



This project is funded by
The European Union

CONECTA

Strengthening of HIV/STI interventions in sex work in Ukraine and the Russian Federation

www.conectaproject.eu

The CONECTA partners

TAMPEP International Foundation

www.tampep.eu | Netherlands

Humanitarian Action

www.haf-spb.org | Russia

Salus Charitable Foundation

www.salus.org.ua | Ukraine

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CONECTA: goals and achievements

This section highlights Conecta project's main achievements in the approximately 2-years programme that are about to end.

The project is implemented by three organizations working for a European project financed by the European Union. *TAMPEP International Foundation* is the regional coordinator of this project. *SALUS Charitable Foundation* (in Ukraine) and *Humanitarian Action* (in Russia) are both national coordinators and the implementing organizations. Irina Maslova (from Silver Rose, Russia) and Natalia Isaieva (from Legalife, Ukraine) are both representatives of the national sex worker-led organizations and were fundamental in participating in several of our activities and by peer reviewing our publications.

Conecta's partners are very grateful for their cooperation.

The project was born from the knowledge that Russia and Ukraine account together for almost 90% of all people living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

In this context, female, male, and transgender sex workers are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection. Criminalization of sex work, abusive law-enforcement practices, violence, stigma, discrimination, and human right violations against sex workers increase severally their vulnerability to HIV/STIs and limits sex workers' ability to access vital health and support services, including medical and social care and harm reduction.

Conecta seeks to strengthen HIV/STI interventions in sex work in Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Hence, its main aim is to reduce vulnerability of sex workers to HIV/STI transmission, while developing an example of comprehensive and right-based service approach to HIV and sex workers, based on the experience and knowledge of the sex worker projects and organisations in the region.

By targeting non-state actors, Conecta believes it is fundamental to connect different stakeholders in the two countries and reformulate together better strategies for future integrated and targeted interventions in the context of sex work.

Important to highlight is that all our actions happened parallel in Ukraine and in the Russian Federation. We have developed a common working methodology throughout the project and, as a result, we were able to create a transnational HIV intervention with a broad number of stakeholders involved.

As we move to the final moments of Conecta project, we would like to highlight some of our achievements and how you can benefit from the knowledge and efforts of this project.

In order to increase the knowledge on sex work in the region, which was only possible through cooperation of several NGOs that carry out programmes for sex workers and the community leaders, we developed:

- Two **national mapping reports on sex work** (one for Ukraine, one for Russia)
- One **regional trend report on sex work**

By means of these three reports, public and private organisations can assess the main situation of sex work and sex workers in both countries, as well as compare the different and similar trends between them.

In order to create a supportive network structure for NGOs that work in cooperation, we developed:

- Two **national capacity building training meetings** – one in Lviv, another in Saint Petersburg, in 2012;
- The **conference Addressing HIV in the Context of Sex Work** – which includes delegations from both countries and a wide list of different stakeholders; and
- Two **newsletters** as a result of our events

These events were and are fundamental pillars of Conecta, as we believe that effective HIV responses demand cooperation and networking.

In order to achieve a comprehensive model and tools for an interdisciplinary prevention and care projects based on the principle of outreach work, health and social promotion, we developed:

- Multi-faceted programmes in Lviv and St Petersburg;
- Educational materials and resources;
- Peer education trainings and reports; and
- a Good Practices Manual

The model developed by Conecta project, including its tools, can be used by other organisations in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, as they are based on internationally recognised standards of efficient HIV response in the context of sex work and provide a framework for efficacy in national HIV responses.

Human rights are also a fundamental issue of this project and conference. Our idea was to bring in legal knowledge and inspirations on how to advocate for sex workers' human rights, as a means of reducing their structural vulnerability to HIV. For that, we developed:

- Two **briefing papers** that analyse the legislation and situation of sex workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation;
- Two **policy papers** which are focused on the need of reviewing laws and policies regarding sex work in Ukraine and the Russian Federation;
- A **booklet called 'How Violence Affects Sex Workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation'** which

assesses and analyses the negative impact of violence on sex workers, increasing their risk to HIV, and posing severe human rights constraints; and

■ **Services that address violence against sex workers**, as well as **human rights campaigns**

All our final publications are **evidence-based** and focused in the reality of sex workers. We, as Conecta team, **oppose criminalization of sex work and condemn violence against sex workers**. Our aim during this two-year programme was to think further on how we can actively engage in a positive change on sex work and reduce their vulnerability to HIV/STIs. By addressing structural barriers to sex workers accessing health and legal services, Conecta has tackled a fundamental component of any HIV response: human rights.

As a human rights-based project that recognizes sex workers' **self-determination** and **autonomy**, we are glad to have worked in cooperation with and for sex workers in all levels of our project.

