



## **News sheet**

January – April 2010

Resource Centre for Women “Marta” (Latvia) in cooperation with the Åland Islands Peace Institute (*Ålands Fredsinstitut*, Finland) has successfully carried out several activities within the project “Challenge Traditional Gender Roles – Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings!” The project combines both knowledge and resources in order to negotiate the traditional gender stereotypes and reduce the risk in human trafficking during the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project (January – April, 2010).

Researchers from Latvia and the Åland Islands have carried out an analysis on the direct relation between trafficking in human beings and the socio-psychological processes of individuals, which promote various prejudice and stereotypes among different intergroups.

The theoretical part of the research analyses the most effective preventative means, which could help reduce occurrence of stereotypes, as those are associated with the various experiences that the individuals have in the society in accordance with M. Brewer’s theory on social identity. The theoretical part is based on a two groups’ study – of men and women; the study questions the effect that the power of these men and women has on the behaviour of the representatives of the two groups and wonders whether the behavioural differences can be explained with gender differences. The social psychology theory on intergroups integrates feminist theories on gender equality and the rights to equal opportunities. Feminist theory and the social psychology theory have different opinions on empowerment. The feminist theory measures women rights on the society level, but the social psychology analysis the awareness of rights on the individual level. The project shall measure the awareness of rights on the individual level. The researchers took part in the introductory seminar on the boys’ and girls’ group methodology, as well as trained the participants of their organisations in understanding the reasons for occurrence of stereotypes and the possibilities to reduce those.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project dealt with active communication, preparation and distribution of information to partner websites in order to attract group members. Due to a successful informative campaign the project has attracted 42 eventual group leaders in Latvia and 14 in the Åland Islands. A successful introductory seminar for group leaders was organized in April, both in Riga and Mariehamn. As project experts acknowledge, the project flyer was of great importance when working with the group leaders.

On March 8, 2010 the Åland Islands Peace Institute (*Ålands Fredsinstitut*, Finland) organized a round table discussion on gender equality and youth work or “Do Boys Also Need Gender Equality? Challenge the Gender Roles in Youth Work.” The discussion dealt with the following

issues: gender aspect in work with the youth; boys and gender equality; why and how gender roles should be challenged?

A round table discussion on the direct relation between prostitution and human trafficking was organised on April 30, 2010 in Riga (Latvia).

Taking the topicalities and rhetoric of Latvia into consideration, which sees and evaluates the development of Latvia from the economic resources and benefits point of view, the discussion was organised to found out whether prostitution and trade in sex (buying and selling) is just a source for economy? Studies show that in various countries approximately 60 % of women, who have become prostitutes, experience posttraumatic stress disorder, which is a DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) classification. Likewise, about 60 % of prostitutes have been sexually mishandled as children and approximately 70 % of these persons have experienced homelessness during their lifetime. Thus, from the psychological point of view women (less frequently – men), who choose prostitution as their means of income, make this choice as a destructive survival strategy and therefore should be rehabilitated for living in the society already before this choice has been made.

“Marta’s” experience shows that the society in Latvia lacks a common or normative attitude towards prostitution: prostitution and purchase of sexual services. There are stereotyped opinions, that it is the free choice of women to become prostitutes and it is the free choice of men to buy sexual services. It is quite easy to promote such stereotyped thinking in the society, taking into consideration that prostitutes are already stigmatized; it is easy to enhance such stereotypes that are based on myths and prejudices in order to safeguard one’s own inner group.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project a flyer was developed, a database consisting of professionals, the media, opinion makers, the target group and decision makers is being prepared and will be supplemented during the other project implementation phases, thus starting also an informative campaign “Save the Country!”

During the project there have been regular meetings of the national management groups, mutual communication of the experts and cooperation among the project partners.

The project is funded by the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A programme for 2007–2013.

The project was started in autumn 2009 and is planned for more than two years.