their human rights,

Alarmed especially at recent developments where thousands of women from Eastern Europe, the Baltics and Russia have been trafficked into the sex industry (...),

Concerned that increasing numbers of women and children are being made into sexual instruments for men's pleasure,

Concerned that international campaigns against trafficking for sexual exploitation will not be successful unless we combat the system of prostitution which includes traffickers, recruiters, pimps and buyers,

Deeply concerned about the harm to women and children, especially girls, that is made invisible when prostitution is accepted and tolerated as inevitable, as work, as a choice, as a solution to women's poverty, as sexual liberation, as a form of women's empowerment,

Concerned that the gap between rich and poor and the growing economic, social and political inequality between men and women in many parts of the world create the conditions for prostitution and trafficking,

[...]

Deeply concerned that a large number of women and children in prostitution have been sexually abused as children

Recalling the 1949 Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and Article 6 of the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Welcoming United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol on the Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and, in particular, its definition of trafficking, urging countries to harmonise their national legislation on trafficking in accordance with its provisions,

Calling to mind the Violence against Women Act (Kvinnofridspropositionen), implemented by the Government of Sweden, which prohibits the purchase of sexual services as a violation of women's equality

[We urge] countries to re-establish the connections between prostitution and trafficking to combat the trend to legalise / regulate prostitution as work and to put prostitution on the political agenda

[We call] upon governments, in particular in the Nordic countries, to combat prostitution and trafficking by focusing on the demand for prostitution and to draft new legislation that penalises not only the traffickers and pimps but also the men who buy women for the sake of prostitution

[We urge] more governments to fund women's NGOs in developing countries and countries in financial and political crisis so that projects promoting gender equality are not mainly financed by countries which have legalised the system of prostitution

[We urge] governments to ensure that their national development policies do not intensify the marginalisation of women and place them at the risk of sexual exploitation

[We encourage] governments to provide adequate resources, such as financial aid, shelters, legal advocacy, medical assistance and alternatives for victims of trafficking and prostitution

[We urge] governments not to treat trafficked women as illegal migrants who should be automatically deported from the country

[We call] upon governments to make available temporary and permanent residence and to provide for the voluntary and safe return of victims of trafficking.

# "In Defence of Morality?". A Critical Appraisal of Austria's Legislation on Prostitution

by Iris Kugler

Some years ago Austrian judge Lilian Hofmeister formulated a succinct definition of the role which prostitution plays in our society. In her perception, there is a preponderant view of the way women are required to be:

*Patriarchal society classifies women under two categories: those who are deemed "respectable" (aka "decent") and those who are considered "not respectable". Respectable women are consigned to the private sphere as their apt working environment, and here they perform unpaid household, nursing and educational tasks. Self-effacement ranks as a virtue here. By contrast, prostitutes work in the public arena, where they are degraded to the status of sexual objects, dispensers of gratification. Their services are available on demand for any male member of the patriarchy at any time, on payment of an agreed "pittance". Their bodies are marketable commodities, for sale at the going rate. The women in these two groups, having been set up as rivals (!), are reluctant to have anything to do with each other. They are incapable of developing solidarity.*

Hofmeister's perceptions may point to an explanation of the problem that women tend to be diffident in stating their demands frankly in public. By so doing, they would be running the risk of losing their classification as "respectable" and thus forfeiting any standing they had in society. How many women actually do stand up in public and voice their demands loud and clear? In terms of the individual working women, the above fear may well be the underlying cause of unequal pay for equal work.

This is an instance of double standards in moral judgement, and at the same time it un-masks the true attitudes that have gone into

the formulation of legislation on prostitution. A respectable society must be protected from its immoral components. What the legislators have overlooked is that, in the context of a free market economy, supply only ever occurs in response to demand. Neither in Austria nor in other European countries (with the exception of the Netherlands) has any attempt been made to resolve this internal contradiction. The restrictive measures imposed are not designed to protect the sex worker or uphold her safety, her right to sexual self-determination or her dignity, but rather to impose society's idea of moral rectitude, to safeguard the respectability and safety of society.

Migrant women who opt for sex work because they have virtually no alternative means of earning a reasonable living must thus contend with a threefold discrimination: as women, as foreigners and as sex workers. The upshot of this stigmatisation is that they are assigned a legal status comparable to that of slaves in the ancient world. If they fall victim to a criminal offence, they cannot even report it to the police unless they are in possession of a valid residence permit.

