

capacity
building &
awareness
raising
a European guide
with strategies
for the empowerment of
sex workers



#### **INDOORS**

Support and empowerment of female sex workers and trafficked women working in hidden places

This quide is based on contributions from the nine partners of the INDOORS project. It was compiled within the framework of the INDOORS project (January 2011- December 2012), under the coordination of the following organisation:

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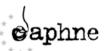
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The Capacity Building and Awareness Raising guide is part of a series of other resources produced by the INDOORS project:

- Pictures of a Reality | Sex workers talk about their life and work experiences within the indoor sex work setting in nine European cities
- Equal Rights | advocacy video
- INDOORS Outreach Report | Sex workers' working and living conditions in nine European cities
- Indoor Sex Work | Analysis and good practice manual on indoor sex work settings in seven European cities
- Safer Work | leaflets for sex workers in six languages

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We come from many different countries and many different backgrounds, but we have discovered that we face many of the same problems in our work and in our lives.



Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto, 2005



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## the INDOORS project

The aim of the INDOORS project is the empowerment of female sex workers working indoors, i.e., in apartments, brothels, massage parlours, windows, bars, clubs, saunas, other private places, and via the internet.

he project's intention is to develop strategies for female sex workers to protect themselves against violence, while giving them the means to become active agents in terms of their well-being, physical and mental health.

#### **Further objectives**

- facilitate their access to social and health services, to labour and human rights.
- empower and improve their self-esteem and professionalism.
- make more visible and audible their voices against violence, discrimination and stigmatisation.
- raise public awareness of policies that reduce the violence, discrimination and stigma suffered by female sex workers.
- enhance the knowledge of outreach workers and other professionals regarding the indoor prostitution setting.
- develop local networks of NGOs, social services and health services dealing with indoor-based sex workers.
- facilitate and expand the exchange of information in Europe regarding indoor prostitution, good practices and lobby strategies for sex workers' rights, especially their right to protection and access to justice.

#### The project

The INDOORS project was carried out between January 2011 and December 2012, within a partnership of nine organisations in nine member states of the European Union: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

The goal of INDOORS was to carry out an analysis of the working and living conditions of female sex workers in nine cities of these countries: Amsterdam, Genoa, Hamburg, Helsinki, Madrid, Marseille, Porto, Sofia and Vienna.

The project was financed by the European Union, in the framework of the Daphne III Programme of the European Commission.

INDOORS produced four final products. They are avai-lable at www.autresregards.org and at the partners' websites.

- Capacity Building and Awareness Raising |
   A European guide for the empowerment
   of sex workers
- Equal Rights | advocacy video
- INDOORS Outreach Report | The working and living conditions of indoor-based sex workers in nine European cities
- Pictures of a Reality | Sex workers talk about their life and work experiences within the indoor sex work setting in nine European cities

The INDOORS project had a previous phase, carried out between January 2009 and December 2010, also within the framework of the Daphne Programme III. It had six partner organisations in five European countries: Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Portugal.

## the INDOORS partners

#### AUSTRIA M

#### LEFÖ

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LEFÖ (Counselling, Education and Support for Migrant Women) is an autonomous migrant women's organisation that was founded in 1985 in Vienna. LEFÖ supports migrant women, migrant sex workers and migrants who are affected by trafficking. It provides a broad spectrum of holistic and largely first-language-based outreach and empowerment activities, counselling and support for legal, psychosocial and health issues. LEFÖ advocates for the rights of migrant women and sex workers.

#### BULGARIA M

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HESED (Health and Social Development Foundation) was founded in 1998 as a successor of the first organisation working in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention in Bulgaria. The organisation's mission is to create opportunities for personal and community development, health and social well-being, and to develop and promote effective approaches for successful integration of disadvantaged communities.

#### FINLAND



#### **Pro-tukipiste**

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Pro-tukipiste (Pro Centre Finland), founded in 1999, is a registered non-profit organisation which supports and promotes the civil and human rights of individuals involved in sex work. It offers professional low-threshold social support, health care services and legal advice for sex workers in Helsinki and Tampere. Services are free of charge and anonymous, politically and religiously independent. The organisation also offers training on issues concerning sex work and trafficking in human beings.

#### FRANCE M



#### **Autres Regards**

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Autres Regards is a communitybased organisation that since 1995 has worked with and for streetbased sex workers of all genders. The organisation works on STI/HIV prevention, health promotion, and the improvement of access to health services and fundamental rights for sex workers. Since January 2009, Autres Regards' work has also been extended to indoor-based sex workers.

## GERMANY A

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ragazza is an NGO that has offered support and counselling on health and social issues for drug-using female sex workers in Hamburg since 1991. It offers a consumer

room, needle exchange, meals, showers and overnight accommodation. Other activities are outreach work, harm reduction interventions. and advocacy to call attention to the situation of drug-using sex workers and their lack of labour and human rights.



#### Le Graziose | CDCP Genova

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Le Graziose, created in 2007, is the Genoese branch of the Committee for Civil Rights of Prostitutes (CDCP-ONLUS), founded in 1982. It is a non-profit association that promotes the civil and human rights of sex workers, provides information and advice on issues related to sex work, applies empowerment strategies for sex workers, is involved in projects to combat exploitation and trafficking, and supports information campaigns on AIDS, STI and harm reduction interventions.

#### NETHERLANDS



#### **TAMPEP** International Foundation

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TAMPEP is the European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers, founded in 1993 to address the needs of migrant sex workers in Europe. It operates a community development and participation model that is rooted within a human rights perspective. TAMPEP advocates for equitable access to services and support for sex workers. The **TAMPEP International Foundation** carries out EU and international projects concerning sex workers' rights, health promotion and advocacy.

#### PORTUGAL A



#### Porto G | APDES

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APDES (Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento) is an NGO founded in 2004 to promote sustainable development. It works with vulnerable populations to improve access to health, employment and education. APDES invests in the promotion of sex workers' rights and citizenship through the promotion of initiatives towards sex workers' rights and participation in national and international networks.

#### SPAIN A

#### Hetaira

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Hetaira was founded in 1995 by sex workers and activists from other professional areas, to advocate for sex workers' rights, fight stigmatisation, denounce the violence sex workers face, facilitate their organisation, and raise public awareness about their situation. Hetaira is a human rights advocacy group, offering counselling and outreach activities for indoor- and outdoorbased sex workers.

# Guidance sor empowerment



This guide is intended for the development of those who work in the field of sex work services. It reinforces the need for welldeveloped national and transnational networks to face the actual needs of national and migrant sex workers. It provides practical points, ideas and successful models to consider when designing and implementing projects/ aimed at sex workers.



apacity building & awareness raising is a European guide with strategies for the empowerment of sex workers. It was drawn up within the framework of INDOORS, a project financed by the European Union as part of the Daphne Programme of the Department of Justice and Home Affairs.

The INDOORS project originated from the need to develop different strategies for outreach projects targeting indoor-based sex workers, as well as the need to strengthen networking between existing projects and initiatives.

As a result, the project aims to promote human rights among sex workers by empowering them and those who work with and for them. In other words, this project is entirely focused on the needs of a specific group of national and migrant sex workers, of all genders, who work indoors. Because sex workers are not a homogeneous group, their needs and strategic actions to promote human rights differ.

Although violence against indoor-based sex workers occurs in various forms, it is often difficult to get sex workers to speak about it. Thus, regular outreach activities, trainings, workshops and seminars are indispensable in order to support the target group in these situations. This guide reveals some of these initiatives carried out in nine different EU countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain – and encourages and inspires anyone working with or for sex workers to develop their own programme and networking to address sex workers' needs.

This collection of capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives, created by INDOORS or related to ongoing experiences, is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. It reveals the status of national networking initiatives regarding sex work in Europe, and how they are reacting to the present challenges.

By revealing different experiences, perspectives, initiatives and strategies, this guide, as part of the INDOORS project, seeks to develop and present the efforts and experience of sex work programmes in the promotion and defence of the health, well-being, safety and rights of sex workers.

## METHODOLOGY

Given INDOORS' diverse activities and objectives, the project was divided into different work streams. This guide is the result of one of these work streams, which was coordinated and edited by the Netherlands-based TAMPEP International Foundation with the collaboration and participation of the partner organisations at all levels. Without a common strategy and guidelines it would have been impossible to gather useful information for those who work with or for sex workers in Europe.

In seeking to build the capacity of service providers it is essential to ensure that sex workers are consulted and encouraged to participate at all levels. The INDOORS partners count on the direct or indirect participation and consultation of sex workers, which makes this work relevant to the improvement of their realities. Moreover, community participation and empowerment should be at the heart of any policy in this field.

This guide is not limited to the activities of civil society, such as seminars and training sessions in the framework of capacity building and raising awareness of sex workers' support programmes. It elevates the discussion of sex work to its deserved place, in human rights-based discourse. All the organisations mentioned in this guide share the same values regarding sex work and are charged with respecting internationally recognised human rights standards.

#### Development

Each partner organisation was asked to fill out a form developed to collect different sorts of experiences and records of events which took place between the beginning of 2011 and March 2012. Guidelines were prepared in order to facilitate the collection of common knowledge. Additional information on the background of each organisation and on network building was also required in order to draw up a timeline of this networking engagement and development.

The form was then developed to allow for analysis of the national plans for capacity building and awareness raising, some of which were prepared within the framework of the INDOORS project; others related to ongoing activities in their respective countries. Given the diverse forms of events and strategies to empower sex workers in their national contexts, the form had to be improved and adjusted to support all types of national initiatives.

This guide took into consideration local, national and regional events, and analysed them in order to reveal their ability to strengthen networks that deal with the issue of sex work. Furthermore, the analysis was guided by the reported current national situation and the actual needs of sex workers of all genders, working indoors and outdoors, migrants and nationals.

In this sense, the guide is an analysis of the collation of all the initiatives of each country, in different moments of the project, between 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, it served as an incentive for organisations to bring up common agendas and discuss relevant issues for the empowerment of sex workers in their countries. Knowing that some networks are quite new and others long-established was not an obstacle for countries in presenting their results of capacity building and awareness raising. The guide is all about building up and fortifying existing networks; there is no common scale of efficiency between them. Each one was analysed within its own national context, and comparison between them is only relevant in terms of strengthening local, national, and regional networks, which are also described in this guide. The INDOORS guide presents the importance of this networking process for the improvement of sex workers' rights and participation in the region as a whole.

Each country chapter, therefore, builds upon the idea that to improve services that address sex workers' needs in an effective manner, a comprehensive coalition of networks is needed.

For this reason, the INDOORS partners present in this guide their organisational capacities and barriers and how these barriers are overcome by means of networking.

Finally, the guide encourages partner organisations to propose recommendations for other organisations working in this field, taking into account the hard task of breaking down national institutional/legislative barriers and related structural problems.



#### GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Given the aims of this guide, the meanings of networks, capacity building and awareness raising must be contextualised in the framework of sex work projects. Each of these elements helps to empower sex workers and brings their voices, opinions and ideas to the public debate.

#### Networks

Considering the fact that sex workers face violence and limitations to their rights, this guide proposes that each country should build or reinforce its own local, national, and regional networks of defence of those rights and adequate responses to sex workers' needs. These networks should be able to:

- Sensitise and train outreach workers, NGO professionals and public service providers dealing with sex workers;
- Empower sex workers, by enabling their active participation in public policies; and
- Share information in order to combat the stigmatisation and marginalisation of sex workers.

INDOORS acknowledges that each local context generates different problems for sex workers, which pose obstacles to their participation in the political, social, economic and cultural lives of their countries. Sex work itself does not generate these problems, but 'institutional structure' is responsible for their creation.

Therefore, an analysis of various initiatives will serve as an example of the different realities within the sphere of the European Union. The main goal of this is to understand, in a contextualised manner, how countries build their own strategies of capacity building and awareness raising. What are the limits? What should be done? This could consequently serve as an example to other organisations that are willing to empower sex workers against discrimination and social exclusion.

The main goals of these local, national and regional networks are to:

- Encourage, develop and/or strengthen a national and/or regional network in each partner country;
- Improve knowledge regarding the indoorand outdoor-based sex work scenes and their specificities; and
- Exchange and spread good practice strategies, leading to the empowerment of sex workers.

#### Capacity building

Aware that the term'capacity building' or 'capacity development' has been used in different ways and with broader meanings, this guide will use the definition reached by consensus by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration:

Capacity development is the process by which individuals, organisations, institutions and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, it is a term understood on three main interrelated levels: individual, institutional and societal. Each level depends very much on the others in order to achieve its goals. The very idea of network building is one of the examples of capacity building initiatives.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Glossary of Key Terms (UNDP) available through the link: http://mirror.undp.org/magnet/policy/glossary.htm

When a network is able to bring together sex workers, activists, governmental institutions, public officers, and academics, it means that the capacity building process has a greater chance of obtaining good results. The intersection between all these elements of society can make the capacity building process stronger or weaker.

The level of contribution of each of these elements should also be taken into account to express this moment of collective approach and understanding. Sometimes one segment is stronger than the other, and by combining them in the network all benefit from the same status.

A fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits, and of needs identified by the sex workers themselves.

INDOORS points out the need for training sessions and workshops that can serve as tools for addressing the main questions regarding sex work. A training session or workshop should be able to point out where needs are to be met, elaborated upon or better explained, empowering sex workers against repressive measures, stigma and marginalisation.

Seminars, meetings and task forces also serve as examples of capacity building in the context of empowering sex workers.

#### Awareness raising

According to the *Principles of Awareness-Raising* study by UNESCO, 2006,



As part of a permanent and interactive communication flow, awareness-raising is a process which opens opportunities for information exchange in order to improve mutual understanding and to develop competencies and skills necessary to enable changes in social attitude and behaviour. To be effective, the process of awareness-raising must meet and maintain the mutual needs and interests of the actors involved.<sup>2</sup>

'Awareness raising' is a broad and somewhat vague term, yet one that is almost intuitively understood in most societies and cultures. To raise awareness of something is to promote its visibility and credibility within a community or society. To raise awareness is also to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal.

Generally, awareness raising is understood to be a constructive and potentially catalytic force that ultimately leads to positive change in actions and behaviours. This change may be sought by stakeholders in individuals, groups, organisations, communities or societies. For the participants of networks related to the issue of sex work, many aspects of awareness raising have to be considered in order to inform sex workers, policy-makers, academics and the general

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Principles of Awareness-Raising: Information Literacy, a Case Study. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok, 2006. Available through the link: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001476/147637e.pdf

public about the consequences of violence, factors of HIV/STI risks, health promotion strategies, social care, stigma and discrimination-related problems, such as:

- Social exclusion that results from the stigmatisation of sex workers
- Denial of access to health, to alternative work, to equal access to justice, to the right to privacy and family life, to active citizenship, to unimpeded travel and migration
- Isolation and social marginalisation

Most forums, seminars, meetings and task forces address awareness-raising situations, in order to collect opinions and evidence that could improve sex workers' position in relation to stigma and discrimination.

To raise public awareness means to inform a community about its attitude, behaviour and belief regarding a specific topic, with the intention of influencing it in the achievement of a defined purpose or goal: for instance, improving public health and social services or promoting information. This kind of awareness-raising process needs to consider sex workers' experience and opinion at all levels, treating them as experts on their field and not simply as one-dimensional characters. In other words, "nothing about them without them".

Generally, in the social context of sex work, awareness raising is significantly linked to the lack of public health and social services and promotion of rights, all of which lead to violent situations and risky working conditions for sex workers. The lack of support of governmental institutions and other sectors of society constitutes additional barriers to improving this situation, including a lack of financial support for awareness-raising activities.

Some other definitions are crucial in order to comprehend what this guide means by 'social mobilisation'. The vocabulary used in this guide to explain the countries' social mobilisation can be found in the definitions below.

#### Advocacy and lobbying

Advocacy is any action directed at changing the policies, positions or programmes of any type of institution.

Examples of advocacy actions could be raising the public profile of sex work and building support for tackling sex workers' principal needs. Advocacy and lobbying efforts are sometimes overlooked when planning awareness-raising campaigns, but can be vital to ensuring ongoing support from governments and civil society organisations.

#### Examples:

- Forming strategic alliances and partnerships with government, civil society and international organisations
- Meeting with politicians at all levels of government, but focusing on ministers and other officials with the authority and power to provide resources
- Cultivating political activists in successful campaigns
- Identifying audiences: advocacy must be directed at people with decision-making power, and to people who influence decision-makers, including the media
- Using updated data and research is essential for making decisions, devising solutions, and setting

realistic goals. Good data can be used in persuasive arguments, which is fundamental in the discussion of sex work within a human rights framework

Changing perspectives and attitudes of service providers

## Developing and delivering messages of advocacy

Different audiences respond to different messages. A politician may become motivated when he or she knows how many people in his or her district care about a certain problem. A minister of health may take action when presented with detailed data on the extent and nature of a specific problem. It is important to be able to predict results of advocacy messages, especially in the delicate field of sex work. An unsuccessful campaign can lead to worse results, and even worse laws.

#### Building coalitions

Often, the power of capacity building is found in the numbers of people who support and recognise sex work as legitimate work. Thus, building coalitions is an important thing to think about when aiming for good advocacy work.

## Making persuasive presentations

Opportunities to influence key audiences are often limited. Preparation of convincing arguments and their presentations can turn these brief opportunities into successful advocacy.

#### Mobilising policy change

During the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, held in Brussels in 2005, sex workers in Europe made use of a Declaration to state their rights<sup>3</sup>. However, it is also important to build a supportive policy environment, accompany and influence legislative reforms, encourage participation of special parliamentary committees, and develop and disseminate specific regional advocacy tools.

#### Community mobilisation

It is essential to engage sex work communities in planning, advocating and implementing programmes. It is fundamental to plan together with these communities which kind of mobilisation is necessary, and to correspond to the real needs of sex worker groups, with respect to the diversity and the different realities of sex workers' lives and working situations.

#### Partnership building

Mobilising alliances includes local government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and civil society. The work should be coordinated and collective, within structured networks, in the form of task forces or platforms.

## Mass media and social marketing

The media usually reproduce generalised discourses regarding sex work, often with incorrect information. Organisations should therefore be in touch with key

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See full text of the Declaration through the link: http://www.sexworkeurope.org/images/phocadownload/dec\_brussels2005.pdf

journalists with whom they can raise awareness by informing the general public about realistic aspects of sex work, and develop a strategy to promote behavioural change.

## Strengthening cooperation between government and NGOs

The main goal of a coalition is to make the word of NGOs valid in reality. Without a common framework for discussion this could be very difficult; this is why a common language should be used by NGOs in order to draw the government's attention to key issues of sex work. Knowledge of some social mobilisation characteristics and concepts is relevant for a project that seeks social mobilisation towards capacity building and awareness raising.

#### Stakeholders

A stakeholder is any person, group or organisation who holds an important or influential community position, and who might have an interest, investment or involvement in the issue being pursued. They are people in government and other positions of power at a national, regional or city level; local policy-makers and service providers; people in the community where projects may be introduced; and people who may benefit (or not) from the intervention. The communication and support of good stakeholders is a big step forward for the social mobilisation movement.

For example, stakeholders can be international organisations, government organisations, service providers, community representatives, human rights services, law and order (enforcement and criminal justice system), non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, private/commercial sector, and the media.



## Community participation

Community participation and ownership have long been recognised as critical to the success and effectiveness of intervention programmes. Sustained change cannot be achieved without support, commitment and involvement of the community. In the context of sex work projects in Europe, INDOORS means the participation of sex workers in the process of social mobilisation.

There are many forms of community participation which are possible within the framework of a sex work project.

#### Self-mobilisation

Sex workers participate by taking initiatives, independent of external institutions or NGOs, to change a system and/or a situation, and form coalitions with other stakeholders.

#### Participation by consultation

Sex workers are consulted and their opinions are taken into account during the process of social mobilisation towards specific actions.

#### Participation by integration into projects

Sex workers are integrated into projects on an equal level, for instance as staff, managers, social workers, counsellors, peer educators, outreach workers, trainers, etc., addressing their community's needs and actions.

#### Interactive participation

Sex workers participate in joint analysis of problems, resulting in action plans and the possible formation of new local groups or strengthening of existing ones. These groups can therefore have influence over local, regional and/or national decisions.

However, there are many possible barriers to community participation, which is why this guide intends to explore some of these factors. It is important to understand how things work in a particular sex work community.

There are many differences between countries, societies and regions and it is essential that the network be flexible about how to begin the process of community participation. In some countries, community-based organisations may not have the requisite social space and recognition due to the amount of barriers. That is why community-based organisations must be built up and supported in their endeavours. It is also crucial that involving existing organisations and networks be considered as part of the process of community participation. The underlying principle is to be flexible and involve all possible key stakeholders.

In relation to sex workers' rights, the following structural barriers need to be taken into consideration when dealing with this target.

## Barriers to community involvement

- Social stigma leads to people seeing sex workers in a negative and stereotyped light, denying them a place in society. To protect themselves, most sex workers hide their involvement in sex work. Many absorb the social stigma of shame and unworthiness, and live in fear of being exposed.
- Sex workers are perceived merely as victims to be assisted, criminals to be arrested, or targets for public health interventions, a perspective which denies the real and valuable contribution to their own communities.

- Frequently, current mechanisms of representation and consultation are closed to sex workers' communities' voices. An example of this is the scant recognition of sex workers' voices in the media.
- Criminalisation of sex work, clients, migration, and sex work-related aspects leads to the denial of freedom of association, and restricts sex workers' ability to self-organise. Criminalisation is considered to be the main barrier to sex workers' community mobilisation and representation.
- Sex workers working indoors and outdoors often have different perceptions of themselves and their work, which can hamper common actions.
- Sex worker-led organisations and communities often have reduced funding and limited resources and capacity, which impacts their ability to react to repressive trends and fight for better working conditions.

## SEX. WORK IN EUROPE TODAY



This guide is about sex work, which is one of Europe's most marginalised and stigmatised professions, even after some efforts to decriminalise it by some Euro-pean countries. The European panorama presented here serves to highlight the links between the realities of sex workers across European countries, and contextualises the region's current tensions and debates, which is fundamental to understanding the capacity building efforts implemented in each country of the INDOORS project.

Sex work is a transnational phenomenon. Hence, its capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts should be drawn and guided within the framework of cooperation of countries and regions, to support health and social promotion among sex workers. With the increasingly high mobility of sex workers, there is no other way to address their needs than focusing on national and transnational cooperation models of empowerment, which include the participation of national and migrant sex workers. The following pages reflect examples of European cooperation models that were created to address the national and transnational needs of sex workers.

The INDOORS partners observe that legislations, policies and practices regarding sex work are increasingly more repressive and punitive across Europe. Instead of laws that empower and support the independence and autonomy of sex workers and improve their working and living conditions, measures are being implemented which undermine their dignity and self-determination, violating human rights and, consequently, international treaties, which the European states have ratified and committed themselves to implementing.

#### Sex work versus trafficking

For migrant sex workers the situation is even worse. A dominant discourse conflating sex work and trafficking is being used to justify restrictive regulations on migration and prostitution. Within this harsh context, all migrant sex workers are seen as victims of a cruel trafficking network. Yet these anti-trafficking measures do not recognise that migrant sex workers are not a homogeneous group. Some authors even suggest that the creation of the 'damaged other' has

led to the justification for interventionist impulses by various sectors of society<sup>4</sup>.

In response to this debate, INDOORS emphasises the distinction between prostitution and trafficking in persons, through recognising that:

- Trafficking in persons is a blatant violation of human rights;
- Trafficking occurs in sex work and many other areas of labour:
- Sex work itself, without violence, coercion or deceit is not a violation of human rights. It is a profession that demands a complex combination of skills interpersonal, marketing, administrative and business, as well as considerable diplomacy<sup>5</sup>;
- An individual should have the right to sell sexual services and to migrate.

In regards to male and transgenders ex workers, homophobia and transphobia have a direct impact on their working conditions throughout laws that criminalise their work and limit or deprive them of their rights. Moreover, discrimination, violence, and a lack of targeted health services and outreach activities are other factors that increase this group's vulnerability.

#### Consequences of repression

In association with working conditions, repressive measures against outdoor prostitution and the rise of new forms of technology (internet, smartphones,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> DOEZEMA, J. (2001). *Ouch! Western Feminists' Wounded Attachment' to the 'Third World Prostitute'*. Feminist Review, No. 67, Sex Work Reassessed (Spring, 2001), pp. 16-38. Available through the link: www.jstor.org/stable/1395529

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The Toolkit: Ottawa Area Sex Workers Speak Out (2011). Available through the link: www.powerottawa.ca/POWER Report TheToolkit.pdf

etc.) have increased the percentage of indoor-based sex workers. Working indoors, however, has driven many national and migrant sex workers to less visible forms of sex work. Indoor settings are very diverse, some of them being very hard to reach, even for outreach workers. In this way, this European repressive legislative and policy trend contributes to the isolation of sex workers, who do not have adequate access to services, rights, information, or social protection. All these factors increase sex workers' vulnerability by denying them equal access to rights.

Criminalisation that targets street- and indoor-based sex workers, and other erotic services, also appears in this guide as a trend of European prostitution policies that undermine collective ways of working. Moreover, there is a general, increasing focus on the criminalisation of sex workers and clients. There has been greater police repression against street-based sex workers, systematic police raids of indoor premises, systematic deportation of undocumented migrant sex workers, unlawful mandatory HIV/STI testing, unjustified disclosure of private data of sex workers, and a climate of intolerance and social stigmatisation of sex workers. There has also been increased aggression, violence and hate crimes against sex workers of all genders. Ironically, new laws have put sex workers in more danger, as they and their clients tend to move into less safe work settings in order to avoid detection and arrest.

#### Continuity is fundamental

INDOORS emphasises that there is a need to be continuously in contact with sex workers in all possible indoor sex work settings, due to concerns that migrant and national sex workers, and those who

only occasionally engage in sex work, face greater isolation than before. Thus, it is important to consider the relevant impact of the European repressive trend when analysing the present indoor as well as outdoor sex work settings.

This certainly presents challenges to sex work projects, which are being constantly required to review and reconfigure their services to respond to changing environments, finding new strategies to reach out to sex workers who have become more 'hidden', as the sex industry adapts itself to constant changes in legislation, policy and law enforcement practices. In addition, the continuing high levels of mobility and migration reported in all countries require sex work projects in countries of origin, transit and destination to constantly review their services, in order to respond to the needs of this mobile population.

INDOORS was designed within this new framework and brings together community-based organisations in the context of sex workers rights' activism, all rooted in the principles of the protection of human rights and the direct representation of sex workers. These organisations deliver programmes of empowerment combined with social support and health promotion activities and advocacy, some of them led by sex worker groups. All activities are based on the principle of self-determination of sex workers.

#### Sex work is work

The European sex workers' human rights' movement has developed a common language tool to define sex work in the context of human rights. For instance, 'sex industry', 'sex work' and 'sex worker' are used as non-judgemental terms in relation to 'commercial sex' and those selling sexual services. These terms focus on the

conditions under which sexual services are sold and enable a realistic analysis of how sex workers' vulnerabilities can be reduced.

When sex work is recognised as legitimate work, sex workers have control over who they have sex with, the sexual services they provide, and the conditions under which they provide those services. It does not mean that violence is a necessary part of the job. Sex work and violence are therefore two different agendas that, unfortunately, are often brought together to justify repressive measures and increasing stigmatisation.

Abuse and exploitation may occur within the sex industry as they may occur in other industries, but this does not signify that all sex workers necessarily had or have this experience. Voluntary engagement in sex work is by definition consensual sex between adults. Non-consensual engagement in sex work is forced labour, slavery and sexual violence, and as such, it is a gross violation of human rights. The involvement of children and young people in the sex industry is sexual exploitation and abuse through prostitution, and as such, it is a gross violation of their human rights as well.

In this sense, it is important to point out that all INDOORS partners recognise sex workers' rights, without exception. These rights should be understood within the framework of each country's national legislation; however, many of these rights have their roots in international human rights law<sup>6</sup>.



 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 6}$  Human rights treaties signed and ratified by European states.

#### Sex workers' rights

This international legal framework enabled sex workers to organise themselves to consolidate the Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, signed at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration held in Brussels, Belgium, in 2005. This declaration was put together and endorsed by 120 sex workers and 80 allies from 30 countries, and is an example of a law enforcement initiative.

The Declaration highlights the state's obligations to ensure that it does not violate rights, that others do not violate rights, and that all structures of the state are organised to ensure that diverse persons can enjoy and exercise their rights. It goes on to make recommendations for measures and practices to ensure that sex workers' rights are respected and protected. In doing so, it offers guidance to organisations and institutions seeking to develop a comprehensive and rights-based approach to sex work. INDOORS is one more initiative that has its roots in the universal aspect of human rights, focusing on sex workers as subjects of rights.

INDOORS recognises that discrimination against sex workers violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity.

The project points out common violations of major provisions of human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); European Convention for the Protection of



Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR); and European Social Charter (ESC).

Violations, however, are not limited to use of force. In many cases, individual sex workers experience:

- violent health care abuses (coerced abortion, mandatory HIV testing, absence of counselling for HIV tests, disclosure of health status without consent, forced and/or denial of treatment, lack of STI treatment, and detention within rehabilitation centres);
- police abuse (physical violence and threats of violence, sexual violence including coerced sexual services, arbitrary arrest and detention, failure to investigate complaints of violence, coercion, confinement, extortion, planting of evidence, confiscation of condoms, confiscation of identity documents, threats to take away children);
- denial of social benefits (denial of general health care, denial of education for children of sex workers, denial of social welfare services, restrictions on ability to organise, restrictions on ability to communicate)<sup>7</sup>; and
- social exclusion and discrimination (denial of equal access to justice, discrimination in the labour market, barriers to buying and renting properties, denial of the right to family life, denial of the right to privacy, etc.).

These are gross violations of human rights. Every individual who decides to enter sex work is entitled to human rights under international treaties. There are no exceptions.

## The effects of human rights abuses, stigma and discrimination are multiple.

During the Nordic Network meeting described in the Finnish chapter of this guide, Jasmine, a sex worker from the Rose Alliance, brought up how official treatment of sex workers has worsened after the advent of the Swedish prostitution law which criminalises the clients of sex workers. Condescending attitudes among authority figures are rampant, she says. Personally suspected unfit for motherhood because of her sex work, Jasmine, even after regaining custody of her child, heard from the female judge on her case that she did not have adequate understanding of how harmful sex work could be. Another sex worker reported being denied health insurance benefits despite having been insured for eight years in Sweden. In this case, the authorities did not believe she understood the effects of criminalisation on her work - she was told that since her clientele was criminalised, she should not expect any income in the future. She managed to win her case and access her rights but, still, the judgement set no precedent for other sex workers to expect the same.

#### Changes in the European context

Emphasising the challenges faced by national and migrant sex workers in Europe, this guide offers tips and tools with the intention of fostering better capacity building, awareness raising and social mobilisation.

Day after day, the number of people who engage in sex work gets higher, and so does the number of nationalities among sex workers. Concurrently, sex workers, especially migrants, face a more repressive system every year.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Common Human Rights Violations Experienced by Sex Workers.

Open Society Foundations Public Health Fact Sheet. Available through the link: http://www.soros.org/sites/default/files/common-human-rights-violations-experienced-by-sex-workers-english-20110831.pdf

The majority of sex workers who work in the northern, western and southern parts of the European Union are migrants: they form about 70% of the sex worker population. In some countries, this percentage is as high as 80-90%, resulting in a very multinational work environment, with over 65 different nationalities. In the eastern part of the EU, formed by those countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, the majority of sex workers are nationals.

#### EU Expansion

The expansion of the EU has had a significant impact on migration from Eastern to Central and from Central to Western Europe. There is a constant move back and forth. The trend is to stay and work for a short period in the EU, travel back home and, after a while, return to the EU. Clients of sex workers have also become more mobile, and there are new forms of prostitution around cross-border areas.

Considering only the migrant sex worker population within the member states of the European Union, it is estimated that about 35% of them are EU citizens themselves: about 30% come from those countries that joined in 2004 and 2007, and about 5% are from the older member countries.

The other 65% of the migrant sex worker population come from outside the EU, namely: 37% from Eastern Europe, 12% from Africa, 11% from Latin America and 5% from Asia. This means that about two thirds of the sex worker population in the EU are impacted by migration policies and additional barriers<sup>8</sup>.

INDOORS takes into consideration the high mobility of sex workers. According to the TAMPEP 2009

data, about 70% of migrant sex workers have already worked in more than one country, which can mean in and/or outside the EU. Migration is often directed towards the neighbouring countries, either moving on, or going back and forth. Within countries there is also a high mobility. About 50% of national and migrant sex workers said that they had already worked in at least one other town of the country they were presently in.

Moreover, the high mobility of sex workers combined with increasingly high levels of institutional repression has generated another phenomenon: a wide diversification of indoor settings. Even traditional indoor settings had to adapt to the new reality of law enforcement in Europe. Internet, mobile phones, social media: all these tools have been highly used among sex workers; however, direct contact with clients is still the main form of soliciting. Service providers, in this sense, had to adapt their services to this 'new' form of sex work setting, which can be seen as more hidden and hard to reach than the traditional forms.

### LOCAL POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Across Europe, countries have drawn up a complex combination of social policy, criminal law and civil law in order to control sex work activities.

Historically, four different approaches can be defined: prohibitionist, regulationist, abolitionist, and legalisation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> TAMPEP VIII, Final Report, Sex Work in Europe: A Mapping of the Prostitution Scene in 25 European Countries (2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> For more information, please read the full report 'Prostitution – Which Stance to Take?' available through the link: http://assembly.coe.int/ Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11352.pdf

Sweden has recently invented a new approach which is generally defined as neo-abolitionist.<sup>10</sup>

#### The approaches

#### Prohibitionist

Seeks to prohibit prostitution and penalises sex workers and pimps alike (although not necessarily clients).

#### Regulationist

Seeks to regulate rather than prohibit or abolish prostitution.

#### Abolitionist

Seeks to abolish prostitution by penalising procurers and pimps rather than sex workers.

#### Legalisation

Seeks to turn prostitution and sex work business legal, regulated by civil and labour laws.

A main characteristic of the legal approaches to sex work, however, is their implementation, which takes place on two often contradictory levels: the theoretical implementation governs prostitution through creating national legislation measures that are most often established in the penal code rather than in distinct prostitution laws, and the practical implementation governs prostitution through implementing special (local-level) policies and regulations that highlight the actual state approach to sex work.

