

Translation (non-authorized) from the article:

## **Researcher to the ÅU: The ban on sex purchase creates a false optimism**

(Forskare till ÅU: Sexköpslagen skapar falsk optimism)

ÅU is the abbreviation of Åbo Underrättelser, a Finnish newspaper that publish articles in Swedish. The article was published September 9th 2014 and is written by Dan Lolax. See: <http://www.abounderrattelser.fi/news/2014/09/forskare-till-au-sexkopslagen-skapar-falsk-optimism.html>

Jari Kuosmanen is a senior lecturer (associate professor) at the University of Gothenburg. <http://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet/personal/?publicationPageNumber=4&selectedTab=2&userId=xkuoja&userName=Jari+Kuosmanen#tabContentAnchor1>

**Finish politicians that want to follow the example of Sweden and impose a total ban on prostitution should think once again. There are no facts that support the claim that prostitution has declined in Sweden since the law was tightened in 1999 according to Jari Kuosmanen, associate professor at the University of Gothenburg and the first to evaluate the effects of the new law.**

The problem, according to him, is that the politicians didn't tie together the change of the law with any research at all.

When the law making it criminal to buy sex is described as a success, this is based on judgments of police officers and social workers.

This makes for a completely faulty picture of supply and demand on sex-related services. Activity on the streets have declined, true, and is now dominated by east European and African women. But the hidden prostitution is difficult to assess, Kuosmanen says and adds that even before the change of the law, two thirds of the prostitution was hidden.

On the whole the Swedes are positive to the ban on buying sex. Around seventy per cent support it, women more so than men, but that doesn't mean that they think that the law is effective, he says and refers to his own survey.

The effects have more to do with the resources of the police than with the new law, Kuosmanen means. The number of arrests varies; sometimes they can be as many as three hundred.

If the police, after time-consuming observations, succeed in busting a trafficking-ring this leads to pretty statistics. Many sex-buyers admit immediately to avoid court and the public shame, Jari says.

- But these kinds of busts were possible also before the change of the law as pimping was forbidden also before 1999.

Prostitution has become a political issue. Mostly for the worse, he says. We have politicians that travel around the Nordic countries praising the law, without having any evidence. Instead of basing their standpoints on research they are basing it on the authorities' often tendentious assumptions, according to Kuosmanen.

He and his colleagues have for example been opposed in their work by Social Authorities when they have suggested that a center of knowledge on prostitution should be established.

- The risk would be that we would find something that goes against their goals.

When the state made an evaluation of the law in 2010, two years after Jari Kuosmanen did his evaluation, only lawyers were on the panel.

- The feeling one gets is that the instructions were; do what you want as long as you don't go against the law.

What makes him doubt at least the praise the politicians are pouring out over the law is that the supply does not seem to have diminished.

The percentage of Swedish men who bought sex was according to Kuosmanen's evaluation ten per cent in 2008, down from thirteen per cent in 1996.

- But when the question was put in 1996 it was not illegal to buy sex as it is now. And how many will admit to a crime?

Among the men that buy sex seventy per cent do it abroad. That number has not changed since the law took effect.

Jari Kuosmanen's words to the Finnish politicians are not to forget that prostitution is a multifaceted phenomenon.

All researchers in Sweden do not agree, he admits, but some of them cannot honestly claim that the law has had any effect. What Kuosmanen can say is that prostitution and everything around it cannot be opposed simply by changes in the laws.

- There are so many facets to prostitution. There are descriptions of misery but also others.

At the moment he is researching on male prostitution, in which a new kind of sex revolt can be found – to want to go against the mainstream, have fun and make money. His point is that the question of prostitution has to be just as complex as all other issues.

- If authorities and politicians try to create a simple picture their credibility disappears, Kuosmanen says, and urges the Finnish politicians to get themselves sufficient research

studies before an eventual change of the laws. Only then can the effects of the laws be followed up and a correct appraisal be done.