Austria recently introduced legal provisions by which a migrant woman can be given a residence permit if she declares herself willing to testify in court proceedings relating to organised crime. However, this residence permit is limited, valid only until she has given her testimony. Moreover, it does not go with a work permit. As a result, migrant women who choose this option live in constant fear of being deported.

It transpires that this legislative amendment has little to do with the upholding of

minimum standards of human rights but is in fact an attempt to take advantage of migrant women. As long as a foreign sex worker has no way to register legally as such, she is barred from becoming integrated in society and has no prospect of ever changing her line of work. Because a work permit is not issued for the job description “prostitution”, a foreign sex worker can never prove that she has worked here before, a requirement for acquiring an unlimited work permit. And even if she actually works in this country for several years, she may end up having no legal rights whatsoever, in a position of total dependence on a nightclub owner, a husband or a pimp. A woman who tries to defend herself against this dependence and exploitation is running the risk of being reported to the Aliens’ Department of the police by her self-proclaimed “protector” and subsequently being deported.

A further consequence of the existing legislation on migrant women’s legal status is that it fails to target the core structures of organised crime where it relates to trafficking in women. In fact, legislation which merely envisages the deportation of illegal migrant women actually promotes trafficking in women. The increasing demand for women as sex workers generates a steady or rising income for airlines, travel agencies, owners of accommodation, pimps, protectors, traffickers and smugglers and others. The women’s dependence prevents them from demanding appropriate remuneration for their work, while a woman who is deported is immediately replaced by a – likewise illegal – successor. Thus, the system is left to continue operating unimpaired.

The Vienna-based platform “More Rights for Women Sex Workers” concludes from the above that prostitution must be officially recognised as employment, bringing with it all the requisite social security. In the case of foreign sex workers, this would mean granting them residence and work permits on the basis of an application which states “prostitution” as the source of income.

The work of migrant women is much in demand where wage levels are low and working conditions poor. The sex industry as a growth sector is generating an ever-increasing demand for new women’s bodies. As such, this industry affords a viable option for migrant women who are barred from virtually all other job openings. Work which is in such demand and is not legally prohibited should be officially recognised for what it is. In the circumstances, then, the implicit demand made by the legislation on prostitution in

Austria and elsewhere – that sex workers cease to carry out their immoral trade and find a respectable job – is the product of cynicism compounded by ignorance.

Where two parties in business dealings are unequal in terms of their economic leverage, the legislature is obliged to redress the balance and uphold the interests of the weaker party. Our legislators refuse to meet this obligation. They therefore bear the responsibility for the fact that women are catering to an existing demand, in some cases in degrading conditions. Trafficking in women will continue to thrive until the focus of attention and interest shifts to the protection of women and their rights. Any policy which sincerely sets out to combat trafficking in women must be founded upon ethical principles and human rights. The greater the measure of self-determination and protection afforded to women, the sooner it will be possible to destroy the criminal foundations of trafficking in women.

The current legislative provisions applicable to sex workers and the underlying attitudes which they reflect stigmatise women as second-class human beings. It cannot be the intention of legislators to promote organised trafficking in women by upholding antiquated laws irreconcilable with a modern pluralistic society. Most laws on prostitution – not only those in force in Austria – derive from the nineteenth century, proceed from the moral and ethical precepts of the day, and seek to protect “respectable” society from perceived “indecent”. This legislation fails to define women’s right to self-determination, their protection and their dignity as worthy of upholding in law. Such an approach cannot possibly solve the problems of our own day, nor is it consonant with the principles of human rights to which our society has also pledged its allegiance.

As long as gender relations do not change, prostitution will remain a feature of our society. Hydra, a project for prostitutes, has formulated the same point this way: prostitution is not a sickness within society but a symptom of a sick society.

Iris Kugler is a lawyer and legal mediator. She is employed by the Labour Market Service as a commissioner on gender equality. She is also spokesperson of the platform “More Rights for Women Sex Workers”, a member of the Human Rights Advisory Board in the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, and editor of the periodical “Juridikum”.

# Tell it like it is – New Video on Role Stereotypes

Sharon has put together a video diary, and Darren is asked to give a commentary on it. On her way to school, says Darren, Sharon is greeted by people she knows. The same video sequence with Sharon's own commentary shows that she has to cope with "the usual hassle from men in the street". She also avoids taking the shortcut through the park, because it could be dangerous for girls. Sharon is just as wrong about Darren's video diary: she identifies a group of boys as his friends, although in fact Darren feels terrorised by them.

