

“YOU ARE NOT ALONE, TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER”

You are holding a unique and exclusive issue of a community newsletter, the result of an international sex workers' rights advocacy training in Ohrid, Macedonia, 2009. 18 sex workers developed these posters, poems the articles in their own languages. Read it. Enjoy it. And remember that YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Funding and mobilizing sex workers for activism

A high number of sex workers are not informed about their human rights. Because of this, violence against sex workers often goes unpunished. The frequency of violent attacks, has resulted in sex workers organizing and taking action in order to inform the public, as well as sex workers, about human rights abuses and the importance of respecting human rights.

Some of the actions are:

- “publicity” of sex workers and sex work issues through flyers and media appearances, in order to raise awareness among the general population about sex workers and their human rights.
- Networking with the non-governmental sector to make issues surrounding sex worker's rights have a broader - global - reach.
- Sharing information between sex workers and asking for support in organizing actions.
- Making different public actions done by sex workers and concerning their rights through the internet (FB,GR,WEB).

Do not look at me with disgust
Do not say that I am imprudent
You are not far from problems
You know perfectly well the night life

You say to me: "Prostitute!"
I will look back at you with a smile.
My life, your life is not a joke!
Treat yourself with respect!

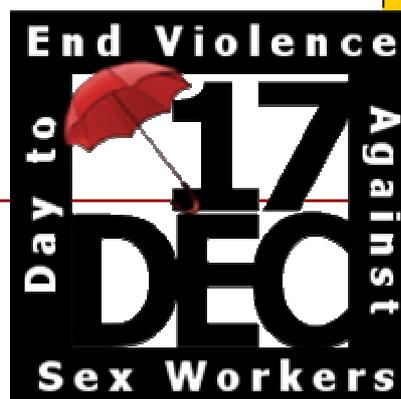
Our relatives are far away,
There are friends, work and family
When I hear all those insults
I think, "how did I deserve them?"

We want to be real women,
Real men, to become fathers and sisters.
Disrespect insults us,
I am not alone, there are many of us!

Let's not tolerate the humiliation any longer!
Let's not put up with violence
Let's create networks
And find support and force among friends

In ten years you will see
That everything is all right and calm:
You have a choice and time to make it
To stop inequality and to break the cycle of injustice.

A sex worker from Kazakhstan



Sex workers around the globe have declared 17 December as the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. The commemoration began from the [Sex Workers' Outreach Project's](#) in the USA as a memorial and vigil for the 48 victims of the Gary Ridgway, the "Green River Killer". This day is meant to call attention to hate crimes committed against sex workers all over the world.

"We demand that our governments recognise that violence against sex workers is a crime, whether it be perpetrated by our clients, our managers, our partners, local residents or members of the public authorities." (Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe)



**“ I AM WHAT I AM AND WILL BE
WHAT I AM, DESTINY BRINGS
WHAT IT BRINGS “**



On interacting with police

Do sex workers have rights?

Kyrgyzstan: there are no rights for sex workers

Lithuania: there are no rights for sex workers and there will never have any rights. Sex work is considered to be a shame. [But] it brings me money and allows me to communicate with different types of people.

Kyrgyzstan: They work to survive.

Lithuania: I work because of the money - I am used to big money. [Sex] work allows me to make good money and not just a little bit. I can afford to go to a nice resort, to go shopping in expensive stores with quality clothing; I have bought a car and a flat and now it is hard for me to part with this good life.

How do the police in your countries treat sex workers?

Lithuania: It depends. I have been treated normally, with respect; they explained that there are different sex workers and they see which kind of sex worker you are; if they see that the apartment is clean, and you are not an alcoholic or drug addict, they treat you respectfully and politely. Nevertheless, they will take you to the police station and incarcerate you. There are official raids, they have to follow the orders, there is a law in our country that punishes both girls and their clients. Even though there are also striptease and erotic massages, those are not considered prostitution. The first time you are caught you have to pay a fine between 300 to 500 litas; the second time it can be up to 1500 litas or up to a month of community service. Those who are working on the street are arrested and fined, but if they are illegal migrants they can also be deported.

Street prostitutes charge between 50 and 70 litas; those working at home have an average rate of 200 litas per hour, and for elite sex workers it can be 150—200 euros, and the fee at striptease clubs can be up to 300 euros.

Several years ago, I heard a story where girls were placing advertisement on the net that "I would like to meet for sex" and police learned about it and started calling. It happened that one of the girls

was caught this way. One of the policemen called and promised to become her permanent customer if he liked her. The girl agreed, she was delivered to her 'client' and was caught red-handed.