Sex work in Europe is predominantly discussed within the contexts of morality, violence, criminality and trafficking, but seldom within the frame of human rights,

## Criminalisation through legislation and policies

The dominant frameworks that represent state approaches towards sex work result in a set of laws that centre around the exclusion of sex workers and often make legal prostitution virtually impossible. These include:

- legal frameworks that consider pimping, pandering and procuring as crimes and thus often also criminalise sex workers' families, partners, co-workers and managers
- laws that aim to prevent the organisation of prostitution into a business or criminal enterprise, thus also criminalising individual sex workers, groups of sex workers working in collectives, and business managers
- laws that target the promoters of prostitution and also criminalise business managers who provide safe and fair working conditions
- laws that aim to eliminate 'public nuisance' aspects of prostitution by prohibiting its visible components, such as (active and passive) soliciting, negotiating, advertising, kerb-crawling and loitering, and criminalising sex workers and their clients
- laws that prescribe registration and mandatory health checks for sex workers and thus promote a public health policy that excludes and stigmatises sex workers.

labour rights, autonomy or self-regulation. The different legal systems share common elements which have similar consequences for sex workers' human rights and their access to public health and social care services.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Sweden's neo-abolitionist approach takes the abolitionist logic one step further and penalises the clients.

These regulations that focus on 'prohibition', 'prevention' (of disease, organised crime, abuse, public nuisance) and 'protection' (of the public, the family, of morals and of minors) do not consider the prevention of human rights violations against sex workers and the protection of sex workers. These regulations have a seriously harmful impact on sex workers, their working and living conditions, and their health and wellbeing. Sex industry laws and regulations should ensure the full protection of sex workers' human rights, including migrant and mobile sex workers, and assist sex workers to exercise greater control over their work environment.

### EUROPEAN NETWORKS



To respond to actual legislative trends, to fight against marginalisation and discrimination, or to contribute to the improvement of sex workers' rights in Europe, different networking initiatives were developed.

Networking is a fundamental element to understanding how European NGOs articulate and develop their capacity. Networks, however, originate in the framework of different sets of initiatives: some are developed within the framework of a project, and others are NGOs which carry out the task of networking as their main organisational purpose.

In this section, this guide provides you with the current picture of European networking in the field of sex work, anti-trafficking, and health equality issues, and reveals the collaboration of INDOORS partners in this field with other organisations across Europe.

## ICRSE | International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe

Established in 2004 to raise awareness about the social exclusion in Europe of sex workers of all genders, to promote the human and civil rights of sex workers at a national, regional and global level, and to create strong alliances between sex workers, allies and other civil society organisations. All INDOORS partners are part of the ICRSE network.

SWAN | Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Established in 2006 to advocate for the human rights of sex workers in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and South-East Europe. INDOORS partner HESED is a member of SWAN.

www.swannet.org

#### **TAMPEP** | European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers

Founded in 1993, the network is focused on assessing the circumstances and needs of female and transgender migrant and national sex workers in Europe. All INDOORS partners are part of the TAMPEP network, with the exception of APDES. www.tampep.eu

#### Correlation Network

Set up in 2005 within the framework of a European project. The overall aim of Correlation is to tackle health inequalities, and to improve prevention, care

and treatment services, targeting blood borne infectious diseases (BBIDs), in particular HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, among vulnerable and high-risk populations. INDOORS partners Pro-tukipiste, Ragazza and APDES are members.

www.correlation-net.org

## **COMP.ACT Europe** | European Action for Compensation for Trafficked Persons

A network built upon the framework of a European project, aiming to improve access to justice and to guarantee compensation to trafficked people. INDOORS partner LEFÖ is a member. www.compactproject.org

## **ENPATES** | European NGOs Platform Against Trafficking, Exploitation and Slavery

A network founded by a European project, aiming to develop an effective strategy and coordination system among relevant NGOs in Europe in order to contribute to the promotion and protection of the human rights of trafficked persons. INDOORS partners LEFÖ and Pro-Tukipiste are members. www.enpates.org

## UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX. WORKERS



Nobody asks to be assaulted. With sex workers it is no different. Although violence is not inherent to the profession, high levels of violence – physical, economic, verbal, psychological<sup>11</sup> – continue to affect sex workers' daily lives, and hinders their right to self-determination. Thus, criminalisation policies and stigmatisation processes seem to link violence directly to the work, conceptualising sex work as a violent and criminal act per se.

Depending on context, sex workers are disproportionately affected by violence, and by other factors that increase their vulnerability, such as better or worse access to health and social support, greater or lesser autonomy at work, and types of working conditions. The context of the country and its policies regarding sex work also influences sex workers' lives and their risk of exposure to violence. Gender also plays a role when the issue is violence against women, especially if we take into account that sexual services in Europe are sold predominantly by women.

Additionally, TAMPEP estimates that 6% of sex workers in Europe are transgender and a further 7% are male<sup>12</sup>. They face homophobia and transphobia as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Indicators of violence used by INDOORS mapping (2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The number of projects working with transgender or male sex workers in Europe is limited. As a result, the given estimation of transgender and male sex workers might be lower than the reality. TAMPEP VIII, Final Report, Sex Work in Europe: A Mapping of the Prostitution Scene in 25 European Countries, November 2009, www.tampep.eu

added elements of gender-based violence. Thus, INDOORS finds it important to understand gender-based violence as an inclusive term, as its effects are not limited to non-transgender females. Male sex workers and transgender sex workers are the targets of double social stigmatisation concerning their professional choices and sexual orientation or gender presentation.

Abuses against sex workers may also be related to public health measures. For example, compulsory HIV/STI testing and compulsory registration for sex workers only, as in Austria and Greece, are discriminatory regulations related to unjustifiable public health goals<sup>13</sup>.

INDOORS recognises that sex workers are frequently experts on safer sex, in spite of the myths surrounding the profession. In the European Union, researchers point out high rates of condom use: higher than those of the general public. However, the interface between performing safer sex practices and the working conditions available in many countries makes sex workers more vulnerable to HIV/STI infections. If the environment in which sex work takes place is hidden and risky due to repressive measures, sex workers' vulnerability to HIV/STIs is higher.

Thus, most of the strategies carried out by the INDOORS project take into account that violence and the threat of violence can hamper sex workers' ability to adequately protect their health and wellbeing. In many countries, sex workers experience illegal law enforcement in the form of violence, rape,

harassment and arbitrary arrest. INDOORS condemns all these violations of sex workers' rights. Autonomy in the profession and freely chosen workplaces and working conditions are crucial elements to be considered from the perspective of reducing gender-based violence, and enabling safer work and safer sex environments.

INDOORS notes the UNAIDS recommendation that all HIV prevention programmes must have as their fundamental basis the promotion, protection and respect of human rights, including gender equality<sup>14</sup>. And, in the case of HIV interventions and testing programmes, sex workers should be voluntarily and anonymously tested, and the sensitive epidemiological data, if available to the general public, should always be compared to other groups of the population. Data should not be used as a tool against sex workers and their well-being.

The vulnerability of sex workers depends on different push-pull factors which are created by structural determinants such as poverty, gender inequality, lack of access to education and employment, mobility and migration.

These structural determinants require sustained long-term interventions on both national and international levels; they are beyond the immediate influence of local sex work projects and service providers. Reducing vulnerabilities and minimising harm to sex workers falls within both their circle of influence and control.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See report: http://www.saflii.org/za/other/zalc/ip/19/19-CHAPTER-8. html#Heading3214

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See report UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and Sex Work (2009): http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/unaid-spublication/2009/JC2306 UNAIDS-quidance-note-HIV-sex-work en.pdf

Because violence is sustained by silence, sex workers' voices must be heard. INDOORS puts every effort into enabling sex workers to speak out against violence, empowering them with strategies that lead to the non-victimisation of the profession. In this way, they should be seen as subjects of rights, not as objects of rights.

## SEX. WORK SETTINGS

The European Union has seen in recent years a remarkable shift from outdoor to indoor forms of prostitution. Today, nearly two thirds of sex workers in the EU work in indoor forms of prostitution. Due to the shift to indoor sex work settings, it has become considerably difficult for service providers to establish and maintain contact with these sex workers. TAMPEP<sup>15</sup> estimates that only 30% of sex workers in the EU are covered by prevention, support and care measures.

There is also a stronger tendency for migrant sex workers to make themselves less visible, either as a means to avoid law enforcement or because they are forced to work in these locations. The majority of the new forms of indoor prostitution are underground and in secluded settings.

About 60% of national sex workers and only about 40% of migrants have control over their working con-

ditions<sup>16</sup>. This low figure for migrants correlates with high levels of violence, dependency and social exclusion, strong indicators of their specific vulnerabilities.

INDOORS aims therefore to target indoor-based sex workers to provide efficient tools for their empowerment. The most effective method of promoting services for sex workers is word of mouth within the sex industry itself. Once services have established a good reputation among sex workers, by providing confidential high-quality services that respond to their needs, sex workers will recommend those services to their colleagues. In addition, it is essential to negotiate with gatekeepers and brothel managers, to encourage them to promote sex workers' access to services.

Furthermore, there is the need to combine forces and engage in alliances for the promotion of a holistic strategy underpinned by principles of respect and inclusion of sex workers. This should be based on what are for INDOORS partners the basic principles:

- A non-repressive approach to sex workers and sex work:
- Inclusion of sex workers in the development, implementation and evaluation of prevention activities and policy;
- Health and social services appropriate to sex workers' needs, based on reducing health inequalities;
- A multidisciplinary approach to HIV/STI prevention which addresses the needs identified by sex workers;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> TAMPEP VIII, Final Report, Sex Work in Europe: A Mapping of the Prostitution Scene in 25 European Countries, November 2009, www.tampep.eu

- Expanding legal and social frameworks for dealing with prostitution based on the protection of their human and civil rights;
- Cooperation and networking on local, regional and international levels.

## ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY SERVICES FOR SEX WORKERS

#### Promote dignity

Dignity, defined as 'a high opinion of oneself' and 'self-esteem', is critical to achieving health and the social model of health that is integral to HIV prevention. This requires a non-judgemental and supportive environment, promoting sex workers' rights and challenging the stigma and discrimination experienced by sex workers.

#### Promote empowerment

Within a community development and participation framework, and defining empowerment as the process of gaining confidence, self-esteem, understanding and power to articulate concerns, ensure actions are taken to address these concerns and more broadly for sex workers to gain control over their lives.

#### Promote peer education

Involve current and former sex workers at every level, and, in particular, encourage sex workers to share health promotion and personal safety information with their colleagues.

#### Promote client education

Provide support to sex workers in educating clients about safer sex and sexual health, and challenging attitudes to sex workers.

#### Provide support

Within a person-centred approach, respond to needs presented and provide support through the provision of appropriate in-house services, cultural mediators, and referrals to external agencies.

#### Promote services on violence and human rights protection

As legislation and policies do not favour a safe environment for sex work in most European countries, services for sex workers have to be prepared to address violence and legal systems in order to deter abuse and punish those who perpetrate violence against sex workers.



# European experiences



The harm related to the way sex work is addressed in society can be mitigated by empowerment initiatives – or provision of the means and opportunity for self-assertion. The following are examples of such initiatives, carried out in nine EU countries.

**Personal empowerment** is the awareness and strengthening of personal skills and options to control and improve sex workers' lives. Community empowerment, additionally, strengthens the community's ability to participate in positive changes.

**Social empowerment** enables sex workers to fight for their rights and acceptance in society. With the intention of providing an overview of the national capacity to improve the empowerment of sex workers and support services that target their needs, nine country cases will be analysed.

Although the method of collecting analytical information was the same for all countries, the ways in which their networks are structured, developed, and improved are unique and depend heavily upon the respective country's social and economic situation. Moreover, historical elements and engagement with different stakeholders are accordingly different and should be understood within each specific context.

Some similarities, however, lie in the fact that all countries reported at least one capacity-building event during the period between 2011 and 2012. Some of the events were national, others regional. Local initiatives were also appreciated, although they are not the main focus of these chapters. The idea is to picture the capacity building in each country and present ways in which barriers to the improvement of sex workers' rights can be mitigated by means of networking, knowledge sharing, and specific strategies such as advocacy and lobbying activities.

Moreover, the events are very different from each other, not just in terms of structure, but also in terms of content. Each one has its own unique aims and goals

but they are all legitimate in that they are events that empower sex workers in their country and/or region.

Sex workers took part in most of the events; however, their significant representation still depends strongly on activist engagements and the opportunity to participate in the activities that matter to them.

The following chapters underline the importance of social mobilisation in order to effectively address key stakeholders that need to be present in the development of social changes.

The intention of these chapters is not to exhaust the possibilities, but to present some specific cases in which sex workers' rights have been placed on the political agenda of these countries in order to empower sex workers and reduce vulnerabilities.

The idea of this guide is to inspire other networks and social movements around the rights of sex workers and to improve their own capacities by understanding the relevance of certain actions in certain contexts.



ccording to the Austrian Federal Supreme Court, sex work is, since April 2012, not considered to be

'against good morals' anymore. The impact of this landmark decision can only be evaluated in a near future. Day to day, sex workers face different sorts of regulations across the Austrian provinces, from compulsory registration to mandatory health checks.

This chapter presents the networking initiatives and efforts in the country to lobby for the legal and social recognition of sex workers, and consequently better working conditions and respect for human rights.

#### The context

According to the Austrian National Constitution, sex work is an issue to be dealt with at the provincial level, with each province regulating the initiation and provision of sexual services through different laws.

Legal amendments as much as sets of problems in local contexts refer only to these particular local contexts. This results in a complexity of laws and executive practice, as there are no uniform legal regulations; organisations working in the pro-rights field have to face different situations.

In November 2011 in Vienna, after massive protests by residents in the 15th district (one of the two districts where sex work was taking place outdoors on some streets), an amendment to the Prostitution Law came into effect. According to the new regulation, street prostitution was forbidden in the whole residential area of Vienna.

The new regulation does not take into account negative effects on the working and living conditions of sex workers, and reduces their visibility by shifting outdoor sex work to the outskirts of the city. As a consequence of this, a steering group, composed of municipal politicians, district representatives, the police, the STI clinic, LEFÖ and Volkshilfe Wien/Project Sophie, was called up

by the municipal councillor to define so-called 'allowance zones' in the city. LEFÖ has initiated a list of criteria for safe working conditions, to evaluate potential allowance zones.

Moreover, penalisation of sex workers' clients was introduced with the new amendment of the law. Both sex workers and clients have to pay fines of up to €500 when caught soliciting outside the allowed zones.

In Salzburg, sex work is only allowed indoors in registered brothels, and political discussions were held concerning the introduction of legal mechanisms that criminalise clients as well, with the ultimate intention of abolishing street prostitution.

Considering the national context of repression towards sex work and sex workers, the organisation PiA and the platform sexworker.at (online platform developed and run by sex workers for sex workers) were invited to a meeting held at the Provincial Parliament of Landtag in Salzburg. It was a successful and positive political action to influence politicians and media in their decision-making

process, the results of which remain to be seen.

The draft of a new Prostitution Law in Upper Austria can partly be regarded as progress insofar as the alteration of terminology – from 'prostitution law' to 'sexual services law' – indicates a change of attitude. Moreover, local permission for sex work on the street, which has here, too, been forbidden, has been integrated into the draft, which is not yet finished.

In general terms sex workers in Austria are facing common problems, which have to do with their acceptance into Austrian society. Sex work regulations are characterised by severe restrictions. No importance is being attached to the quality of the working conditions of sex workers or their protection against exploitation and violence. On the contrary, sex workers especially migrant sex workers from Bulgaria and Romania and in some provinces clients, too, are being criminalised and confronted with repressive actions and severe controls carried out by the police, resulting in high fines. Sex workers

are also stigmatised as being carriers of STIs, as they are forced to undergo regular health examinations – once a week for STIs and every three months for HIV.

To oppose and change this national situation, this chapter describes two national networking initiatives that were created in the framework of combating discrimination, marginalisation and criminalisation of sex workers.

## NATIONAL LEVEL

#### Task Force on Human Trafficking Working Group on Prostitution – Provinces' Competence

The working group Prostitution

– Provinces' Competence was
established in 2009 as a body of
experts on sex work in Austria
under the formal coordination of
the Women's Department of the
Federal Chancellery of the

Republic of Austria. Its main task is to examine and improve the living and working situation of sex workers in Austria.

In 2004, a separate body of experts on prostitution was formed in the framework of the Human Trafficking Task Force, which is, under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. an established coordination mechanism concerning national measures against human trafficking in Austria. This development was enabled by the recognition of the necessity of a clear distinction between sex work and human trafficking and their own specific needs. The body of experts on prostitution finished its work in 2008 with a detailed report that contained a comprehensive action plan.

Regarding the provinces' competence, the recommendation was issued to convene another body of experts with the participation of all provinces of Austria and professional groups concerned. So the Task Force on Human Trafficking Working Group on Prostitution – Provinces' Competence resumed its work from March 2009.



Activities that are promoted or carried out include, besides the regular meetings, the exchange of knowledge, information and best practices by representatives of the provinces of Austria concerning their specific legal and social situations, research and updating of data on sex work, and the release of recommendations that target and assist policy-makers in forming opinion through the documentation of knowledge generated and the presentation of expert opinions on specific issues. It assumes an advisory role in the policy-making process in Austria.

In the light of the complexity of legal regulations, nationwide and regional networking is essential in order to exchange experiences and gather knowledge. The working group is also working towards the harmonisation of provincial laws. So far, a catalogue of measures has been produced, which functions as a basis for actions by political stakeholders. This contributes to the raising of awareness around the issue of sex work.

## NATIONAL NETWORKING

The national network on sex work is a self-organised informal group linked to other networks, including - with the exception of one organisation – the national Task Force on Human Trafficking Working Group on Prostitution – Provinces' Competence. This network is composed of seven member organisations, six of which are counselling centres while the seventh is an online portal and forum led by sex workers for sex workers. All the NGOs offer counselling and conduct regular outreach activities for indoor- and outdoor-based sex workers of all genders, including migrants. It is able to cover and represent four different provinces of Austria – Upper Austria, Styria, Salzburg and Vienna – in frequent meetings, especially before meetings of the national Task Force, and as need arises.

The network's objective is twofold. It enables its members firstly to exchange information on new legal, health, and social developments in the country, and secondly to discuss potential cooperation. This is possible since its members share a common position on sex work and advocate for the recognition of sex work as work and for the decriminalisation and destigmatisation of sex workers.

Moreover, it has evolved from common political positioning, activities and discussions since the end of the 1990s. Since 2000. the network has carried out advocacy activities. Furthermore the members of the network use national seminars or advanced trainings as a discussion and exchange forum. Each member of the network participates voluntarily and according to their organisational needs. For this reason, different contexts result in different constellations of cooperation. Moreover, advocacy and lobbying activities are often carried out by the members, in their region, and in their name.







#### The partners

#### maiz | Linz

Autonomous Centre of and for Migrants (Autonomes Zentrum von und für Migrantinnen); outreach activities and counselling for migrant sex workers. www.maiz.at

#### SXA-Info | Graz

Services for Women (Frauenservices); outreach activities and counselling for sex workers. www.frauenservice.at

Frau und Arbeit | Salzburg Project PiA; counselling for sex workers. www.frau-und-arbeit.at

Caritas - Beratungsstelle LENA | Linz Outreach activities and counselling for sex workers. www.caritas-linz.at/hilfe-einrichtungen/not-in-oberoesterreich/lena

#### Volkshilfe Wien | Vienna

Project Sophie; outreach activities and counselling for sex workers. www.de.sophie.or.at

#### Sexworker.at

Internet portal in the German language, developed and run by sex workers for sex workers, which offers information and a forum. www.sexworker.at

**LEFÖ | Vienna** www.lefoe.at

#### Other networks

#### Österreichischer Frauenring (ÖFR)

| The ÖFR, founded in 1969, is the umbrella organisation for more than 40 women's associations in Austria. As a member of the EWL in Brussels, the ÖFR presented a position paper on sex work lobbying for the recognition of sex work as gainful employment

and the human and labour rights of sex workers.

www.frauenring.at

## Network of Austrian Counselling Centres for Women and Girls | The network is an um-

brella organisation of 55 counselling centres for women and girls in all nine Austrian provinces, aimed at the improvement of living conditions of women and girls and securing a high quality standard of counselling.

www.netzwerkfrauenberatung.at

#### **INDOORS** partner

#### **LEFÖ**

LEFÖ is a self-organised migrant women's foundation that was founded in Vienna in 1985.

The holistic and largely first-language-based services at LEFÖ include:

- counselling centre for Latin American women
- educational centre for migrant women
- centre for women affected by trafficking
- public relations, awareness raising and lobbying
- support and European network for migrant sex workers.

In the working area of sex work, a multi-professional team offers outreach activities in indoor and outdoor venues, including access to information as well as counselling and support on legal, social and health issues in multiple languages.

LEFÖ benefits from its membership of national and international networks, since the organisation is able to raise awareness of the situation of migrant sex workers, highlighting the repressive regulations. The advocacy actions of the organisation are supported and many times expanded through its networking.

## Barriers and capacities

In order to achieve its organisational goals and ensure systematic high-quality work, LEFÖ needs continuity of financial resources and funding. Besides its three main public donors (and also private contributions) in the working area of sex work, the organisation is constantly looking for more financial support through consultations with ministers and with municipal authorities.

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In these proceedings LEFÖ draws the attention of institutions and policy-makers to the situation of migrant sex workers and stresses the importance of cultural mediation in reducing sex workers' vulnerability.

Furthermore, the organisation, through networking, seeks to improve its services and strengthen its capacity to respond to diverse legal positions on sexual services as work. Providing services in a wide range of languages is essential to the organisation and a fundamental part of its work. The strategy is also to develop new concepts for services aimed at migrant sex workers.

In the course of the implementation of an amendment to the Prostitution Law in Vienna in 2011, LEFÖ was highly involved in critical discussion platforms and steering groups parallel to the legislative process, and developed a new concept of assistance for migrant women wanting to take up sex work, which was supported by the local government.

Working in a strong national, regional and international net-

work strengthens its members' common position on sex work, and helps to implement joint actions and measures in order to legally acknowledge sex work as gainful employment. The needs of the various members of each network, however, differ according to differences in provincial laws on prostitution and the political context in the provinces.

Some member organisations of the national network on sex work have to cope with structural problems in their fight for resources; others are structurally integrated into bigger organisations or associations and therefore don't struggle financially.

In this respect, the national network on sex work needs more commitment to the political importance of national cooperation in order to exchange, connect and offer its experiences, best practices and expertise in the field of sex work. The harmonisation of the different laws would alleviate these network ties. Like many other informal networks, the ability to selforganise and develop joint events and tasks depends heavily on the levels of human and

financial resources of the members of the networks. The activities of the national network on sex work rely, still, on the efforts of its member organisations.

## TIME FOR ACTION



Many actions were promoted by LEFÖ across Austria, some with the support of organisations belonging to the networks. Collaborations in Austria have been successful, especially because these organisations involve strong governmental stakeholders and powerful sex worker activism.

## Public/political actions

■ Since 2002, every year on 2 June – International Whores' Day – LEFÖ, together with some partners from the national network of NGOs, carries out different public actions. On 2 June 2011, LEFÖ, together with sexworker.at and the Green Party, distributed leaflets to raise awareness of the situation of sex workers in Vienna, and held a



public speech. At the same time, Maiz went public and arranged a radio broadcast.

#### Campaigns

- LEFÖ, together with partners from the national and European network, launched national campaigns in 2007 and 2008 to raise media and public awareness about the lack of rights for sex workers. The campaigns took place under the motto 'Sex workers lust... for their rights!' A number of organisations and individuals contributed to the planning and organisation of different activities, including information events, panel discussions, film presentations, art interventions, etc. www.lustaufrechte.at
- From 18-23 July 2010, the 18th International AIDS Conference took place in Vienna. Within this context, LEFÖ actively advocated for women, including migrant women, worldwide, so that they could receive unrestricted access to HIV prevention, treatment and support. With its expected 25,000 participants and over 2,000 media representatives, the International AIDS Conference

in Vienna offered a public forum for examining gaps locally and demanding that the international community take responsibility globally. At that time, a coalition was formed by the organisations Maiz (Linz), SXA-Info (Graz), PiA (Salzburg) and the platform sexworker.at to call public attention to the situation of sex workers in Austria.

#### Seminars

■ In June 2005, LEFÖ organised advanced training, titled 'Sex Work. Sociopolitical significance – political reality' in order to call attention to this matter and enable profound and critical discussion to counteract suppression, stigmatisation and criminalisation. Participants from Austria, Germany and Switzerland came together for this event.

## Successful joint action and cooperation

The campaign 'Sex workers lust... for their rights!' was extended until the end of the European Football League taking place in Vienna in 2008. The campaign was propagated to offset media discourses and prejudices in light of the situation during the 2006 World Football Championship in Germany, when scaremongering anti-trafficking campaigns and questionable statistics were promoted.

The public and media attention was used to channel the human rights discourse into one on sex workers' rights, and also for offers of cultural mediation. support and networking of sex workers. A number of organisations and individuals contributed to the conceptualisation and organisation of different activities, including information events, panel discussions, demonstrations, public actions, informative city walks, film presentations, art interventions, exhibitions, performances and more.



■ In this timeframe accompanying campaigns were implemented, such as a helpline for sex workers and an empowerment photo workshop and exhibition 'Sex work- my work' made by sex workers.

These common actions resulted in a bigger public presence: over 30 media reports accompanied the campaign, including TV, radio, print media and online media in Austria and abroad (Slovakia, Germany, Italy). The media coverage, through the acknowledgement of the reality of sex workers and the use of respectful language, reflected a change in dealing with the topic and a critical position in the face of the lack of rights of sex workers.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

The implementation of the Task Force on Human Trafficking Working Group on Prostitution – Provinces' Competence, separate from the Human Trafficking Task Force, is a governmental recognition of the need for a clear perspective in dealing with consensual sex work, that not only counters discrimination but also makes exploitation and violence more accountable.

The working group is composed of representatives of the institutions (NGOs, GOs, police and academics) who participate on equal terms at regular meetings twice a year. NGOs represent the voices and interests of sex workers; there is no direct representation.

#### ■ The 2011 Seminar

The Task Force Conference 'Prostitution - Provinces' Com-

petence' was held in St. Veit/ Glan on 22-23 March 2011. This particular meeting should be viewed as one of a continuous series of meetings, in which diverse topics are discussed.

One aim of the Task Force is to foster multidisciplinary discussions about legal, social and practical differences and difficulties in the field of sex work in the different provinces of Austria. It focuses on the exchange of knowledge, information and good practices among the representatives of the federal states of Austria, and the development of a variety of solutions and recommendations in order to improve the situation of sex workers. In addition, it tries to consolidate and enhance network activities among all the actors in the field - also by bridging the gap between research, practice and policy.

Furthermore, in 2011, it produced a yearly report about the current situation in all provinces, with recommendations on how to improve the actual situation of sex workers in Austria. The dissemination was directed at governmental authorities and policy-makers.

#### Contents

Because the Task Force brings together representatives from different provinces of Austria, the first part of the meeting was dedicated to an outline of the current situation in each province of the country.

GOs from Vienna reported on the status of the amendment to the Prostitution Law, which was initiated due to strong protests by residents in two districts of Vienna, where sex workers work outdoors.

In advance of the decision to change the law, there were attempts to de-escalate the situation on the streets. From June to November 2010, the municipal councillor implemented a programme of intervention by establishing, among other things, a professional complaint management system for residents, and a pilot scheme to relocate prostitution to designated streets. After evaluation it became clear to the authorities that the intervention programme hadn't achieved its goals. Because of their relocation, sex workers were dissatisfied with their particular

working places due to the lack of infrastructure and the loss of regular clients. Furthermore, they were confronted with frequent police raids and severe fines, which made it impossible for them to perceive the police as having a protective role.

Within the scope of this municipal programme of intervention, LEFÖ had the opportunity to implement a pilot project aimed at raising awareness among sex workers of violence and trafficking in women. The key findings and conclusions of the project were reported to relevant stakeholders.

Tyrol and Upper Austria reported on the new legal policies and amendments to laws that regulate prostitution, such as the mitigation of a general ban on advertising and the easing of brothel licences in Tyrol.

In Upper Austria, the alteration of terminology from 'prostitution law' to 'sexual services law' was discussed; as well as the local permission of sex work on the street, hitherto forbidden; the prohibition of advertising unsafe sex; the cancellation of a working ban for 'apparently'

pregnant sex workers; and the obligation to register for house calls.

After these updates, the police informed the group about the interim results of a nationwide enquiry on fines due to violations of prostitution laws. The final results were scheduled to be presented at the next meeting.

Still on the topic of legal perspectives in Austria, an overview was given of the provincial differences in sex work regulations, including the topic of the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court, particularly concentrating on the unconstitutionality of legal measures and by-laws, and certifying their compliance with the rule of equality.

Seeking to harmonise national regulations, the meeting put special emphasis on three themes.

#### Discussion themes

### ■ Age limit and culpability in case of shortfall

The starting point was the fact that different provincial laws set different age limits (18 and 19) for legal age, which has legal



consequences in sex work. There is an urgent need for nationwide standardisation. The discussion also touched on international trends to set the age limit to 21 years.

A common position could be found in the fact that minors need special protection by the law and that the penalisation of minors in sex work is counterproductive. For example, the willingness to press charges decreases based on their own culpability. Alternatives were discussed such as the offer of counselling instead of penalties, lowering the level of the fine, or shifting more responsibility to the clients of minors. There was also mutual agreement that raising the age limit brings more disadvantages for sex workers.

### ■ Violation of bonos mores

As one positive aspect, in a recent decision dated 18 April 2012 the Supreme Court pronounced sex work not to be contra bonos mores any more. In the discussions of the Taks Force working group there was absolute consensus that the abolition

of this notion of sex work would be a basic requirement for further improvements on a legal and tangible level (improvements of working conditions of sex workers).

#### Mandatory registration

Sex workers are obliged to register with the local authorities (in Vienna at the police). In some federal states the registration has to be done by the venue owner, rather than personally by the sex worker. Arguments concerned the consequences of cancelling the duty to register.

Consensus was reached on the question of personal registration and destigmatisation. But no common position could be found on the question of the necessity of registration per se, due to different interests.

## Challenges encountered

The network has a multidisciplinary approach as members include NGOs, GOs, the police and public health services. This is, however, accompanied by the challenge to combine different perspectives, interests or opinions – especially the interests of the (criminal) police, which are more strongly directed at combating organised crime than at improving the situation of sex workers. Conceptual shifts between sex workers and victims of trafficking are not uncommon. These different opinions and attitudes towards sex work. especially the victimisation of sex workers, limit the capacity to act as a cohesive entity.

## Results and improvements

As a result of the meeting, a catalogue of recommendations was prepared and disseminated through a report, which was targeted at key stakeholders and politicians. The main improvement coming from this initiative was the fact that NGOs and public institutions are together, as a Task Force, appealing for the

acknowledgement of sex work as gainful employment and the abolition of the notion of sex work as an immoral profession. This would provide sex workers with the legal ground to enforce their social protection and labour rights. In addition, this framework provides a good environment for sex workers to organise their own trade union.

The achieved consensus of the members in favour of the abolition of the notion of sex work as a 'violation of morality' is a significant step towards the goal of contributing to the betterment of the working and living conditions of sex workers, the improvement of social security and the prevention of exploitation and violence. Without doubt the recommendations of the Task Force's working group had influence on the recent decision of the Austrian Supreme Court to not consider sex work as contra bonos mores any more.

Furthermore, some recommendations of the Task Force were an important contribution to the process of amending the Prostitution Laws in Vienna and Upper Austria. In Vienna, improvements have been made

to the issue of the punishment of minors. A first violation is not supposed to lead to a fine, but to counselling at the youth welfare office – as discussed within the network. Additionally, the penalty for sex workers – although somewhat insignificant – was reduced from €700 to €500

Some goals have still not been achieved, but the current situation has to be seen as a snapshot in a successfully ongoing awareness-raising process.

#### Impacts

The national meeting was a space in which to emphasise the different realities faced by sex workers in Austria and, due to its continuity, an approximation of a common approach could be achieved despite different perspectives and interests.

A unification of the different provincial laws not only brings a higher degree of transparency, but also opens the door to common work in the future. The Task Force allows for highlighting the advantages of more liberal systems of prostitution and presenting them as role models for provinces facing more restrictive systems.

## SOCIAL MOBILISATION

Social mobilisation towards capacity building, in Austria, is strongly influenced by the social and political context in which it operates.

Sex work in Austria is organised as part of a regulatory regime. Since the criminal law reform in 1974, sex work is not criminalised in principle, but subject to many controlling measures. Sex workers have to officially register, commit to regular health checks, and pay taxes. Simultaneously sex work is not recognised as proper employment. This institutionalises a double standard that accepts sex work as an industry, but the actors - the sex workers - are criminalised and made illegal. In hegemonic discourses they are represented either as victims of patriarchal violence - also through the discursive link between sex work and human trafficking – or as offenders in terms of a danger to public morality, public health and public safety.



## Historical and political context

The matter was first taken up in the autonomous women's movement of the 1970s; from the 1980s onwards it was also taken up politically. In 1983, the tax liability for sex workers was introduced; access to statutory social security, however, was not. Sex work as an 'antiemancipatory problem' has been the position of the last and also current Viennese women's councillors of the Socialist Party in the provincial government.

On the other hand, for the first time ever the lawless situation of sex workers and the social double standard was highlighted. In March 1986, sex workers founded their first and last association in Austria – Verband der Prostituierten Österreichs. As a kind of trade union it was only active until 1992.

The legalisation of sex work and the decriminalisation of sex workers are two central claims that are still relevant today and remain on the agenda. The differing interests of stakeholders such as policy-makers versus sex workers or cultural mediators were and still are barriers to progress in the fight for sex workers' rights.

Since the 1990s, the situation of migrant women in sex work has been an issue, with LEFÖ and Maiz at the forefront of service delivery and representation of their interests. In 1997, the Platform For More Rights For Prostitutes was established by LEFÖ. With support from the Green Party and the Liberal Forum, it was committed to the equal treatment of sex workers.

One of the biggest accomplishments was that sex workers finally gained access to social security in 1998. Although there has never been a strong sex worker movement like that in Germany, since early 2005 there is again an autonomous organisation of sex workers in Austria, in the form of an online forum.

## Strategies for support

NGOs, whether migrants' organisations working with or for sex workers, or sex workers' organisations, use strategies to raise stakeholder awareness and seek their support. The means

of achieving changes include campaigns, statements on legal amendments, position papers, press releases, public discussions and round tables, or by spreading data and information on the real living and working conditions of sex workers.

Policy-makers are important stakeholders for capacity building. Currently LEFÖ is part of a steering group consisting of politicians, the police, district administrators, the STI clinic, an anti-discrimination body and Volkshilfe Wien/Project Sophie, which deals with the implementation of the new prostitution law in Vienna. Support for sex workers' rights is, in this way, possible with the Green and Socialist Parties.

Sex workers themselves, despite fierce criticism, have not yet been invited to attend this steering group. The primary objective of the group is to create by decree into law more permit zones within the residential area. Unfortunately, this aim has not yet been achieved. Through the amendment to the Prostitution Law in Vienna, outdoor-based sex work has been banned in the residential area of the city.