This new short animated video from the Leeds Animation Workshop vividly illustrates the daily problems – like gender stereotyping and bullying – experienced by 11 to 15-year-old teenagers. The video is intended as a starting-point for discussions in schools and youth groups. The aim is to prompt a critical attitude to role stereotypes, peer pressure and male and female behaviour patterns, which can ultimately be the roots of violence in relationships. The video also sets out to encourage girls and boys to talk about their feelings and to form their own opinions and stick to them, as the video's title suggests: "Tell it like it is!"

The video "Tell it like it is" can be ordered from:

Leeds Animation Workshop  
45 Bayswater Row  
Leeds, LS8 5LF, England  
Tel & fax: +44 (0)113 248 4997  
E-mail: law@leedsanimation.demon.co.uk  
Website: <http://www.leedsanimation.demon.co.uk>

## NGO ACTIVITIES

# V-Day 2001: Halt Violence

by Colette De Troy

Ideas, multimedia presentations, theatrical and musical performances, brainstorming, the elaboration of action plans, and an exchange of views among women from all cultures: that was V-Day 2001. Women from forty-six countries gathered in New York on February 10. Some came in jeans, others in saris; there were militants among them, and representatives of organisations, and stars, and women who had themselves been victims of violence. Despite their different backgrounds, they were united by one common aspiration: to combat violence

against women, to say "It's enough", to mobilise resources, to improvise, and to act – and to go on acting until violence against women has stopped.

### Why V-Day?

"V-Day evokes a vision of a world in which all women and girls can live in freedom and safety, in dignity and on an equal footing with men. It enshrines the conviction that life is there to be led as a creative and competent individual, not as an exercise in coping with victimisation and the aftermath of outrage. V-Day is a

demonstration of determination to halt violence against women and a catalyst in the process of sensitising the public at large to the issue.” The vision was the brain-child of actress and dramatist Eve Ensler, playwright of “Les Monologues du Vagin” which has been translated into numerous languages and performed successfully the world over. Prior to writing the play, Eve Ensler interviewed thousands of women and was shocked by the extent of violence inflicted on so many women. She made up her mind to launch a movement and to put on V-Day as a day of celebration and victory over violence.

### **Action against rape**

This year’s V-Day, February 10, brought together the finalists in the competition “Stop Rape”. The competition, which was held world-wide, was designed to generate original, innovative, effective and viable ideas and strategies which do not require large budgets. Twelve regional co-ordinators distributed information on the competition and selected the five best action plans from their regions. The sixty projects were then presented in New York, three of them being awarded the funding needed for their implementation.

V-Day had thus begun to make an impact internationally even before the final round of the competition. Although the finalists came from widely differing geographical backgrounds, the basic treatment of the subject had much in common. Virtually all of the entries focused on breaking the silence: in spectacular fashion in Pakistan, where a chain of women would cry out one after the other against violence; by a barrage of various noises as in the Philippines; by the synchronised smashing of plates accompanied by shouts of “I am not a victim” in Russia; or soundlessly in Finland, by sending messages against rape via mobile phones.

### **The European finalists**

The entries submitted from Europe varied widely in their approaches, involving artistic concepts, modern media or grass roots educational strategies in schools or on the streets. It was difficult to select only five finalists from so many entries. In the end the choice fell on those submissions which envisaged concrete action over a specified time period capable of being transferred from one context to another and of being implemented with a limited budget. The following five European projects were selected for presentation during the V-Day programme:

**1. Thelma & Louise, the anti-rape bus** (Irène Zeilinger, Belgium): Thelma and Louise in this case are two militant activists prepared to go from town to town for a period of three months with their bus, which houses an itinerant display (videos, books, posters). The target audience is women of all ages and backgrounds who would learn about various ways of protecting themselves (first and foremost techniques of self-defence). The campaign would receive coverage by the media and in the Internet.

**2. Urban action points against rape** (Cristina Erviti Zabalda, Spain): Large “V” emblems would be set up at the most heavily frequented places in cities as a symbol of the fight against rape and to mark an information point, to enhance public awareness of the issue and to involve the authorities in the campaign. The information points would provide factual information about rape, both in the country concerned and world-wide, and also offer support services and document ways and means of ensuring that the crime of rape does not go unpunished.

**3. V-Day logos transmitted by mobile phone** (Kati Arhippainen, Finland): This idea, evolved in the country of the mobile phone, initially involves distributing V-Day logos to put on your mobile phone or to send to your acquaintances. In the second phase, these logos would be sent to men, inviting them to give financial support to anti-rape campaigns and/or getting them to have anti-rape logos and slogans on the displays of their mobile phones.

