

German Cabinet OKs prostitution bill requiring condom use

23 March 2016, by Geir Moulson



In this May 8, 2009 file picture , Eva, left, and Dana, right (full names not given) pose inside a brothel in Berlin. Germany's Cabinet on Wednesday March 23, 2016 approved legislation meant to better control prostitution and make life safer for sex workers, a bill that includes making the use of condoms obligatory. (AP Photo/Franka Bruns,file)

Germany's Cabinet on Wednesday approved legislation meant to better control prostitution and make life safer for sex workers, a bill that includes making the use of condoms obligatory.

Legislation in 2002 that legalized prostitution gave sex workers social benefits but led to an explosion of unregulated brothels, prompting calls for tighter controls.

The new bill, which still requires parliamentary approval, calls for stricter regulation of such establishments and those who operate them. Businesses will require an official permit that will depend on what the government calls "the reliability of the operator," and people who have been convicted of offenses such as people smuggling, blackmail or fraud won't get permits.

Operators will be forbidden from giving sex workers orders on the "the nature and scale of sexual services," while sex workers will have to register and receive health advice at least every two years.

The legislation foresees fines of up to 50,000 euros (\$56,000) for violations. It is to take effect in July 2017, a delay that the government said is meant to give local authorities time to put in place the new procedures.

"The aim of this bill is to improve the situation of prostitutes and improve their protection against exploitation, violence and smuggling," government spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

However, a union representing German police already has said it's unreasonable to expect anyone to check whether customers at a brothel are using condoms.

Cornelia Moehring, a senior lawmaker with the opposition Left Party, said many sex workers will balk at registering because of the fear of social stigma—"so they will continue working illegally and really lose any protection."

"Obligatory condom use can't be checked and is a pure illusion," she added.

Frank Kempe, a spokesman for the ministry for women and families, conceded that verifying condom use would be difficult. But he said it is important to "set a standard" that backs up sex workers demanding their use.

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