

## DECLARATION

# Europe has forgotten the Human Rights of Migrant Sex Workers

## NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION

Every day we see how the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impact those already vulnerable and those on the fringes of society. Migrant Sex Workers across Europe have witnessed increasing levels of poverty and exclusion, not only socially but also from vital services and support accessible to other groups in society.

Stigma against them, and its tangible threat to their well-being and basic Human Rights, has risen in what has become a more hostile and exclusionary environment since COVID-19. Many of the challenges facing migrant Sex Workers are not new, but the situation is now desperate.

TAMPEP is a network of over 30 peer-led organisations across Europe that has been dedicated to promoting the Human Rights and health of migrant Sex Workers since 1993.

Never has this been more necessary with organisations and Sex Workers across the continent reporting on the degradation of the situation as a result of COVID-19 and the exclusion of migrant Workers from national and European support that has been made available to other groups in society.

This has occurred in tandem with the continued attempts to criminalise the Sex Work industry and hostile migration policies, resulting in multiple forms of discrimination and punitive systems discouraging support, encouraging restricted access to services, and increased levels of vulnerability.

Rather than supporting migrant Workers, COVID-19 measures have been used to further the goal of combatting Sex Work and controlling Migration. Tangible examples include law enforcement using the changing legal situation to target Sex Workers, denial of access to justice, and increases in violence and harassment.

In assessing the impact of the crisis on migrant Workers, several vital issues have been highlighted in community reports on migrant Sex Workers and through first-hand testimony from Sex Workers across Europe:

### **Exclusion from governmental support**

Migrants, with and without documentation, have reported barriers in accessing government support resulting in migrant Workers struggling to maintain a basic standard of living in terms of housing and nourishment. Governments across Europe failed to provide adequate financial support to third sector organisations that work directly with migrant Sex Workers and other marginalised groups.

### **Increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 and augmentation of other health inequalities**

Migrant Workers currently face restricted access to healthcare, language barriers and more precarious working situations resulting in higher rates of unsafe practices such as unprotected sex. Sex Workers have been classed as a highly vulnerable non-shielding group due to the in-person nature of their work. Migrant Workers are particularly vulnerable as state support programs, even in countries where Sex Work is legal, often exclude migrants, despite the fact that over 70% of Sex Workers are migrants across Western Europe.

### **Precarious social situation and limited mobility**

Many migrant Sex Workers were already vulnerable to unstable housing conditions, debt and isolation and the ongoing crisis have seen the issues exacerbated considerably. In criminalising countries where Workers operate covertly, the risk of violence from clients and law enforcement has risen because of the crisis.

These issues are worsened by the limited mobility of migrants as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

### **Stigmatisation and psychological pressures**

Migrant Sex Workers are in a crisis resulting from stigma, discrimination, financial insecurity, and isolation. These factors have a severe impact on the mental well-being of migrant Workers. When accessing services or justice, stigma remains the main barrier for migrant Workers.

**In face of this situation, migrant Sex Workers demand their Human Rights be respected!**

The demonisation of migrant Workers and their exclusion from the democratic process have challenged their ability to advocate for their rights; however, there can be no more waiting. **Lives are at stake.**

TAMPEP, in cooperation with networks of Sex Worker organisations and allies across Europe, call for all actors to stand together and demand change.

**We ask upon all those who see a fair and just Europe, a Europe that rises to the challenges of COVID, to demand the rights of migrant Sex Workers be protected and their health promoted. No person should be denied these basic necessities, especially in times of crisis.**

## **OUR DEMANDS**

In light of this reality, we, the TAMPEP Network, call on individuals and organisations to support the following demands for change based on the values and legal responsibility stemming from the European Convention on Human Rights.

- 1.** Guarantee barrier-free access to healthcare services and vaccines for all, including migrant sex workers and other potentially criminalised communities in accordance with UNAIDS recommendations.
- 2.** Access to public services and funding without penalisation or risk of deportation

- 3.** Stop using pandemic regulations to unfairly arrest, detain, heavily fine and deport migrant sex workers

- 4.** Ensure no person is held in breach of visa conditions for overstaying due to reasons related to COVID-19 and release though held in detention under immigration powers to reduce risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and humanitarian catastrophe

- 5.** Enforce migration policies that are inclusive and respectful of the Human Rights of migrant Sex Workers while guaranteeing their legal protection

**Migrant communities, regardless of status, have the right to life, liberty, and security of person. They have the right to be free from discrimination and to have an adequate standard of living.**

**Yet migrant Sex Workers have been left out in the cold by national governments and European official.**

**They cannot wait any longer.**

**We call upon you to stand against injustice and to demand a Europe where we stand by a humane moral code that is inclusive of society's most vulnerable.**

**We call upon you to support our call to action.**

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We are releasing a petition to ask individuals and organisations to sign in in a show of solidarity with societies most vulnerable.

The petition will play a key role in the lobbying of European and national government officials to force real change, ensuring the safety and rights of migrant Sex Workers.

**The situation is critical, it is time to act!**

**Sign the petition here:**

<https://tampep.eu/campaign>

**Stay up to date with the TAMPEP campaign**

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