**4. Interactive display to break down stereotypical preconceptions** (Sonia Abdesslem, France): This travelling display would show photographs of people in various locations and situations: a war scene, a marital bedroom, a public park, an empty carpark, a police station and so on. Visitors would be given a slip of paper and asked to write the percentage of rapes which they think occur in each location/situation. After they have seen the display, they are given a card containing the correct percentages. The display would thus reveal the true extent of sexual violence and more particularly convey the message that rape is not merely an offence committed by “criminals” but is a social phenomenon arising out of men’s proprietary attitude towards women’s bodies.

**5. “Bread bags: rape – no way (*kommt nicht in die Tüte*)”** (Silke Pillinger, Germany): The original slogan makes use of a pun on the idiomatic German

expression kommt nicht in die Tüte, meaning “no way!” but also literally “doesn’t go into the bag”. The campaign centres on the bags used for wrapping loaves of bread – everyday objects – and sets out to enhance men’s and women’s awareness of rape as an outrage but also as an everyday occurrence. The bags establish the commonplace associations of bread wrappers and violence against women, illustrating the fact that most cases of rape are committed by men known to the victims, generally within the family. Printed on the bread wrappers would be provocative slogans with a startling content such as: “In this country every second woman suffers from migraine, every third woman prefers cereals for breakfast, and every fifth woman is a potential rape victim”. The printed messages would also include telephone numbers for information and support services. **This outline campaign was selected by the international jury in New York and will be given a V-Day budget line for its implementation.**

The competition constituted just one step in the process, but it demonstrated the will and determination in every country and among all classes of women to devise means of combating violence. We had too little time to publicise the competition adequately in advance, so the V-Day organisers have decided to continue their HALT VIOLENCE campaign this year. The competition is open again, so start drawing up your plans right away! The requirements are as straight-forward as last year: an original idea, simple, effective, capable of being outlined on two pages, submitted on a V-Day form. The entries selected for the final round will be presented on behalf of Europe in February 2002, the next V-Day.

#### Information

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Reading  
suggestions



## Two New Books on Prevention by Anita Heiliger

Last year social scientist Anita Heiliger, who works in the Gender Research and Women’s policy Department in the Munich-based German Youth Institute, published two books on male violence against women and girls which both relate to practice and prevention.

“Täterstrategien und Prävention” (perpetrator strategies and prevention) deals with the sexual abuse of girls within family and family-like structures. Heiliger provides a vivid profile of perpetrator strategies using statements made by victims in the course of interviews or documented in court records. The focus of her analysis is the victim’s perception of events and not – as so often in studies of the subject – the perpetrator’s viewpoint, which often derives from statements made in the course of legal proceedings. The only perpetrator statements which Heiliger includes in her study are those which occurred in conversations in which victims confronted perpetrators with their actions.

Heiliger concludes that perpetrators employ carefully targeted strategies gauged to the prevailing circumstances in sexually abusing their victims. What also emerges is that the sexual abuse of children within the immediate social environment generally lasts for a long period of time – typically six to nine years – so that it constitutes a serious traumatic factor in the childhood and youth of the women interviewed. Heiliger argues that preventive action is necessary at several levels. Her suggestions on prevention for victims and perpetrators will be valuable for anyone working in the field of prevention of sex-related violence.

Heiliger's second book contains the results of the study she made during the Munich campaign "Aktiv gegen Männergewalt", which ran from October 1997 to October 1998. The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether the approaches developed and applied in the campaign actually succeeded in reducing the level of male violence and dealing with its causes and if so, to establish in what way this happened and if the same approaches could be adopted in other fields and in other geographical settings. Unlike the widespread evaluation studies, this study was an instance of "action research", which focuses on the interests and

needs of the subjects and thus involves the researchers in the practical process.

In her study, Heiliger closely examines all the campaign's priority objectives, listing her conclusions at the end of each section. These mean that the experience gained can be used for further prevention work. The study itself is supplemented by an extensive bibliography of literature and documentation. This book should prove invaluable for anybody planning to launch a public awareness raising campaign.

Anita Heiliger: Täterstrategien und Prävention – Sexueller Mißbrauch an Mädchen innerhalb familialer und familienähnlicher Strukturen, Frauenoffensive, Munich 2000, ISBN 3-88104-319-5

Anita Heiliger: Männergewalt gegen Frauen beenden – Strategien und Handlungsansätze am Beispiel der Münchner Kampagne gegen Männergewalt an Frauen und Mädchen/Jungen, Leske + Budrich, Opladen 2000, ISBN 3-8100-2652-2

New Projects

## Refugee Women's Resource Project

The **Refugee Women's Resource Project (RWRP)** was set up last year by Asylum Aid, a charity which provides free legal representation and advice to refugees seeking asylum and safety from persecution in the UK.