Although agreement on how to deal with the 'problem' is not easy due to differing interests and differing opinions, the cooperation and debate with very different parties should be seen as a step forward in the capacity-building process.

When a network is able to gather together sex workers, activists, governmental institutions, public officers, academics and so on, it means that the capacity-building process has a higher chance of achieving its goals.

## The role of the media

Working with the media is essential to raising societal awareness. This affords LEFÖ an opportunity to convey its experiences and expertise to others, to disseminate its pro-rights position and to engage in critical exchanges with diverse partners.

In November 2011 LEFÖ released a statement on the new Prostitution Law. Furthermore, LEFÖ gives interviews to daily newspapers, feminist journals like the AUF, radio and television stations. One contemporary example is the lengthy survey and discussion process that preceded the amendment to the new Prostitution Law.

In the wake of this, sex workers with the support of NGOs were directly included in preliminary discussions with policy-makers in order to express their voices and make themselves heard in the public discourse. The entire process was also covered by the media. Not all media outlets called for the recognition of the rights of sex workers; there were also abolitionist positions and aggressive words. Raising the public profile of the topic of sex work is certainly very welcome, but this must not come at the expense of sex workers.

In order to rebut negative attributions and judgements and pursue an awareness-raising effort for the recognition of the rights of sex workers, LEFÖ published a press release entitled 'Sex workers feel left out. A good law must first prove itself in practice.'

The awareness-raising process also requires the public presence of the topic. Since 2007, I FFÖ has introduced sex work as a topic in need of action around 8 March, International Women's Day. For example, it participates in the 'open city hall', where women's organisations and counselling centres are showcased. Among the latest demonstrations, on 19 March 2011 LFFÖ marched with red umbrellas in a huge demonstration to mark the 100th anniversary of the struggle for women's rights: for equality, democracy and participation.

## Annual seminar

For over ten years LEFÖ has organised an annual educational seminar at which current issues on the topic of women and migration are discussed for a few



days. The continuity of this seminar — which is one of a kind within German-speaking countries — offers the opportunity to discuss and reflect on formal and informal developments and changes in migration policy.

LEFÖ regularly receives requests from academics. In an effort to structure the responses and to provide differentiated and competent information to those interested, LEFÖ holds a two-hour information afternoon once a month. In addition, LEFÖ runs a library of books and publications on the topics of women's migration, trafficking, sex work and related topics.

Using updated data and research is essential in making informed decisions, devising solutions and setting realistic goals. Good data can be used in persuasive arguments. LEFÖ cooperated in 2011 and will again in 2012 with an academic institute - the Institute of Conflict Studies – in a study aimed at a comparison of prostitution policies in the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden and the analysis of their effects on the living and working conditions of sex workers.

After 15 years of public relations, lobbying and advocacy work, LEFÖ, in collaboration with members of the informal national network of NGOs. especially Maiz, has significantly contributed to the change in dominant attitudes towards sex work in politics and society and in improving sex workers' situation. But despite all this, sex workers are still being stigmatised, criminalised and discriminated against. Abolitionist voices outnumber others in the public sphere. That's why it is essential to support the empowerment of sex workers, providing them with the necessary tools to defend their rights and to work towards an official network to gain more political representation and influence.





## BULGARIA

ex work in Bulgaria is a phenomenon on the receiving end of heavy stigmatisation and discrimination. Most of the sex businesses in the country are controlled by illegal networks, the police are often involved with corruption and harassment, and very few sex workers speak up for their rights. The country also has a very diverse and mobile sex worker population which frequently migrates to Western Europe.

The lack of legal regulation places all sex workers in a vulnerable position and, for this reason, the marginalisation of sex workers is considered to be a precondition for the vulnerability of the group to HIV/STIs and violence. This chapter presents a network of service providers that intends to overcome these barriers and improve the situation of sex workers in the country.

### NATIONAL NETWORKING

There is only one network dealing with sex work issues in Bulgaria: a national network which so far consists only of service providers and is focused on health promotion and STI/ HIV prevention. A focus on human rights protection and the involvement of sex workers are, for this network, topics to be discussed at a later stage of development.

Sex workers are included as a most-at-risk group in the National Strategy and National Programme for Prevention and Control of STIs and HIV. This is one of the first times that sex workers have been recognised as a vulnerable group in an official national document, and further steps to develop some services are planned.

Within the framework of this National HIV Programme is the Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS (PPCHA), financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF). It operates in accordance with GF rules

and is overseen by the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM Bulgaria). This is a country-level multi-stakeholder partnership which is tasked with developing and submitting grant proposals to the GF<sup>17</sup>

CCM Bulgaria was founded on the basis of the pre-existing National Committee on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections Prevention, which is a body of the Council of Ministers to coordinate the activities of state bodies regarding focalisation of the spread of HIV and STIs. The National Committee was restructured in 2002 in CCM Bulgaria according to the GF's directions, and its present members are representatives not only of all ministers but also of NGOs. international agencies, academic institutions, private business and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). There are currently 38 members, three of which are NGO members of the Network of Service Providers for Sex Workers in Bulgaria. Therefore, the network of NGOs participates in the decision-making process on HIV prevention in Bulgaria.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For more about the CCM: www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm

#### **Component 6**

## Network of service providers for sex workers

The network of NGOs dealing with sex workers in Bulgaria exists under the above Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS (PPCHA) implemented nationally by the Ministry of Health (MH) and financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The network was formed in 2004 as Component 6 of the PPCHA. Outreach teams were chosen and specially trained.

All participants in the network are organisations providing services to vulnerable groups, and their outreach teams are comprised of professionals. These NGOs have the same approach and attitude to working with vulnerable groups, based on principles of volunteering, anonymity, confidentiality, accessibility, respect, non-interference in the sex industry, equal access to services, and an individual approach to every service user.

Currently, in 2012, the network consists of nine NGOs operat-

ing in nine regions of Bulgaria and covering big cities, smaller towns, some villages, ring roads and highways, winter and summer resorts, truck stops, etc. All these organisations take part in an annual meeting for exchange of experiences and capacity building. These organisations ensure coverage of around 80% of the country's territory.

Each outreach team provides a standard package of services:

- Regular outreach visits to sex work venues, needs assessment, and dissemination of safer sex materials and safer drug use materials. Mobile medical units offering medical check-ups and diagnosis of HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Specialised workshops. Case management individual care and support for sex workers with special needs (PLHA, homeless, drug users, pregnant women etc.).
- Low-threshold centres for sex workers, including the above-mentioned services on a stationary basis, and additionally targeting other segments of the sex worker community. Other activities: organising and implementing regular meetings

with different professionals, authorities and other relevant actors in the field, about reducing the stigma against sex workers; participation in various surveys by the Ministry of Health Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS.

In the framework of the programme, a meeting is organised once a year, usually in autumn/ winter, for these nine NGOs to get to know each other better: to share their experience (from the Programme and from other projects), local specificities, recent achievements and difficulties in reaching sex workers; to plan activities and to unify their working standards. These meetings are usually led by the long-term consultant of Component 6. Those invited are all outreach workers, coordinators, medical specialists and supervisors, and meetings may be attended also by managers and/or assistants from the Programme's management unit; in total, attendees may number around 50-60 individuals. Despite efforts made to engage sex workers, no peers have been involved so far.



All participants are NGOs and occupy equal positions and roles within the network.

#### The partners

**Dose of Love Association | Burgas** Services for different at-risk groups, including sex workers. www.doseoflove.org

#### SOS – Families at Risk Foundation | Varna

Aims to improve quality of life of children, families and groups at risk. www.sos-varna.org

#### Perspectives Foundation |

Sandanski

Aims to foster attitudes of tolerance to difference and to stimulate the social development of underprivileged groups and communities.

#### Samaritans Association

Stara Zagora

Works to unite society around children, youths, the elderly and families at risk.

www.samaritans.bg

Avis vita Foundation | Plovdiv Support for persons from marginalised and stigmatised social groups. www.avisvita.bg

#### Bulgarian Gender Research

**Foundation | Haskovo** Gender equality, domestic violence prevention, reproductive rights and anti-discrimination. www.bqrfhaskovo.nqobq.info

#### Health and Prevention for People at Risk Foundation | Ruse

Health promotion and education among populations in their respective environments, community development for ethnic minorities, women and youth.

#### Znanie (Knowledge)

Association |Lovetchaims Application of democratic values of society and improvement of human potential through qualitative and accessible lifelong learning, www.znanielovech.org

HESED Health and Social Development Foundation | Sofia www.hesed.bg

#### **INDOORS** partner

## HESED | Health and Social Development Foundation

HESED was founded in 1997 as a successor of the first organisation working in the field of HIV prevention in Bulgaria, the Anti-AIDS Campaign, founded in 1992. Nowadays the organisation's activities have been developed into three main areas of work: Roma community development programmes; health promotion programmes for vulnerable groups, including sex workers; and research projects.

The organisation consists of a multidisciplinary team with experience in both health promotion and social work practice, and 15 lay professionals of Roma origin. The team working with sex workers consists of ten professionals.

Experts who previously worked in HESED are currently in charge of coordinating and training the network of service providers within Component 6, due to HESED's extensive experience and model of outreach work to sex workers. In the period 2005-2010, experts from HESED acted as consultants for the Ministry of Health in order to implement monitoring and methodological and administrative support to all NGOs and their local outreach teams. In this period Component 6 underwent several changes in the regions covered, but also in the number of organisations and outreach workers, and developed new services. All training and annual meetings for experience exchange are designed and led by HESED experts and consultants from the Ministry of Health PPCHA.

#### Barriers and capacities

The partnership of Component 6 and the national network of service providers for sex workers made big changes for the empowerment and capacity building of sex workers in Bulgaria.



To be able to implement the joint activities of the network and to achieve the objective of Component 6 – to keep the spread of HIV low among sex workers – HESED and all member organisations of the network have to develop trusted and stable access to the target group.

Given high mobility and specifically organised and controlled prostitution in the country, this objective could be gained only through attaining good national coverage. At present, the nine outreach teams deliver basic HIV prevention services to all known significant sex work scenes in 24 of the 28 administrative provinces of Bulgaria. In 2011 a total of around 8,000 sex workers was contacted, according to estimates by local teams.

This wide coverage is one of the main capacities of the network. It was achieved after the successful dissemination of HESED's outreach model to other regions. Throughout the years of implementation of the HIV Prevention Programme, HESED's employees have played the roles of trainers, monitoring experts, guides and consultants for the other local teams. This

ensures consistent quality in all regions and teams and gives the network another capacity – a common standard for all outreach materials and services.

The strong referral system built among the partners in the network provides sex workers with access to a higher number of services across a wider geographical area. In practice, the highly mobile sex workers in Bulgaria can receive the same quality and quantity of outreach materials, consultations and support in each of the regions in which Component 6 is in operation. Furthermore, as an independent organisation every team develops its own local referral system according to its own expertise and experience.

Access to stable and long-lasting outreach services helps sex workers in Bulgaria to be a little bit more active; the network gives them self-confidence, respect and an opportunity for their voices to be heard. Still, a lot remains to be done, and the network is facing several barriers. Formed initially with a focus on HIV prevention, the network now needs to develop new services. New topics are being

discussed for incorporation into its action plan. The involvement of sex workers and their more active participation are considered to be future challenges. This will lead also to the need for development of new advocacy and public awareness-raising efforts.

## TIME FOR ACTION



#### Network actions

As a formal component of a large national HIV prevention programme, the network of service providers has to implement the following activities on an annual basis:

- organising and implementing seminars and specialised training on different topics for sex workers and for other professionals at a local level;
- participating in regular national campaigns about HIV prevention three times a year – on 14 February, the last Sunday of May, and 1 December;
- organising and carrying out local advocacy meetings in

order to reduce stigma against sex workers. These meetings have been held once a year since 2009, aiming to inform and raise awareness among representatives from different local institutions and services (GOs, NGOs, municipality and/or regional bodies) about HIV and sex work issues. Invitees include police, doctors, health and social services, media and other relevant organisations. Discussions are held on general topics such as HIV prevention and the situation and vulnerability of sex workers, but also on possibilities for local referrals and cooperation between the institutions in attendance in order to improve sex workers' access to more services in the region. Often these meetings are organised for 17 December, to focus the attention of relevant institutions and organisations on violence against sex workers.

All the results of these actions are shared within the network via regular emails, phone calls and during the annual meetings.

#### HESED actions

Advocacy and support for sex workers – in the summer of 2011 sex workers mobilised to defend their rights, to speak out against constant police raids and disrespectful treatment by police, etc. Several public events were organised to demand legalisation/regulation of sex work in Bulgaria. These were the first such public actions and sex workers' declarations in the country, and were supported by HESED through logistical help and consultations. These developments were later shared within the network.

Work with the media – HESED is working to establish good contacts with media representatives who are interested in presenting the real life and situation of sex workers rather than covering sex work from a sensationalist angle. To this end, **HESED** participated in several activities: in 2008 its experts took part in a press conference to discuss whether prostitution in Bulgaria had turned into an industry, and whether society felt a pressing need to adopt a law. Within the framework of

the SWAN<sup>18</sup> network in 2009, HESED produced a specialised brochure targeting journalists and devoted to the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, including appropriate language and principles to be used when news is reported about sex work and sex workers. In 2010, HESED staff took part in media sensitivity training for trainers, organised by SWAN to improve knowledge and capacity on contacting media and participating in interviews.

■ Campaigns – promotion of the date 17 December among sex workers and relevant institutions in Bulgaria. Since 2007, HESED has produced red umbrellas and various materials with anti-violence slogans to be distributed among sex workers and relevant organisations to introduce them to the International Day to End Violence Against



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The SWAN network covers Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and mainly focuses on advocacy and support for sex workers' groups and their allies. Actions are also conducted such as joint campaigns on 17 December, research on violence in the region, media training for SWAN members, and annual meetings of all members. All communication and decisions are taken via emails and phone calls. The slogan of the joint campaign on 17 December 2011 was "Rights, Not Violence for Sex Workers".

Sex Workers. On 17 December 2010 HESED organised the first online campaign of its kind in Bulgaria through sending messages to 119 female sex workers (including nine transgender sex workers) advertising on the web. This occasion was also used to promote and send them the electronic version of the brochure Safer Work, produced in the first phase of the INDOORS project.

## Successful joint action and cooperation

The standard and unified package of services provided by the organisations in the network allow sex workers to receive the same services, to the same standard, wherever they are in the country.

As a result of the shared work of the organisations in Component 6, a brochure was produced with a map of all the services available in the country and detailed contact information for all service providers. This brochure is equivalent to a business card for the whole network, allowing sex workers access to a cooperative referral system. A sex worker could undergo STI testing with one service provider and receive the results from another, keeping anonymity by using only a unique code and no other personal data.

Another example of good interaction between the service providers, the target group and different institutions may be seen in an individual case managed within the whole network. In 2010, a female sex worker was sentenced to probation and treatment for alcohol and medicine addiction. She was referred initially to HESED's team in Sofia by the detention institution, and several meetings were organised with her and with experts from the National Centre for Addictions. Afterwards the help of the team in Stara Zagora (Samaritans Association) was also needed to get her into a specialised treatment institution near their city. They assisted and accompanied her to the hospital. This joint case was managed by the network for several months and was later used as an example of good practice and cooperation.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

The achievement of national seminars on issues of HIV prevention and sex work in Bulgaria began with the official start of Component 6 and has been taking place since 2004. Such seminars are included in the action plan of the component on an annual basis. This seminar - the National Seminar for Experience Exchange Between the Local **Outreach Teams in Component** 6 – brings together professionals dealing with HIV prevention among sex workers in Bulgaria to share their achievements and difficulties from the past year and to plan joint activities in the coming year.





The most recent seminar took place on 11-13 November 2011 in the city of Stara Zagora. About 40 people participated: consultants from the PPCHA, outreach workers and coordinators.

#### Aims

The formal aim of the annual meeting is for the NGOs and their outreach teams to get to know each other better, and to exchange experiences and information gained during the year while conducting HIV prevention work among sex workers (according to the rules of Component 6).

There is also an informal aim: to reinforce the development of the network in directions beyond HIV prevention, as the seminar is open for participants to share innovations and issues surrounding the implementation of other activities and projects for and with sex workers.

#### Contents

The meeting began with discussion of internal issues, including the sharing of achievements and difficulties by every partner in the past year while implementing the activities of

Component 6; presentation of newly produced materials for outreach work (Period Calendar and The Most Common STIs); and brainstorming ideas for new advocacy tools to be published in the coming year.

## Presentations and discussion themes

## New activitiesby HESED

## ■ Promotion of the INDOORS project

The aims, partners, financing institution and the four work streams of the project were presented.

## ■ Social intervention tool (SIT) as a new strategy for contacting sex workers on the internet

The need to contact sex workers on the internet was also discussed during the previous meeting in 2010. HESED is now continuing the development of a complete strategy using different methods – banners to promote several campaigns, displayed on specialised sites for advertising sex work; offering contact and consultations to sex workers via email; enhancement

of the SIT tool, to be launched in early 2012.

### Activism of sex workers in Sofia

HESED is trying to support and involve sex workers in the implementation of certain projects and activities. The team in Sofia helped an activist sex worker to motivate other sex workers to attend an organised sex workers' protest and to meet to discuss future self-organisation. These efforts and the overall situation were presented to the network; several videos of the protest held on 21 August were viewed or presented for viewing, along with the press conference held on 2 November 2011 and some interviews with sex workers

A discussion took place about this, the first instance in Bulgaria of sex workers defending their rights, and about whether and how the network supports such initiatives. It was necessary to make clear that every NGO is free to decide independently if it will support this activism. HESED asked all partners who want to assist in this initiative to facilitate contact between sex workers in their region with activist sex workers in Sofia. The aim of

establishing such contact is to join in public activities and work around self-organisation of sex workers in Bulgaria.

## 2. Opening low-threshold centres

The opening of a lowthreshold centre is obligatory by every partner according to the Action Plan of Component 6. Only two such centres have been opened so far, by the two partners from the cities Burgas (Dose of Love Association) and Sandanski (Perspectives Foundation). Both started with few difficulties because they already had appropriate sites for the centres. They shared the positive outcomes of work in such a safe space, and noted that many sex workers visit them. Each of the other partners shared the problems that they experience, mostly concerning appropriate sites and related negotiations with municipalities.

#### Workshops

■ **Re-teaming:** a game was organised to mix up all the local teams in order to feel like one big team. Small groups were

formed by people from different cities to take pictures on various themes for inclusion in a joint calendar for 2012 representing the network. The pictures were presented later in an informal space where people could share more personal feelings and problems encountered during outreach work.

#### Coordinators' group: a presentation was given by the long-term consultant to some internal organisers for Component 6 on issues such as targets and activities in the action plan for the coming year. A crucial component of the seminar was a discussion about the potential for all present NGOs to set up and register an association independent from the PPCHA and the Ministry of Health so that the network would be able to continue its joint work after the end of financing by the GF.

#### ■ Outreach workers' group: a discussion was held on topics such as the increasing social needs of sex workers in Bulgaria, problematic cases during outreach work, and ways to manage them.

## Results and improvements

The main outcome after the seminar was the agreement between the partners to form and register as a network independent of the Ministry of Health. Some practical tasks were assigned to the long-term consultant as the interim formal coordinator of the network. This was done after considering the increasing social needs of sex workers that need to be covered with stable services and working actively to guarantee sustainability of standardised outreach work across all regions in the country.

This seminar was the stage at which the network realised that it needs to move further. HIV prevention among sex workers in Bulgaria is no longer enough. The target group's characteristics are also changing slowly and more needs are arising. The services should respond to sex workers' needs, and this situation prompts the service providers to develop new initiatives. The positive results achieved in HIV prevention should be maintained, but other spheres



should also be covered, such as: services on the internet, protection of rights, social and labour consultations, active sex worker involvement, etc.

#### TRAINING SESSION

HESED elected to organise a training session for students from the St Clement of Ohrid University of Sofia who were specialising in social work. The target group of students was selected from other professional groups due to a lack of knowledge surrounding outreach work and about sex workers as a vulnerable group in the basic educational programme.

The training was titled "Outreach Work Among Sex Workers in Bulgaria", and was held in Todorini Kashti in Koprivshtitza on 2 – 3 December 2011.

## Relevance of the training

The training aimed to deliver basic knowledge to the students along two themes: outreach work as a method of social work, and the specific vulnerability of sex workers.

The presentation of some best practices in work with sex workers aimed to make the future professional social workers more sensitive, open-minded and non-judgemental, which could lead to providing services to vulnerable populations in a non-stigmatised and non-discriminatory way. Some of the participants may join HESED as volunteers if needed.

#### Impacts

The capacity-building impact of the training may be considered from two angles:

- HESED developed its capacity in starting to provide training for students, and is prepared to incorporate these human resources to their organisational activities as volunteers;
- The University of Sofia extended the framework of its educational programme with different and more practical aspects of social work such as sex work interventions.

### SOCIAL MOBILISATION

The Bulgarian context presents an example of direct capacity building of service providers and capacity mobilising of sex workers through empowering services.

Bulgaria is still new to building good social policy and providing services to vulnerable groups, both on the part of the state and on the part of civil society.

Sex work in Bulgaria takes place under the control of illegal networks, which do not allow sex workers to self-mobilise and self-organise very actively. The whole Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS could be used as an example of social mobilisation and capacity building of service providers regarding HIV prevention and care. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, and with the help of many experts from the NGO sector, a whole system of NGOs was set up in the country to carry out health promotion to the most vulnerable groups, including sex workers.



The network gained extensive experience along with stable contact and a trusting relationship with sex workers. The long-lasting work promoted awareness-raising among sex workers, not only about their health but also about their rights, freedom of choice, and improvement of their working skills and working and living conditions. These services led to mobilisation among the target group and assisted them in the process of self-organising. Such a process is just beginning in the country.

Another important issue to mention is the fact that three of the organisations belonging to the network are also members of the Country Coordinating Mechanism which is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the PPCHA. This allows the network to participate and influence in the decision-making process with regards to HIV prevention and care in Bulgaria and to initiate some advocacy steps to keep sex workers on the agenda.

The main stakeholder involved in the direct capacity building of the network of service providers

is the Ministry of Health and its Programme for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS. It provides knowledge and new capacity skills not only to all the service providers but also to sex workers. Projects outwith this large national programme are carried out rarely and only at a local level by some of the organisations.

HESED is the only member of the network participating in international projects and networks targeting sex workers and focusing on issues beyond health (SWAN, TAMPEP, PoP project, Bordernetwork project, INDOORS project). Within the frameworks of these projects HESED has facilitated several interactions between sex workers and various stakeholders, for example organising an interview with a sex worker from a strip bar in Sofia for the NSWP Global F-Consultation for WHO Guidelines on Sex Work and HIV (August 2011).

Other service providers are also contacted when needed for special cases, but mainly at a local level.

The focus on municipalities is considered to be one of the

most important advocacy tasks requiring promotion through recognition of sex workers as a vulnerable group and including them in the municipalities' strategic plans for development of local social services. An example is the local HESED project "Early Prevention of Risk Factors for Family Planning and Reproductive Health Among Female Sex Workers" funded by the Europe Programme of Sofia Municipality Council.

Political attention to sex work issues is focused mainly on potential regulation with the aim of taxation and revenues for the state budget. Several drafts were prepared of specific prostitution laws by different parliamentary commissions, but to date none of them have been approved. Serious public discussions about possible legislation and/or any regulation were held several times. One such discussion was organised in May 2007 by HESED: a large round table event titled "Do we need to evaluate the effects of future law on prostitution? Why and how?" in the framework of international projects funded by the MATRA programme of the





Royal Netherlands Embassy. This event featured many important participants, including the deputy minister of the Ministry of Interior, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Health, representatives of the police services, the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, many providers of services to sex workers including all the members of the national network, research organisations, women's support organisations and sex workers. The Dutch partners of the project presented the example of legalisation of prostitution in the Netherlands. **HESED** prepared a statement about the potential effects of legalisation of prostitution in Bulgaria, which was sent to all relevant stakeholders. One of the main topics in this statement is the need for representatives of sex workers to play an active

part in the preparation of such a law and to ensure respect for their human rights.

Of course, the potential regulation of sex work in the country is widely reflected by the media. Apart from sensationalist news and dramatic life stories, there are some media outlets presenting the real situation and working conditions of sex workers. Still, the journalists of Bulgaria need to improve their attitude and ensure appropriate language when talking about sex workers.

The biggest difficulties in the present time are connected to the relationship between sex workers and law enforcement bodies. In the summer of 2010 there was a campaign of massive police raids on many sex work venues across the country.

As a result, more than half of the indoor venues in Sofia known to HESED at this time were closed, and contact with many sex workers was lost. The attitude of police officers to sex workers requires significant discussion in order to prevent corruption and harassment.

HESED used to train street-based police officers at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior about basic principles of outreach work among vulnerable groups, but these training sessions ended due to financial limitations. The police are now wellinformed about the presence of outreach workers on the streets and in clubs. Problems however are experienced by the sex workers owing to negative, sometimes violent, attitudes from police. Service providers need to focus on improving this work.



rostitution is defined in Finnish law as "engaging in sexual intercourse or associated sexual acts in exchange for reward". Even though prostitution itself is not illegal and is not punishable as a crime, several regulations restrict prostitution in Finland. In addition to the Criminal Code. Public Order Act and Aliens Act. sex work is regulated by various customary law regulations. As a result, this legal structure criminalises the clients of victims of trafficking or pimping, sex work is prohibited in public areas, and non-EU citizens suspected of selling sexual services are deported.

The Nordic countries are especially important for this guide, since the legislative models on prostitution recently developed by some of these countries today represent a new trend to other European countries willing to take the same stance.

Understanding how networking contributes to challenging perceptions of sex work and legal issues is one of the main objectives of this chapter.

### REGIONAL LEVEL

## Nordic Network on Prostitution

The Nordic Network on Prostitution consists of service providers, sex worker activists and researchers from all Nordic countries except Iceland. The network began its work in the 1980s to share information and expertise between Nordic service providers. Finland joined as an active member of the network in 1990 when Protukipiste was established. In all Nordic countries, prostitution was considered to be a social problem and, according to the ideology of the Nordic welfare state, required society to provide special public social services to tackle the issue. All the services were targeted at women who worked in street prostitution.

The network's scope and representativeness have developed over the years. The topics were extended to cover policy issues and sex work activism in addition to service provision. Though members of the network historically differ in their statutory background and political views on prostitution, the platform has served as a means to compare and discuss these differences.

By doing so, the main aim of the network was (and still is) to share information on current trends in sex work and Nordic prostitution policy, as well as to build and maintain alliances among different Nordic actors. The Nordic Network's capacity to organise itself is twofold. First, an annual meeting takes place in one of the member countries.

Due to the fact that there is no formal coordination, members hosting the meetings are responsible for coordinating this task on a rotational basis. Second, bilateral meetings are organised by members as a consequence of the sharing of knowledge and interest of members in keeping in touch. Sometimes organisations from other Nordic countries are also invited



to participate in national events due to their own expertise.

Membership of the network is open to everyone who is engaged in sex work-related issues. Participants have ranged from NGOs, individual sex worker activists, GOs and municipal services, to research and development institutions.

#### The context

Since the legislation is quite similar within Nordic countries, important legal reforms in one country normally lead to analogous discussions in other Nordic countries. Prostitution policy has been a permanent topic in the Nordic discussion since the beginning of 1990. The criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services, the so-called Swedish model, has expanded to Norway and, in a restricted form, to Finland as well.

The debate has shifted to evaluation of the consequences and functionality of the criminalisation of purchasing sexual services. An evaluation of the effects in Sweden was long anticipated and when it finally came out in summer 2010, it claimed that

the law is functioning extremely well. However, there are a great deal of critics of the accuracy of this evaluation and the way in which it was conducted. It is also notable that sex worker activism is more vibrant in Sweden than in any other Nordic country.

In Finland, no proper evaluation of the legal reform has been carried out, but according to a report given to the Parliament by the Ministry of Justice, the effects of the law cannot yet be evaluated. In Norway, the consequences of criminalisation have been on the agenda in public debate, but official evaluation is still under way. In Denmark there are ongoing discussions on what effects the governmental change will have on prostitution policy and prohibiting the purchase of sexual services.

The importance of having annual meeting events is, in this context, to discuss social topics and analyse the validity of the arguments behind prostitution policy and law proposals, as well as the possible effects that amendments to the law can have on sex workers' position in society and their rights. As sex worker activists, NGOs,

and GOs all have their own position on each country's national legislation, there are sometimes tensions or even clearly conflicting positions between the participants. Every topic brings forth discussion and sometimes debates on certain issues, such as: the roles and power structures between sex worker activists and the roles of service providers (advocates, allies, civil servants, ownership of the expertise, etc.); dialogue between different actors; applied concepts (such as prostitution or sex work): involvement of sex workers; and the principles and visibility of gaining more knowledge and further education on the subject.

At the moment, there is much debate on the effects of the criminalisation of clients, and how it affects sex workers' position in society and reduces (as well as redirects) service provision. The challenge is to understand the effects of criminalisation in a broader sense, not only as charges and sentences given by the police and the Court of Justice. Besides law enforcement practices, criminalisation affects sex workers' position in other



areas of society as well. Many of the network members are concerned about the negative influence that criminalisation has had on sex workers' lives. societal attitudes towards sex workers, and treatment in public services.

Including different members with different approaches and ideologies regarding sex work can be considered one of the network's strengths. It offers a platform to discuss and argue, as well as learn, and sometimes even ends up with common understanding on some issues. It has also clarified the fact that differences in policy approach are not between countries but between different organisations. It has helped members to understand the idea of topics that can be dealt with in a Nordic framework and, on the other hand, to identify areas in which the Nordic view is misleading and simplistic.

Despite the many similarities, there are also considerable differences in concepts, working practices and standpoints between the countries and inside the countries.

Since the Nordic Network on Prostitution does not have permanent members as such, the list of organisations that took part in the 2011 event (below) does not necessarily correspond to past or future meetings; however, some of these organisations are constantly active in the network

#### The partners

#### FINLAND

#### Sex worker activists

Individual Finnish sex worker activists

#### Sexpo Foundation (NGO)

Promotes sexual well-being. equality and sexual rights www.sexpo.fi

#### Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (GO)

Action against human trafficking www.ofm.fi

#### Pro-tukipiste (NGO)

www.pro-tukipiste.fi



#### Rose Alliance (NGO)

Sex worker-led NGO, advocacy, support www.rosealliance.se

#### Special services within the municipal service providers

Units are part of municipal social services and the services are targeted at both those selling and buying sexual services

#### Prostitutionsenheten **Stockholm Stad (Prostitution** Unit, Stockholm City)

Social service to reduce prostitution in Stockholm www.stockholm.se/ prostitutionsenheten

#### Kompetenscenter Prostitution in Malmö

Social service to reduce harm and new recruitment into prostitution, and gain knowledge www.malmo.se/prostitution

#### Prostitutionsgruppen Göteborg (Prostitution Group in Gothenburg)

Social service: outreach, advice, support and counselling for victims of human trafficking www.goteborg.se

#### DENMARK

#### Sexarbejdernes Interesse Organisation (NGO)

Sex work activist organisation www.s-i-o.dk

#### Servicestyrelsen (GO)

Ministry of Social Affairs in Denmark National Competence Centre and Danish Anti-Trafficking Centre www.centermodmenneskehandel.dk

#### Pro Vest (GO)

Social and health support for sex workers, including migrants and trafficked persons www.provest.dk/en



#### NORWAY

#### **PION - Prostitutes Interest** Organisation in Norway (NGO)

Harm reduction related to health, safety and rights, and advocates for decriminalising prostitution www.pion-norge.no

#### Pro Sentret (GO)

Provides information and advice for male and female sex workers www.prosentret.no

#### Bergen Red Cross (INGO)

Vulnerable groups, female sex workers www.verdighetsenteret.no

#### **Nadheim (Church City Mission Oslo)**

Outreach, low-threshold services, and shelter for male and female sex workers, including victims of trafficking

www.bymisjon.no/Virksomheter/ Nadheim

### City Mission (NGO) "Night home" (Natthjemmet)

Emergency accommodation, support, and harm reduction for women www.bymisjon.no/Virksomheter/Natthiemmet

#### KAST, Norge (NGO)

Counselling and STI screening for clients of sex workers and their partners www.kast-norge.no

#### Fafo AIS

Research institute http://www.fafo.no/ais/index.htm

#### **INDOORS** partner

#### **Pro-tukipiste**

Pro-tukipiste was founded in 1990, starting first as a voluntary-based helpline service. Its aim was to identify whether there was a need for support and, if so, what form this support should take. Its starting points were respecting the autonomy of the target group's members, and delivering professional low-threshold services. Although Pro-tukipiste's work has expanded over the years, its working ideology has remained the same. The ideology based on supporting sex workers' rights has met with a lot of criticism as well as support.

The staff of the organisation is composed of a multidisciplinary team that operates in Helsinki and Tampere. Activities range from (social) advocacy work (monitoring and participating in Finnish discussions around prostitution, sex work and human trafficking) to the maintenance of low-threshold service centres (offering free of charge anonymous social support and health care services, in multiple languages and with cultural mediators).

Outreach work is also conducted in the streets, sex bars, sex shops, massage parlours and to sex workers working via the internet. As an important means of making a social impact, Protukipiste uses web communications including social media.

## Barriersand capacities

To support its advocacy work, Pro-tukipiste needs network cooperation whereby professionals from different fields and countries share information on promoting sex workers' rights. After a few years of silence, prostitution is once again widely present in the media and a debate on the total prohibition of the purchase of sexual services has started anew. In the political discussions around prostitution, Nordic countries represent an important reference group.

For Pro-tukipiste, the Nordic Network on Prostitution is a means of making a social impact, sharing information and developing working methods. The participation of sex worker activists in the network has further increased its importance for national work in promoting sex workers' rights and equal treatment. The members of the network, particularly the organisers of the meetings, are able to support the participation of local sex worker activists and/or the sex workers' organisation.



At the national level, Protukipiste also understands the need to cooperate with national networks. National networking and cooperation is more difficult since Salli (the sex worker union) officially ceased its activities in 2010. The changes and actions that affect sex workers' position in society are linked to many other social phenomena such as health policy, human rights policy and immigration policy.

For example, increased police activity to reduce prostitution in public places revealed questionable measures from a sexual health perspective, as well as in terms of fundamental rights. These flaws illustrate sex workers' unequal status in society and require a broader approach, not limited to sex work. The aim is to disseminate the message that sex workers have the same rights as anyone else and it is important to get supportive statements from allies such as health and human rights organisations.

Networks consisting of different organisations and authorities are common in Finland, although an open stance in support of sex workers' rights is often difficult to achieve. In spite of this, common positions have been achieved on a general level, for example in relation to securing anonymous services, promoting the position and rights of human trafficking victims, and promoting the right to health services for undocumented migrants.