The conference '*HIV in the Context of Sex Work*' was the conclusion of our programme and a process of consultation that took place one month ago with sex workers from Ukraine and UNFPA representatives. Dialogue between state and non-state actors was promoted as key to opening new ways in dealing with HIV interventions in the context of sex work.

All Conecta's publications are available through the website:
www.conectaproject.eu

There you can find resources and useful information for your projects and future strategies.

REPORTS

National Mappings on Sex Work

The project aimed at assessing the current situation in the environment of sex work, trends in sex work and programs to reduce the vulnerability of sex workers to HIV, implemented by state organizations and NGOs in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The study was of an applied nature, due to the pressing needs to ensure greater effectiveness of the prevention efforts among sex workers in the Russian

Federation. Program specialists today are in need of information, documentation and analysis of the situation, understanding the structural and behavioural aspects, correct interpretation of the processes in sex work, knowledge of the hierarchy of needs and vulnerabilities of sex workers, as well as a related set of social relations and working conditions.

Thus, the national mapping reports – one for Ukraine and the other for Russia – created an expert knowledge on the basis of the understanding of current trends in sex work, and to make recommendations for more effective social and advocacy work to protect the rights and health of sex workers.

The mapping on sex work was based on the following questions:

- What is the scope, structure and gender composition of the sex industry in the country?
- What are the possibilities for street-based and indoor sex workers to control the working conditions? Is there independence and autonomy possible for decision-making in critical situations?
- Who are the main subjects of relationships that involve sex workers and what are the specifics of their behaviour? (This includes clients, police, partners, etc.)
- What is the hierarchy of occupational hazards that threaten the health of sex workers?
- What are the consequences of unsafe work environment and the risk of HIV and violence for sex workers?

To address all the objectives of these mappings, we applied a combination of qualitative data collection methods: questionnaires, review of documents, statistics and interviews with sex workers and experts from different regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The national mappings included the following steps

- Development of methodology
- Identification of respondents
- Collection of information
- Processing of the results and analysis
- Development of the report and recommendations on the basis of the information obtained
- Discussion of the results with experts in the field of sex work

Finally, after concluding the two national mapping reports TAMPEP elaborated a **regional trend report**, which seeks to highlight the similarities, differences, and trends in sex work across Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The report is being finalized and will be published in Conecta's website.

For more information, please find the report through the link:
www.conectaproject.eu

MANUAL

Manual of Good Practices on Sex Work Projects in Ukraine and the Russian Federation

The **Manual of Good Practices** was drawn by Conecta project in order to present the best available services for sex workers across the two countries.

This manual touches upon some initiatives carried out in the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the past few years – and encourages and inspires anyone working with or for sex workers to develop targeted and creative programmes to address sex workers' needs.

It is primarily intended for the development of those who work in the field of sex work services, particularly in Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Furthermore, it reinforces the need for well-developed coordinated response to the actual situation of sex workers. It provides practical points, ideas and successful models to consider when designing and implementing projects aimed at sex workers. This collection of good practices, created by CONECTA or related to ongoing experiences, is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

By revealing different experiences, perspectives, initiatives and strategies, this manual, as part of the CONECTA 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.

The **Good Practices Manual** has three main objectives:

1. To present examples of good

practice for health and social service providers offering care for sex workers, leading to adequate health and social promotion activities carried out with a non-prejudiced attitude, and operating from a human rights' perspective.

2. To present examples which systematises different experiences on HIV/STI prevention strategies, introducing and facilitating implementation of different targeted methods.

3. To increase and spread good practice actions targeting sex workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The manual explains what good practices on sex work projects are and exemplifies some selected initiatives in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The selected good practices come from a wider range of initiatives collected through a questionnaire, which was nationally distributed among organizations working with and for sex workers in both countries.

For more information, please find the report through the link: www.conectaproject.eu

POLICY PAPERS

Sex Work and Human Rights

Conecta project published two briefing papers and two policy papers along the two-year programme.

The purpose of these policy documents was:

- to inform stakeholders about the legal and policy environment and its impact on sex workers' vulnerability to HIV/STIs; and
- to call on governments to put human rights at the centre of the HIV response, particularly on matters that affect sex workers.

These papers examine the human rights impacts of laws and policies that affect sex workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, particularly those which increase their vulnerability to HIV/STIs and influence their right to health and life.

To tackle sex workers' vulnerability to HIV/STIs it is fundamental to consider the structural determinants that put them at risk of infection.

As stated by the *Global Commission on HIV and the Law*: "there are instances where legal and justice systems have played constructive roles in responding to HIV, by respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights".

Thus, HIV response is fundamentally about human rights. These policy resources can be used for advocacy goals and also for supporting sex workers' community mobilisation.