Kyrgyzstan: Sex workers are not considered humans. There are frequented illegal police raids even though sex work has been decriminalized. The police can insult, detain on the grounds of disorderly conduct, take money in exchange for a release, and/or organize "subbotniks".

Sex workers are a source of additional income for police. Usually sex workers say that we provide funds for buying bread, fuel, a birthday present for the wife, car repairs and renovations, per diem in case of travel, for covering the expenditures of renovating the office, paying phone bills, etc. Usually we pay the police a certain amount every week or month, so the policemen at the station not abuse you; but then policemen from any other station can come by. If you are working on the street, up to 10 policemen can come per day, and you have to pay all of them to earn a living for yourself and your children.

If a sex worker is abused by a client, can she turn to police for help?

Lithuania: They can't because sex work is illegal.

Kyrgyzstan: Many sex workers do not turn to police at all, because their complaints will be rejected under pretext that they knew what to expect when they started sex work. The majority of sex workers who do report abusive clients, usually turn to a police officer they know: This police officer will catch the client, 'reappropriate' money, out of which a small amount returns to sex workers as a compensation for damages, while the larger sum stays with the officer. Usually, such operations and detentions are not taken to court.



- You, bitch, prostitute! What rights? You don't have any rights!!!
- Why are you hitting me????????????



- Are you all pigs? Can't you be human?



Girl: Again would have to give them everything I have earned.
Clients: I am fucked!!!!
Police: Good catch... Got both of them!!! Great!!!

ONE DAY IN MY LIFE



7.00- The alarm is ringing! Why do I have to get up again?

7.10- Cup of coffee. I have to prepare breakfast for my daughter Nastia and my husband Alexander. While the porridge cooks, I go to take a shower.

7.30- Every day I go to coax my children awake and out of bed, wake up my daughter. They have to get ready to go to kindergarten and school. We have breakfast and get dressed to leave.

8.00- Daughter to kindergarten and son to school.

8.15- I am running to work. I can't be late! My boss is strict-she says that if I am late to work, I can leave or pay the fine!

8.30- On my schedule is my first client. She is telling me her problems and also about her life: the husband is 'walking about', not paying her any attention and so on...

16.00- Next client... woman client... problems of other people are getting to my head....

17.00- I am running to the kindergarten to pick up my daughter, so that she isn't the last one on her way home. I think about coming expenses- for the kindergarten renovations, the gift for director of the kindergarten, mobile telephone, rent, also medication my mother...

18.30- We are home. I have to check my son's home work, do laundry, tidy up, feed them and to think of a bedtime story to tell them to be able to go out for night from 22.00

21.00- I say goodnight to my children. Nice bedtime story for the night

21.30- To live a normal life I need to have a second job.

23.00- My first client. I listen to his life story: wife is not listening to him, problems at work...

03.00- I am home, the children are sleeping. LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL!



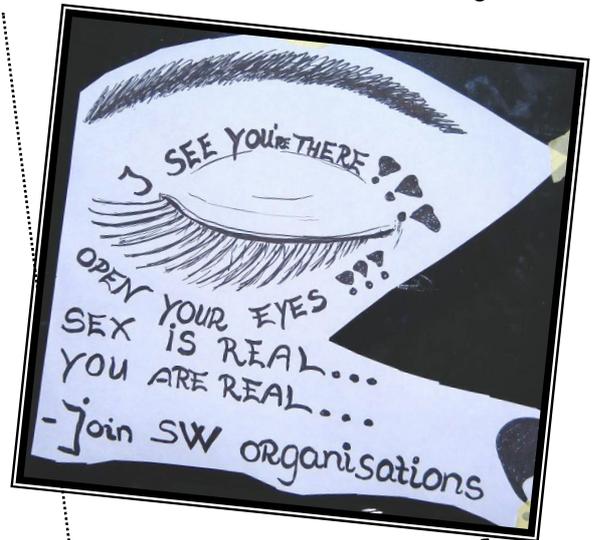
"NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE FOR ME. JUST TRY IT..... YOU CAN'T. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR YOURSELF."

"SEX WORKERS SHOULD NOT CONFUSE THEIR PROFESION. BECAUSE PROFESSIONS CAN BE CHOSEN, BUT DESTINY, UNFORTUNATELY, CANNOT."