## TIME FOR ACTION



Although Pro-tukipiste has not organised campaigns as such, it has frequently participated in various campaigns with different themes related to sex workers' rights, for example World AIDS Day (participation in actions and publications), SlutWalk (participation with a banner reading "Only rights can stop the wrongs" and giving media interviews with a message condemning violence against sex workers), participation of a panellist from Pro-tukipiste in an Amnesty International Finland seminar titled "Towards a fearless world", on violence against women, and a presentation in a seminar titled "Oikeuksia erojen

yli" ("Rights over differences") organised by Victim Support Finland.

Every 17 December, Pro-tukipiste celebrates Red Umbrella Day with a focus on sex workers' right to live and work without violence. This is taken into account in all our work and the theme is widely presented on the organisation's website and social media.

Pro-tukipiste has an updated website, as well as a blog, where anyone interested can find information and newsflashes on current issues. Social media (Facebook and Twitter) is used to share information on Pro-tukipiste's work and other relevant topics related to sex work and prostitution policy.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the Nordic Network, joint campaigns were not organised. The criminalisation debate provides members with updated news on recent campaigns which are often published on their websites and social media pages.

It is noteworthy that social media is actively used for spreading information. For instance, the



Nordic Network has its own Facebook community group page. In addition to Protukipiste's page, PION in Norway has a Facebook group "Nei till kriminalisering" ("No to criminalisation") and Rose Alliance Sweden and SIO Denmark have their own groups as well.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **REGIONAL SEMINAR**

In 2011, Pro-tukipiste was the organisation responsible for organising, in Helsinki, the annual Nordic Network on Prostitution meeting on 8 and 9 September.

With this task in hand, some of the Pro-tukipiste staff were designated to work specifically on the network meeting, and the theme "Sex work and mobility in Nordic countries" was chosen. Feedback on the situation of each Nordic country was requested, and seven working groups were created. The

event was initially guided by sex worker activists' perspectives on the situation of different Nordic countries. Secondly, press conferences and workshops were held. 72 participants took part in the two-day event.

#### Aims

The meeting was designed first to get an overview of service provision, prostitution policy, and the different sex work scenes across the Nordic countries. The debate on criminalisation is active in every Nordic country, even if the situation varies: Sweden and Norway have already adopted a general ban, Finland has its own restricted model and Denmark has not (at least yet) chosen a policy of criminalisation.

Sharing knowledge made it possible to get up-to-date and comparable information about the situation in different Nordic countries, which can be used in national advocacy work. The goal was to diversify and strengthen national advocacy activities, and influence media, public opinion and governments regarding the reality of sex workers, including migrants.

Participants were requested, therefore, to present an evaluation of the significant changes in their operating environment, instead of their own activities.

The second aim of the seminar was to take a closer look at the mobile sex worker population working in Nordic countries, considered in the media to be a threat to social order. In order to broaden and deepen the network members' understandings of this matter, participants were requested to evaluate the effects of Nordic prostitution policy and law on mobile sex worker populations' positions and rights. The goal was to provide a gap analysis of the current situation of migrant sex workers in the region.

From the service providers' point of view, it was especially relevant to evaluate how the pressure to develop services towards exiting programmes affects migrant sex workers.

The third and final aim of the seminar was to increase sex workers' involvement in the Nordic Network. To this end, the programme was planned to give more time and leader-

ship to sex worker activists. As a consequence, sex workers were expected to take the lead in highlighting their own positions, interests and needs, without the interference of service providers.

Workshops also took place during the event and aimed to reflect upon the relationship between mobility, service provision and sex worker activism. by sharing thoughts on the principles of peer activities and information and experiences regarding new working methods, and by providing an open space for discussion about the structural violence directed towards sex work and how it manifests itself. The goal of each workshop was related to a specific theme and was based on sharing information and experiences of good practices as well as challenges in service provision, activism and knowledge production.

To gain more visibility and media publicity and raise awareness about sex workers' rights and the consequences of the increasing tendency towards criminalisation, a press conference was organised. Because the network does not make joint statements, everyone who

participated in the press conference represented his or her own perspective, or that of his or her organisation.

#### Contents

The meeting started with a brief presentation on the redefinition of the concept of sexual morality in terms of 'Nordic morals' and the 'moral threat coming from outside'. In other words, the familiar pattern of discursive 'Othering' is in effect, dividing the 'good' and the 'bad', 'us' and the 'danger' in a very Manichean manner. Moreover, it was also stated during the introduction that academic work may not provide definite answers to any questions connected with prostitution, but it certainly helps to neutralise attitudes and often strong feelings in the area of prostitution.

Next, each organisation was able to present the current situation in its country from its own point of view, using the mobile sex worker population as a starting point. The discussions that follow represent a summary of the first and second day of the meeting.



#### Sex Worker Activism

The message of all sex worker activists was consistent: the effects of the law cannot be viewed only as a law enforcement issue. As a consequence of the law, a negative attitude towards sex work has spread across the whole society. This environment affects the position of both national and migrant sex workers. Negative impacts of the law were emphasised in the lives of the sex workers in the most vulnerable position, whose situation has become even worse There is a real need for activism and the promotion of sex workers' rights. Sex workers need allies and supporters in the political sphere. All speakers emphasised that service providers should respect sex workers' right to self-determination, and resist a repressive perspective characteristic of social work.

#### Service Provision

The advocacy role of service providers provoked the most discussion. Service providers should be empowered to highlight the human and

fundamental rights perspective more strongly. Nowadays, statements are being overly avoided for fear of decreased funding. There is an urgent need to share evidence-based knowledge about the concrete risks which endanger the health, safety and well-being of many sex workers. Many service providers also expressed concerns about the political and ideological redirection of funding. State control has increased and decision-makers demand that previous working approaches be replaced by exiting programmes. Service providers take a different position: state control is stronger in governmental and municipal services than in NGOs.

In Sweden and Norway, funding has also targeted social work for social reintegration of clients, and now services have expanded to include their families.

Traditionally, service providers have taken strong roles in producing evidence and gaining knowledge, so they should be transparent and critical in relation to what kind of knowledge is produced and for what purposes it is used.

#### Nordic Policy

The criminalisation of purchasing sexual services has been promoted by policy-makers and politicians as the Nordic Model or as the Nordic view on prostitution. This promotion and marketing has been linked with the idea of the Nordic welfare state. The so-called Nordic Model has shifted its approach from social policy to criminal justice policy. Ironically, Nordic countries are, in a sense, competing with one another for the best 'criminalisation policy' and to see who can produce the best figures (reduced prostitution as evidenced through high numbers of penalised clients or low numbers of sex workers).

Trafficking in human beings has been on the agenda for a long time and is often (mis)used in policy-making – both in prostitution policy and in immigration policy. Migrant sex workers are seen as a danger while at the same time being in danger themselves.

## Day 2

#### Plenary

Pro-tukipiste began by introducing the Nordic Network members to the online outreach service PRO24/7, which is entirely conducted on the internet. The organisation is a pioneer in the use of such technology; therefore, partners were able to learn more about this method of outreach.

Other presentations were given, and a study about how the illegitimacy of sex work is useful to the government in shaping the Finnish nation was also a focus of attention. Firstly, this is the case through laws concerning sex work that exclude sex workers from citizenship rights (in particular those who are migrants), therefore allowing the government to determine who can and cannot be a part of the nation. Secondly, it is an issue that is manipulated in political discourses to justify the politics of control and state racism (as seen, for instance, in human trafficking discourse).



#### Press Conference

The purpose of the press conference was an ambitious one: to foster different outlooks on sex work-related issues and to help the media to construct a general overview of what is going on in Nordic countries.

#### Working Groups

As mentioned above, each working group was devoted to a specific topic:

- Cultural diversity and mobility meet Nordic services and activism
- How do we know what we know? Evidence-based documentation and evaluation
- Thai people in sex work: group discussions in the Thai language
- Working with people who buy sexual services. Why, for whom and by whom?
- Peer work possibilities
- A wider perspective on violence against sex workers: structural discrimination and social exclusion as part of the phenomenon
- Sex work and service provision on the internet.

## Challenges encountered

One of the main challenges encountered during the Nordic meeting was a critique by sex work activists and some service providers concerning the implementation of repressive and punitive social and health service practices. Services are provided and produced without including service users in needs assessment, service planning or evaluation. Sex work activists also reiterated their preference for the word 'sex work' in place of the 'prostitution', still in use by some service providers.

In the Scandinavian context. the concepts of 'sex work' and 'prostitution' constitute a significant ideological battlefield and are an extremely important component of policy-making and the representation of the Nordic Model, All service providers have to take this ideological framework into account. Particularly in governmental and municipal services, increased state intervention has meant increased pressure to adhere to officially accepted concepts to ensure funding and to be able

to maintain work undertaken.
As a result, some discussions during the meetings were very confrontational.

One such discussion was on the programme for rehabilitation of clients, already implemented by KAST in Sweden and Norway. The topic raised mixed feelings: is there a genuine need for these services or are they a manifestation of the abolitionist policy? Opinions ranged across the board.

## Results and improvements

- The involvement of sex work activists was stronger than ever before in Nordic Network history.
- Members of the Nordic
  Network were able to share updated information on sex work,
  making an active contribution
  to the development of advocacy
  work and tools in the region and
  at the local level.
- There was significant agreement that criminalisation of clients and migrant sex workers across the region contributes to deteriorating human and civil rights, especially for migrant

sex workers. Although reaching consensus was not an easy task for this network structure, efforts were made to set a regional agenda for dealing with this topic.

- Despite their differences, participants – including sex workers – were able to share their points of view and come to an understanding on certain issues.
- The meetings developed and strengthened cooperation among sex workers and service providers across the Nordic countries.
- The inclusion of a press conference within the structure of the event helped to spread information on the Nordic prostitution policy and its consequences for sex work and sex workers.
- Due to the fact that the media campaign was well-prepared and targeted, the result was broad and effective media coverage. While the Finnish Minister of Internal Affairs had suggested that Finland should reconsider a general ban on the purchase of sexual services, the network reacted with good media cover-

age and strategic messages.

- Special attention was paid to the situation of Thai massage parlours and their link with sex work across the region. A particularly important result was the direct participation of Thai sex workers and their Thai-speaking allies.
- The online counselling service (PRO24/7) was presented at the meeting, empowering other service providers to make use of this technology in their services.
- Due to the fact that Finnish sex worker organisations are no longer in existence, the Rose Alliance welcomed Finnish sex workers to join it. During the meeting the first Finnish sex worker working in Finland was accepted as a member.
- The significance of the Nordic cooperation was discussed and it was agreed that it is an essential part of network members' activities. Even if the members can be active in different European networks, it is essential to have a forum for Nordic dialogue at a regional level.

- Due to the excellent media coverage, Pro-tukipiste made lots of contacts and received many training requests (from medical and social work students) and was invited to write an article in The Finnish Occupational Health Institute's online magazine).
- The Rose Alliance and Prostitutionsenheten Stockholm decided to have a meeting together for the first time.

### SOCIAL MOBILISATION

The Nordic Network, as outlined here, plays a strategic role for organisations working in the field of sex work. Instead of simply diverging opinions, the network brings together different perspectives and therefore it is frequently hard to reach consensus or prepare joint statements and campaigns. It does, however, foster an environment that makes sex workers and service providers more aware of their roles in a broader Nordic context.





Having said that, every network member can utilise the outcomes and information provided by the meetings as they choose, and the existence of the network has encouraged its members to stay in contact between the meetings as well. Normally, information from other Nordic countries is requested when there is a need for a common Nordic approach to a politically current issue.

Moreover, the network has been of great importance to the dialogue between sex worker activists and service providers. For a long time, the network was merely a platform for service providers to discuss prostitutes'/ sex workers' issues without the involvement of the target group itself; the only exception was PION, a Norwegian sex workers' organisation. Wider participation of sex worker activists began only a few years ago. For some service providers, network meetings have been the first forum to provide an opportunity for frank dialogue with sex workers including sex workers from their own country or city. For example, in the meeting in Helsinki,

the Swedish activist union Rose Alliance and a prostitution unit from Stockholm's social bureau decided to organise their first joint meeting once back home.

A joint press conference organised during the network meeting in Helsinki was the first one in the network's history. Participation in the press conference was not obligatory and it did not include a joint declaration or statement signed by the network members. The members respect their statutory differences and positions; however, they find common ground on the negative impact of criminalisation. In this way, the focus of the briefing was on the negative consequences of criminalisation: sex worker activists and those service providers known for their negative stance on the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services were present.

## The role of the media

The media attention received by the Nordic Network strengthened Pro-tukipiste's national advocacy work. Almost every medium highlighted in its reporting that among the most negative impacts of criminalisation is a rise in negative attitudes among basic services as well as in society in general. Without the network's support, it wouldn't have been possible to highlight this message.

The fact that Pro-tukipiste received various references and training requests after the meeting demonstrates the importance of the media attention.

#### Organisations

In Finland, Pro-tukipiste has long been the only organisation focused on questions related to sex work. Salli, an organisation of sex workers themselves, was set up in 2002 in order to air sex workers' own views in the public domain. Its creation was related to the criminalisation of purchasing sexual services: sex workers wanted to participate in



the law-making process and in the public discussion. The organisation quickly became established, Salli was well-presented in the media and its statements were requested by government officials. Pro-tukipiste and Salli mutually agreed upon roles and distribution of work.

The most important thing was to be open in giving statements and to inform each other in advance of crucial statements and potential campaigns. For example, statements given to different parliamentary committees during the process of preparing the law were similar but had some differences in emphases. Pro-tukipiste has not organised big campaigns; instead, its strategy has been to participate in already existing campaigns with its own message concentrating on sex workers' rights. For example, at SlutWalk, organised in August 2011, Pro-tukipiste received media attention for its message concerning sex workers' right to work without violence.

The organisation Exit – a programme for exiting prostitution - was established in Finland in 2008. According to the press. its establishment was linked to a parliamentary decision to increase exiting programmes, following the partial criminalisation of purchasing sexual services. However, the organisation has primarily focused on preventing prostitution among its target group – young people at risk. Thus, the Finnish exit work has differed from that in other Nordic countries.

#### Cooperation

Pro-tukipiste has sought partners from other organisations; cooperation is linked to shared questions and concerns. For example, cooperation in advocacy work is done with Victim Support Finland in order to improve the position of crime victims with a foreign background. Common statements are made with specialist HIV organisations as well as with organisations working with drug users in order to promote possibilities for low-threshold testing and treatment.

Pro-tukipiste is also a founding member and chair of a national network for professional outreach work. Networking with other organisations has improved sex workers' position and rights as well as enabling the promotion of their rights together with those of other social groups. In this kind of cooperation the focus shifts from sex work to rights that belong to everyone and, at the same time, exposes structural inequalities.

Cooperation with human rights organisations has been more difficult, but at the end of 2011 Amnesty International Finland took note of the structural violence against sex workers. A representative from Pro-tukipiste was invited to speak at a seminar titled "Towards a fearless world" on the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The audience was composed of more than a hundred human rights activists, service providers, media representatives and researchers. It was an excellent forum at which to expose the serious human rights violations as well as violations of physical



integrity connected to the fact that prostitution itself is defined as a form of violence against women.

#### Networking

Network building on the theme of human trafficking has been easier, since everyone is unanimously against human trafficking. Nonetheless, maintaining clear concepts and continuing to fight the 'battle of meanings' is important in organisational activities against human trafficking as well. It is common to draw parallels between prostitution and human trafficking, and the position of sex workers who are victims of human trafficking is, for many reasons, worse than the position of victims of other forms of human trafficking.

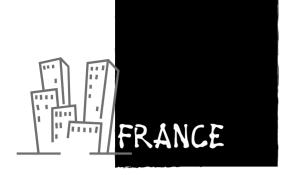
Pro-tukipiste has an established role as an organisation with specialist expertise on questions of human trafficking, and participates in various human trafficking-related professional groups and networks.

#### Social media

Advocacy work done through the web and social media communication has become an important part of Pro-tukipiste's work. This became possible when Pro-tukipiste was able to hire a public relations officer. Their website, blog, Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated almost daily and this has increased people's awareness of Pro-tukipiste's activities as well as of current issues related to sex work.

Since Pro-tukipiste is the only organisation concentrating on sex workers' rights in Finland, international networking has been essential. The support and input received from European networks for supervising interest, clarifying concepts and argumentation and developing working methods has been indispensable and encouraging. In addition, international networking has increased Pro-tukipiste's national influence.





ex work in France is neither prohibited nor regulated. The national legislation has many implications, especially as sex workers are often the targets of laws that impact their ability to work in favourable conditions. Because of the national legislative conjuncture, sex work is still a marginalised and clandestine activity which demands the attention of service providers in France.

This chapter presents the French capacity building which is marked by strong activism by sex workers and service providers, most of them community based organisations (CBOs). Representatives of this movement historically oppose abolitionist policies and advocate for the improvement of the rights of sex workers and health promotion among them.

### NATIONAL NETWORKING

The national network Collectif Olympio was created in 1996 by the Association Cabiria and all the existing French communitybased sex work projects. It was supported by the Directorate General of Health (AIDS Division), the Epidemiological Surveillance Centre of Saint Maurice (in Paris) and the TRABOULES researchers (organisation for sociological and ethnological research in Lyon and Toulouse). This formal network was created after three years of informal meetings between outreach and prevention projects for and with sex workers, in order to give a technical and ethical framework to these projects and to provide better visibility and greater advocacy power. A charter was then signed by the members of this network: Cabiria (Lyon), Pastt (Paris), Perles (Montpellier), Autres Regards (Marseille), Genre (Bordeaux), Bus des Femmes (Paris), Arap-Rubis (Nîmes) and Bus des Garçons (Paris).

They were engaged in supporting sex workers' rights and access to health by setting up meetings twice a year. Several press releases and group statements were published.

The Collectif Olympio ceased to be a reference point for prostitution issues in 2001, after 4-5 years of existence. Despite the end of this collective, the French CBOs kept their links and networking in an informal way, in national meetings on sex work, health, migration, and lately on indoor sex work more specifically.

## **Collectif Droits et Prostitution**

Rights and Sex Work Collective

In 2003, the creation of the Collectif Droits et Prostitution gave fresh impetus to national networking among NGOs working with and for sex workers. It is a national network with links to international networks, such as the ICRSE, through its members.



It was within the context of the application of the law criminalising soliciting that, initiated by Act Up-Paris and Arcat, several NGOs and CBOs working on health promotion, fighting against HIV and working with and for sex workers decided to join together to protest the effects of this law and to create the Collectif Droits et Prostitution. This collective is dedicated to improving exchanges between organisations working with sex workers, in the specific context of the enforcement of the Law on Inner Security and its article 225-10-1 on the criminalisation of passive soliciting.

For eight years, the collective has denounced the negative consequences of the application of the law criminalising soliciting, including the deterioration of working conditions. Because of police repression, sex workers must hide in order to work, go to the outskirts of cities and move to other regions and countries. In the face of this pressure, sex workers found themselves increasingly isolated and in precarious situations. This has reduced their ability to negotiate condom use: due to

lower revenues, sex workers may more frequently agree to have unprotected sex. Under these conditions, access to health and rights, and thus the prevention of STIs and HIV, is complicated.

The law also impacts very negatively on the activities of associations that support sex workers in their access to prevention, health and rights, as the greater isolation of sex workers impedes contact and building of trust.

Currently, the collective faces a very repressive political movement. The main political parties all favour abolitionism. The criminalisation of clients is being debated, and the collective regularly issues press releases and provides expert information on the field in order to introduce objective arguments to the debate and to dismantle myths about sex work and sex workers.

The advocacy actions of the collective have an important impact on ideological debates about sex work issues in France. The collective, with its members working in the field and coming from the community, has developed legitimacy in terms of expertise and is a major force countering the strong lobbying

implemented by abolitionist organisations.

This national network is used by all members as a means to amplify another, different voice on sex work, more rooted in evidence and concerned with rights. Thanks to this network and to several years of awareness-raising work, social mobilisation around the question of sex workers' rights has become possible.

Despite this work, the collective continues to face well-organised opposition from political bodies and NGOs, which mainly consider sex work to be violence against women. The latest result of this abolitionist movement was the majority vote in parliament in favour of a resolution reaffirming the abolitionist position of France, and the introduction of a bill on criminalisation of clients to be discussed in 2012.

The role of the collective is mostly political. It has the capacity to carry out advocacy activities, such as publishing press releases and position papers targeting politicians and the media, and organising demonstrations.

This collective also enables discussion and information exchange on local actions in order to increase their visibility and to disseminate legal, political and advocacy information among its members

To bolster its activities, the collective meets regularly in Paris, especially for the preparation of specific advocacy actions. A recent example of such an action is the press release, press kit and letter addressed to members of parliament, published and disseminated in the media and to political bodies in April 2011 against the political proposition to criminalise the clients of sex workers.

The Collectif Droits et Prostitution is composed of 14 organisations working with and for sex workers, including community-based, HIV/AIDS-specific organisations, organisations working with drug users, LGBT organisations, and a sex workers' union.

## Organisations working with and for sex workers

Of the eight organisations working with and for sex workers, seven are CBOs, and one is currently developing this approach. All of these organisations defend sex workers' rights, fight against their stigmatisation and discrimination, support sex workers in their access to health, and provide them with legal and social support.

The seven CBOs, Les Amis du Bus des Femmes, Avec Nos Aînés, Arap Rubis, Autres Regards, Cabiria, Grisélidis, and Pastt, were created by sex workers and other activists in the field of rights and HIV issues.

The common principle of these CBOs is the participation and decision-making of those persons directly concerned (sex workers), in a partnership and team of different but complementary sensibilities, institutions and professions, and in projects on harm reduction and advocacy.

Health community-based organisations fight for the sharing of knowledge and skills, making each individual an active agent in prevention.

#### The partners

The following organisations are all community-based organisations working with and for all sex workers.

Les Amis du Bus des Femmes | Paris www.lesamisdubusdesfemmes.com

Cabiria | Lyon www.cabiria.asso.fr

**Grisélidis | Toulouse** www.griselidis.com

**Arap Rubis | Nîmes** http://arap-rubis.voila.net

Entr'actes | Lille www.itineraires-entractes.org

Autres Regards | Marseille www.autresregards.org

#### Specific organisations

**Avec Nos Aînés | Paris**With and for 'senior' sex workers
http://gabounette.canalblog.com

## Transgender and LGBT organisations

These organisations are part of the collective because they represent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people working as sex workers, and they fight for more rights for sex workers and an end to repression,



which causes more vulnerability especially in terms of HIV/STI prevention.

PASTT | Paris
With and for transgender sex workers
Support Transgender | Strasbourg

Acceptess-T | Paris www.acceptess-t.net

www.sts67.org

Total Respect | Tjenbé Rèd Fédération

LGBT Afro-Caribbean community www.tjenbered.fr

## HIV/AIDS-specific organisations

The two HIV-specific organisations, Act Up-Paris and Arcat, are the founders of the collective. As HIV organisations, both were especially concerned about the impact of the 2003 law on soliciting on HIV/STI prevention among sex workers. Moreover, they have long-term experience of advocacy and networking.

Act Up | Paris www.actupparis.org

**Arcat | Paris** www.arcat-sante.org

**Charonne | Paris**Organisation working with drug users www.charonne.asso.fr

#### Union of sex workers

STRASS, French Union of Sex Work | Paris www.strass-syndicat.org

#### LOCAL LEVEL

## Comité de Pilotage de la Réduction des Risques

Steering Committee on Harm Reduction

This committee has been meeting every two months since 1996. It is the forum in which actions on harm reduction are defined, coordinated and followed up at the level of the city of Marseille.

Its members are institutions (directorate of the local public health services, social security services, City of Marseille) and NGOs working on harm reduction with and for drug users.

The main aim is the political inclusion of sex work projects and organisations in the framework of harm reduction, in order to provide them with better visibility and to emphasise their relevance in terms of health prevention (HIV/STI prevention) and access to health and rights.

#### Collectif du 1er décembre 1st of December Network

Since 2005, this network has comprised almost 20 organisa-

tions from Marseille (15 NGOs and 4 public institutions) fighting against AIDS, and is coordinated by Autres Regards. Contact is maintained regularly throughout the year and the focus is the organisation of an information and awareness stand on 1 December each year. This is the only specific and global action carried out by this network.

### NATIONAL LEVEL

## STRASS | Syndicat du Travail Sexuel

French Union of Sex Work

STRASS was formed in March 2009, during the Sex Work Conference organised by the Collectif Droits et Prostitution. The union was designed as a tool for the self-organisation of individual sex workers. It fights for the recognition of sex work and against any prohibition of it, and therefore against all repressive provisions that limit freedom of exercise and prolong insecurity and lawlessness. The union also fights against discrimination and

marginalisation of sex workers and enables them to speak and be heard in public debates on sex work. In addition, STRASS fights against slavery, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

#### Ac.Sé | Dispositif National d'Accueil et de Protection des Victimes de la Traite des Êtres Humains

National Network for Protection of Victims of Trafficking

Ac.Sé is a national network created and coordinated since 2001 by ALC, an NGO working for sex workers and victims of trafficking in Nice.

#### **INDOORS Partner**

#### **Autres Regards**

Autres Regards is a community-based health organisation located in Marseille working with and for sex workers of all genders. Since 1995, the organisation has worked on STI/HIV prevention, health promotion, and the improvement of access to health services and fundamental rights for sex workers. Thanks to its

multidisciplinary staff, including sex workers working in the organisation, Autres Regards provides several free and confidential services:

- Outreach work by day and night in Marseille and surrounding areas: distribution of condoms, lubricants and other safer sex materials, information on sex work and rights
- Drop-in centre with shower, washing machine and body care
- HIV/STI prevention and accompaniment for HIV/STI testing, treatment and accompaniment to public services
- General medicine and mental health care
- Social and juridical support: support for housing, training and legal support for migrants
- French courses
- Support for rights and the fight against discrimination and criminalisation of sex work
- Participation in and promotion of advocacy activities

# Barriersand capacities

There are two main barriers for organisations working with sex workers in France: lack of political support, and lack of funding to sustain work.

The political barriers relate, generally, to the national atmosphere of repression and victimisation of sex workers. Networking, in this context, is fundamental to setting up a common agenda to counteract the present situation.

To overcome this barrier, Autres Regards and the members of the collective produce joint position papers and press releases, which aim to mobilise sex workers and relevant actors in the struggle to improve sex workers' rights in France. National advocacy, albeit essential, cannot replace local and regional advocacy. On the local level, the mairie (town hall) and the prefecture are mainly responsible for the way with which prostitution is dealt. Depending on the position of the mayor or the police chief, the general context can be more or less repressive or permissive. To improve this political situa-





tion, NGOs need to find a balance between national and local lobbying, and use networking as a tool to make contacts (deputies, political bodies), to better argue, to legitimise their actions and to adapt and strengthen their communication strategies.

The financial barrier is a result of the current political situation of France, and the shift of opinions on sex work. As a consequence, abolitionist NGOs are the ones gathering funding to run sex work projects. Additionally, gaining funds for HIV/STI projects has become difficult due to the fact that it is no longer a priority for the French government. Considering this situation, the network plays a fundamental role in developing strategies to pool resources and strengthen and combine experiences, knowledge and projects. The aim is to develop more innovative and interregional projects, and at the same time to preserve the identity and specificities of each NGO.

# National and interregional projects

Examples which were presented to public and private funders for a greater impact:

- HIV/STI prevention project targeting clients at a national level
- Identification, listing and dissemination on the internet of all relevant and adapted materials for sex workers, on a national level

Although the network is still struggling to organise meetings, manage communication, develop its website and so on, the reality is that only through joint action can French organisations overcome the political barriers. Autres Regards and network members are lobbying the Ministry of Health to get involved in sex work issues by supporting their actions.

Networking helps new actions to be better recognised and legitimised for funding, and it increases the weight of political actions, especially when an NGO or a group of NGOs undergo a defamatory campaign, as happened on an internet forum in which the NGOs are available for

sex workers to contact. To put an end to the recurring abusive messages which were addressed to a specific NGO, the participants decided to take a collective position and undertake a joint juridical action.

Finally, concerning more specifically the situation of indoor sex workers, NGOs working with and for this target group need to coordinate, especially with regard to their internet activities, during outreach and during counselling/information sessions, in order to better respond to the mobility of indoor sex workers and to better communicate on these new actions and strategies.

# TIME FOR ACTION



#### LOCAL LEVEL

In addition to its usual activities, Autres Regards occasionally prepares awareness-raising actions: a film screening on sex work including a debate with the participation of sex workers, regular information stands on sex work and rights during

specific events, and short training sessions targeting students in the social sector.

These actions are promoted and shared within the network, mostly through the internet, on the organisation's Facebook page and on Sex In Blog, a blog targeting indoor sex workers. They are also shared with local sex workers via email and during outreach activities.

Local advocacy actions which take place in Marseille are always prepared in conjunction with other NGOs in the network.

#### NATIONAL LEVEL

The Collectif Droits et Prostitution leads advocacy actions by systematically meeting with politicians or persons in charge of sex work issues any time there is a political change or when problems occur with police forces.

In addition, the network has developed empowerment activities among sex workers: organising events, meeting with them, distributing literature in sex work venues, and creating information materials on their rights.

NGO members of the network have the opportunity to use and relay all documents, position papers and statements created by the network, targeting political bodies or targeting sex workers. These are important tools for local communication and advocacy campaigns.

# Example of an action organised by the collective and the NGOs

Since 2007, the national network has organised the Assises de la Prostitution (Sex Work Conference) in order to advocate for more rights for sex workers and to give them a voice on STI/ HIV prevention issues, working conditions and how they wish to work. The conference generally lasts two days, with round tables on specific themes, a press conference during the first day and a march for the rights of sex workers on the second day. This conference also provides a space to strengthen relationships and connections between sex workers and the NGOs.

# Successful joint action and cooperation

#### Capacity building

The collective has achieved two main results in terms of capacity building.

First of all, it has allowed NGOs with different missions and objectives, but with the same approach towards sex workers and their rights, to share local actions, and to harmonise and encourage the advocacy message.

Secondly, since this network came into existence, sex workers have become more visible and united. STRASS, the first union of sex workers in France, was created with the support of the network.

#### Advocacy

In terms of advocacy, the national network has become a key informant and key player on issues related to sex work at a national level, and the media increasingly reflects the voices of sex workers. This would not have been achieved without a network.



The mutual communication of the network had a significant impact on the political debate on the criminalisation of clients, taking place in France since April 2011. As sex workers and sex work organisations face strong lobbying by the abolitionist movement, it is important to be able to propose a legitimate, argued and extensively thoughtout alternative based on the rights of sex workers.

Although the presence of the sex workers' rights movement in the media and the visibility of the network are themselves both achievements, the advocacy capacity of the network still needs to be developed.



# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

In 2008, Autres Regards organised a meeting on "The New Forms of Sex Work" with several organisations working with and for sex workers and others sharing their approach and values about sex work. The aim of this meeting was to analyse the changes related to sex work that took place in recent years in France, and the increasing evolution of indoor sex work.

Based on this first meeting, Autres Regards decided to organise, in 2011, a new one.

The seminar took place on 10 November in Marseille and was titled the National Meeting on Indoor Sex Work. Autres Regards wanted to bring together NGOs from all over France working with and for sex workers.

For this national meeting, it was primarily important to gather the French CBOs (Autres Regards, Cabiria, Grisélidis, Les Amis du Bus des Femmes and Arap Rubis), but also organisations with the same approach, like Entr'Actes, and some national organisations working with sex workers: Médecins du Monde from Nantes, and Aides from Bayonne. More than half of the participating organisations are members of the Collectif Droits et Prostitution, underlining the desire to use a common position as a way to consolidate existing bonds.

#### Aims

The reason for a national meeting was to share and discuss different projects and actions targeting indoor sex workers which are currently, or soon to be, implemented by different organisations. This meeting was organised to exchange the experiences, difficulties and specificities of the participating organisations, to exchange good practices and outreach methods, and to encourage the development of new methodologies of contact. This gave



the participant organisations a better picture and mapping of the indoor sex work scene and its projects.

It enabled the creation of efficient networking to address indoor sex workers' working conditions, local difficulties linked to the political situation, their needs, and possible situations of vulnerability.

The national meeting also had the aim of enhancing common understanding of how to improve CBOs' capacity to develop and implement concepts of peer education, and empower and encourage sex worker leadership locally.

#### Contents

The national meeting was divided into two main parts: the presentation of ongoing and future projects on indoor sex work, and a discussion on common strategies and good practices for more efficient contact with isolated indoor sex workers, for better networking, and for the set-up of a real community-based dynamic.

### Part

Five current and future initiatives were presented targeting indoor sex workers in France. Each participant presented their project and explained its aims.

#### Internet action

presented by Grisélidis Grisélidis began a specific action in order to analyse sex work on the internet and to evaluate the demands and needs of sex workers in terms of health and STI/HIV prevention. Several tools were set up: a website created by and for sex workers with a forum, a Facebook page and a Twitter account. They also contact indoor sex workers through phone calls and emails, during informal meetings across France, on MSN chat and via a chat box on their website. They ensure an online presence on specialised forums on the internet, and with an emergency line specially created for indoor sex workers. The creation of partnerships and participation in public events is also part of their work in order to raise the awareness of other service providers.

#### ■ ProstBoyz Action, a project targeting male indoor and outdoor sex workers

presented by Cabiria
Since March 2009 Cabiria has
conducted outreach with
and for men who offer sexual
services to other men on the
internet and in specific indoor
venues. The association has set
up a website aimed at this target
group. They contact male sex
workers through a specialised
website, through email contacts
and also on their Facebook
page. The next objective for the
team is to be more present in
the field.

#### The INDOORS project

presented by Médecins du Monde

The organisation Médecins du Monde in Nantes conducts specific outreach to sex workers which started with the INDOORS project in 2009. Following analysis of their local difficulties and the needs of indoor sex workers in Nantes, they decided to target mainly bars operating at night. They are currently seeking to develop this new project's phase with the participation of a sex worker in the team.





#### ■ A project targeting indoor sex workers presented by Arap Rubis

Arap Rubis has developed a small activity targeting indoor sex workers who advertise on the internet. Social workers working on this project mainly send emails to sex workers to introduce the association and answer their specific questions. The next goal of the team is to set up contact through phone calls.

# ■ The INDOORS project presented by Autres Regards

Autres Regards presented the INDOORS project, implemented since the beginning of 2009, and in particular its new activities: outreach to night bars, presence on specialised forums, and the publication of an ad targeting indoor sex workers in the local newspaper.

#### Other upcoming projects

Entr'Actes, AIDES and Les Amis du Bus des Femmes are currently considering implementing new activities aimed at indoor sex workers. More specifically, the local structure of AIDES in Bayonne, part of the national organisation fighting against AIDS, is planning to begin a new activity with women working in bars at the Spanish border.