For more information, please find the report through the link: www.conectaproject.eu

BOOKLET

How Violence Affects Sex Workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation

Throughout the two-year programme Conecta project developed together with its national partners a booklet on violence called: *How Violence Affects Sex Workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation*. The purpose of this booklet is to provide a better understanding of how violence experienced by sex workers infringes their civil and human rights and increases risk to HIV/STI infection. It presents data collected during Conecta project in Ukraine and the Russian Federation revealing high levels of violence against sex workers in both countries. Violence is a key factor to sex workers' vulnerability to HIV/STI infection. Hence, several typologies of violence and their impacts on sex workers were examined.

The booklet underscores the need of development of programmatic strategies to address violence and support sex workers in reducing their vulnerability to violence and accessing justice and equal legal protection. The experiences of sex worker-led organizations Silver Rose (Russia) and Legalife (Ukraine) are particularly relevant for acknowledging the key role of sex worker communities in the struggle against violence and abuse. Hence, the booklet provides evidence on how to consider violence when designing and implementing projects aimed at sex workers, particularly by ensuring their right to legal support and access to judicial and extra-judicial mechanisms.

It is fundamental to implement violence reduction strategies within HIV prevention programmes focusing on sex workers. There is also a need of having a broader recognition of violence against sex workers as an abuse of their human rights, not only when it relates to HIV and STI prevention.

Finally, the booklet seeks to call on states to recognise human rights obligations, especially the highest attainable standard of health ('right to health') and right to life. It is the duty of the states to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights, which includes sex workers' protection from violence and health-related violations.

For more information, please find the report through the link: www.conectaproject.eu

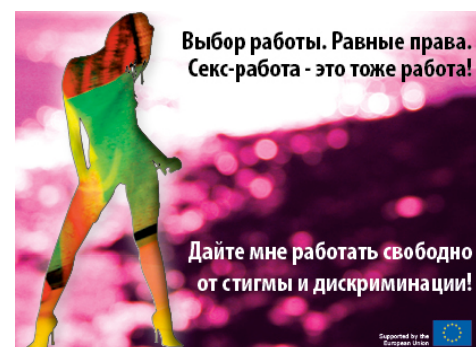
CAMPAIGN 2013

17 December

International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers

17 December | Initiatives

RUSSIA



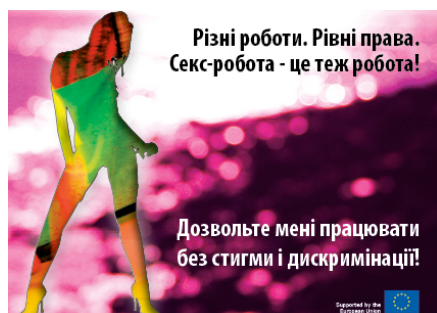
December 17 was celebrated in the Russian Federation by the sex worker-led organization Silver Rose, in Moscow. The event emphasized how violence affects sex workers in the country, by means of a press conference and an art exhibition. Conecta project, as a supporter of Silver Rose and sex workers' rights, developed for the event postcards with an advocacy message, which was

printed (more than 200 copies) and distributed for those who were present. On top of that, Conecta also developed a statement document to highlight the importance of tackling violence against sex workers as a way of increasing sex workers' access to human rights, particularly the right to health and life¹. The event resulted in a broad advocacy action, including several national and international stakeholders. It was an opportunity for Silver Rose and Humanitarian Action to share the results of Conecta's two-year programme, including the booklet on violence and the policy paper developed along the 2012-2013.

The following links highlight the main achievements of the 17 December campaign:

<http://rylkov-fond.org/blog/novosti/sexwork/>
<http://www.radioazadlyg.org/content/article/25204284.html>

UKRAINE



17 December campaign in Ukraine was organized by the sex worker-led organization Legalife, with support of SALUS Charitable Foundation and Conecta project. Due to the very tense political situation in the country, and vulnerability of sex workers to violence, Legalife conducted a silent action for those sex workers have been killed throughout the years. This decision was taken to ensure the security of the sex workers from arbitrariness of the police.

¹ See statement document in English through Conecta's website:

<http://www.conectaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/17-December-2013-CONECTA-campaign-statement-ENG-3.pdf>

(document also available in Russian: http://www.conectaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/17-December-2013-CONECTA-campaign-2013_RUS.pdf)

Legalife used the documents provided by Conecta, including postcards and a statement document² which was posted in Legalife's website and Facebook page. The organisation's main strategy is to expand the documentation of human rights violations of sex workers in Kirovograd, Mariupol, Rivne, and Cherkasy.