RWRP is the only organisation in the UK to combine casework, outreach, training and research on issues affecting women asylum seekers and refugees. As well as providing expert and sympathetic advice and representation to women asylum seekers, RWRP aims through research and publications to raise awareness of the specific problems affecting women refugees and to campaign for changes in law and policy.

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# European Info Centre Against Violence

In the last two years the WAVE Co-ordination Office has increasingly been inundated with requests for information: from victims of violence or their friends or supporting organisations seeking assistance, from students in search of specific information, from women's organisations in search of project partners, from journalists requiring the latest figures on violence against women, and so on. With the help of the EU Commission's Daphne Programme and co-financing from the Austrian ministries of the interior and of social affairs and the Vienna municipal authorities, the WAVE Co-ordination Office is now able not only to pass on information but also to research the latest developments. The main goal of this Daphne project is thus to set up a European-wide Info Centre which supports and networks NGOs and public institutions (public authorities on a national, regional and local level, research institutions) and keeps them informed about relevant issues. The basis of this project is the WAVE database and website on the Internet (<http://www.wave-network.org>), which are an excellent networking and information source. In the course of the project the database will be extended to cover all forms of violence against women, and the services will also be enlarged. Other measures include the sensitising of journalists, the publication of "Fempower", a new news magazine, a brochure on standards of women's refuges in Europe, and a training course for staff of women's support services and a train-the-trainer seminar for training professionals on combating violence against women.

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Legal Issues

## Italy

### Discriminatory verdict on sexual harassment

Italy's Supreme Court has ruled that a slap on the bottom does not count as sexual harassment provided that it is "isolated and impulsive".

The court of first instance had allowed the sexual harassment action brought by a female employee against her superior. The Public Health Manager, who had threatened after the incident in 1994 that he would ruin the woman's career if she told anybody about it, was sentenced to a fine of US\$ 3,800 and a prison term of eighteen months.

However, the court of appeal (Court of Cassation) ruled that there was no evidence to prove that the man's behaviour amounted to an "act of libido" and overturned the verdict by finding him innocent.

Previous discriminatory rulings by Italy's Supreme Court had prompted protests from feminist activists and female parliamentary deputies. The most notorious case was the court's 1999 ruling that a woman wearing tight jeans cannot be raped.

# Bosnia

## Mass rapes classified as war crimes for the first time

The “Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague” has found three Serbs guilty of systematically raping, torturing and sexually enslaving Bosnian Moslem women on the grounds of their ethnic identity. This is the first time that mass rape and sexual enslavement in wartime have been classified as crimes against humanity. The verdict could serve as a precedent for future court findings – with regard to crimes committed in Rwanda and in Kosovo, for instance. In stating the grounds for her sentence (a total of sixty years’ imprisonment), the presiding judge said: “Rape was used by members of the Bosnian Serb armed forces as an instrument of terror.” The courage shown by the Moslem women from Foca, a town in south-eastern Bosnia, in testifying before the tribunal on the torture, rape and enforced prostitution to which they had been subjected was a key factor in the sentencing of the perpetrators. The tens of thousands of women and girls who were victims of similar crimes were disappointed at the short prison terms. Human rights groups in Sarajevo launched strong protests.

## Conferences

### European Law Conference

June 10-12, 2001, Stockholm, Sweden

The Swedish Parliament and the Swedish government, jointly with the Institute for Further Education of Lawyers (VJS), are organising a conference devoted to twelve topics – including Domestic Violence. The conference is primarily targeted at lawyers practising in the EU member and candidate countries and in Iceland, Norway, Russia and Switzerland.

#### Details:

Ms. Stephanie Eklund, VJS, Box 5192, S-10244 Stockholm, Sweden.

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### World Conference Against Racism

August 31– September 1, 2001, Durban, South Africa

South Africa is hosting a World Conference Against Racism under the motto “United to combat racism: Equality, Justice, Dignity”. As is customary with UN conferences, the event will be supplemented by a concurrent NGO Forum, likewise in Durban, from August 28 to September 1, 2001. The NGO Forum organisation committee is headed by the South African National NGO Coalition.

#### Details for NGOs:

<http://www.racism.org.za> and <http://www.hri.ca/racism>

For reports and documents relating to the conference, consult the website of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: [www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch)