

Martina Schuster, Almut Sülzle, Agnieszka Zimowska

# **Executive Summary**

## **Discourse on prostitution and human trafficking in the context of UEFA EURO 2012**

Academic study of discourse and campaigns in the run-up  
to the 2012 European Football Championship finals as the basis  
for advising decision-makers and organising media campaigns

Contact: Agnieszka Zimowska, [a.zimowska@googlemail.com](mailto:a.zimowska@googlemail.com)



*commissioned and funded by UEFA*

## Executive Summary

### Discourse on prostitution and human trafficking in the context of UEFA EURO 2012

This study focuses on the themes of sex work and human trafficking in the UEFA EURO 2012 host countries, Poland and Ukraine. It is based on media analysis, expert interviews in both countries and analysis of previous major football events. In the study, sex work or prostitution is understood as being a service, whereas human trafficking is a violation of human rights. When the two phenomena are mixed together, the debate does not accurately reflect the role of either the protagonists or the victims.

#### Framework and legal situation of prostitution in Poland and Ukraine

Prostitution is not a criminal offence in Poland and Ukraine. However, it takes place in a legal grey area and prostitutes enjoy no form of civil law protection. Stigmatisation and exclusion of sex workers is a serious problem in both countries. Ukraine has the highest rate of AIDS infection in Europe (1.6%), as well as the world's highest HIV growth rate. Prostitutes and their clients are among the most likely groups of people in the country to contract AIDS.

#### Prostitution and human trafficking at UEFA EURO 2012

Experience from previous major football events shows that fans are not particularly interested in sexual services during such events. Nevertheless, the sex industry in both host countries, Poland and Ukraine, is hoping that UEFA EURO 2012 will produce an upturn in business.

It is currently impossible to predict whether there will actually be an increase in demand for sexual services. It appears possible, since Poland and Ukraine are both popular destinations for sex tourists, where sexual services are inexpensive compared to the rest of Europe.

There is currently no evidence in either country to suggest that human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation will increase during UEFA EURO 2012.

#### Media discourse in Ukraine

Many Ukrainian media are expecting a sharp increase in sex work and sex tourism during UEFA EURO 2012.

The FEMEN activists' group in particular equates football fans with sex tourists. Its spectacular media campaign against UEFA EURO 2012, featuring large-scale nudity, is sufficient in itself to bring major football events and prostitution together in the press.

The Ukrainian media frequently report on human trafficking, often in a scandalmongering tone, but this has rarely been the case in connection with UEFA EURO 2012.



FEMEN's activities attract the attention of the international media Source: FEMEN

#### Media debate in Poland

The Polish press considers UEFA EURO 2012 to be an opportunity to solve structural and social problems in Polish society. However, football fans are often equated with hooligans. In reports on prostitution, prostitutes are viewed as medically abnormal and morally deficient, while victims of human trafficking are often treated in a voyeuristic way.

Many reports on UEFA EURO 2012 suggest that the demand for sexual services will increase as a result of the tournament. Since the start of 2010, articles on sex work in the context of UEFA EURO 2012 have focused almost exclusively on the activities of the Ukrainian women's group. Human trafficking is frequently discussed in the Polish media, but with no significant reference to UEFA EURO 2012.

#### Summary of media analysis

Links between football and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation are rarely mentioned in the press. Although one-off sensationalist reports have been published in both countries, these were countered quickly and effectively in the press by non-governmental organisations.

One problem is the image portrayed by the Polish press of the other UEFA EURO 2012 host country, Ukraine. Football fans travelling to Ukraine are described as sex tourists and all

Ukrainian women as potential sex objects. The population in general is considered poor, criminal, corrupt, HIV-positive and undemocratic.

In the international media, the FEMEN organisation dominates the UEFA EURO 2012 and prostitution theme with its topless campaigns. In Ukraine, although FEMEN receives a

lot of press coverage, its members are not taken seriously. However, in Poland and the international press, these women are quoted as experts on sex work and sex tourism. For example, all Polish media report continue to quote unconfirmed figures of between 12,000 and 110,000 prostitutes in Ukraine, which they have copied from FEMEN press releases.

## *Recommended action*

**1** ■ Since there is no proven connection between major sports events and human trafficking, prostitution and sex tourism, we recommend that UEFA EURO 2012 should not be publicly linked with these themes.

**2** ■ Experts from non-governmental organisations should receive (financial) support to help them deal seriously with the themes of prostitution and human trafficking in the media in the run-up to UEFA EURO 2012. They must be able to react to a media onslaught in order to ensure that sex work is not confused with human trafficking and that football events are not linked to human rights violations. They must coordinate views and information, particularly figures, with each other, the police and the state authorities (and, if possible, with FEMEN in Ukraine).

**3** ■ The physical safety of sex workers will be threatened if they are forced into dangerous peripheral areas by city-centre cleaning-up operations designed to separate fan miles for tourists from existing red light districts. This should be deliberately avoided.

**4** ■ Media analysis and interviews suggest that UEFA EURO 2012 has enormous potential to have a positive impact on society and to bring about changes that would otherwise be inconceivable. In addition, experience shows that international sports events such as UEFA EURO 2012 generate an extremely cosmopolitan, positive atmosphere in the host countries, an exceptional situation that must be exploited. Experts in both countries are proposing that a safe sex education campaign should be conducted, from which both foreign fans and the local population will benefit. We recommend a campaign with the slogan "Healthy and safe with a condom". Information on the subject can be disseminated via fan organisations and fan embassies. Cooperation with FARE, Football Supporters Europe (FSE) and the UEFA-backed health projects in both countries is recommended.

**5** ■ The image that the Polish press is portraying of its neighbour Ukraine in the context of UEFA EURO 2012 must be improved. This may be achieved through exchange programmes for volunteers, school classes, fan groups and journalists.

**6** ■ With the help of a sociological study on the composition of fan groups at major international football events, it is possible to counteract the image of football fans as hooligans or potential clients of prostitutes. Simple statistics concerning age, profession and gender can show that they actually represent a diverse, mixed-gender, international fan community.