CONECTA CONFERENCE

HIV in the Context of Sex Work

The conference *Addressing HIV in the Context of Sex Work* was organised by the three partners of Conecta project, following preparations by, and in close consultation between, UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, including the Russian Federation and Ukraine Country Offices, Sex Workers Rights Advocacy Network (hereinafter 'SWAN'), and the Lviv AIDS Centre.

It was funded by the European Union, with additional support of UNFPA, and closed a two-year program in the region. In the aftermath of a consultation with community representatives in Ukraine (Legalife) and the Russian Federation (Silver Rose), the Conference permitted a meaningful participation of sex worker-led organisations in the design and implementation of the event, including specific panels by sex workers.

The **objectives** of the conference were to:

- Promote, raise awareness, and cooperate with different stakeholders in Ukraine and the Russian Federation and highlight the structural determinants that put sex workers, their clients and other sexual partners at greater risk of HIV infection;
- Strengthen rights-based approaches to HIV and sex work, by sharing good practices and developing evidence-based recommendations collected throughout the two-year program with state and non-state actors from both countries; and
- Identify the next steps and future actions to further progress responses to HIV infection in the context of sex

² See statement document in Ukrainian through Conecta's website: http://www.conectaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CONECTA-campaign-2013_UA-3.pdf

work within Russian Federation and Ukraine.

This Conference was the first of its kind after several initiatives to strengthen sex work projects, separately, in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, particularly because it adds a multi-stakeholder approach to HIV/STIs interventions in the context of sex work. Thus, through a participatory model, public and private organisations could articulate, throughout several of the conference's panels, common strategies and cooperation to support sex workers in overcoming the barriers in accessing health and rights services, and advocate among national policy-makers for sex workers to be considered a vulnerable group in need of rights-based services. The Conference further tackled legal and policy barriers to the affirmation of sex workers' right to health and life.

Hence, it consolidated a key moment of gathering of the best expertise active in the field of HIV/STI and sex work in the two countries, from different sectors and perspectives. It created an integrated platform for policy dialogue between the different stakeholders involved, such as governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, and most importantly, representatives of the sex worker communities, voiced by Silver Rose and Legalife members.

Therefore, the intention was to create an opportunity for networking based on a participatory model. The outcomes envisaged by this event reflect the knowledge, capacity, and experience of those who are active in the field of HIV/STIs and sex work.

As in the case of Conecta's capacity building meetings (see Newsletter 1), held in Lviv (Ukraine) and Saint Petersburg (Russia), in 2012, the aim of the Kyiv conference was to bring together, and share information among, expert projects that provide services to sex workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The conference also emphasised the need of a multi-stakeholder approach and that is the reason why, for this event, members of governmental institutions, international organisations, and community representatives were selected.

Particular attention was given to synergy with regional networks and projects, SWAN, UNFPA, and UNDP, to name a few.

Conecta carefully selected, for the Conference, those projects which collaborated with the program in its several activities, particularly expert organisations active for many years in the field of HIV/STIs prevention, treatment, and care among sex workers. Sex worker-led organisations selected their community representatives, and international organisations facilitated the connection with national and local governmental representatives.

Invitation letters were sent out, following endorsement of the organisers of the event. The capacity of each organisation was duly reviewed, for the goal of eligibility to the conference by the members of Conecta's Steering Committee. National distribution of the participants was sought throughout the selection process.

Few weeks before the Conference, a pre-meeting was also organised with and by sex worker communities in Ukraine, voiced by Legalife and SWAN, in dialogue with the UN representatives, particularly from UNFPA Ukraine. The goal of this pre-meeting was to systematise sex workers' demands and positions, as a form of consultation.

Finally, a press release was prepared in three languages – English, Ukrainian,

and Russian – and sent to the Ukrainian media and other stakeholders, process of which was duly assisted by the *International Renaissance Foundation's* office in Kiev. During the event, experts and community representatives were interviewed by the media.

Finally, a **call for action** was endorsed by more than 82 participants from different regions of Ukraine and Russia, including members of international organisations. The executive report is composed both of the contents and outcomes of this policy-relevant event and can be found (in English) through the link: www.conectaproject.eu.

CONTINUITY

Conecta Project as part of a EU programme is closing its activities by the beginning of 2014, yet its contributions in terms of capacity building, resources and tools should remain and, hopefully, be used by organisations working with and for sex workers in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

We have learned from our brief experience that it is fundamental

building partnerships for increasing sex workers' access to services and overcoming the barriers that impede their access to rights and services and provoke vulnerability.

We would like to thank all organisations in Ukraine and in the Russian Federation who made possible this project, by contributing actively to our activities' implementation and also by supporting us in our advocacy mission. We invite all of you to use Conecta's website as a permanent platform for policy discussion and expert consultation.

Many thanks!

The Conecta team

