

Tomáš Kurtanský
Editor-in-chief of
Hospodárske noviny
ECOPRESS, a.s.
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820 07 Bratislava

July 26, 2007, Budapest, Hungary

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

As a Project Coordinator of SWAN (Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network) I would like to congratulate you on the opening of discussion about such an urgent and important topic as sex work issues. Even though it was done in such a controversial way and caused much disagreement on the side of your readers, I believe your newspaper will continue highlighting the developments in the area of State health and social services for sex workers of Slovakia. But I would like to point out that more articles and interviews with sex workers themselves as well as with organizations working on sex work issues could contribute a lot to creation of a fuller picture.

There are a lot of prejudices and myths around sex work, which are fed to the population. Unfortunately, in most of the cases they are ungrounded and exaggerated. For instance, the article "*Non-existing Children*" by Jozef T. Schön is an example of such prejudiced attitude. This article could have been very helpful in attracting the readers' attention to the relationship of the State, police and sex workers, and to improvement of workers' standard of living, their access to health and social services and to elimination of unnecessary negative attitude towards drug-users and sex workers as members of Slovakian Society.

Unfortunately, the language and attitude of the author created a completely negative and insulting image of already stigmatised part of population. Mr Schön forgot that the people whom he compared to animals are as human as he is, and that they have exactly same rights as anybody else. This also includes rights to one's privacy and dignity. By employing such offensive language and inaccurate data the author discredited himself as a professional and, moreover, endangered the good name of such respectable newspaper as Hospodárske noviny. And this is happening when international health and human rights organizations adopt adequate terminology and put effort to include sex workers into the life of whole society!

Nevertheless, since the discussion is open now, it will be logical to expect that the other party is given the opportunity to respond. The readers have a right to see the whole and objective picture of the situation with sex work in Slovakia. I believe specialists and sex workers themselves have much to tell and share. On behalf of SWAN, which includes organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, I would like to recommend you NGO ODYSEUS and Lubica Tornosciova as a credible source of information on sex work situation. Should you like to take an interview or have a meeting with Ms Tornosciova, please contact her at lubica.tornoczyova@centrum.cz or me, SWAN Project Coordinator at sexwork@tasz.hu any time.

I wish you all the success in building a more human and tolerant society in Slovakia through Hospodárske noviny.

Sincerely,

Aliya Rakhmetova
SWAN/TASZ Project Coordinator