Press release

The Constitutional Court confirms that a pimp can indeed become an entrepreneur in Belgium

Ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Constitutional Court has issued a disappointing ruling by declaring constitutional the Belgian law, which entered into force in December 2024, allowing pimps to employ people for prostitution under an employment contract.

The non-profit organization isala and the eight other Belgian grassroots associations that initiated the appeal against this law (*Le Monde selon les femmes, Observatoire féministe des violences faites aux femmes, Maison de la Famille-Willy Peers, Synergie Wallonie, Mouvement pour l'Égalité entre les Femmes et les Hommes, Fondation Anne-Marie Lizin, Réseau Européen des Femmes Migrantes* and *La Voix des Femmes*) remain determined to defend the rights of individuals in prostitution, against the interests of a handful of pimps/"entrepreneurs" whose business model relies on the economic exploitation of their employees' sexuality.

By ruling that the law complies with the Constitution, the Court approves a decision with severe consequences for equality between women and men, labor law, and the rights of individuals in prostitution in Belgium. To justify this validation, the Court relies on purely theoretical "safeguards" written into the law, notably the formal right to refuse a client or a sexual act.

> *"This decision is disappointing and reveals a lack of understanding of the realities experienced by people in prostitution,"* states Mireia Crespo, Director of isala. "The Court itself acknowledges in its ruling that the vast majority of prostituted persons are women yet refuses to see this as an infringement on gender equality. Moreover, after two years of implementation, the law has proven to be a complete failure, with only 17 approvals granted, confirming that this legislation lacks the capacity to improve the situation of those concerned."

The Court's decision ignores the real asymmetry of power dynamics on the ground: how can anyone claim that a prostituted woman—90% of whom are of migrant origin in Belgium—living in extreme precarity, can freely exercise a right of refusal when facing an employer-pimp who holds managerial authority and economic power over her survival? The law transforms an intermediary—whether a bar owner or a brothel operator—into an "employer," thereby legalizing and institutionalizing pimping and the ability to make a

financial profit from the prostitution of others. Allowing pimps to organize the sexuality of the people they recruit in order to benefit economically from it constitutes an intolerable violation of human dignity.

> "CAP International deplores the Court's judgment, which endorses the institutionalization of the system of sexist and sexual violence that is prostitution. Behind the rhetoric of social rights lies a true Trojan horse: the idea that the commodification of precarious, migrant women—among the most vulnerable in our societies—is legitimate as soon as a contract is signed. The experience of Germany, which adopted this same model over twenty years ago, should have warned us: the country has become a hub for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This denial of reality is a collective failure whose price is, and will continue to be, paid by prostituted persons," says Héma Sibi, Executive Director of CAP International.

The situation can only improve through the full decriminalization of prostituted persons, the criminalization of the purchase of any sexual act, the effective prosecution of pimps and exploiters, and the funding of genuine exit pathways as well as sustainable economic alternatives for those who wish to leave prostitution. Despite this verdict, isala stands firm against the institutionalized exploitation of women's bodies and remains mobilized to support individuals in prostitution and demand a genuine equality model.

In the meantime, Belgium will continue to organize and regulate access to precarious women to satisfy the sexual desires of sex buyers, who are overwhelmingly men—without questioning what the purchase of sexual acts means in a society that claims to promote equality between women and men.

The press conference will be followed by the opening of the exhibition by Colombian visual artist Erika González Ramírez: *ASIMETRÍA*, a visual immersion into the world of prostitution and its various realities through an autobiographical approach (IG: @minotauracollage).

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Note to editors

- *Ruling of the Constitutional Court: (French version: https://fr.const-court.be/126/2026.pdf)*
- *Policy recommendations by isala*
- Knack (4/5/2026), *Seksuele uitbuiting bevrijd je niet met contractuele clausules*
- Le Vif (5/5/2026), *Les dessous du contrat de travail dans la prostitution: «L'Etat a surtout normalisé l'impunité de ceux qui vendent et achètent les corps*