### Part 2

The second part of the national meeting was dedicated to discussion of common strategies. A summary of the main topics and debates can be read below.

#### ■ How to overcome the difficulties and improve contact with indoor sex workers

Several difficulties were discussed: financial ones, methodological ones, the difficulty of being present and efficient in specialised chats and forums on the internet, difficulties in contacting migrant sex workers, community-based organisations' difficulties in achieving legitimacy in the eyes of the sex workers they contact, and the lack of national coordination on sex work.

It was interesting to have this exchange for two main reasons: the less experienced projects learned from others, and the most experienced projects gained a better understanding

of the evolving indoor scene in other cities, which enabled them to better plan and organise a stronger partnership.

#### How to improve and strengthen networking

The participants focused on the implementation of a dynamic network and on possible collective actions. Several ideas were presented for efficient networking. To improve networking between NGOs working with and for indoor sex workers, the participants proposed the development of informal and formal contacts through video conferences, possible exchanges using the already existing national network, and the organisation of an annual meeting specifically focused on indoor sex work.

To improve networking and provide more comprehensive and harmonised access to services for sex workers, two tools were highlighted: the French section of the existing website www.services4sexworkers.eu, developed by the network TAMPEP, should be updated; and Grisélidis presented the tool they are currently developing: the Agora. This initiative is a



collaboration of interactive and online platforms for both NGOs and peers acting as key informants for the sex worker community. This will be a database on indoor sex work, compiling all the documents, tools and materials already published on the topic, and with relevant addresses of providers of services to sex workers.

### ■ How to encourage the mobilisation of sex workers

This discussion was greatly facilitated by the presence of sex workers in teams working on the projects and the input of a sex worker who wanted to encourage the self-organisation and mobilisation of other sex workers. Barriers to mobilisation and how to overcome them were discussed – it is a fact that indoor sex workers are hard to reach and to involve.

The repressive political context partly explains their reluctance to give up anonymity, while a more personal barrier is linked to their self-perception. Indoor sex workers generally refer to themselves as 'escorts' as a way of differentiating themselves from street prostitution, from

which they want to maintain a distance. The high turnover which characterises indoor sex work also considerably hampers the continuity of actions implemented.

#### Strategies

The following strategies were discussed for the mobilisation of sex workers:

- Organise themed community meetings concerning health promotion, self-defence training, and the legal framework of sex work, a subject which attracts considerable interest from sex workers
- Use international themed days such as 17 December and the activities planned during this event to interest indoor sex workers in collective actions
- Work with peers as cultural facilitators to create and maintain links with indoor sex workers.

# Results and improvements

Considering the goal of the meeting, to consolidate and stimulate the national network on indoor sex work issues (i.e. specific work conditions, legal frameworks, outreach techniques, etc.), the outcome was considered constructive by all the organisations. A new dynamic was created in terms of networking and cooperation. The joint commitment to more systematically share information on indoor sex work is also a key step in terms of capacity building.

The meeting allowed participants to share knowledge and methodologies. There was a significant need in France to exchange outreach practices implemented in different cities, in order to eventually adapt and coordinate contact methodologies. Moreover, it allowed participants who had no current projects or actions targeting indoor sex workers, but wished to develop them, to get information about methodology and data on indoor sex work, and to discuss good practices in outreach.

Indoor outreach requires flexibility, creativity and innovation, as it is more or less hidden and is never directly presented as such, given the political context and particularly the law against soliciting. This is why sharing experience is particularly important in the context of indoor sex work. Should the political context become more repressive through the criminalisation of clients, CBOs will have to be even more flexible and creative.

An initial step forward was taken in terms of the other objective, to create a better community-based dynamic and to encourage the participation of the community. Capacity building inside the community is a very difficult issue because of difficulties in creating and maintaining links. However, all participants view this process as a priority. The national meeting allowed all participants to reaffirm their common position on defending sex workers' rights.

A few weeks after the meeting took place, the abolitionist position was reaffirmed and a law proposal concerning the criminalisation of clients was introduced. The reaffirmation of a

common position on defending sex workers' rights is retrospectively all the more important in this precarious context. If this law comes into being, it will seriously affect sex workers' working conditions by increasing their vulnerability to violence and abuse, thus impeding their rights even further.

#### TRAINING SESSION

The idea of carrying out a threehour training session on 9 November and 7 December 2011, targeting students, particularly from the Social Work Institute of Marseille, came from two main considerations:

- Students in the social sector are not trained on sex work issues, or if they are it is only by NGOs with an abolitionist approach which are not active in health prevention. Yet, these students will be in the situation of working with sex workers during their careers.
- The institute where the training took place asked Autres Regards several times for training due to the strong interest in a sex work approach.

Moreover, it was an important way to raise the awareness of students about indoor sex work issues and to take the opportunity to discuss and debate the current law proposals on the criminalisation of clients, as the recent resolution voted by the deputies of the National Assembly reaffirming the abolitionist position of France is commonly considered as a first step in that direction.

#### Facts

In total, 70 students were trained on sex work issues and more specifically on indoor sex work issues. Several themes were tackled: the legal and political framework of prostitution, the working methodology of the association, the basis and ethic of a community-based project, the importance of peer education, and the discrimination and stigmatisation faced by sex workers. The training sessions enabled awareness-raising on sex work issues as a form of advocacy:

■ To improve the students' knowledge of indoor sex work – to inform them about the difficulties, needs and working conditions of sex workers

- To encourage a nonjudgemental approach and fight against stigmatisation and discrimination
- To encourage students to promote better access to rights and to health for sex workers.

#### Impacts

The two training sessions carried out by Autres Regards are just a start in the development of social work in France, but they represent the ability of the organisation to promote:

- Future advocacy actions in France, since the training sessions focused heavily on political and advocacy issues related to sex work
- More comprehensive services enabling sex workers to access health and rights, since the target group was future social work professionals
- Cooperation with local social service providers and the development of future networking to benefit sex workers.

### SOCIAL MOBILISATION



Thanks to the grassroots and community-based work of Autres Regards since 1995, this organisation is considered to be a key local actor and a resource in terms of its knowledge and experience of sex work.

Autres Regards has strong links with local stakeholders such as local governments, and more specifically the City of Marseille and the regional administration, but also with local and regional service providers and the media.

The data, documentation and research written and collected during these years allow the organisation to better advocate for the rights of sex workers and for a better understanding of the importance of community-based work.

The publication of the research on indoor sex work edited under the INDOORS project had a great impact on local and national newspapers and TV.

It allowed the general public to get a more representative and non-judgemental picture of indoor sex workers and to go beyond all the misrepresentations and clichés about this population. 回

Furthermore, when a local action is planned or when research is commissioned in the field of harm reduction or outreach work, Autres Regards is often asked to participate either as a key informant or as an active partner.

Recently, the local police forces decided to strengthen current local policy and to clamp down on a specific district where Autres Regards carried out outreach work. Several measures were decided: more police checks, clampdowns on drug users and sex workers, etc.





In this context, a mobilisation of alliances took place, including the City of Marseille, Autres Regards and other local NGOs, in order to advocate against this planned change in policy. It was highly important to explain the impact of the outreach work at a grassroots level in the context of public health, the importance of not impeding such work, and how this policy would negatively impact the work of the local organisations.

The advocacy and lobbying actions of Autres Regards also take place through active participation in the drafting of regional health programmes and regional calls for proposals, so that community-based projects are included – and continue to be included – in their regional priorities.

Autres Regards is not only a key actor for institutions and services but also for sex workers. This organisation often acts as a mediator between service providers and sex workers and between neighbourhoods and the sex worker community.

Autres Regards participates in the meetings of neighbourhood associations in those districts where sex work takes place. It helps to solve problems and disagreements and may prevent the creation of petitions.

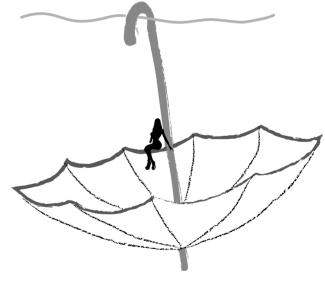
At a national level, as a part of the national network Collectif Droits et Prostitution, Autres Regards takes an active role in position papers and national consultations on sex work.

In April 2011, the organisation, along with other NGOs, was heard by the Parliamentary Mission on Prostitution in the framework of a consultation ordered by the French government.

Autres Regards could not have such a local and national impact without the participation of sex workers. They play an active role in the projects of the organisation as staff members, volunteers, members of the Board, and also key informants. Projects are set up, implemented and evaluated with and for them. Autres Regards considers sex workers as agents of prevention and the work of the organisation is based on an active exchange

of experience, knowledge and expertise.

Although this is an important basis of Autres Regards' work, the organisation often faces barriers to the mobilisation of sex workers. Particularly in terms of advocacy and lobbying during events, for example a demonstration, sex workers do not easily get involved. Sex workers' activism in Marseille still needs to be developed with the support of Autres Regards.





n Germany, even though sex work is legal and regulated by law, the conditions under which many sex workers provide sexual services are not always favourable. Stigma and other discrimination-related aspects are still an issue for the organisations that work for the improvement of sex workers' working conditions and rights in the country. The situation of migrant sex workers, in this context, remains one of the main concerns of the majority of service providers, especially considering the high mobility and vulnerability of this population.

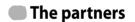
This chapter presents two examples of capacity-building initiatives in Germany – one at a local and one at a national level – which represent the efforts to improve services for sex workers and strengthen their capacity for agency and to fight for their rights.

### LOCAL NETWORKING

The Ratschlag Prostitution in Hamburg (Working Group Prostitution Hamburg) has existed as a self-organised, informal local network since 2005. It is composed of representatives from eight member organisations: six NGOs working with different target groups within the sex work community, one GO (the local health service) and one trade union. The aim of the network is to exchange information regarding the legal and social issues affecting sex work and sex workers in the city. Moreover, the group carries out advocacy activities such as presenting position statements to policy-makers and the media, and promoting International Whores' Day.

Although informal, the network in Hamburg is often acknowledged by governmental departments because of the expertise of its members. On these occasions, it is considered an ally in discussions involving sex work and trafficking.

Within the Ratschlag Prostitution, all NGOs and the local health service offer counselling and conduct regular outreach work for indoor- and outdoorbased sex workers of all genders, including drug users. With the exception of KaffeeKlappe, all of them also work with migrant sex workers and with cultural mediators. All the organisations offer voluntary, anonymous, confidential and free of charge services. There is no autonomous or sex worker-led organisation in Hamburg.





Male sex workers, including juveniles www.basis-projekt.de

#### KaffeeKlappe

German sex workers; support for those wishing to move on from sex work www.kaffeeklappe-hamburg.de

#### KOOFRA, Koordinierungsstelle gegen Frauenhandel Victims of trafficking

www.koofra.de

#### Sperrgebiet

Drug-using female sex workers, including juveniles www.sperrgebiet-hamburg.de

#### **TAMPEP Germany**

Migrant sex workers www.tampep.eu

#### ragazza

www.ragazza-hamburg.de



#### GO

#### CASAblanca

Public health service, Centre for AIDS and STIs, counselling, testing and treatment www.hamburg.de/casablanca

#### Trade Union

#### ver.di

Technical support for specific labour questions, logistic support for advocacy events, participation in advocacy discussions www.verdi.de

#### The context

Although sex work is legalised in Germany, there are some areas in some cities where street prostitution and soliciting is not allowed: the so-called 'restricted areas' (Sperrbezirke).

St. Georg, in Hamburg, is one such area. Nevertheless, despite this regulation, sex work was always tolerated because it is a traditional red light area, near the main train station, and a workplace for national and migrant sex workers of all genders.

Since 2009, however, streetbased sex workers in St. Georg have faced increasingly repressive measures. Sex workers are fined up to €200 each time they are stopped by police. Police checks have been systematic, particularly against Romanian and Bulgarian sex workers.

And since February 2012, clients who approach outdoor-based sex workers on St. Georg's streets are penalised and have to pay fines of up to €5,000.

The aim is to remove street prostitution from this area and transfer sex workers to an isolated site distant from the city centre. The reasons for these measures are not only moralistic, but economic, as the plan is to transform St. Georg into an upmarket, upper middle class neighbourhood. Given this situation, the Ratschlag has not limited itself to the role of a discussion forum about the increasing repression; it has taken action to raise awareness among politicians, authorities and civil society of the consequences of such repressive policies. It serves as a political pressure instrument for policy reflection and reform.

An example of intervention was the creation, in 2011, of a flyer in 11 languages, informing sex workers about the working conditions in St. Georg, and in January 2012, the publishing of

statements against the criminalisation of clients.

The criminalisation of clients in Germany is already a reality in Düsseldorf, Bonn, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Cologne, Leipzig, Karlsruhe and Frankfurt/Main. These measures are applied only within the 'restricted areas'.

### NATIONAL NETWORKING

The German national network of sex work organisations, BUFAS (Bündnis der Fachberatungsstellen für Sexarbeiterinnen und Sexarbeiter e.V | Alliance of Counselling Centres for Sex Workers), is an NGO formed in January 2010 as an umbrella organisation for all NGOs working in Germany with and for sex workers. BUFAS' main goal is to advocate for the labour and human rights of sex workers of all genders in Germany.

Since the end of the 80s, the Rights/Prostitution Working Group, an informal group of sex workers and activists from NGOs dealing with and for sex work-



ers, was responsible for producing and disseminating political statements to inform policymakers, media and the general public about the situation of sex workers, while demanding the improvement of their working conditions. This group was responsible for pushing and advocating for the legalisation of sex work in Germany.

Despite the legalisation of prostitution in 2002 and efforts by rights activists, the situation did not change or improve as expected. Therefore, to be able to approach politicians and the civil society in an official manner, and achieve more effective results in advocacy work, the group decided to create an NGO, BUFAS. Another important reason for this step was that through a legalised institution it would be easier to get funding to develop activities and sustain the structure.

BUFAS has a homogeneous character and is able to nationally centralise the claims of sex workers and sex worker organisations in a strategic manner, developing cooperation between service providers and sex workers.

Only NGOs can become members of BUFAS. All 16 members are committed to offering counselling and support for German and migrant sex workers, on a voluntary, anonymous, confidential and free of charge basis. They all carry out regular outreach activities for indoor and outdoor-based sex workers of all genders.

#### The partners

**Basis Projekt | Hamburg**Male sex workers, including juveniles www.basis-projekt.de

Hydra | Berlin German and migrant female sex workers www.hydra-ev.org

Kassandra | Nuremberg German and migrant female sex workers www.kassandra-nbg.de

**Kober | Dortmund** German and migrant female sex workers www.kober-do.de

Madonna | Bochum German and migrant female sex workers www.madonna-ev.de

Marikas | Munich German and migrant male sex workers www.marikas.de

Mimikry | Munich German and migrant female sex workers www.mimikry.org

#### Dortmunder Mitternachtsmission

Dortmund
German and migrant
female sex workers
www.standort-dortmund.de/
mitternachtsmission

Nachfalter | Essen German and migrant female sex workers www.nachtfalter-essen.de

Nitribitt | Bremen German and migrant female sex workers www.nitribitt-bremen.de

Phoenix | Hannover German and migrant female sex workers www.phoenix-beratung.de

Pink | Freiburg German and migrant female sex workers www.pink-baden.de

Tamara | Frankfurt/Main German and migrant female sex workers www.diakonischeswerk-frankfurt.de/ zefra/kontakt\_tamara.php

**TAMPEP Germany | Hamburg** Participation through ragazza

**ragazza | Hamburg** www.ragazza-hamburg.de

#### BUFAS | Positive aspects of the National Network

All 16 NGOs provide services to migrant and national sex workers of all genders, and carry out outreach activities and advocacy actions for sex workers' rights.

- It is a broad network with wide national coverage.
- BUFAS is based on a participatory structure: the board members are NGO representatives, but at the decision-making level they work together with an advisory committee comprised exclusively of sex workers.

#### The context

BUFAS members meet twice a year to discuss relevant topics around sex work in Germany and Europe, to exchange information at the national level regarding legislation and labour, and to decide on priorities for advocacy actions and/or any other activity at the regional and national level, focusing on drawing the attention of politicians and the general public to the situation of sex workers and their rights. The topics are chosen in accordance with current need.

#### **BUFAS** advocates for

- The improvement of the working and living conditions of sex workers
- The juridical and social equalisation of sex workers with other workers

- The equalisation of sex work with other labour activities
- The decriminalisation of sex work and the destigmatisation of sex workers

#### **BUFAS demands**

- Support for professional and cultural education for sex workers
- Support to increase the awareness of policy-makers, managers and the general public of the interests and needs of sex workers
- Support for the self-organisation of sex workers

#### **BUFAS** goals

- To work together with the whores' movement, and in the interest of sex workers, to make changes through social and political participation
- To demand, at a national and international level, respect for sex workers and the recognition of their human rights, by expanding the network of solidarity

Considering the ongoing institutional repression faced by sex workers in many German cities, such as Dortmund, where outdoor prostitution was banned in 2011, BUFAS constantly points out that any repressive measure taken by the police and local authorities violates sex workers' human rights and working conditions.

BUFAS' relevance goes beyond the recognition of a national network on sex work. It takes advantage of the well-developed local NGOs to build national capacity against repressive measures and other topics related to the needs of sex workers.

BUFAS' legacy lies in the National Seminar on Prostitution (Fachtagung Prostitution) which takes place once a year. It represents the main effort in the mobilisation of service providers and sex workers, and the improvement of their capacities. Recognising today's European context of sex work, BUFAS involved NGOs from the neighbouring German-speaking countries, Austria and Switzerland, to its discussions.

#### **INDOORS** partner

#### ragazza

With twenty years of experience in outreach work to female drug-using sex workers, and counselling for prostitution and drug use, ragazza is an important actor in the local and national arena, ragazza's participation in different local and national networks is important in lobbying for the improvement of the working and living conditions of outdoor-based female drug-using sex workers, in order to advocate an end to the stigmatisation and discrimination suffered by this group.

A good structure responds adequately to the needs of this specific target group: a secure place to sleep, warm meals, showers, a drug consumption room, a needle exchange service, and counselling on health and social issues.

# Barriers and capacities

Networks such as the Hamburg Ratschlag Prostitution and BUFAS – one informal and the other formal – build the local and national capacities of service providers, including an evaluation of what can be improved through mobilisation.

As part of its networking on local and national levels, ragazza is able to share its knowledge through seminars, meetings and training. The quality of the information and the level of critical analysis of its data can be a tool for the improvement of other service providers in Germany. This is only possible within the context of organised discussion platforms and collaborations where members are entitled to present results as well as promote actions.

In relation to referral systems, networks are fundamental in spreading technical and professional skills among their members. They improve communication between members and the development of common actions.

The financial capacity of the networks depends heavily on the input and presence of their members, leading to a mechanism that enhances the networks' aims. As in any network, some contribute more

than others, according to their organisational and structural capacity. Despite the lack of specific financial resources for the national network, the German capacity-building example is significant in revealing the importance of the contribution that each member can bring to a specific network.

The result of such effort is an increase in field knowledge and promotion of political influence guided by mechanisms of cooperation among service provider organisations and sex workers. This model of cooperation is able to identify national and local needs, and assess them according to the reality of each state within the German federation and legislative system.

# TIME FOR ACTION



Actions should not always be seen on an individual basis. The German capacity-building model proves that common actions can be taken to reach certain goals. In this sense, ragazza's work with different



networks enabled the organisation to participate and promote a variety of advocacy actions.

#### LOCAL LEVEL

- In March 2011, ragazza organised a march in St. Georg to call attention to the situation of street-based sex workers working in the area and to raise awareness among the residents, who demanded that sex workers leave their part of town. Other NGOs dealing with sex workers in this area gave support and participated in the action. The media covered it, increasing the impact of the event.
- The area of St. Georg is a restricted area regarding street prostitution in Hamburg, where soliciting is forbidden and where the police conduct regular and repressive checks of sex workers. In order to offer legal counselling for the sex workers of this area, ragazza provides the regular service of two lawyers, paid for through donations for this purpose.

#### NATIONAL LEVEL

- In November 2011, ragazza, in cooperation with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Berlin), organised a seminar in Hamburg about the situation of outdoorbased sex workers in Germany. The aim of the seminar was to question, pragmatically, what actions should be taken and how, and to start and maintain. cooperation with other social groups, institutions and political forums in order to improve the situation of outdoor-based sex workers, including those using drugs.
- BUFAS has already produced several declarations and position papers. One such paper was published in April 2011, against the repression in Dortmund. In June 2011, on International Whores' Day, they issued one titled "Rights Instead of Repression". In September 2011 they presented a position paper against the European Women's Lobby campaign and one against the different forms of taxation on sex work, applied differently by various towns.

# Examples of successful reaction and cooperation

In January 2006, six months before the Soccer World Cup in Germany, there were constant discussions and media reports heralding the arrival of an enormous quantity of women from Central and Eastern Europe, apparently all victims of trafficking, who would be forced to work in prostitution during this event.

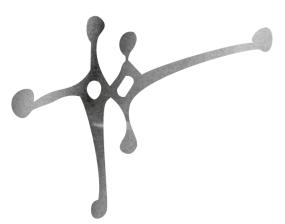
The members of the Hamburg Ratschlag Prostitution network, as well as all similar networks in Germany, had an important role as local sources of information for policy-makers and the media, in showing that this 'invasion' would not take place and that it was just an argument to increase border controls.

The Ratschlag members decided to carry out three different actions related to the Soccer World Cup:

- Outreach Increasing indoor and outdoor outreach activities, to better inform sex workers before and during the event.
- Information Creating an information point for sex work-

ers by putting an information kiosk in front of the main railway station of Hamburg, shortly before and during the event. The existence of this kiosk was publicised during outreach and in the different counselling centres. Social workers and cultural mediators from the various member organisations of the Ratschlag were responsible for the counselling in the kiosk.

■ Clients – in cooperation with other organisations in Germany, the Ratschlag members participated in a national campaign for clients and potential clients of sex workers – Freiersein – on safer sex and increased respect for sex workers. This campaign was extremely successful and distributed around 500,000 condoms during the four-week event, www.freiersein.de



# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

From 1985, with the creation of Hydra in Berlin, the first sex workers' organisation in Germany, the Prostitutes' Congress (Hurenkongress) was held twice a year, initially with the majority of attendees being sex workers. Based on these first meetings in Berlin, sex workers started creating autonomous organisations in other towns, like Bremen, Nuremberg, Bochum, Frankfurt and Saarbrücken.

Social workers were a minority at these Congresses; however, as time went on, there were fewer sex workers and more social workers. One of the reasons for that phenomenon was the closure of many sex workers' organisations during the 90s due to lack of financial support.

In 2000, because of the increasing amount of social workers

and the decreasing number of sex workers, the remaining group of sex workers and other rights activists – the Rights/
Prostitution Working Group – decided to name it Seminar on Prostitution (Fachtagung Prostitution) and undergo structural changes.

- The Seminar is held only once a year. It is organised on a rotational system, with a different NGO or sex worker organisation responsible for carrying it out each year.
- There is a special space reserved exclusively for sex workers, either the day before the Seminar or the day after.
- The Seminar is open to sex workers, social workers from NGOs and public health services, students and academics from German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). The idea is to offer a wider cross-section of the public the opportunity to better inform themselves about sex work. The only ones not allowed access are journalists and the police.
- Since 2010 the Seminar is organised by BUFAS. Every annual meeting deals with a special



issue, according to the political moment. The issue is proposed by the annual hosting organisation and agreed within BUFAS meetings.

The last Seminars on Prostitution had the following themes:

- 2008, 39<sup>th</sup> Seminar:
   Sex Work and Migration
- 2009, 40<sup>th</sup> Seminar:
   Sex Work is Work
- 2010, 41st Seminar:
   The increase in Romanian and Bulgarian sex workers in Germany

#### The 2011 Seminar

The theme of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Seminar was: "Working professionally: 10 years of the Prostitution Law, its consequences for sex work and the demand for professional counselling."

The main goals of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Seminar were to evaluate the Prostitution Law after 10 years, and discuss the German prostitution scene and how society sees sex work nowadays. Furthermore, it aimed to look more closely at the changes and discuss what counselling centres

can and should do to adjust to this process.

# The Sex Workers Only Day

As usual, the Seminar provided a space for sex workers to discuss and exchange knowledge and experiences of their work. The day before the official start of the Seminar, sex workers attending the Seminar, and those who just came for this special day, went through a 12-hour programme. The Sex Workers Only Day was attended by 19 female and male sex workers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The program consisted of two workshops - "For Professionals by Professionals", and "Sex work and Psychology", both delivered by sex workers – along with a film, and a theatre performance by a German sex worker.

#### The seminar

This offered space for discussion regarding the current sex work context in Germany, the capacity of counselling centres to adapt their services to it, and how to improve advocacy strategies and support regional, national and European networking.

The 2011 Seminar was held over the course of two and a half days, with the participation of 75 individuals. There were two presentations in plenary, with discussions afterwards.

#### **Discussion subjects**

The core discussion themes were:

- From self-help to professional counselling: what are counselling centres for? What do sex workers need/want/wish from counselling centres?
- Does prostitution policy require a change in advocacy work? What could this look like?
- Social work and social science: their uses in specific counselling work.

#### The marketplace

In the afternoon of the first day of the Seminar, an open space facilitated the exchange of information, materials and new publications.





#### Workshops

# 10 years of the Prostitution Law

■ Sex workers' wishes before the Law: secure social and financial support in case of illness, less control by public institutions (police, tax department, etc.), less stigmatisation, more social security rights, recognition of sex work as an activity.

#### Aims of the Law in 2002:

improve the working conditions of sex workers; abolish sex work being legally seen as 'immoral'; allow sex workers access to social benefits; make work contracts legally possible; destigmatise sex workers; improve training for those wanting to move on from sex work.

#### What happened since

then: the legal definition of prostitution as being immoral was abolished; the organising of prostitution venues was decriminalised; sex workers can work as employees and as self-employed; they have access to social benefits; three training projects were created for those wishing to move on from sex work.

■ The praxis: In reality very little changed in those 10 years: the Prostitution Law was not linked to other legal areas like the Criminal Law, Civil Law, Alien I aw or Tax I aw. The fact that each town or state can 'interpret' the law independently led to insecurity and uncertainty among sex workers and officials; none of the suggestions made by the Official Evaluation carried out in 2005 were taken on board: almost no work contracts were signed because employers can be considered pimps and because the majority of sex workers prefer to work on a selfemployed basis.

Despite the legalisation of sex work, sex workers in Germany are still often seen as 'victims'. It has been difficult to develop legislation that harmonises the interests of sex workers, brothel managers, counselling centres, official departments, and the police.

#### What should be improved:

the Prostitution Law should have been linked to the Civil and Tax Laws; a national image campaign should raise public awareness of sex workers' working conditions; networking at the European level should be improved, along with the services offered by existing counselling centres.

# Work with cultural mediators

This workshop examined the different competencies of translators and cultural mediators, while pointing out the additional advocacy role of cultural mediators and the importance of integrating cultural mediators in all levels of planning, reflection and practical activities of an organisation.

# Wearing different hats: sex workers as social workers

There are difficulties in linking the two activities due to the high expectations and bureaucracy demanded in Germany for a person to work as a social worker. It is important to employ sex workers as cultural mediators and outreach workers, and to include them in regular supervision sessions with social workers, with the aim of reciprocal learning.

# Moving on from sex work

In 2009 the German government financed three organisations (NGOs) to develop a five-year project and create further education programmes for sex workers wishing to move on from sex work. The chosen organisations were sex work projects in Berlin (Hydra, with DIWA) and Nuremberg (Kassandra, with OPERA), and a Christian organisation in Freiburg (Diakonisches Werk, with PINK).

#### Sex workers' expectations

– Important issues identified by sex workers when participating in such programmes include flexible services, addressing individual needs, reliable contact persons, coaching, conversations, therapeutic support, guaranteed coverage of costs of qualifications, transparency, absence of conditions requiring an exit from sex work in exchange for access to qualifications, and guaranteed coverage of living costs during qualification period.

■ NGOs' perspective – It is important for organisations in charge of qualification programmes to have a multicultural team

# 5. Quality management within counselling centres

Counselling centres should also have the role of evaluating, awareness raising and influencing policy-makers and the general public regarding sex workers' needs and situation.

#### **Press conference**

The Seminar closed with a press conference with members of BUFAS and Kassandra as representatives of the network.

# Results and improvements

The main outcome of the 2011 Seminar on Prostitution in Germany was the decision to intensify advocacy work aimed at a positive image of sex work and sex workers in the media, among the general public, policy-makers and academics. It was decided that not only the BUFAS board but also some BUFAS members would be encouraged to act as advocates in the name of the network. This will happen on local, regional, national and European levels.

The action – which will mainly highlight the difference between sex work and trafficking in women, in order to get sex workers out of the 'victim' role – will be carried out in various steps and will be coordinated by BUFAS. The steps are as follows:

- Use more frequently the already existing advocacy texts, developed since 2008 by a working group of activists called the Image Campaign Group. These texts tackle the topic of sex work alongside themes of labour, health, migration, clients, competencies of sex workers, and taxes.
- Exchange experience regarding what has already been done in Switzerland and Austria.
- Contact individuals outside counselling centres and health care services who could support advocacy campaigns and activities.

#### Impacts

In the long term, the most important impact of the 2011 Seminar on Prostitution in Germany was the strengthening of BUFAS as a central reference point for German sex work issues and a lobby group for sex workers' rights.

This impact will enable sex workers and organisations to count on BUFAS support when developing and carrying out advocacy activities or facing specific difficulties or demands.

Other activities were mentioned as support for the campaign to destigmatise sex work:

- Organise brothel sightseeing tours
- Offer information sessions for youth
- Get the activity 'sex work' under the Labour Ministry and out of the Women and Family Ministry
- Create a film to support all the above-mentioned activities. The INDOORS video clip Equal Rights was welcomed as an excellent initiative for the empowerment of sex workers in Germany.

#### TRAINING SESSION

In December 2011, ragazza and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation organised a one-day European seminar with a training element on the theme 'City, Prostitution, Expulsion', with 70 participants.

The intention was to raise awareness of the repressive measures against street-based sex workers occurring in St. Georg in Hamburg, and to compare the process of gentrification and its impact on sex work and access to services in Amsterdam, Vienna, Barcelona and other German cities. The seminar trained participants (mostly service providers and academics) on issues related to sex work, migration, and gentrification.

#### Facts

Since 2010, pressure from local residents and growing financial interest in turning the St. Georg area into an upmarket residential area have led to more repression against street-based sex workers in the area. Sex workers are fined up to several hundred euros and, since January 2012, their clients are equally checked and fined up to €5,000. The effect of this policy is an increase

in the precarious and vulnerable situation of sex workers, as they lose their capacity for self-determination, are forced to work clandestinely, and have fewer customers and less income, which leads to more working hours and bad working conditions.



There was a final consensus among the seminar participants that the recognition of sex work as work, as is the case in Germany since 2002, still remains a political issue which needs to be tackled. Moreover, the participants agreed that the current law only provides security for some sex workers and has little impact on societal recognition. They further agreed that it is necessary to point out the heterogeneity within sex work and make marginalised sex workers visible regarding the Prostitution Law.

The event also reinforced the mobilisation of local sex workers, with the support of NGOs and independent groups, to protest against the actions in the neighbourhood. Statements were delivered to the media and politicians.



# SOCIAL MOBILISATION

In Germany, advocacy actions aimed at social mobilisation around sex work and sex workers' rights were, and still are, initiatives of NGOs, whether sex workers' organisations or those working with or for sex workers.

The exception is the trade union ver.di, which, after the legalisation of sex work in 2002, offered support and developed an example of a work contract between a sex worker and a brothel enterprise.

These were and are the actors who, since the 80, have been responsible for developing campaigns, presenting statements, and spreading data and information about the real working conditions of sex workers in Germany.

However, the main effort of this group was to apply pressure and push for the abolition of mandatory health examinations for sex workers, which was achieved in 2001, and the recognition of sex work as an activity, which was achieved in 2002.

These activists, independent of the situation, always used strategies to raise awareness among different stakeholders and look for their support, either to make political pressure or to spread information. The stakeholders were policy-makers and the media, but also public authorities in the social and health fields, the main funding sources of NGOs.

One example of such a situation was the support given by the Green Party in 2001, the then coalition partner of the Social Democratic government, in order to pass the Prostitution Law. During this process of legalising sex work, others who acted on an individual basis were very important, such as lawyers specialised in labour law or human rights, and independent sex workers.

Hydra was the first sex workers' organisation in Germany. It was founded in 1985, in Berlin, and slowly other organisations were created.

The Rights/Prostitution Working Group started functioning as an informal group at the end of the 80s. They comprised around 20 activists, both sex workers and NGO members. They organised discussion meetings and the Prostitutes' Congresses. Actions were carried out occasionally, and only at a local level, because the group did not have national representation.

The Soccer World Cup in Germany, in 2006, was a very important political moment in the discussion process about sex workers' situation and rights, despite the huge anti-prostitution campaign in the media, a result of the conflation of sex work with trafficking in women. The Rights/Prostitution Working Group, even as an informal group, had a very important role in demystifying and clarifying the situation by writing and distributing statements and giving interviews to local, national and international media representatives.





The 2006 World Cup also provided the opportunity to develop another sort of social mobilisation directed towards sex workers' rights, which was the FairPlay campaign, an action targeting sex workers' clients. This campaign had the participation of NGOs in 11 different German cities, all members of the Rights/Prostitution Working Group.

In January 2010, the Rights/Prostitution Working Group founded the NGO BUFAS (Bündnis der Fachberatungsstellen für Sexarbeiterinnen und Sexarbeiter e.V. | Alliance of Counselling Centres for Sex Workers, www.bufas. net), in order to gain, through a legal entity, more political representation and space, have more influence, and be the official representative of NGOs in Germany engaging in sex workers' rights. Because BUFAS' structure includes an advisory board comprised solely of sex workers, the organisation is able to guarantee a position that defends and prioritises sex workers' interests at all levels. Since 2010 BUFAS has been responsible for the organisation of the annual 'Seminar on Prostitution' in Germany.

After all these years and despite the legalisation of sex work in Germany, sex workers are still stigmatised and discriminated against. Although the media treats sex work in a more open manner, the overlapping of sex work and trafficking is very common. Therefore, one could say that even after 10 years of legalised sex work, work remains to be done to guarantee sex workers full acceptance in society. BUFAS is, and will continue to be, a very important instrument and source for the development of this process, not only within Germany but also in the European context. GERMANY



n Italy, prostitution is neither legal nor illegal. The national law on prostitution imposes numerous restrictions on sex workers, who are forced to work in legally marginal conditions. If the national laws are not favourable, local ordinances are even worse. In some cities, prostitution is prohibited in public areas and sex workers and their clients, too, have become the subject of heavy fines.

