



**Challenging Gender Roles  
for Prevention of Trafficking  
NEWSLETTER  
May – August, 2010**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase (May – August, 2010) of the project “Challenging Gender Roles for Prevention of Trafficking”, that is carried out by the Resource Centre for Women “Marta” (Latvia) and the Åland Islands Peace Institute (*Ålands Fredsinstitut*, Finland), provided impetus for significant discussions in the communities of Latvia and the Åland Islands, as well as facilitation of a youth forum on risks regarding trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation and existing stereotypes in Latvia.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the Project dealt with active communication, as well as preparation of information on the Project and on the group work methods for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Central Baltic Showcase Conference in Riga.

Regular group meetings of the national leadership groups, mutual communication of the experts and cooperation among Project partners was organized during the period.

Resource Centre for Women “Marta’s” social campaign “*Buy a Girl – Save the State!*” was organized with the aim to prevent trafficking in human beings and start a discussion in the society against legalisation of prostitution and for criminalizing the buyer of sexual services.

Two websites were created within the framework of the campaign: [www.meitenes24.lv](http://www.meitenes24.lv) and [www.izglabvalsti.lv](http://www.izglabvalsti.lv). These websites projected the situation in Latvia, imitating actual sexual service portals and referring to the opinion of specialists (criminal law experts, gynaecologists, contraceptiveologists) on the foreseeable economic benefits of the state, if Latvia legalized prostitution, thus making the country itself a legal souteneur and levying taxes from sexually exploited girls and women.

On June 16, 2010 the social campaign was opened on the Internet. Reacting to the interest of mass media, the State Police immediately (5 hours after opening the campaign) blocked the website [www.meitenes24.lv](http://www.meitenes24.lv) and, indicating a breach of legislative acts that forbid offering of sexual service on the Internet, asked representatives from both Centre “Marta” and agency “Baddog” to come to the police and give explanations.

At the police, the organisers of the campaign ascertained that the law enforcement institutions lack instruments to attain actual criminal digital brothels on the Internet. On June 16, 2010 the State Police opened an administrative case against Centre “Marta” for breaching the “Regulations Regarding Restriction of Prostitution”, yet at least 19 other digital brothels are still active on the Internet in Latvia.

Reacting to the attitude of the State Police, a public *Sex police*, [www.seksapolicija.lv](http://www.seksapolicija.lv) was established within the campaign. This website asked all Internet users to gather information on those sites that openly offer sexual services in Latvia.

During the campaign, a creative video “Help Latvia!” was made and distributed via the Internet and social networks.

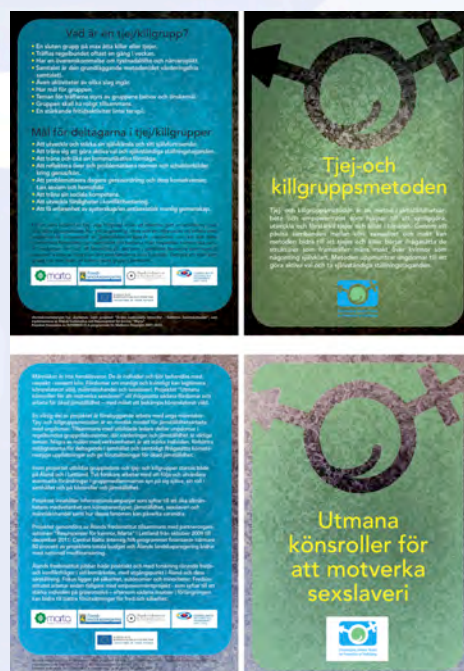
A report on the situation and the attitude of the State Police was prepared and sent out, in order to inform the international community and the U.S. Department of State, which is the monitoring institution for issues on trafficking in human beings.

The Information campaign in Åland was planned and layouted to run for an entire week in the local newspaper Nya Åland as well as on the homepage of the newspaper and the institute. A debate article was written, to be simoultanesly published in Nya Åland and Ålandstidningen.

Flyers on the project and on the girl- and boy group method were developed and layouted, to be sent for printing.

Representatives from the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) Working Group on Civil Security with special focus on human trafficking have visited the Peace Institute. The project Manager and Information Officer have given a detailed overview of the project’s activities as well as information about working with gender, trafficking and youth empowerment. The feedback from the parliamentarians was largely positive.

Lots of consultations have been made to make the method manual relevant for this project as well as to adjust it to girl and boy groups on Åland and in Latvia. The manual was submitted for translation to Latvian.



In Latvia, May, June and July were dedicated for the communication with the project partners in Åland, the translator and the educator of the trainings in order to prepare the information package for group leaders and to create a common informative leaflet for the group members in Latvia. A lot of work was done to keep the contact with potential group leaders by sending them information about the project, planned trainings and the further recruitment of group members.

On Åland group leaders were recruited through networking, e-mails, website information, Facebook and through presentations at youth events.

In August both girl and boy group leaders' trainings were organized were the project assistant, project researcher, translator and educator participated. From 20th - 22nd August a girl group leaders' training was organized in Latvia were 12 participants took part (age amplitude: 20-44 years). From 27th - 29th August a boy group leaders' training was organized in Latvia were 16 participants took part (age amplitude: 18-56 years). In

trainings the educator explained the methods in work with youth groups. The project assistant and the researcher informed about the future activities in the project. On Åland the trainings were carried out in May (8 participants) and September (12 participants).



To sum it up, the trainings for girl and boy group leaders were successful both on the Åland Islands and Latvia, and therefore can be considered a significant gain in both partner countries.



Project Research Assistant Golnar Bahar has made a presentation of the theoretical background for the research, where social theories, as well as theories of gender empowerment were summarized.

A research questionnaire and measurement tools have been tested during the deepening trainings.

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The Project was started in autumn 2009 and will last for more than two years.



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