

## Summary

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 a new Act came into force in the Netherlands, lifting the ban on brothels. Brothels where adult prostitutes choose to work voluntarily are no longer prohibited. At the same time, legislation on unacceptable forms of prostitution has become more severe. It is a serious offence to traffic in persons, to force another person into prostitution or to involve a minor in prostitution. By legalising the employment of prostitutes the government is thought to exercise more control over the sex industry and counter abuses. This approach should be in the interest of the prostitutes themselves, and will also facilitate action against sexual violence, abuse and the trafficking in persons.

This report is the first step in the evaluation of this new Act. It is based on six studies that have been executed by various research institutes, directed by the WODC. The studies are for an important part based on interviews with hundreds of prostitutes, dozens of licencees, policemen, informers, representatives of professional services and a Dutch population sample. In this report the main results of the six studies are combined and summarised, and conclusions have been formulated.

At this stage, it is too early to draw conclusions about the effects of the new law. Firstly, this study is only the first assessment and data about the issues concerning prostitution before the change of the law are rare. Secondly, the study shows that the municipal authorities are still in the process of granting licencees to brothels that conform to all the applicable regulations. The consequence of this lag in granting licencees is that the intended changes have not been carried out yet, so it is too early to be able to observe effects. Furthermore, simultaneously with the amendment of the law on prostitution other developments have taken place that may influence the prostitution business. Therefore it is not clear to what extent developments described in this study, can be attributed to the change of the law on prostitution. Nevertheless, this report gives insight into the state of affairs in the prostitution business well over one year after the change of law.

Some municipalities have finished the process of granting licencees and started enforcement already. This results in a variation in enforcement between municipalities, which leads to differences in punishable forms of prostitution from one municipality to the other. In the regulated sector of prostitution signals of a slight improvement of the position of prostitutes are found. The punishable forms of prostitution tend to take place in the unregulated sector of prostitution (like streetwalking or mobile forms of prostitution). Forced prostitutes and under-age prostitutes are especially vulnerable to exploitation in the unregulated sector. For that matter, no confirmation has been found for an often assumed large-scale escape into the unregulated sector. Therefore no conclusions can be drawn concerning a possible increase or decrease of the number of forced prostitutes.