This chapter of the guide is a reflection of an organisation that counts on the direct participation and leadership of sex workers, and therefore its advocacy work is directly influenced by the sex workers' opinions and demands. It is an insight into the engagement of Italian networking in influencing the public debate on a national level, and the gathering of national allies from a diverse range of projects and fields to set up a common advocacy agenda.

### NATIONAL LEVEL

National Platform Observatory National coordination and observatory of street/ mobile units dealing with prostitution

For a brief moment in 2008, the regulation and elimination of prostitution in public places became the topic of the day for a new government. After a feverish month of media scrutiny, sex work was suddenly transformed into a national emergency. Without consulting the NGOs working in this field, that autumn the Council of Ministers drafted a bill to ban outdoor sex work. So far, this bill has been discussed in the parliamentary Justice Commission, but has never been formally presented in parliament, and there has been no promulgation of a decree of law regarding prostitution.

At the same time, the government produced a legal decree concerning public security. This decree gave city mayors plenty of room to manoeuvre in enacting local measures against sex work. There was an immediate string of anti-prostitution ordinances aimed at wiping out or significantly impeding street prostitution as a whole, with severe clampdowns on anyone suspected of prostitution. The imposition of a  $\in$ 500 fine for both sex workers and prospective clients has almost become standard practice throughout the country.

The enactment and application of these strong, repressive measures functioned as a catalyst for the majority of NGOs involved in social issues. A number of NGOs decided to hold a meeting to discuss the negative effects of this legal decree and to take action against its application. In the past, the proponents of this meeting had participated in ministerial discussions with the former government about shared proposals. Representatives of other associations were also invited to this 'emergency' meeting, so attendance was not limited only to those associations focusing on sex work. It included associations tasked with assistance to victims of trafficking and child abuse and the exploitation of immigrant minors.

With the signatures of more than 100 NGOs and GOs, a position paper was prepared titled 'Prostitution and Trafficking, Rights and Citizenship: The Proposals of Those Who Work in the Field' (Prostituzione e Tratta, Diritti e Cittadinanza: Le Proposte di Chi Opera sul Campo).

A month later, in July 2008, these proposals were forwarded to relevant government ministers and members of parliament. Numerous kinds of advocacy actions continue, including flash mobs (small groups of sex workers and supporters visibly protesting in front of Rome's city hall and in front of the Prime Minister's residence) and large public demonstrations in Rome convened by the CDCP with MIT (Movimento Identità Transessuale) and other NGOs in the network, supported by a newspaper that participates in the organisation, to raise awareness and warn politicians about the inherent dangers of repression and the lack of a social support policy.

It was obvious that this large gathering of associations would gain strength by working together as one in a widely disseminated network that would be further strengthened by the input and contribution of knowledge and experience of all the participant associations. To this end, a shared data collection and communications system was developed.

The analyses and findings of the group were based on the daily experiences of people involved in street activity or shelter management. These findings enabled the members to gain timely and accurate knowledge and a capacity to gather evidence concerning the effects of the new security measures. The first important statistic that surfaced showed that the new measures were forcing a significant number of street sex workers to transfer their place of work from the street to closed environments such as private flats, public bars or night clubs, where it is much more difficult for outreach workers to establish or maintain contact with them.

#### **Technical significance**

The National Platform Observatory is a virtual laboratory and offers broad-scale analyses and comparisons of models in place. It offers the opportunity to measure the effects and overall impact of enacted policies on prostitution directly from the field. It also facilitates development and experimentation of new ways of field intervention, particularly for indoor prostitution, the development of local community projects, and the mediation of conflicts, zoning patterns, and so forth.

#### **Political significance**

Through constant advocacy actions, the staff of street/mobile units must strive in every way possible to maintain both local and national political power. Attaining political power will allow official recognition as valuable, influential experts and interlocutors, who deserve a strong voice in all matters regarding policy and procedure for public security issues and field interventions involving sex workers, mediation of conflicts or other social issues, such as harm reduction measures, and the active promotion of civil rights and duties.



#### The partners

The following organisations participate in the Italian National **Platform Observatory:** 

#### NGOs

#### CNCA, National Coordination of Shelter Communities

umbrella association, counselling for sex workers and shelter for victims of trafficking www.cnca.it

Gruppo Abele I counselling for sex workers and shelter for victims of trafficking www.gruppoabele.org

Caritas | counselling and shelter for victims of trafficking www.caritas.it

#### Dedalus social cooperative

counselling for drug users, male and female sex workers and victims of trafficking www.coopdedalus.it

TAMPEP Onlus | counselling for sex workers and shelter for victims of trafficking www.tampepitalia.it

On the Road | counselling for sex workers and shelter for victims of trafficking www.ontheroadonlus.it

Free Woman Onlus | counselling for sex workers and shelter for victims of trafficking www.freewoman.it

Save the Children | Italian branch of the large international association that safeguards minors www.savethechildren.it

ASGI, Associazione Studi Giuridici Immigrazione | widespread association of lawyers supporting the human rights of migrants and nomads www.asgi.it

#### Movimento Identità Transessuale |

the oldest Italian transgender association (formed in 1980) that includes sex workers, counselling and assisting persons regarding gender transition, assistance and shelter for victims of trafficking www.mit-italia.it

Associazione Libellula I transgender association, counselling and support of transgender people and sex workers www.libellula2001.it

Consorzio Nova | group of associations and social cooperative in socially marginalised fields www.contextus.org

#### CDCP Committee for the Civil **Rights of Prostitutes**

www.lucciole.org



Commune of Venice | coordinates the national hotline dedicated to trafficking, assists sex workers and offers shelters for victims of trafficking. This service exists since 1995, when it was started with the consultancy of the TAMPEP project. www.comune.venezia.it

Piedmont Region | proponent and financing institution that gathers regional projects for reception/shelter of victims of trafficking run by various NGOs www.kila.it

#### Other national networks

#### Italian National Focal Point (NFP)

A permanent working group coordinated by the Superior Institute of Health of Rome (Istituto Superiore di Sanità). The NFP began as a member of the network of the European AIDS and Mobility Project.

Representing several regions in Italy, the Italian NFP is a group of experts who come from public institutions or non-governmental or volunteer organisations, who study migrant flows and determine the associated health needs of foreign populations. www.iss.it/binary/iss3/cont/National. pdf

#### Italian Civil Forum on HIV/AIDS

A national network of the associations in the fight against AIDS. It is affiliated to the 6th Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS2011), which took place in Rome in 2011. Besides working on a series of scientific events, the Forum has drawn up the Declaration of Rome for the Italian institutions, which underlines matters urgent to the community for counteracting the spread of the infection and assuring a better level of assistance and support to persons infected with HIV. www.forumhivaids.it

#### Other local networks

#### Le Graziose

Working group that includes social workers and sex workers. It is the Genoese representative of the CDCP (Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes). In 2008, following the commencement of some initiatives against sex workers, the CDCP began a series of initiatives to improve the living and working conditions of sex workers in the Maddalena area of Genoa. This working group has been engaged on several fronts, especially advocacy, and has succeeded in establishing

dialogue, collaboration, and networking with local institutions and NGOs.

#### The Patto per la Maddalena

(The Maddalena Development Pact) Residents and merchants of the historical centre of Genoa came together with the intention of improving the 'bad' image of this area by improving public security and infrastructure. www.incubatorecentrostorico.it

#### Comunità San Benedetto al Porto

A popular community and main refuge for outcasts in Genoa, created by an anarchist priest, whose authoritativeness greatly influences public opinion. It offers aid and comfort to persons in severe distress, especially those with drug and alcohol dependency or mental disorders.

www.sanbenedetto.org

#### **Princesa Committee**

The members are transgender sex workers who work in the old ghetto located in Genoa's historic centre. It was founded in 2007 when they also encountered the same problem faced by the sex workers in the Maddalena area.

### Faculty of Sociology of the University of Genoa

Supports several of the networks' initiatives and protests, though it is not a permanent member.



#### **INDOORS** partner

# CDCP | Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes

Founded in 1982 in Pordenone. Italy, the CDCP is a non-profit association of sex workers and supporters. From the beginning, this association has been a beacon for sex workers. Its mission is social and cultural activism intended to influence decisions in both the private and public sectors to improve the living and working conditions of sex workers. The CDCP strives in every way possible to promote respect for the dignity and rights of sex workers. It also performs interventions that offer training to sex workers and provides them with useful, accurate information so that they may empower themselves and improve their quality of work and life.

Over the years, the CDCP has entered into dialogue with GOs and NGOs to achieve the following legal goals:

- Decriminalising sex work and legalising the workers as professionals.
- Preventing mandatory registration or health checks.

- Eliminating of rules and regulations that discriminate against or restrict the freedom of sex workers.
- Opposing the exploitation of sex workers and trafficking in human beings.

The CDCP has constantly strived to eliminate the stigma of prostitution throughout the whole of society and to defend the right of any person, regardless of gender, to voluntarily engage in sex work whilst enjoying the same social and labour rights as any other worker. The CDCP also promotes the regularisation of migrants who engage in sex work on a voluntary basis, and is involved in the struggle against any acts of abuse, violence, and exploitation.



#### Barriers and capacities

The political debate on sex work in Italy affects the member organisations of the National Observatory in various ways. On one hand, the repressive measures endorsed by the Italian government have generated an environment in which sex workers are at the highest risk of



violence and often have to work in hidden places. On the other, the organisations are struggling to implement their projects in spite of the financial needs they have, which depend on a shift in the debate and the Italian economic situation. Although the sex worker movement in Italy is considerable, and has the support of many NGOs, opportunities for effective interventions in sex work settings are becoming harder every day.

For this reason, the CDCP reports that many outreach programmes for sex workers are being cut due to lack of financial support. The target has become harder to reach because of restrictive measures authorised in recently enacted ordinances. This crackdown has caused a notable shift towards underground activity and, at the same time, has increased the mobility of sex workers, especially those who work under coercion.

This situation presents an obstacle to reaching the weakest members of the target population in order to offer them assistance and accurate information. Therefore, the field workers must continually reorganise

their work methodology as they constantly lose contact with the targets. There is an urgent need to update this strategy and to train both social workers and agency operators.

In this context, NGOs dealing with sex workers and victims of trafficking are set up for either outreach or counselling/drop-in services. The services provide a vast amount of information to the target group, through educators, psychologists, and volunteers. Accompaniment to health care facilities is provided where necessary. Some of the NGOs possess lodgings to house victims of trafficking and to integrate them into long-term statefunded social programmes.

Today these programmes against trafficking constitute a network of dozens of projects throughout the country. Because of the current economic crisis, funding from the Department of Equal Opportunities, which by law has the duty to fund these projects, is insufficient. Although the laws require local regional or municipal institutions to contribute 30% of the costs of these projects, they are often unable to do so because

of the spending limitations imposed by the national Economic Stability Pact.

# Successful joint action and cooperation

Nationally, all the above-named associations promote the network, and act at the local and national level when needed. with brief communications in small groups that take decisive actions and respond collectively for the network, as well as endorsing the above-mentioned document presented to government ministries. In 2008-2009. the network decided to monitor the effects of ordinances that both left- and right-wing administrations had promulgated throughout Italy in several communities.

With no regard to geography or size, the salient finding was the total absence of interface between local institutions and the project personnel who worked in the mobile units, and the existing system of integrated socio-health services set up for persons involved in prostitution or victims of trafficking.

All the mobile street units of the national network took part in the monitoring effort.

The monitoring was based on their fieldwork, which keeps them in constant contact with street-based sex workers and local agencies. The observations of the evolutionary effects of anti-prostitution ordinances were constant and widespread. which enabled in-depth analyses that resulted in a series of cogent proposals which, hopefully, would bring political decision-makers to seriously consider a change of attitude in their policies and adoption of these proposals.

Upon completion, the report was sent to the relevant politicians, with a strongly worded appeal for immediate change. In the first trimester of 2009, the mayors from several regions and the minister, the proponent of the draft bill concerning prostitution, appeared at formal hearings before the Justice Commission of Senate. The minister has always refused direct dialogue with the CDCP and other NGOs of the Observatory.

Owing to the tendency of politicians to ignore NGOs, several associations, comprising in particular sex workers and transsexuals, waged an intense battle to gain access to the Justice Commission's hearings. Finally, a hearing was conceded for some sex worker delegates and the representatives of another four NGOs, all participants in the network. Once again, this hearing was to no avail. Some legal actions by the CDCP against the anti-prostitution ordinances went to court. The result was a success in the court of Venice. which declared the ordinance of the mayor of Verona unacceptable.

Meanwhile, the same opposition to the ordinance by the mayor of Rome was rejected by the court in Rome. An appeal was made, and at the same time. Verona's mayor appealed Venice's ruling. The dispute finally concluded a year later when the Constitutional Court declared the ordinances unconstitutional because they granted excess power to the mayors. This, however, did not halt the application of the ordinances, which the mayors continue to apply without penalisation.

In April 2012, for the second time, the Constitutional Court expressed its opposition to the ordinances. Still the mayors continue to apply them.

However, a positive aspect of a network comprising many associations in various cities is that each NGO organised and participated in public debates, further promoting awareness of the issue and involving the media also.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

#### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

The Italian National Seminar was held in the city of Turin on 30 September 2011, at the headquarters of TAMPEP Onlus, with 35 participants (sex workers and social workers) present. The group was heterogeneous in the sense that it included experts in human trafficking, migration, and drug-related issues from NGOs, and public bodies dealing





with outreach projects for sex workers. This initiative involved several members of the National Network Observatory. The seminar was carried out by the CDCP in collaboration with TAMPEP Onlus, as an associated partner in the last INDOORS phase.

The main idea was to bring the network up to date on the evolving situation. It had been a year since it had last met in order to assess the recent legislation and case law on immigration and its impact on sex workers and victims of human trafficking. Since 2009, the actions of the National Observatory, despite great effort, have not positively influenced the politicians. In addition, the latest repressive policies towards migrants in particular underscore a highly negative stigma against sex workers.

At present, the repression against sex workers in every way has fed violence against sex workers, which, in 2011, was rife and sometimes even fatal. Instances of abuse in the application of the ordinances are also very evident. The CDCP believes that it is necessary to remotivate the network for further actions.

Given the political moment in Italy and the possible changes foreseen in the government, planning a National Seminar was a crucial step and a determinant for raising awareness regarding the current situation. It also served to contribute to future public debate. The meeting was addressed to the staff of NGOs of the Prostitution National Observatory Network, with participants from all over Italy.

#### Aims

The event aimed to get an updated overview of the working conditions in outdoor and indoor sex work settings. The stakeholders were to look at the social and political aspects from a new perspective, considering how to analyse the process of long-term changes on the local and national level, and how to organise the National Observatory effectively and adequately to make it more attentive to the actual needs identified.

Furthermore, the meeting sought to establish dialogue and cooperation between the organisations and to develop new projects and common advocacy actions where possible. In more

concrete terms, it had to recognise that appropriate economic resources are needed and that it is not possible to update or train outreach workers, nor to sustain possible agency visits among members of the network. For these reasons, the meeting concluded by putting in candidates for a European-funded project in the justice sector, "Prevenzione e lotta contro la criminalità: bando europeo 2011 sulla tratta degli esseri umani". This represented a good opportunity for the network to develop capacity building and follow the same objectives, as well as expanding the potential of the network's development.





#### Contents

During the morning session, a brief report was given on the new legal system, with regard to migrants and related matters, focusing on the impacts of repression on victims of human trafficking.

During the afternoon session, two working groups were established:

## Workshop

focused on a deeper analysis of sex workers' conditions: what is occurring on the streets and indoors (more police control, micro-violence, abuse, drug and alcohol addictions); how to counsel sex-workers; do we really know their expectations and their needs? How do mobile units work – should they adapt or modify the methodology in their approach to women, including transgender sex workers, in indoor settings?

# Workshop **2**

discussed the Emergency North Africa (ENA analysis of interventions in the emergency in Lampedusa arising from the

Libyan revolution), the new road to Italy for Nigerian women. Workers in CARA centres dealing with asylum seekers have encountered many Nigerian women who have been transported across Libya to Lampedusa, where they request asylum in order to have the documents required to stay in Italy. Then, while remaining under the control of third parties, they leave CARA and are forced to sell sexual services. During their travel in Libya, many of them are detained by military personnel and raped or forced to provide sexual services, so many arrive in Italy with psychological and health problems.

Following participants' presentations about their work context, sex work conditions and the policies enacted by local administrators, a debate led to a group conclusion that the network must continue working tirelessly to eliminate 'prejudices', focusing on sex workers' vulnerable position in society. As a consequence, the plan was to design, evaluate and implement strategies to favour the recognition of sex workers' rights in the human rights framework.

The network considered, among other things, the option of drafting a new law proposal on sex work, putting more focus on the right to voluntarily engage in sex work, the necessity of educating the general public on sex work issues and gaining support from society, and the need to set up a national reaction to the present political situation in Italy.

As always, the seminar opened with brief individual presentations by all participants, to inform each other about their professional roles and give snapshots of their experiences.

# Results and improvements

In spite of a lack of time to address all relevant issues, the National Seminar was an opportunity for organisations from all over Italy to contribute to the advocacy agenda of the moment. One of the main decisions taken within the framework of this national event was the participation of the network in the European Commission Justice Programme. Even within a limited period of time, the roles of each organisation in this



programme were set up according to their expertise, resources, and ability to mobilise other European partners. This reflects the power of these organisations to put their differences aside, focus on common and collective actions, and recognise common problems.

The network decided that it is crucial to meet one more time in 2012 to address other specific needs in between other achievements; there was an agreement on the continuation of online communication among participants, and the provision to them of updated data and information. The network also decided to prepare a flyer aimed at women believed to be underage, about their rights to assistance and free access to health services and the justice system. Believing that they will be rejected, many young women often lie about their age. At the moment, minors still have rights in Italy and thus it is not an advantage for them to declare that they are adults. which can lead to automatic deportation or arrest.

The main achievement of this seminar was to strengthen the capacity of the network to make joint decisions, even though the political moment does not provide proper financial support. The National Observatory wants to be a national reference point for issues of outdoor and indoor sex work, and is the country's only tool to face repressive measures on a national level.

Moreover, thanks to this event, the participants feel very motivated towards advocacy and towards taking action with the network. The CDCP reports that more organisations within the network are willing to support the cause of sex workers' rights and also of trafficked persons. The network held another meeting in April 2012 in Rome to update the situation and take the decision to ask the new minister for a hearing.

### SOCIAL MOBILISATION

The CDCP has a long history of awareness-raising activities and promoting the rights of sex workers, by involving various parts of society, cultural spokespersons and the media for a greater impact and visibility. One successful approach used to fight stereotypes about sex workers was taken by publishing the stories and life experiences of sex workers with the help of well-known authors. Schools and universities also participated in awareness-raising activities by organising debates on sex work and collaborating in research on violence.

Mobilising together with other active groups such as LGBTI groups, feminists, pacifists, human rights associations and other social groups has contributed to a support network for awareness-raising campaigns, public protests, and petitioning. Even theatre actors, documentary-makers, musicians, photographers, and other artists have been taken into serious consideration by

the CDCP, noting how their work often contributes significantly to the image of sex work and to denouncing social inequalities. From a historical viewpoint, sex workers would have remained a mere dark, shadowy appendix to our society had it not been for artists.

#### The Action Plan

As for the plan of action aimed at changing legislation, there have been many meetings with public and political administrators, both individually and in public debates. This collaboration has prepared some drafts for new laws that have been presented by members of parliament in every legislature.

Regarding health concerns in sex work, in addition to the founding of an association to fight AIDS, the CDCP has been involved in a new method of outreach since the 90s that consists of street-based interventions with the help of peer educators and cultural mediators in many Italian cities, as well as implementing the TAMPEP project. The public health sector appreciated this effort and so a new involvement of social

services was set into motion, favouring dialogue and carrying out specific projects with the participation of the municipalities, health services and sex workers.

As many cities take measures against prostitution, some NGOs attempt to intervene with the institutions by employing mediation measures. The CDCP decided to intervene against the initiatives taken by the Commune of Genoa by putting in place certain strategic practices for that particular context.

The Commune of Genoa initiated measures to close the bassi in the downtown district of the Maddalena, where sex workers have always exercised their profession in former storerooms located on the ground floor or in the basements of buildings. In 2008, the councillor in charge of Genoa Safe City sought to respond to the discontent of its citizens by introducing a measure aimed at restricting the use of the bassi so as to have a safer and better neighbourhood for 'new' residents.

# The role of the media

The local media interviewed the sex workers of the Maddalena, who complained about the measures and asked for the help of the CDCP. A delegation of the CDCP organised a small protest in Genoa. The first action taken by the Graziose was to render the protest visible by organising a red umbrella demonstration in the Maddalena neighbourhood. The initiative involved a number of sex workers who took part in the organisation and publicising of the event.

Media attention was drawn by giving voice to sex workers' ideas and rendering the protest respectful. Leaflets that explained the reasons for the protest were distributed to the press, tourists and citizens who gave due concern and respect to the issue. The sex workers stated that they refused to leave the neighbourhood in which they have lived for years.

At the same time, the CDCP called a public meeting, at San Benedetto al Porto, with a local NGO that participates in the national network, and associations



and stakeholders of the area with the potential to become sensitive enough to the issue to side with the sex workers, such as women's associations, people who work in drug harm reduction, workers in city and provincial shelters for trafficking victims, some representatives of the LGBT movement, academics from the city's university, and other citizens. In a way, these people would be key persons to creating and building public opinion in the area.

The media coverage of the protest had a fundamental role. allowing it to resonate with the rest of the country and to put a lot of pressure on the Commune, so that the sex workers' request to meet with the authorities was immediately accepted. In a meeting with the councillors for Social Policies and Genoa Safe City, the Graziose sex workers and social workers asked for respect for their rights and dignity. From that moment a long process of negotiations and proposals began, with not always satisfactory outcomes: at times quite positive, but never definitive.

It is a constant work of mediation because the repressive tendency towards sex work is a constant in the municipal security policies.

# The role of the CDCP

The CDCP put itself forward as a community-based group that promotes social initiatives such as cultural activities, get-togethers, and solidarity actions. The idea of enhancing sex workers' self-esteem and enabling them to become a part of the neighbourhood in concrete terms is of utmost importance.

Comprising social workers, supporters and sex workers, a permanent action committee called Le Graziose was established.

One of the agreements made at the discussion table was the CDCP's task of collaborating in the monitoring of sex workers and their living conditions in the neighbourhood, and to participate in the Patto per la

Maddalena to mediate/negotiate with merchants and citizens who were overwhelmed by the general state of the neighbourhood and taking out their frustrations on the sex workers. During a three-day cultural initiative organised by the Patto, the CDCP also proposed to have the sex workers as active, mobile points of reference for cultural dialogue.

An information day was organised to present Le Graziose and the project to the neighbourhood. Residents, merchants, associations, institutions, citizens, tourists and sex workers in the area were invited to play a board game called Puttanopoly in order to increase their knowledge and understanding of the complex phenomenon of sex work.

The participation of some sex workers from the neighbour-hood was essential, because without them the impact would not have been so great. In addition, the CDCP is attempting to create a sense of solidarity amongst working colleagues.

The agreements also foresee the use of an office in the neighbourhood to use as a point of contact in the Patto building shared with other groups, to guarantee a dialogue between the citizens and the sex workers.

Since January 2010, in Genoa, CDCP operators are present once a week in a drop-in centre located right in the centre of the area where the sex workers are focused, in order to stay in close contact with them. In 2010, other anti-prostitution measures were taken by the mayor in other neighbourhoods, but they were greatly contested by the sex workers, CDCP supporters and other sectors of the population as well. Official relations between the CDCP and the Commune have deteriorated.

After several months, the Patto and the Commune again asked for the collaboration of the

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CDCP because of the stalemate in the neighbourhood. It seems that nobody can win the battle, and of course nobody wants to lose it either.

#### **Persons involved**

The people involved strategically in the local area are business operators, residents, sex workers who work in the zone in question, the personnel of the Vivo il Centro Storico and the Patto per lo Sviluppo della Maddalena (Maddalena Development Pact) programmes, ARCI migrants, the residents of the quarters, Associazione Princesa, and the University of Genoa Department of Education.

The CDCP is undertaking a range of actions at the national level to achieve its goals: campaigns against stigma, research on violence in sex work, advocacy for respect and recognition of rights, outreach with street operators and cultural mediators to contact indoor- and street-based sex workers and trafficking victims, support and integration with specific personally-tailored programmes, training for peer educators, organising and participating in seminars dealing with sex work, migration, health issues and HIV prevention, harm reduction, human rights, violence and gender policies, and political actions to acclaim better laws, along with other actions.

Movement actions like those in Genoa are easily applicable in local areas, but they require the effort and involvement of sex workers as well as many other stakeholders.





n the Netherlands, even though sex work is legal and regulated by the law, the situation for sex workers has worsened as a result of ongoing changes in policy and legislation, particularly at the national level. Since 2000, police and tax authorities took increased control of sex work settings, and since 2009, the government has been seeking to reform the legislation on prostitution, which if approved will impact heavily on sex workers' right to privacy and integrity.

This chapter presents two examples of capacity-building efforts. First, on the national level, an advocacy platform focused primarily on awareness raising and halting the new prostitution law. Second, a comprehensive training programme was carried out in a bilateral cooperation between TAMPEP and ARAS in Romania on peer education and sex worker leadership.

### NATIONAL LEVEL

The national platform on sex work, Landeliik Platform Prostitutie (National Prostitution Platform), is an informal national platform which was founded in 2009, with the main goal of advocating for the labour and human rights of sex workers of all genders. The Platform has been very concerned about blocking the new prostitution law proposal through clarifying debates on prostitution, trafficking and exploitation. Lately, public opinion and politicians tend to wrongly conflate prostitution with criminality, trafficking and exploitation.

#### **Advocacy work**

Since the end of 2009, an informal group of sex workers and activists working for NGOs dealing with and for sex workers took responsibility for producing and spreading political statements to inform policy-makers, media and the general public about the situation of sex workers in the Netherlands.

The current debate is not human rights-based and is totally

separate from the main issue of legalisation which saw, since the approval of the legalisation law in 2000, an improvement in the working conditions of sex workers.

In spite of the advocacy work done by the Platform, the new prostitution law proposal, known as the 'Law regulating prostitution and combating malpractice in the sex industry', was voted in by the Dutch Parliament in March 2011, and is today under analysis by the Senate.

Prostitution has been legalised in the Netherlands for 12 years. Originally, the intention was to create a licensing system that brought the sex industry into line with labour law, tax systems, immigration law, municipal safety and hygiene regulations, and public order measures. The focus of the policy and its implementation has, instead of normalising sex work, shifted progressively to prioritise stricter controls of workplaces and workers, particularly migrant sex workers. As a result, many sex work premises were closed, amounting to almost half of the workplaces. Most sex workers would not describe the current situation in favourable terms.

and would argue that they have less autonomy, more obligations and little formal recognition or support of their rights. Moreover, following legalisation, some evaluation reports concerning the impact of the new system resulted in the conclusion by some municipalities and governmental bodies that it was not effective in combating criminality nor trafficking. As a result, an alternative law proposal was presented to the parliament in 2009.

### Objectives of the Platform

The main objectives were to correct the disparities in policy implementation across municipalities and to improve the means to combat trafficking and exploitation. However, there are several proposals within the draft legislation that will further seriously affect the living and working conditions of sex workers, which includes compulsory registration of all sex workers working in all areas of the sex industry – whether full-time, part-time or occasional workers - along with further closures of brothels, restrictions on licensing and street-based prostitu-

tion, and possibly criminalising clients who pay for the services of unregistered sex workers, whether they are nationals, legal migrants or undocumented migrants. The end result is increased control over sex workers, fewer legal working places, and more pressure on (migrant) sex workers to move to clandestine and less safe work settings. The political position and social opinion regarding sex work have also shifted from the recognition of sex work as work, and of the sex industry as a commercial business, to the association of sex work with trafficking and exploitation. The goal of the Platform is also to reshift this perspective to the normalisation of sex work and protection of the rights of workers in the sex industry.

The network is flexible and able to organise the efforts of individual sex workers and activists, sex worker organisations, supporter organisations and other stakeholders and individual experts in a strategic manner, developing cooperation in responses and social mobilisation activities, using the fields of influence and expertise of the various participants. Depending on the spe-

cific case, petitions are signed individually by members of the Platform, or collectively. Each member brings in their own influence and competencies.

The number of members varies depending on the action and urgency of organised responses, but there are about 20 to 30 active members. All are committed to preparing letters and statements, giving media interviews, organising public debates. and meeting with politicians. Additionally, strong connections with the health and legal sectors, academics, sex workers' organisations and union, social services for sex workers, the clients of sex workers, members of the municipality, and other marginalised and stigmatised communities empower the network's actions and afford legitimacy.

### The partners

Soa Aids Netherlands | Amsterdam National Institute for STI and AIDS Control www.soa.nl, www.prostitutie.nl

Rode Draad | Amsterdam Information and empowerment centre for sex workers. www.rodedraad.nl

Humanitas | Rotterdam Social support for sex workers and trafficked persons. www.humanitaspmw.org



Amsterdam

European network against trafficking. www.lastradainternational.org

FairWork | Amsterdam Support for victims of trafficking. www.fairwork.nu

Vereniging voor vrouw en recht 'Clara Wichmann' | Leiden Platform of feminist lawyers. www.vrouwenrecht.nl

#### **Prostitutie Informatie Centrum**

Amsterdam Information and advice about prostitution for sex workers and the general public. www.pic-amsterdam.com

TAMPEP | Amsterdam European network for migrant sex workers. www.tampep.eu

Femme Fatale | Alkmaar A working group for support of sex workers in the city of Alkmaar. Outreach work

Stichting Geisha | Amsterdam An autonomous organisation that represents the interests of women and men in sex work.

Other members participate on an individual level.

### PLATFORM | Positive aspects

■ All participants bring to the Platform their own knowledge and resources: some are sex workers, others human rights experts, academics, representatives of clients, policy-makers, and service providers.

- Individual members are free to express their opinion and position independent of organisational policy and position.
- It is a broad platform with a wide representation and skills.
- It is based on a participatory structure, with representatives coming from different backgrounds towards common actions.

### The context

Considering the still unfavourable working conditions experienced by sex workers in many Dutch cities, due to the strict regulation and limitation of sex work settings by local authorities, the Platform points out that improvement of the situation of sex work and regulation of the sex industry must be based on better and favourable conditions for sex workers, access to labour rights, and justice. Instead, the police and local authorities currently employ repressive measures and further limit the autonomy and selfdetermination of the workers, violating their human rights and freedom of choice with regard to working conditions.

With this in mind, network members meet several times a vear to discuss relevant topics around sex work, to exchange information on the national level regarding legislation and labour rights, and to decide on priorities for advocacy actions and/or any other activity on the regional and national level, focusing on raising awareness among politicians and the general public of the situation of sex workers and their rights. The topics are chosen in accordance with the necessity of the moment.

#### The Platform advocates for

- Improvement of the working and living conditions of sex workers
- The juridical and social equalisation of sex workers with other workers
- The normalisation of sex work as with other labour activities
- The decriminalisation of sex work and the destigmatisation of sex workers, as well as social reaffirmation of the original principles of the legalisation of sex work

#### The Platform demands

- Support for the autonomy of sex workers as independent workers and the recognition of their social benefits
- Abolition of the new prostitution law proposal
- The involvement of sex workers against this new law-making process, ensuring that their voices are heard by politicians and policy-makers.

#### The Platform's goals

- To be active for the interests of sex workers in the political and social debate on sex work, through social and political participation.
- To demand at a national and international level respect and awareness for sex workers' human rights.

The Platform's relevance goes beyond the formal recognition of a national network on sex work. It takes advantage of the broad representations to build up national capacity against repressive measures and other topics related to the needs of sex workers and social acceptance of sex work.

### Other national networks

#### Landelijk Prostitutie Overleg (LPO) | National Prostitution Consultation Platform

The LPO was set up at the end of the 90s for the coordination of the position and interests of different stakeholders and organisations around the issues of the legalisation of prostitution.

This is a platform where organisations meet, share opinions, discuss all aspects of prostitution policy, monitor impacts, and potentially agree on a joint position that will determine a common policy.

The members are:

- Soa Aids Netherlands
   Service provider
   www.soaaids.nl
- The Red Thread Sex worker NGO www.rodedraad.nl
- CoMensha Anti-trafficking NGO www.comensha.nl
- **VER** | Association of Operators of Relaxation Companies www.v-e-r.nl
- **SOR** | Foundation for Collaboration of Window Brothel Operators
- The Excellent Group Representatives of sex clubs www.excellent-groep.nl
- LOT | National Consultation of Street Prostitution Services

Besides the regular members, policy-makers and representatives of ministries and other state agencies are invited to participate in ad hoc meetings. All members share the same ideas and take actions collectively.

#### Landelijk Overleg Tippelprostitutie (LOT) | National Consultation of Street Prostitution Services

Since the legalisation of sex work, out-door prostitution was banned in most cities. Today outdoor sex work is only tolerated in four special allowance zones, in Utrecht, Arnhem, Nijmegen, and Groningen. Drop-in projects are run in these four zones, and also in Eindhoven. Services include social and health care, including harm reduction. This group of drop-in centres operates as a network representing the interests of the outdoor-based workers. Its main aims are common analyses and policy advice for the management of the zones.

### **INDOORS** partner

### **TAMPEP International** Foundation

The TAMPEP International Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Amsterdam. The Foundation carried out different projects related to sex work issues, among them the TAMPEP project.





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TAMPEP - European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers - was founded in 1993 in response to the needs of migrant sex workers in Europe. It operates a community development and participation model that is rooted within the human rights framework, and seeks to lay the foundations for equitable access to support and services for (migrant) sex workers. TAMPEP's aim is to reduce sex workers' vulnerability to HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

The TAMPEP Foundation counts on extensive experience, innovative tools, resources and knowledge on migrant sex workers across Europe. As a centre of expertise, it offers technical consultation, training, information and resources to various groups of stakeholders (public institutions, policymakers, sex work programmes and international organisations). The Foundation's mission is to develop and promote programmes and advocacy for the equal access of sex workers to health and rights.

### Barriers and capacities

Considering existing networks in the country, capacity building means the development of advocacy and alternative policies based on a multidisciplinary approach and with a large number of actors. It evaluates and monitors what can be improved by means of connecting the actual situation in sex work with the legal and policy network on prostitution.

The quality of information from such different stakeholders and the level of critical analysis of the impact of the legalisation of prostitution and regulatory measures for sex work are powerful and necessary tools to counteract the current repressive political moment.

This is very relevant in a context in which financial support for sex worker organisations and sex work services programmes, particularly outreach programmes, is being reduced and shifted to exit programmes. The Dutch Platform is an example of how to overcome financial barriers in a model of cooperation between experts.

