



## Good Shepherd Sisters Ireland

# Pre-Budget 2014 Submission Focus on Prostitution and Human Trafficking.

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## **Introduction**

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is more widely known as Good Shepherd Sisters. We are an International Catholic Congregation of Women Religious.

In Ireland we are involved in a range of services, working in particular with women and children. Ruhama, which was established in 1989 was founded as a joint initiative of Good Shepherd Sisters and Our Lady of Charity Sisters. Ruhama is a Dublin-based NGO which works on a national level with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

In 2012 we, Good Shepherd Sisters made a Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality regarding the Review of Prostitution Legislation. We welcome the outcomes of that review but now it is important to ensure full implementation of the recommendations in the Oireachtas Report. This pre-budget submission focuses on the issue of prostitution and human trafficking.

## **Context.**

There are a number of challenges facing women and the factors which influence their entry into and exit out of prostitution, some of these are;

- Poverty
- low educational levels
- poor or nonexistent employment history
- the physical and emotional damage directly caused by the experience of prostitution,
- drugs or alcohol misuse,
- the prevalence of sex trafficking and organized prostitution

In the context of the above reality we made the following Budget recommendations to make progress in addressing these challenges.

## **Recommendations**

We ask Government to:

- allocate adequate resources to fully implement the findings of the review of prostitution legislation and tackle criminality in the sex trade, as manifested in the growth in sex trafficking and organized prostitution
- increase the level of weekly payment to asylum seekers
- allow asylum seekers to access the labour market after a reasonable period (e.g. six months in the system)

- allow victims of trafficking who are in the asylum seekers system access to the Government Administrative Arrangements (AA) and avail of the range of measures that accompany the AA – private accommodation, social welfare, access to education and employment
- continue funding the HSE’s Women’s Health Service in Dublin. The establishment of the HSE’s Women’s Health Service in Dublin in the early 1990’s was an important step forward in the delivery of specialized health services to women involved in prostitution
- adequately resource formal exiting programmes which help and empower prostituted women out of the sex trade
- ensure the maintenance and further development of resourced exiting programmes
- prioritize support and assistance to help those wishing to exit such as organizations like Ruhama
- provide an exemption from the Habitual Residency Condition for women who are exiting prostitution
- waive the Stamp 4 residency card fee for migrants living on low income
- maintain and develop Garda resources with the view of establishing a National Garda Vice Unit
- resource Gardai with in-depth, specialized training on the issue of policing prostitution
- we recommend that Government gender and poverty proof all measures contained in Budget 2014.

## **Conclusion**

The prostitution of women and girls is a chronic form of gender violence that has been structurally embedded in societies over the centuries. We welcome the commitment by Government to address this form of violence and ask that the commitment be matched by the resources required to make a difference.

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