To respond to this repressive trend and the new prostitution law proposal, organised discussions and collaborations are necessary. Networks are fundamental to spreading knowledge, expertise and professional skills among their members. They improve communication between the different stakeholders and develop joint actions.

The result of such efforts is increased knowledge and promotion of political influence guided by mechanisms of cooperation. This format for informal cooperation is able to identify national and local needs, and assess them according to the reality of sex work. It provides a critical assessment of the implementation of the legislation and policies on prostitution in the country.

# TIME FOR ACTION



The actions of the Platform are organised and focused on the main advocacy and lobbying activities to influence the opinions of politicians and the general public on the negative impacts

of the new law proposal in relation to the safety, autonomy and privacy of sex workers and their clients.

#### NATIONAL LEVEL

# Influencing media, public opinion and politicians

Members of the Platform organised or participated in public debates on the situation of sex work, in round tables as experts, including in ministerial bodies, and provided articles to newspapers and interviews for television.

The Platform also promotes information and dialogue with politicians. One of the creative proactive actions for influencing parliamentarians was the organisation of two breakfast meetings by the Soa Aids Foundation with representatives of the parliament and experts from the field. The intention was to inform the members of parliament about the contradictory aspects of the prostitution law proposal. Through this means, the parliamentarians could ask the experts for their opinions on the practical effects of the

law proposal and the expected positive and negative consequences. In this way, parliamentarians were well-prepared with arguments and critical opinions that could be directed to the Ministers of Justice and promote an amendment of such a law. Experts from the network were present at these meetings.

### 2. Advocacy tools

Over the years, network members have produced several declarations, position papers, letters, and tools for discussion with politicians. One of them was a document called *questions and answers*. It outlined 10 of the most common questions related to sex work and trafficking, and was disseminated to politicians and policy-makers, aiming at short arguments for political discussions. The document was given out to parliamentarians in December 2011.

The reason for having short questions and answers is that politicians normally need to have brief arguments to respond in political discussions. This could facilitate, for example, a

politician's reaction to the prostitution law proposal. In 2011, Platform member association Vereeniging for Vrouw en Recht prepared a juridical assessment report on the aspects of compulsory registration for sex workers that are against the law on privacy, and other contradictory aspects of the new law proposal on prostitution. The report's results were used for additional juridical evidence on the contradictory aspects of the law that introduced special and exceptional measures for sex workers – such as registration. Sex workers prepared statements and letters to politicians on the consequences of such a law.

Finally, these actions were able to gather together a common force and expertise against the law proposal, providing politicians with legal and social arguments which have a direct impact on sex workers' lives.



# Successful joint action and cooperation

### ■ CEDAW's critical opinion

In February 2010, the Dutch CEDAW Network issued a shadow report titled 'Women's Rights - Some Progress, Many Gaps'. On behalf of 54 Dutch women's organizations, critical points on the gaps in Dutch policy on the protection and promotion of women's human rights were presented to the UN Women's Convention, the committee that oversees compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the preparation of the shadow report, the expertise of different members of the Platform was gathered with regard to the **Dutch** governmental obligation to Article 6 of the Convention: combating trafficking in women and forced prostitution. Critical points were collated and the report related to the gaps in implementation of anti-trafficking policy and measures and to the new prostitution law proposal.

In turn, the UN Committee in their final report considered the critical arguments and concerns, as quoted below:

### **Exploitation of Prostitution** (Original text from the UN Committee)

(...) 30. The Committee is concerned that the new bill on prostitution in the Netherlands making the registration of prostitutes compulsory may lead the majority of prostitutes to work illegally. Among those prostitutes are migrant women from third countries [non-EU countries] who will not have the possibility of registering. The Committee is therefore concerned that the law, rather than improving the situation of prostitutes, might on the contrary undermine efforts to combat the sexual exploitation of women and increase the vulnerability of prostitutes who are not able or not willing to register by worsening their working conditions and exacerbating their social exclusion. The Committee expresses concern that this new legislation may also create serious risks for registered prostitutes' privacy and safety.

31. The Committee urges the State party to carefully conduct a risk assessment of the new law. including from the perspective of privacy, in consultation with concerned groups and relevant organizations before adopting it. The Committee also calls upon the Netherlands to provide more comprehensive and concrete information in its next periodic report on the measures taken to improve the working conditions of prostitutes and to enhance their autonomy. privacy and safety. The Committee encourages the State party to allocate adequate funding for the empowerment of prostitutes while maintaining funding for exit programmes.

### International Campaign

A campaign was launched against serious violation of human rights and medical confidentiality through the disclosure of details and photographs of an HIV-positive female sex worker by the Greek police and the media.

In May 2012, Greek authorities announced the arrest of 17 HIV-

positive women who allegedly worked illegally as sex workers, accusing them of intentionally causing serious bodily harm. The arrests come amid a crackdown on hundreds of unlicensed brothels around Greece. 130 sex workers were arrested and subjected to compulsory HIV testing by the state-run Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

In an action without precedent in a European country, the competent authorities of Greece publicised first, through a press release by the Greek police, the full details, photographs and medical records of a 22-year-old sex worker from Russia.

Following this first publication of the photograph on 28 April, two days later the police uploaded to their website photos of another 12 sex workers working in Athens. 17 women are to face a prosecutor on charges of intentionally causing grievous bodily harm and misdemeanours related to illegal prostitution, and it is not known how many more will be prosecuted if found to be HIV-positive.

As a consequence, the inhuman initiative of the Greek authorities

sparked a number of articles in the press and media reports naming and shaming the women, publishing their personal data, which was followed by publication in newspapers outside Greece.

TAMPEP, the ICRSE, the NSWP and SWAN immediately began a campaign with a protest letter to members of the European Parliament The network of people living with HIV/AIDS, the EU HIV/AIDS Civil Society Forum and UNAIDS were also mobilised in a common protest action, together with numerous Greek organisations. This campaign resulted in two questions being put officially from different MEPs to the Commission, letters of concern to the FU Commissioners of Health and Justice, and an international protest petition which collected more than 1000 signatures.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

### **TRAININGS**

# On peer education in Romania in cooperation with ARAS

The TAMPEP International Foundation, in partnership with ARAS | Asociatia Romana Anti-SIDA, carried out a comprehensive training programme on peer education for sex workers and outreach teams in the national sex work programme in Romania. The training was in the framework of the health promotion project "it is your right to know", for women from vulnerable groups (including Roma women and sex workers). The project was carried out from 2011 to 2012. The first training sessions were delivered by TAMPEP from 10-16 July 2011, and the second was scheduled. at the time of going to print, for the autumn of 2012.

The importance of this training programme relates to the fact that Romanian sex workers comprise one of the largest groups of migrant sex workers in the Netherlands. Direct involvement and empowerment of Romanian sex workers as peer educators will determine the potential for target intervention in the home country and in the receiving countries.

This training contributed to the improvement of health professionals' and sex workers' local capacity in Romania by underlining the principles of peer education and sex worker leadership. For the Dutch contingent, it improves the knowledge of the situation of Romanian sex workers, particularly those of Roma and Sinti origin.

The six-day training was organised for two different targets:

- Three day-courses for 50 ARAS outreach staff members from 10 cities
- Three day-courses for 20 sex worker-selected peers

The training programme included the technical expertise of TAMPEP on peer education methodology, materials, and

guidelines, as well as on peer involvement in prevention activities and the programme combating violence against sex workers, the coalition and involvement of human rights organisations and civil society, and social mobilisation.

The training was carried out in the form of presentations, exercises in working groups, interactive discussions and sharing experiences.

The intention was to involve peers in the outreach teams' activities

# Training 1 for service providers

- Starting locally: what does peer education mean, what are the basic conditions, what are the expectations, what is realistic?
- Working in partnership with sex workers: introduction of the basic concept and experiences. New methods and change of attitude of service providers.
- Sex workers as the experts: their voice, their advocacy. How to empower sex workers and peers? Discussions on outreach

techniques and contact in different sex work settings.

- Examples of other experiences: TAMPEP's outreach experiences in indoor settings (clubs and apartments). How to do it?
- Is this feasible? Discussion on the possible application of new methods for reaching sex workers working in different settings and methods of national mapping/assessments.
- How to scale up peer education? The aspect of diversity of peer programmes and sex workers' support on advocacy actions.
- How to recruit; how to select; how to work with empowering activities; how to reach new sex workers and involve them; how to mobilise them?
- Model of intervention: dialogue with stakeholders. How to deal with institutional repression in cities? Examples of TAMPEP's experience with acceptance of street workers in an urban area and how to involve the public authority, police, and citizens.
- Priorities and decisions: which stance to take? How to prepare an action plan?

### Training 4 for peers and sex worker leaders

- Stories of sex workers: presentation of sex worker-led organisations: present situation, principles and characteristics of projects.
- Needs and wishes: conversation with peers.
- Self-help and solidarity: why is it necessary, what are the advantages?
- Self-defence: actions on the street, examples of successful self-defence practices.
- Feedback: what do peers expect from ARAS teams in terms of support and integration in activities? What are the peers committed to do? What do they propose as a priority for common action and advocacy?
- Community activities: what do they wish to do? How to make workshops more appealing?
- Preparation of peers/leaders: how can peers contribute to the setting up of organisations led by sex workers?
- Agreements and action plans: how to make agreements

and commitments with the sex worker community?

The six-day training was closed with a plenary involving all participants (service providers and sex workers), an evaluation of all the training days, the presentation of joint action plans and the announcement from the peers' leaders of the founding of a group comprised exclusively of sex workers, with the name Maria Magdalena.

The second part of Training 2 will happen in autumn 2012, in order to monitor and discuss the improvements following the action plan set up in 2011.

Additionally, it aimed to explore the practices, gaps and barriers, improvements and the impact of the advocacy actions carried out in the past year. Supporting the work of the peers and the solidification of Maria Magdalena were among the main aims.

### Results and improvements

The main outcome of the 2011 training was the decision to intensify advocacy work aimed at creating a positive image of sex work and sex workers in the media and among the general public, policy-makers and law enforcement officials. Actions against stigma and discrimination must also highlight the difference between sex work and trafficking in women, in order to get sex workers out of the 'victim' role - humanising sex work.

Additionally, it was decided that the peer educators and leaders will have a position equal to outreach workers in the outreach teams.

ARAS staff will explore the possibilities of involving peers in their staff team by recognising their qualifications and expertise, giving them regular contracts with the organisation, and allowing them to be employed and fairly paid.

ARAS also committed itself to supporting the creation of an independent sex worker-led organisation in Romania and helping with the legal registration of the organisation.

Action against institutionalised violence from the police will be carried out in a formal way through collection of evidence, cooperation with human rights





institutes, and presentation of documented cases of abuse to the Ombudsman and Ministry of Interior.

This training strengthens alliances and networking in Romania with other stakeholders and civil society representatives for the promotion of rights, and links with other European networks on sex work.

### Impacts

In the long term, the most important impact of the 2011 and 2012 TAMPEP training programme in Romania was the empowerment of sex workers and the strengthening of their participation and visibility in ARAS health prevention activities. This formalised a joint commitment by ARAS and sex worker leaders and peers to set up a sex worker-led group as a central reference point for Romania on sex work issues and a lobby entity for sex workers' rights.

This impact will support sex workers and organisations to count on the support of ARAS when developing and carrying out advocacy activities or responding to specific difficulties or demands.

Other activities were mentioned as helpful to the destigmatisation campaign on sex work:

- Interviews with supportive media outlets
- Social media as a campaign tool
- Calling for the recognition by the Labour Ministry of peer work as a labour activity
- Presentation of INDOORS clip Equal Rights as a peer education and empowerment tool.

# SOCIAL MOBILISATION

In the Netherlands, advocacy actions aiming for social mobilisation around sex work and sex workers' rights continue to be related to initiatives by NGOs, either sex worker-led organisations or those working with or for sex workers.

These were and are the actors who, since the 80s, have been responsible for developing campaigns, presenting state-

ments, and spreading data and information about the real working conditions of sex workers in the Netherlands. However, the main effort of this group was to apply pressure and push for the abolition of the article of the law related to the commercial exploitation of prostitution which passed in 2000, and the recognition of sex work as an activity.

These activists, independent of the situation, always strategised to raise awareness among different stakeholders and seek their support, either to apply political pressure or to spread information. The stakeholders in question were policy-makers and the

> media, but also public authorities and local municipalities in charge of the system licensing sex work premises.

In this process, the Rode Draad was the first sex worker-led organisation in the Netherlands. It was founded in 1985 as the national organisation of sex workers. After the legalisation of sex work, one of the programmes of the Rode Draad was the setting up of a labour union for sex workers.

The Platform on Prostitution opened a dialogue channel with government bodies on issues related to the implementation of measures for the legalisation/regulation of sex work. They started functioning as informal and formal consultation and policy development networks. All these groups and platforms are at the national level.

In 2000, legalisation was introduced to regulate and control prostitution businesses and improve the situation of sex workers. This is a national law that allows, under certain conditions, forms of prostitution with which adult sex workers voluntarily engage.

This means that the sections that previously imposed an overall ban on the organisation or promotion of prostitution were removed from the Dutch Penal Code (Article 250B, concerning the commercial exploitation of prostitution by third persons).

The Penal Code only lifted the ban on brothels and the part regarding third persons exploiting prostitution for profit, and substituted the old article with a new definition of pimping and involuntary exploitation of prostitutes and underage persons.

Since 2000, the jurisdiction for regulating prostitution and implementing prostitution policy lies with city councils. Prostitution is only permitted in licensed sex work establishments. In principle, street prostitution is prohibited, apart from in four authorised zones.

In practice, however, the government drew up guidelines for local authorities that referred to regulations on commercial exploitation of prostitution within the municipalities. In most cities, this regulation was put into practice in a very restrictive way, resulting in the reduction of more than half of the existing club brothels and window brothels. Many municipalities also consider escort agencies and apartments as sex work enterprises requiring obligatory licences. It is anticipated that in the near future, due to the law proposal voted on by the Dutch Parliament in March 2011, two measures will be enforced.

The first one is the compulsory registration of sex workers, including the provision of personal data (citizen service number or tax office registration number) and identity information.

The second is a general obligation for a licence to run any form of sex business, including the erotica/porno sector. This regulation system includes individuals working on a self-employed basis and other regular sex work businesses and services. Although this new registration and regulation system will apply nationally, the rules for application and running a business will still depend on the local prostitution policies and licensing criteria. Many other additional limitations on licence holders will be implemented.

The new law proposal also prohibits prostitution businesses unless they have a municipal licence. At this time it is clear that the definition of 'sex work business' covers escort and internet agencies, which would have to supply an actual street address and a landline telephone number, all for insertion in a national register. As a result, businesses





that provide access to sexual services without possession of a licence will be closed. Selfemployed sex workers who work without a licence to run a sex business and without being registered as sex workers will be fined. In addition, this law proposes that clients who purchase services from unregistered sex workers or those working at illegal (unlicensed) workplaces be sentenced to prison or to pay a high fine. To avoid this, they should verify the licence of the sex business and/or the registration of the sex worker.

Another controversial amendment to the law is a change of the age limit for lawful work in prostitution, from 18 to 21 years.

In opposition to this new framework on policy and prostitution law, in 2009, the Platform on Prostitution started running activities and involving representatives of organisations. The majority of the members of the platforms are or were involved in the other original platforms on sex work and in the history of legalisation of sex work. With this common background, the Platform acts as a protest and advocacy group focused on the following main issues:

### Compulsory registration

The Compulsory registration of sex workers has nothing to do with the original goal of this law proposal: combating exploitation. This is a control mechanism that reduces the autonomy of sex workers and their right to privacy.

### ■ Legalisation, not regulation

The legalisation model of prostitution can become a regulatory repressive system, without any attention to or focus on sex workers' situation and autonomy. Even the principle of the 'normalisation' of prostitution abounds because of an exceptional measure that will be adopted by the new law if approved. Sex work is the only profession outside the regular Labour Law system.

The criminalisation of clients will be unique in a framework of legal prostitution.

### Advocacy

The actions of the platforms and allies are based on the conclusion that after all these years and despite the legalisation of sex work in the Netherlands, sex workers are still stigmatised and discriminated against. Although some media treats sex work in a more open manner, others place more emphasis on statements from local administrations. religious groups and stories that link sex work with criminality, and the overlapping of sex work and trafficking dominate the public debate and policy opinion on prostitution. In conclusion, there is a great need for social mobilisation to quarantee sex workers full acceptance and equal participation of their voices in public debate.







here is no specific legislation related to sex work in Portugal: it is neither legal nor illegal.

Although voluntary prostitu-

tion is not a crime, the profession is not legally or socially recognised. The lack of a legal framework to protect sex workers renders them vulnerable.

In this chapter, the guide intends to explore the kinds of initiatives and networking engagements which were developed in the face of this situation. The Portuquese sex work projects and national network are newcomers to the scene if compared to those in other countries in Europe, and relate to the country's capacity-building efforts on services to sex workers. While this field in Portugal is still not greatly made up of sex workers themselves, service providers across the country have developed links to address sex workers' needs and are committed to the involvement of sex worker representatives.

### NATIONAL LEVEL

### National Network on Sex Work

RTS | Rede sobre Trabalho Sexual

The National Network on Sex Work, or Rede sobre Trabalho Sexual (RTS), was set up with the aim of responding to the need to connect services, knowledge and political actions among all the outreach projects and activists working in the field of sex work in Portugal. The idea was that coordinated, all-encompassing work would improve interventions and strengthen common positions when discussing policies with stakeholders.

During TAMPEP's 2009 meeting in Porto, which involved the main Portuguese organisations working in the field of sex work, the idea for a collaborative action was put forward for the first time. With this goal in mind, APDES invited all the organisations working in the field of sex work for a meeting in October 2010, to evaluate the relevance of such

networks, an idea which was welcomed by all participants.

Another push factor that led to the creation of this network was the absence of a legal framework for sex work in Portugal. Sex work is not legally recognised as work, and sex workers are marginalised through the disrespect for their rights. There are still some policy-makers and other stakeholders who. on moralistic grounds, insist on presenting a single image of sex workers as victims of violence. and confuse sex work with the trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation. This approach is particularly dangerous when we consider that a high proportion of sex workers in Portugal are migrants, with added vulnerabilities.

Most of the organisations working in the sex work field, however, are still very focused on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. This network therefore also encourages a collective effort towards lobbying and advocacy for sex workers' rights in a broader sense.



Formally established in 2011, RTS is a national network comprising organisations and individuals involved in sex work-related issues. RTS is based on a commitment to defend human rights, particularly social and labour rights, and the right to freedom from discrimination and other forms of violence against sex workers.

Its main objectives are to share practices, methodologies and knowledge, to optimise resources and working strategies, to discuss and monitor policies related to sex work with public institutions and other stakeholders, to develop collective actions, to encourage the production of knowledge and to promote awareness campaigns and activities to mark significant dates in the sex work calendar. The network is composed of eleven NGOs, one GO and two academics, and still has low representation of sex workers, with only one activist. Its members come from all regions of the country and, in addition to networking by email, meetings are held every two months.

The network is coordinated democratically and on a rotational basis, with APDES and GAT currently responsible for the secretariat. All actions take into account each member position and all votes have the same weight in decision-making processes.

### The partners

The partners are NGOs, GOs and individuals.

**Acompanha | Porto**Social cooperative for HIV prevention among sex workers.

APDES | Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento | Porto NGO with specialised projects on indoor sex work. www.apdes.pt

APF | Associação para o Planeamento da Família | Porto NGO committed to promoting health among sex workers, with several projects in this area. http://www.apf.pt

Programa Autoestima | Porto Governmental programme for the improvement of sex workers' health. http://portal.arsnorte.min-saude.pt/ portal/page/portal/ARSNorte

Médicos do Mundo | Porto International NGO. Develops interventions for sex workers. www.medicosdomundo.pt

Associação Existências | Coimbra NGO for the promotion and protection of the health of sex workers.

#### ANO | Associação Novo Olhar |

Leiria, Coimbra, Figueira da Foz NGO with project targeting indoor sex workers.

### GAT | Grupo Português de Activistas sobre Tratamentos de VIH/SIDA |

Lisbo

Portuguese NGO composed of activists for HIV/AIDS treatment. Has two projects for sex workers. www.gatportugal.org

LPCS | Liga Portuguesa Contra a Sida (LPCS) | Lisbon NGO with a project that supports male sex workers. www.ligacontrasida.org

#### OSIO | Obra Social das Irmãs Oblatas do Santíssimo Redentor |

Lisbon

Private Institution of Social Solidarity. Supports street-based sex workers. www.oblatas.com/oblatas.php

#### Positivo | Lisbon

NGO supporting sex workers in Lisbon.

www.positivo.org.pt/site/index.php

#### UMAR | União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta | Lisbon,

Porto, Almada, Açores Feminist non-profit organisation, actively involved in the fight for sex workers' rights. www.umarfeminismos.org

### Other national networks

Other networks in Portugal have a common interest in advocacy for human rights and interventions for the most vulnerable populations, including sex workers.

The position regarding sex work is not shared by all participants, but the presence of NGOs that work with and





for sex workers ensures that sex workers' needs are being discussed in this forum and are on the political agenda.

### R3 | National Harm Reduction Network

Comprehensive harm reduction projects. Integrates projects related to sex work.

### National Civil Society Forum on HIV/AIDS

Development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies regarding HIV/AIDS.

### **INDOORS** partner

### APDES | Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento

APDES is a non-governmental development organisation, founded in 2004 to promote sustainable development among the communities and countries where it works. Although the majority of its work is undertaken in the north of Portugal, APDES is in geographic expansion, with ongoing projects in other cities of Portugal (Lisbon, Guarda, Viseu), and in other countries (Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde). APDES' interventions are mainly directed at vulnerable communities and populations (drug users, migrants, sex workers, and

the unemployed) with the goal of improving access to health, employment and education, empowering populations, and strengthening social cohesion.

In accordance with its vision, APDES intends to influence the agenda of social and development policies. To do so, its interventions are based upon action-research principles, participatory methodologies, proximity strategies, principles of citizenship and human rights.

APDES also takes a multidisciplinary approach and counts on almost 50 collaborators within the framework of various projects and interventions

To strengthen its actions, APDES also relies on the involvement of national and regional networks.

### Barriers and capacities

The primary current barrier for APDES and other members of RTS is the Portuguese socioeconomic conjuncture, which impacts heavily on non-profit organisations, particularly those which depend on governmental funding. The organisations' services experience great fragility

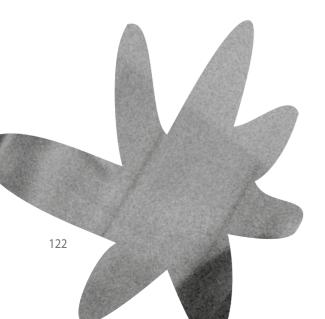
when governments change and priority areas of intervention change as well, when short-term projects are about to end and there is no easy way to ensure the continuity of responses already implemented in the field, even if the need still exists. The main consequence is a negative impact on the overall structure of social services and social support for marginalised groups, including sex workers who are supported by civil society organisations.

In order to have some sustainability, APDES prepares training on subjects in which gained expertise is needed, establishes several partnerships with strategic services and structures, and implements innovative projects to promote social and environmental responsibility. Another strategy to overcome the barriers is to train staff for a proper and comprehensive approach to sensitive issues.

As for the concerns of RTS, economic issues are also at the root of its main challenges, given that this network has no financial support and no budget for any of its activities. As the majority of members are NGOs working

within limited budgets, the simple act of organising a meeting and ensuring the presence of all partners is sometimes a difficult task.

Nevertheless, RTS members work in a cooperative environment in which different opinions are exchanged and discussed in order to identify common positions. The existence of the network allows the members to combine efforts for advocacy issues related to sex work. However, RTS' biggest vulnerability is the under-representation of sex workers within it. In order to overcome this limitation, the current members are trying to mobilise sex workers to be a part of the network



# TIME FOR ACTION



APDES has organised several training courses targeted at:

- outreach workers in the field of harm reduction;
- sex workers' development of peer education and harm reduction skills and knowledge for participation in civil society, among other things;
- students from social sciences faculties, sharing experience and knowledge regarding harm reduction, social and health intervention in their respective fields.

APDES also organises several events, conferences, and seminars, mostly concerned with harm reduction, in which sex work is consistently included as a topic to be discussed.

Examples of these initiatives are: CLAT5, with several initiatives and presentations on the topic of sex work; R3 Seminar with a panel dedicated to sex work; European Summer School on 'Risk Society and Human Rights' with the participation of sex workers and outreach workers

in sex work settings in different European countries.

For this purpose different materials have been created (leaflets, posters, newsletters, manuals), designed to improve sex workers' skills on harm reduction issues, social integration issues, rights and mobilisation.

It is also important to mention that APDES has been actively involved in the organisation and mobilisation of sex workers in the advocacy of their rights and in the improvement of their living and working conditions. For example, during the May Day (Labour Day) parade, the 17 December commemorations, and in the production of political statements and positions.

Recognising the great power and impact that the media have in influencing opinion, APDES collaborates with the media in order to raise community and stakeholder awareness of sex workers' rights and needs.

Even if it is in its early stages, RTS has had the opportunity to develop a common definition of sex work, to outline the fundamental principles that guide members' work, and to share experiences and also materials among the participant organisations and collaborators. RTS works with the media and journalists in the production of media articles and pieces on the subject, and has publicised its existence, along with its main principles, to important stakeholders

RTS has also had the opportunity to disseminate members' common positions, for example, repudiating a European campaign designed to eradicate prostitution. Recently the network organised a debate and a social event concerning 17 December. This event counted on the participation of relevant stakeholders in the field, namely sex workers, outreach and advocacy organisations, academics and representatives of almost all political parties.

# Successful joint action and cooperation

Many of the achievements of Porto G, the outreach project that APDES designed to support indoor sex workers, were only possible due to close collaboration with other service providers, NGOs and governmental structures, allowing for the expansion of sex workers' access to a wide range of services (e.g. legal support, dentist consultations, etc.).

All the members of RTS benefit from this recent partnership in terms of strengthening their advocacy and political impact. Additionally, some members of RTS participate in other networks, such as the National Civil Society Forum on HIV/AIDS, which allows further reinforcement of common positions and causes.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

### NATIONAL SEMINAR

On behalf of its projects Porto G and INDOORS, APDES organised the Sex Work and Human Rights seminar on 25 November 2011.

Porto G, co-funded by the National Coordination for HIV/ AIDS, completed three years of outreach work with indoor sex workers and used this occasion to present significant results achieved, listen to sex workers' voices, and involve partners and other relevant stakeholders. Given the seemingly harsh socio-economic circumstances, APDFS invited decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the future of interventions in the field of sex work in Portugal.

The relevance of the event was to take a human rights approach to sex work, to denounce the violation of fundamental rights, and to foster sex workers' agency. This is a fundamental task considering the lack of an organised sex worker movement in Portugal. Politicians, journalists and other important stakeholders were also invited, to offer them different perspectives on sex work and on the main challenges that sex workers face at the present time.





### Aims

The seminar was planned to raise societal awareness of sex workers' rights and to draw decision-makers' attention to the need to combat the factors that increase sex workers' vulnerability, through integrated actions.

It brought together different key actors from diverse fields (social intervention, activism, academia, research), who had in common the fact that they had close contact with sex workers' principal needs. The main aim was to promote a better understanding of these needs and to reaffirm the importance of taking collective action to eradicate the most common violations and prejudice.



Furthermore, presentations were given by peer educators who shared their experiences, highlighting the need to take sex workers' knowledge into consideration when designing and evaluating an outreach project.

#### Contents

The seminar programme involved a large number of presentations and lectures, as well as moderators and rapporteurs.

In the opening session, each speaker reaffirmed the importance of civil society's interventions with marginalised populations and the need to promote and protect human rights. In particular, and with regard to Portugal's ongoing crisis, the National Coordinator for HIV/AIDS stated that the infection may re-emerge if the government decides to reduce public health responses, with added costs in the future in terms of economic impact, but mostly in terms of the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations.

# Panel 7 Outreach work in indoor settings

The first panel had speakers presenting some experiences from the field. The coordinator of Porto G presented the project's main results and effectiveness. In this panel the importance was also discussed of comprehensive

and holistic interventions that do not focus only on the prevention of STIs, and the association between sex workers and highrisk groups in terms of STI rates was strongly debunked through the presentation of data from the gynaecologist partner. The final presentation in this panel was given by Porto G cultural mediators, who presented their experiences in the outreach project and reiterated the need to involve the target population in each phase of intervention, from conception to evaluation.

# Panel **2**Civic mobilisation and activism

The second panel included a presentation by a sex worker activist who shared her experience of advocating for sex workers' rights. She also outlined the main risks related to public exposure and talked about the consequences of stigmatisation and victimisation. The slogan 'Nothing about us without us' was used to communicate sex workers' capacity to decide what is best for their lives and that no policy regarding sex work

should be made without the full and direct participation of sex workers. The INDOORS project was also presented in this panel.

The evening started with the screening of a documentary entitled 'Das 9 às 5' (From 9 to 5). This documentary brings together testimonies of people who use sexual activity as a means of making money – porn actors, strippers, sex toy vendors – suggesting that multiple activities may fall under the umbrella term of 'sex work'.

With viewpoints from psychologists, outreach workers and one politician, the two film-makers show the vulnerability of these workers resulting from the absence of a law regulating their activity.

In the discussion after the screening, the makers revealed how difficult it was to gather testimonies about sex work from political parties in parliament, lamenting the fact that some issues do not appear in parliamentary debates.

Afterwards, a round table was dedicated to the theme "What is in the future for social and health interventions within sex

work?", and was attended by people from various professional backgrounds to highlight need.

The presence of the northern director of the Aliens and Borders Department, the Portuguese authority responsible for the entry and deportation of foreigners, raised a discussion around sex work and its relationship to human trafficking for sexual purposes. Those present were nearunanimous that there is a need to distinguish between these two phenomena in order to better protect human rights. Also discussed were the difficulties that undocumented migrants face in accessing health services, and strategies to counter this form of violence.

The round table finished by acknowledging the importance of civil society's interventions with vulnerable populations whose voices have been historically silenced, and the importance of participatory methodologies which involve these populations in the designing and ongoing activities of such interventions.

The conclusions panel of this seminar stressed the need to bring a usually taboo theme into the public domain, the need to distinguish between phenomena that even if sometimes connected can't be treated as the same (sex work versus trafficking), the need to support civil society's interventions with vulnerable populations, the need to evaluate projects in terms of cost-effective relationships, and the need to strengthen the space for dialogue between civil society and the state.

### Challenges encountered

It remains a challenge to motivate decision-makers from diverse political backgrounds, and representatives of governmental bodies, to participate.

# Results and improvements

In the aftermath of the discussions that were held, activist voices were heard and some stakeholders made commitments to take action. It was very gratifying to acknowledge that all the speakers used the term 'sex work', from government

representatives to outreach workers.

The event was publicised in six Portuguese newspapers and in alternative media (website, blogs, social media, etc.) and generated some discussion on the legalisation of sex work and the impact that the extinction of some outreach teams would have on services provided to sex workers.

Awareness was raised about the economic crisis in Portugal and its effects on services for sex workers

## Results of the meeting

- As many stakeholders as possible were involved in the implementation of the seminar and in its dissemination:
- It gave the opportunity to the APDES partners and the involved community to participate and share their points of view;
- It enabled sex workers to speak for themselves;
- Donors were involved in the event, highlighting the relevance of their support;

- Invitees included key political actors trying to make an impact on the political agenda; and
- Different channels were used to ensure a broader dissemination of the event across the community.

### Impacts

Given its wide and varied attendance and media coverage, the seminar enhanced the visibility of sex workers and increased understanding of their main vulnerabilities and needs. Having sex workers representing themselves countered a trend and reinforced their agency.



APDES designed and implemented the training course "Promoting the development of skills among front-line professionals: how to deal with vulnerable groups".

This was a three-day course, seven hours each day, targeted at administrative staff, front-line professionals who mediate access to health care in public health centres.

During outreach work carried out with migrants, sex workers and drug users, APDES was made aware of numerous situations of discrimination and misconduct by front-line professionals working in public health centres. The reality is that many people, including sex workers, face real obstacles when accessing public health services. These obstacles have to do with moral judgements, prejudice and stigma about marginalised populations, along with limited knowledge about the legal framework regarding access to health. When it comes to migrants, particularly those who are undocumented, these barriers are even more critical.

APDES implemented this training with the aim of improving health professionals' resources, information, skills and awareness related to the specific needs of vulnerable populations, including the importance of confidentiality.

## Relevance of the training

The relevance of this training programme is to guarantee universal access to health, in particular for those populations who often experience some kind of discrimination that distances them from health structures. Sex workers, migrants and drug users are often afraid to use public health services because they quite frequently have to face discriminatory attitudes from administrative staff.

The training developed interpersonal skills and the necessary knowledge among front-line professionals working in public health centres in order to guarantee universal access to health and to enable these professionals to perform their role with vulnerable groups, taking into account their specificities, in a non-judgemental way and based upon a human rights approach.

The training was able to:

■ provide clear information about legal frameworks regulating public health access, in particular for migrant populations

- strengthen the knowledge of health and hospital services about the problems associated with various phenomena of social exclusion and the main obstacles experienced by these groups in accessing public health services
- raise awareness among these professionals about the impact that stigma and discrimination play in social exclusion
- improve interpersonal skills, enabling these professionals to better mediate access to health.

### Impacts

APDES believes that training targeting those professionals who mediate people's access to services will definitely benefit many people, particularly the most marginalised groups, even if indirectly. APDES also expects that these professionals will share with their colleagues the knowledge, tools and strategies acquired to best respond to some clients' needs, counting towards a sustainable achievement.

# SOCIAL MOBILISATION

Most social mobilisation actions in recent years in Portugal have been faded with time and were developed by organisations, academics or other individuals. Stigma, prejudice, fear of retaliation, and, for migrant sex workers, irregular status and temporary stays in the country, may explain the lack of involvement of sex workers in advocacy initiatives for better working and living conditions.

The creation of RTS in 2011 made easier the collective mobilisation of organisations and individuals towards common causes, and members of this network are increasingly organising for political action, working on legal issues, involving sex workers in their work, and motivating sex workers for self-organisation.

Below is a list of the most significant initiatives developed in Portugal in recent years towards the self-mobilisation of sex workers, the capacity building of organisations and individuals, the involvement of sex workers.



the improvement of policies and the recognition of sex workers' rights.

All organisations mentioned contributed to this national overview of major events.



■ Collaboration fosters debate and the taking of collective positions regarding sex workers' rights.

The National Coordination for HIV/AIDS, the major funder of interventions and research in the field of sex work, launched a campaign targeting sex workers and their clients. To develop this campaign, a participatory methodology was put into place,

and organisations working in the field, along with sex workers and other relevant actors, were called on to decide on the course and contents.

The result, which was highly disseminated, raised enormous controversy among the community, particularly among the Portuguese Communist Party. Much of this controversy had to do with the use of the term 'sex work' and how this reality was presented. RTS issued a position paper supporting the appropriateness of such a campaign to sex workers' realities.

The network produced another collective statement repudiating a campaign produced by the European Women's Lobby that clearly violates sex workers' rights and dignity and that the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights disseminated on 18 October, the EU Anti-Trafficking Day.

■ Autoestima, the Portuguese representative partner of the European project TAMPEP, involved almost all the national organisations working in the sex work field in the mapping of sex work in Portugal and in the pro-

duction of the products 'Work Safe in Sex Work', 'Sex Work Migration Health', 'Sex Work in Europe Report', and the website www.services4sexworkers.eu

■ Several meetings, conferences and seminars on this topic were held in recent years. UMAR organised the Feminist Congress in 2008 with a panel on trafficking in women and prostitution, a training course titled "Prostitution and Sexual Services" was held in 2008 with the participation of Colectivo Hetaira from Madrid, and two workshops about prostitution were held in Lisbon and Porto in 2011.

The Autoestima programme, on behalf of the TAMPEP Network, organised a national conference in 2009 which gathered together almost all the NGOs working in the field of sex work in the country.

APDES organised in Porto the 5th Latin American Conference on Harm Reduction in 2009, integrating some panels and workshops to discuss sex work-related issues, with the participation of European activists such as Pia Covre, Laura Agustín and Pye Jacobson.



- In 2011, Panteras Rosa wrote an open letter about trade unions and sex work in time of crises, calling on sex workers to join and to fight for equal rights, and demonstrating their support for the prevention campaign launched by the National Coordination for HIV/AIDS.
- 17 December has motivated the development of some initiatives to raise community awareness of sex workers' rights and the need to combat prejudice and other forms of violence. In 2005 two academics and activists organised a national meeting with sex workers and stakeholders; in 2010 APDES organised a debate and a party at which the Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto<sup>19</sup> was read; in 2011 the Network on Sex Work developed a national event with the involvement of politicians, sex workers, academics and NGOs in a debate, followed by a party.





<sup>19</sup> Signed by 120 sex workers from 26 countries at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, October 2005, Brussels, Belgium.

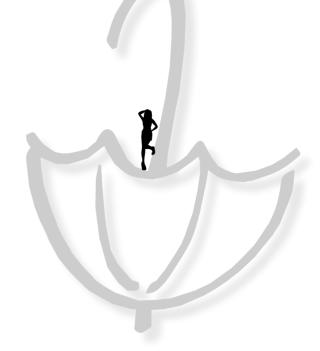
### Developing activist initiatives and giving sex workers visibility and voice

- Several organisations, academics and sex workers have been involved in the organisation of the May Day commemorations and in the mobilisation of sex workers calling for the recognition of sex work as work. This initiative was seen in 2009 in Lisbon and I isbon.
- During the last few years, a transgender activist member of RTS has been participating in several networks, projects and conferences on behalf of sex workers and transgender rights.
- In 2010, some sex workers, one manager of an indoor sex venue, and the mediator of Porto G (APDES) worked together to successfully negotiate a reduction of prices of ads in the newspaper that has the monopoly on commercial sex advertisements in the city of Porto.
- Several projects and other initiatives were developed by

- NGOs to promote the collective mobilisation of sex workers. APDES developed two editions of the training course Management of Associations of Drug Users and Sex Workers with the aim of promoting the involvement of these target groups in the development of collectives and associations. The NGO OSIO implemented in 2009 the project 'Together we can. Stop discrimination', aiming to promote the mobilisation of street-based sex workers for their rights. The actions, priorities and themes debated during this project were selected by around 16 sex workers taking part.
- Some videos have been developed giving visibility to sex workers' reality and voice:
- 'Do corpo à palavra' (2007) regarding sex workers' right to motherhood.
- 'Prostituição: Não ao preconceito. Sim à pessoa' (2010) to combat prejudice and giving voice to sex workers.
- 'Das 9 às 5' (2011) regarding the diverse picture of sex work in Portugal.

# Consulting and involving sex workers in decisions

- Some NGOs integrated mediators and/or peer educators into their teams, benefiting from their knowledge, experience and integration in sex work venues. These include Espaço Pessoa, (APF), OSIO and Porto G (APDES). Additionally, under the PREVIH project GAT and APDES initiated in 2011 the training of outreach teams to integrate peers in their work, and training peers to develop their skills as peer educators.
- For the preparation of the European Conference on Sex Work, held in Brussels in 2005, a participatory process to involve Portuguese sex workers in the initiative was set in motion by an activist member of RTS. Testimonies were collected from several sex workers in Porto in order to identify their main needs and complaints, and this information was compiled into a document which was sent to the committee of the Conference.



■ A high number of organisations involve sex workers in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their projects and initiatives. GAT is developing a pioneer study 'PREVIH: HIV/ AIDS Infection in Groups of MSM and Sex Workers: Prevalence, Determinants, Prevention Interventions and Access to Health Services'.

This study involves the participation and consultation of a large number of sex workers and NGOs working in the field. APDES' outreach project Porto G has, from its conception to its constitution, incorporated a consistent participatory methodology and consultation of sex workers.

Sex workers took part in the needs assessment to select the most suitable and essential services to provide. They were also involved in the design of the project, in the development of events, interventions and publications, and in the annual evaluation of the project and subsequent redefinition of the actions and strategies.





n Spain, sex work is neither legal nor illegal. However, pimping is a criminal offence. As sex work is a marginalised and clandestine activity it is still hard to unify and mobilise sex workers in the country. In spite of this, Hetaira and other organisations in Spain have devoted considerable effort to amplifying sex workers' voices and keeping them at the forefront of the debate on their rights.

In this chapter, the Spanish civil society networking initiatives in the field of sex work reveal the country's capacity to improve the living and working situation of sex workers in the country, including migrants. It is a chapter devoted to strong activism and remarkable social mobilisation.

### NATIONAL NETWORKING

In 2006 it became apparent that a network needed to be organised due to the ever-declining situation in Spain of sex workers' rights. Sex workers' rights were not only poorly recognised, but were also being actively cut back. It had become impossible for sex workers to work without persecution and stigmatisation in cities like Madrid, as a result of the City of Madrid's Plan Against Sexual Slavery, and Barcelona, due to civic by-laws passed by the city hall. Both of these models were repressive, and were starting to appear in other cities around the country.

Eleven organisations responded to the call, and in March 2006 the first Plataforma Estatal por los Derechos del Trabajo Sexual was created.

The National Network for the Rights of Sex Workers is a network of like-minded NGOs that exchange information, ideas and tactics concerning the fight for sex workers' rights. The network meets once a year and these meetings have been traditionally organised in Madrid by Colectivo Hetaira. In 2009, a website was created, trabajosexual.org, where the network's manifesto, goals and press releases may be found. It is a visible space promoting sex work-

ers' rights. Since its foundation there has been a steady increase in organisations taking part. In 2011 there were ten participants, but there was a motion to incorporate three more organisations from Barcelona and Madrid.

The network is composed of a mix of organisations with varied backgrounds. They all share the common goal and understanding that sex workers should be given their rights and not be discriminated against. It is a means to unite the voices of those who do not identify with abolitionist or prohibitionist ideas, but who believe in the diverse realities of the sex industry and in different solutions to consider. The network's demands are:

- Labour and social rights for those who work in prostitution
- Quality jobs with adequate salaries, not fake programmes based on the idea of 'rehabilitation', rescue, and benefits for those who want to leave sex work (for whatever reason)
- Combating organised crime, without negative repercussions for the women
- Attention to migrant sex workers' needs.



In 2007, the mixed senate congress of the Spanish government came to a resolution that prostitution is violence against women.

Although it was admitted that there was no official or serious data concerning prostitution in Spain, it was *still* concluded that 90% of female sex workers were forced into sex work. It was also here that the idea of banning sex ads in the daily press was first proposed.

In June 2008, the network issued a press release against the campaign to eliminate these advertisements in Spanish newspapers. That same year, the government put together the National Plan Against Human Trafficking. Fundamentally, it related to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This would have been an appropriate move had it not constantly confused trafficking of people with the smuggling of people across borders; and prostitution with trafficking. This national plan was protested against and criticised again in a press release in the name of the network.

Since 2004, there has been a highly active abolitionist feminist lobby, whose pressure can be increasingly felt in the government's general attitude towards prostitution. The criminalisation of clients and the conceptualisation of prostitution as violence are ideas that are gaining strength. Although the government has not drafted any direct laws concerning sex work, it has remained passive in the face of municipalities that implement by-laws whose main purpose is to eliminate street prostitution.

Sex workers are suffering even more persecution, and are stamped with the contradictory label of victim or delinquent. Public opinion is being swayed towards the abolitionist discourse in which women, in particular, never choose to be in sex work. It is regarded as a form of sexual exploitation and violence and therefore should be removed from public view, and eventually from Spain in its entirety.

The Plataforma is a network for responding to these challenges. It found a way to join forces against discourses such as this

one, that impede sex workers' rights and put sex workers in a more vulnerable position in society. It is there to affirm their rights, to improve knowledge and evidence about this field, and to intervene in the media, policy development and support services for sex workers.

The member organisations of the network are typically very present and active at their local levels, including taking an active role in their local networks and environments. This fact has significant relevance if we consider that strong local networks are able to influence coalitions and stakeholders on a national level. In other words, due to strong and active engagement at local levels they are able to share and raise awareness on these matters at a national level.

Basically, each organisation in this platform contributes information on what is happening in their part of Spain or with the sex work population that they specifically work with. They also each contribute different forms of expertise (e.g. problems faced by male sex workers), ways of resolving conflict (community meetings, demonstrations) and



fresh problem resolution methods (e.g. the use of data protection laws against the fining of sex workers or clients).

There are three organisations that are LGBT. The LGBT movement is pro-sex workers' rights because 1) there are many LGBT people involved in sex work; 2) they recognise that sex workers who are pushed out of sight are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and to STIs/HIV: 3) they are against moralistic law-making and believe that sex workers in general should be able to work in the best conditions possible. The main contribution of these groups in particular is that they complete the picture of sex work in Spain through the direct participation of male and transgender sex workers.

The network can be loosely divided into three main types of organisations: advocacy and social provision, community and human rights, and sex workerled.



### The partners

CATS | Murcia

Committee for the Support of Sex Workers (Comité de Apoyo a las Trabajadoras del Sexo) Spanish and migrant sex workers. www.asociacioncats.org

Fundación Triangulo | Madrid Male and transgender sex worker organisation. Branches in Andalucia, Canarias, Castilla y la Mancha, Castilla v Leon, Extremadura www.fundaciontriangulo.org

Transexualia | Madrid Transgender sex workers. www.transexualia.org

Lloc de la Dona | Barcelona Female sex workers. www.llocdeladona.org

Ambit Dona | Barcelona Male and female sex workers. www.fambitprevencio.org/ treball-sexual.php

Genera | Barcelona Female sex workers. http://www.genera.org.es

Cogam | Madrid LGBT sex workers. www.cogam.org

APDH Andalucia | Andalucia Andalucian Pro-Human Rights Association (Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía) Male and female sex workers. www.apdha.org

Lambda | Valencia Collective of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales); LGBT sex workers. www.lambdavalencia.org

AMTTTSE | Malaga

Spanish association for female, including transgender, sex workers (Asociación de Muieres, Travestis y Transexuales Trabajadores de Sexo de España) For all sex workers in Spain.

CTSX | Madrid Committee of Sex Workers (Comité de Trabaiadores de Sexo) Exclusively by and for sex workers.

Colectivo Hetaira | Madrid Female, including transgender, sex workers. www.colectivohetaira.org

### **INDOORS** partner

#### Colectivo Hetaira

Colectivo Hetaira is an organisation that was founded in 1995 to fight against the social stigma that fell upon sex workers; to defend their rights; to facilitate the organisation of sex workers as workers; to promote solidarity between women; to erase the divide between 'bad' women (sex workers) and 'good' women (everyone else); to reinforce sex workers' self-esteem and seek to empower them; and to be a reference point in their daily lives and as a mediator in conflicts.



# Barriers and capacities

Hetaira and the Plataforma work on a cooperation model. They share initiatives which aim to improve the services and working conditions of sex workers in Spain. This model depends heavily on individual know-how and engagement of the network members. The organisations contribute to the network's development, the meetings and other bilateral activities in accordance with their own capacity.

Hetaira is not just historically the organiser of the network; its actions influence the ideology and position of network members. Even with limited human resources and a lack of financial support, Hetaira is able to engage volunteers in events, projects, training, referrals and network activities. Sex workers involved in Hetaira take part in the leadership of the organisation and also influence strategic actions within the network's decision-making process. The Plataforma represents the only national capacity building and awareness-raising initiative for

sex workers, and service providers working with and for them, in Spain. Its importance has grown of late due to extreme governmental actions against sex workers. The information coming from local actions provides evidence of the reality faced by sex workers and plays a role in the demystification of sex workers as victims.

The network is self-funded by its member organisations, and for this reason meetings are crucial to improve capacities and overcome barriers. Members contribute by sharing the division of tasks following network meetings. In opposition to the lack of funding, the network makes use of its national coverage to develop national cohesion and mobilisation on sex workers' rights and needs.

Another form of capacity building is the ability of some of its members, such as Hetaira, to join advocacy tools such as creative art materials (banners, leaflets, etc.) with provocative and ironic language demanding rights for sex workers. These materials are available on the organisations' websites, and are circulated on the internet to a

wide range of actors, including the general public via social media.

Finally, all members of the network share a need to overcome ideological problems with local governments that do not favour sex workers' rights. While financing diverse pro-rights programmes remains a great challenge for all NGOs in the field, the network takes advantage of what each member brings to the table in terms of solution-finding and powerful advocacy work.

# TIME FOR ACTION



Since 2006, the network continues to be the only sex worker activist forum in Spain. By unifying and strengthening communication between members, the network was able to react on different fronts. This is because most organisations are grassroots and community-based. The network itself serves to support them in their individual actions, and in their local contexts.



The consensus-building of this platform is highly relevant to the homogeneity of local actions, with the same ideology and associated decisions behind them. It can be argued that although the network itself has few common actions, the capacity of members to agree on certain issues promotes a common national strategy on sex work.

One example of a common action developed by the network was the ability to arrange a meeting with the Defensor del Pueblo – the Ombudsman – to demand action be taken against the discriminatory by-laws that persecute outdoor sex workers. This commissioner would be able to put pressure on the relevant municipalities.

As a network and in terms of advocacy, press releases were disseminated after every national seminar, denouncing the national and local governments for the actions they have taken against sex work, and the inefficiency of the National Plan Against Human Trafficking. Finally, the network is highly concerned with the implementation of said Plan, as can be read in the position paper below.

## Successful cooperation

Hetaira's recent position paper regarding the National Plan Against Human Trafficking reflected upon the networks' position and capacity to counteract the current situation in Spain.

Integral Plan against Trafficking of Human Beings for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation

We are delighted that the Government has at last worked out a plan against the trafficking of human beings. Nevertheless, we are worried that, given the grave violation of human rights that is trafficking, the resulting plan is focused on 'purposes of sexual exploitation', leaving behind other forms of human trafficking (labour exploitation in other economic activities. forced marriage or servitude). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the European Union, the trafficking of human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation is not the only existing kind of exploitation, nor even the main one (20-32% of cases).

This seems accurate to us, and we agree with the distinction that the introduction makes between human trafficking and the trafficking of illegal immigrants. Nevertheless, in the package of measures proposed by the Government, this distinction is obscured, since both phenomena are, in many cases, treated identically.

We are particularly concerned by the fact that the measures proposed by the plan for protection and care of the victims are determined by reporting and collaboration in the pursuit of criminal networks. Trafficking is such a grave crime that protecting the victims should be the focus of governmental actions. These must be considered subjects of protection, rights and repair, independently of their collaboration with police and the judicial system. On the contrary, in the plan presented by the Government, victims are considered fundamentally as witnesses in judicial processes, if not delinquents should they refuse to cooperate. In this sense, not only police measures but also social measures are lacking, for early detection and the

protection of victims. Expulsions and deportations of victims to their countries of origin urgently need to stop.

We believe that the Government is wrong when it claims that "trafficking cannot be dissociated from prostitution". For us, it is essential that 'voluntary' prostitution is interpreted as an economic activity that should have labour rights, and forced prostitution is a crime. However, some measures are aimed at fighting prostitution (control of contact ads in the media, campaigning to reduce demand), not the trafficking of human beings.

Proposed measures are pending further development whose efficiency will have to be evaluated at the time, but some of them are clearly insufficient. For instance, the 30-day period given to victims to consider if they want to testify is too short, as explained by NGOs working with victims suffering from trauma, which point out that at least 90 days are necessary.

We are particularly worried that the plan does not explicitly mention the possibility for victims to obtain a work permit, which is indispensable for their recovery and social integration, and the residence permit is only mentioned for those who have previously testified.

Finally, we welcome the Government's commitment to undertake studies and research in order to shed light on human trafficking and its consequences, making intervention possible in the recovery of victims and initiation of adequate and pertinent social resources.

# EVENTS CARRIED OUT DURING INDOORS

### **NATIONAL SEMINAR**

On 7 May 2011 the annual national seminar took place in Madrid at the Colectivo Hetaira office. Attending were members of the national network and two new sex worker-led organisations, AMTTTSE and CTSX.

### Aims

The national seminar itself is the main collective action promoted by the Spanish network of organisations that work with and for sex workers. The whole structure of the event is focused and based on Spain's main problems related to sex work. The aim was to address and better understand what these problems were and respond to them in a collective and adequate manner.

In 2011, the national seminar aimed specifically to develop a national strategy to respond to stricter and more confining by-laws developed by local municipalities which push outdoor sex workers out of urban centres and indoors. The idea was mainly to advocate for adequate working conditions for outdoor-based sex workers in Spanish cities. With this in mind. discussions were held to identify effective ways to stop fines and institutional oppression. Organisations and sex workers could also define and agree on which specific workers' rights needed to be protected, respected and fulfilled.



Throughout the event, members of the Plataforma exchanged knowledge on the situation of indoor sex work in other parts of Spain (which differs province by province), discussed strategies used for outreach and project implementation and their results, addressed the lack of leaders and/or peer educators, and had a lot to say about working conditions. Specifically regarding indoor workers, the focus was on the obligatory health checks enforced by club owners, control over time schedules. what types of sexual services were offered, rent price, percentage taken by owners, imposed conditions, and violence within the workplace.

At a glance, this seminar was an opportunity to develop common strategies; mitigate the negative impacts of repressive policies, measures and legislation on sex workers' lives; to prepare recommendations; and to train and support peers and sex worker community leaders to take action.

As a result, the network expects that the sharing of knowledge and expertise – at this seminar and at future ones – can put a stop to the repressive actions against sex workers across Spain, improving access to rights, information, safety, and better working conditions.

#### Contents

The seminar took place over one full work day in Madrid, and its discussions were driven according to specific topics of common concern.

# Defining terms related to human trafficking and prostitution

The seminar began with a discussion on terms used by the press, the government and society in general concerning human trafficking and sex work. The network has noted a constant confusion of the smuggling of undocumented migrants with human trafficking and sex slavery. There is also the indiscriminate intermittent use of (voluntary) sex work and sex slavery/sexual exploitation. The idea that sex workers may be exploited in the workplace because of bad working conditions is never covered in the press. The idea of consensual prostitution has disappeared from these public debates.

As the discussion progressed it became clear that there was no unanimous agreement between members on the exact meanings of these words and terms. It was therefore decided that Hetaira would organise a workshop on sex work terminology. It is noteworthy that without the efforts of this seminar, members of the network would still differ in their use of those terms, which could badly impact the progress of the networks' actions. To have common terminology and interpretations of some key terms is fundamental for the development of any social movement.

The reason for this discussion was to find strategies to end this confusion and put the notion of voluntary prostitution back in the public mind. It was also concluded that a dossier should be made for the press so that they know how to define sex work.

An interesting point that came out of this talk was that in the National Plan Against Human Trafficking and the Penal Code, a sex worker's consent to work for a third party is considered irrelevant because the sex worker is in a vulnerable position and therefore has no choice. How-

ever, consent is defined under the notion of Contract Law, which states that two adults who are of age and are not incapacitated, nor under duress, can consent to offer and accept an agreement (the contract). Denying sex workers the right to consent (without threat, intimidation or violence) is to consider them either as minors or facile.

# The increasing national tendency towards eradicating street prostitution

In regions across Spain, local municipalities are adopting stricter and more confining bylaws aimed at pushing outdoor sex workers out of urban centres. The NGOs in Barcelona have been dealing with these by-laws for five years. According to their experience, since fines are administrative resolutions, it is the issuing administration (i.e. the municipality) that has the power to revoke or revise the sanction. If a fine is challenged by an NGO but upheld by the municipality, the next step is court.

The experience of Catalonia (where challenges to fines are presented to the Catalonian Data Protection Agency, therefore any effects would remain local) is of course a good example for other NGOs across Spain.

The Spanish Constitution guarantees, at least in theory, the right to privacy. This right was further developed in the Organic Law on Data Protection, passed by the Spanish Parliament and thus in force all over Spain: this means that the unconstitutionality of such sanctions ought to be investigated should appeals be dismissed.

In Malaga, sex workers from AMTTTSE demanded from the municipality a 'tolerance zone' in which they could work safely. All the institutions they approached denied having the jurisdiction to grant that space.

The conclusion reached was that members of the network would refer the case to their local People's Advocate and issue a press release regarding the violation of and damage to sex workers' rights due to the criminalisation of their work.

#### Indoor sex work

As all of the network members function from a different angle

(social, health, etc.) the responses and information shared are varied. Organisations that work with male and transsexual sex workers appear to see higher prices for services and more flexible working conditions.

It seems that every venue decides on its own rules. regulations and standards. Some places impose regular health checks while others don't, and clubs may take up to 80% of the sex workers' earnings, though the usual percentage tends to be 50-60%. Sex workers normally feel they can decide for themselves what sort of services they are prepared to offer, except in venues where they are not in charge of the advertising. In this case they can find themselves confronted with a client demanding a service they do not want to provide, in an environment in which the pressure for customer satisfaction is high.

As far as violence goes, the response is varied: few sex workers admit to experiencing violence. Outreach teams do not see it first-hand and sex workers may only talk about it when it concerns another person, another

venue and another time. Violence from clients does happen, but is rare. Owners mostly take the sex workers' side and throw the client out. On the other hand, sex workers do not feel that they can turn to the police, because they won't be listened to or taken seriously.

### **Training of** peer educators

Although there are two network member groups that were formed exclusively by and for sex workers, it is still difficult to get sex workers involved longterm for the continued fight for workers' human rights. It was agreed at the seminar that one of the priorities later on is to support, train and mentor sex workers in their activism, to increase the number of individual sex workers involved in advocacy work and attain a stronger sex worker leadership.

### Results and improvements

The outputs of the national seminar were a press release to be distributed about the meeting; a press dossier to be made and distributed to the Spanish

press to draw journalists' attention to the ill-used terms in their articles: a letter requesting a meeting with the local People's Advocate in order to address the persecution of outdoor sex workers in many regions of Spain; and a workshop in 2012 for network members concerning the misused terms in the press about prostitution.

The network wanted to update information concerning prostitution laws in different regions and to analyse the legal responses of other organisations to by-laws against sex workers. The exchange of information between the Genera and Ambit Dona and the rest of the group was invaluable. They explained the process of how they fought against fines, and the obstacles they encountered. ATTTSE's effort to obtain a tolerance zone was a positive one for the sex workers, but also showed that the municipality is only interested in pushing outdoor sex work out of sight and is not, at least presently, open to negotiation. Furthermore, a united move to write to all of the People's Advocates was a good conclusion, keeping the plight of outdoor sex workers on the agenda.

In the discussion on how to identify and train leaders and peer educators, the outcome focused more on problems encountered by the members in getting sex workers involved in advocacy. However there was a very strong conclusion that only sex workers who feel proud of their work could be leaders This shows that more incentives should be made to fight the stigma attached to sex work and to provide sex workers with support to stand up for their rights.

Another breakthrough was the definition of consent in the civic code, of which members were unaware. This is a good political tool to use in the fight for sex workers' rights.

It was also learned that many members were not clear on the differences between different terms used in the press concerning sex work. The future workshop will be an effective way to unite the network and build its capacity.







### Impacts

One of the most important aspects of the network is the support that is generated and felt by each organisation. Many of the members are small grassroots associations that not only need to learn from each other and exchange knowledge, but also need to feel that they are not alone in their defence/support of sex workers' rights.

Several agreements were reached and these unified and strengthened the network. This seminar succeeded in gathering together, for the first time, forces from two organisations exclusively led by sex workers (AMTTSE and CTSX). The impact of this is not in terms of political action, but in terms of legitimacy of the network as one working with and for sex workers. In this way, sex workers were able to represent themselves directly in the discussions and improve the knowledge of the group regarding the current situation.

### SOCIAL MOBILISATION



Hetaira's approach of social mobilisation and capacity building is strongly influenced by its characteristics (small size, limited financial and human resources. local scope), and the social context in which it operates (strongly abolitionist, with great influence on legislators and policy-makers, on one hand, and the media and Spanish society, on the other), giving Hetaira an even stronger ideological twist, since the organisation's position is in the minority and its work goes far beyond mere social assistance.

The internet has significantly broadened Hetaira's geographic scope, making it possible to reach similar organisations all over the world; thus, it can overcome the invisibility imposed by the mass media, allowing for an enriching exchange of information with other agents that until recently could not express their opinions (sex workers, small unions, neighbourhood associations).

The campaigns, actions and strategies are shared on Hetaira's website and social media tools in a creative and artistic manner

Being a grassroots project makes it a reliable interlocutor for both sex workers and small communities, such as neighbourhoods, small business owners or the municipal police. These are all stakeholders in the environment in which sex work takes place in most cities of Spain.

Taking all these factors into account, Hetaira's key stakeholders can be divided into the following categories, which require different strategies to achieve its goals.

**Policy-makers** (public administrations, international organisations such as UN agencies, the Spanish judicial system, the police) are large and not easy to reach; nevertheless, Hetaira has participated since 1999 in several commissions



and conferences convened by authorities such as Congress, the Senate and the Judiciary General Council to debate different issues related to prostitution.

On another level, Hetaira has been campaigning through its website and social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), in order to effect policy change. It has an online campaign asking Mrs. Leire Pajín, the Spanish Minister of Health and Equality, to respond to sex workers' demands regarding safety and health.

Service providers (health services, other NGOs, legal advisors) are key potential partners, since they bridge the gap between sex workers and public policy-makers. Hetaira regularly meets representatives of other networks, to inform them of the current situation of prostitution in Madrid. This is also a way to build strong partnerships with those who cover essential multidisciplinary aspects like advocacy, health and human rights protection.

In a more informal way and in small geographical areas, it is important to keep in contact with other relevant actors who have contact with sex workers, such as the local police, community-based organisations, neighbourhood associations, small business owners, etc. In such contexts, Hetaira

has a solid enough reputation to act as a mediator between sex workers and the local community, in order to solve conflicts of interest. This has already taken place in Montera street and the Villaverde district, where a conflict between sex workers and local residents has allowed Hetaira to go further in its defence of sex workers' rights. A press conference and demonstration in Madrid have recently put Madrid's sex workers in the spotlight, gaining attention from the Spanish media. Accordingly, a meeting with the Mayor of Madrid, Mr. Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, has been requested to highlight the sex workers' request for the negotiation of an appropriate space in which to work with dignity, 'without disturbing or being disturbed'.

Here **media**'s importance is to be highlighted, since they transmit information between policy-makers and the general population. They provide Hetaira with great opportunities to spread its pro-rights position, although it is usually ignored.

Hetaira also has strong links with the LGBT movement, since participation in its activities (for instance, a sex worker presence at Madrid's Gay Pride), attracts strong media attention.

Nonetheless, Hetaira is extremely careful when deciding whether or not to appear on certain television programmes. It prefers to lose media coverage if it has suspicions about the production methods, especially concerning sex workers' privacy. Hetaira will not sell out nor destroy its relationship with the sex workers, which, like all strong relationships, is built on trust.

But there is nothing like directly reaching **public opinion**, although this is difficult within the current abolitionist climate. Nonetheless, Hetaira's website and Facebook profile are proving to be powerful tools.



It's through Facebook, however, that Hetaira conducts most of its online campaigning. There it can deliver up-to-date messages to its followers (more than 4,700), engage with the public, and provide an interactive space for sex workers, other collectives and activists. It is further used as a means of monitoring opinion on its campaigns and a tool to develop them. It is an excellent way to show Hetaira's multifaceted involvement in sex worker support.

Hetaira has strong links with the world of **art and culture**. Artistic works are excellent vehicles through which to express pro-rights ideas. For instance, in recent months Hetaira has been promoting Hetairas, a book containing photos of sex workers by Spanish artist Alexis W, and Puta Poesía, a compilation of poems about prostitution.

Hetaira always tries to maintain a positive, optimistic perspective in its declarations. A sense of humour is far more persuasive and captivating than the usual victim rhetoric. This is entirely consistent with its philosophy, which is not views sex workers as possessing agency. In fact, no

matter how the advocacy work is carried out, Hetaira always focuses on bringing out the sex workers' role in claiming their rights, giving them an empowering visibility. Promoting sex workers who accept themselves as such and talk about it publicly puts them back in the leading role, one they should have had from the beginning. This idea, though, is difficult to develop since the stigma continues to weigh heavily. That's why Hetaira focuses on strengthening their self-esteem by providing them with the necessary tools and training to express and defend their rights by themselves.

An example of this attitude could be the Lumifashion show (Madrid, 2008). Here sex workers promoted their own trendiness as a tongue-in-cheek response to municipal authorities and local entrepreneurs who wanted to transform the red light district into a 'trendy' shopping area. Another good example is the catchphrase directed at activists calling Spanish politicians 'sons of whores' (hijos de puta) during the demonstrations in May 2011: 'We whores insist – politicians are no sons of ours!'

Within a more academic environment, Hetaira has given lectures and organised conferences (La prostitución a debate – por los derechos de las prostitutas, Madrid, 2004, with a compilation book edited in 2007; ... Y ahora, las trabajadoras del sexo, Madrid, 2010), offering a more theoretical and specialised viewpoint on sex work, aimed at universities and academics.

Up until now, the key stakeholder who remains widely unknown is the **client**. The campaign 'I am a sex professional', aimed at clients, involved sex workers handing out brochures that contained some basic health, safety and rules on mutual respect to ensure the fair transaction of sexual services.



# Recommendations

### **Capacity building**

- Governments and NGOs working with and for sex workers should empower sex work projects to better respond to sex workers' needs.
- Governments should acknowledge the expertise of NGOs and CBOs by incorporating them in the policy-making process.
- Comprehensive service provision should involve law enforcement authorities and the public and private sectors.
- Services should be able to reach diverse sex work venues and communities, especially those more isolated, hidden and distanced from support services.
- Services should work with multidisciplinary outreach teams: they increase the effectiveness of the services provided.
- Services should establish partnerships with other services acting in different areas, in order to develop a comprehensive approach to sex workers' needs and realities.
- Measures undertaken by different stakeholders should always be adapted to the living and working realities of sex workers, and should include respect for the full protection of sex workers' human rights.

- Sufficient financial resources for sex worker-led organisations should be provided in order to enable them to assist sex workers in their fight for their rights, for advocacy and lobbying activities.
- Nowadays, electronic means permit broader communication. Therefore, these should be used more often to inform, facilitate cooperation, and empower sex workers. Additionally, new information and communication technologies are effective tools for building networks and cross-border alliances.
- Because capacity building can be a time-consuming process and the results are not always immediate, organisations working with a multicultural team and targeting a multicultural group should be flexible and tolerant regarding their own structure and working plan.
- Regarding the principles of participatory feminism, capacity building should be built upon the good practices recommended by those who fought for sex workers' rights from the beginning, pursuing the idea of solidarity within the women's movement instead of dividing it.

### **Awareness raising**

- Awareness raising should have the ultimate objective of empowering sex workers, which should be reached through peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding between sex workers and the wider society.
- Awareness should be raised among politicians to ensure services that protect sex workers' human rights, which include their access to non-discriminatory social and health services.
- Awareness raising within sex work requires a regular updating of information regarding the legal and social situation of a given context, as well as the evolution of the indoor and outdoor sectors and their working conditions. Organisations carrying out outreach work should adapt their intervention strategies to these changes in order to anticipate possible problems.
- Law enforcement activities have significant impact on sex workers' working conditions, increasing their vulnerability. Rights-based evidence and information should therefore be made public to clarify to the general public the consequences of punitive and repressive policies.

- Regarding public opinion and the media, organisations working with and for sex workers should take the role of deconstructing stereotypes and myths related to issues such as the distinction between sex work and trafficking, by insisting on and promoting the use of correct terminology by the media.
- Organisations should develop initiatives to raise awareness among all stakeholders involved in the sex industry, including the clients of sex workers.
- Organisations and politicians should consider the development of a policy framework that focuses on the safety and well-being of sex workers, ensuring equal treatment and protection under the justice system, regardless of their status.
- Respect for individual choices and an absence of moral judgement should be fundamental requirements for every person working in the field of sex work.

# Sex worker leadership | peer education

■ Sex workers and sex work projects should be included as experts in all phases of the design, development, implementation and evaluation of any policy that affects sex workers and their well-being.

- To build the capacity of service providers and reduce the vulnerability of sex workers, organisations should ensure the participation of sex workers on all discussion levels.
- Peer educators should be trained and integrated into every outreach team in a formal and professionalised manner, permitting them to be employed on a regular contractual basis and paid fairly.
- Sex workers should be allowed to speak for themselves, because nobody knows better than they do about their own reality and needs. Sex workers should be given a voice to facilitate their visibility and demands.
- Existing networks dealing with sex work issues should be further developed and have their structures better adapted to promote, support and integrate sex workers.

## Advocacy and cooperation

- Local, national and regional networks should be strengthened through cooperation between different human resources and expertise, between civil society representatives and sex workers.
- Networks of different institutions and organisations, together with sex workers, should continuously monitor policies on sex work, their implementation and

- outcomes, to support sex workers' rights and combat discrimination and stigmatisation.
- Whenever possible, other stakeholders bar and apartment managers and receptionists, clients and other key actors should be involved in actions and projects related to sex work.
- Local and national networks of sex work projects should facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practice to encourage international exchange.
- Advocacy campaigns should link in with long-term activities. Organisations should identify key informants before launching advocacy campaigns, and raise awareness among key agents dealing with issues connected to sex work and labour, migration, health and human rights.
- Networks and allies should be responsible for the information they provide as well as bearing responsibility for the dissemination of any misleading information.