Dear Sex Worker,

I know that you are there, hiding in the depths of society's clutches.
 I know that you are a girl, a woman, a boy, a man, trans-gender, or a person of colour, or might be a migrant worker!
 I know that you have been marked, humiliated by others many times!
 I know that that it is not the easiest way life you have chosen
 I know you are not STUPID, and yes, I know that sometimes you are even more educated than those who are punishing you!
 I know that you want to take part in a society that gives you the respect you deserve, in accordance to your responsibilities.
 I know because I am a sex worker as well!!!
 I know we will find each other, we just need to reach out.
 There are organisations for sex workers worldwide waiting for you!
 Come, be one of us! Enjoy the great family of sex workers!
 Together we can show the world that we care – and let us as: "care for me too"

Mariann



"YOU ARE NOT ALONE,
 TOGETHER WE ARE
 STRONGER"

My Day...



9.10-
 Wake up without an alarm. Drink water

10-10.30-
 Breakfast. Listen to the news on the radio

10.30-12-
 Reading/chatting on phone/going to the aesthetician

12-14 -
 Specially prepared vegetarian lunch

14-16-
 Meet friends in café of pub/ every second day, I go to the gym

16-18-
 Meet clients/have a nap/visit parents

18-22-
 Meet clients/ surf the internet/visit boyfriend

Sleep. I don't see clients at night

"SEXS WORK IS A CHOICE
 NOT DESTINY"



"WE ARE THE PRODUCT OF A
 COMMUNITY WHICH SHUNS
 US"

ADDRESS TO PEOPLE

Dear people,

I am a human and I want to make an announcement to all of you, no matter what profession you have - because I know that everyone of us makes a living doing different jobs, using different skills.

I earn money for myself and my family by doing sex work and this job is not at all easy, like some other jobs. Sex work is difficult and not good for the mental and physical health of a person. My girlfriends and I, who are in this job, are tired of the humiliation and lack of respect that we face from people around us and governmental institutions.

I am very sad about the people working in governmental institutions, who abuse their power, forgetting that we are not only sex workers-WE ARE HUMANS! And the most sad thing is that I sometimes forget that I am also human. When I discovered that in many countries, there are groups of sex workers facing the same problems and solving them together, I grew emotionally stronger - I started to value myself, something I didn't do before. At first, I was very suspicious of sex worker organizations but with time, I got involved in it because I understood that sex workers' organizations can help me a lot.

Sex work is the same kind of work that doctor, teacher, sellers, politicians and others do. Don't forget that we, sex workers, are in society and we are normal people!

And please, don't forget that you are not alone in this world! Please remember you have where to go to ask for help or get advice. Together we have the power!



- I bought you and will do with you whatever I wish: if I want to, I can hit you or kill you!!!



- Prostitution is bad, it's a sin, it's immoral! Go back to the right path!!!
 - Better give me money to live by, than to teach and preach all the time!



"OUR PROFESSION IS EQUAL TO OTHERS"

"SEX WORK IS A PROFESSION, SEX WORK IS SURVIVAL, SEX WORK IS THE MIRROR OF SOCIETY"



Red umbrella



The red umbrella was the first time used by sex workers and allies in Venice, Italy in 2001. The so-called First World Congress of Sex Workers was an art installation by the Slovenian artist Tadej Pogacar, placed within the 49th Venice Biennale, between 6th and 8th June 2001. Organized on a public space in a tent, in the "Prostitute Pavilion", the event had as participants groups and individuals from Taiwan, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Italy, Germany, USA and Australia. They presented the situation on the market and discussed the strategies to fight for civil rights of sex workers. They organized video projects, exhibitions, performances, activist street theatre, and distributed publications.

One of the activities was the Red Umbrellas March. Sex workers marched the streets of Venice and used megaphones and red umbrellas, drawing attention to the bad work conditions and the human rights abuses they face. The march started at the Pavilion tent and went through the city centre.

The march route incorporated the geography of the social history of sex workers, from the famous Venetian courtesans Veronica Franco and Gaspara Stampa until today.

In 2005 the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) adopted the red umbrella as a symbol of resistance to discrimination. The initiative was welcomed by the community and other sex workers' groups followed. What started as a simple idea is becoming a global symbol for sex workers' rights.

Red is a color of beauty and an umbrella is the resistance to sky's and humans' attacks. It symbolizes protection from the abuse sex workers are subjected by the police, pimps, customers, and an ignorant and biased society.

"IF I DECIDED TO BE A SEX WORKER, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT IS MY DESTINY"



Be relentless, be everywhere, be recognizable!

1. Download different versions of the red umbrella from the ICRSE website www.sexworkeurope.org (go to the [image gallery](#))
2. Download a [version without text](#) and add your own slogan in your own language.
3. Put a red umbrella on the front page of your website and on your letterhead.
4. Create a signature with a red umbrella for your emails.
5. If you do not know how to do that just send the text to info@sexworkeurope.org and they will help you.

Everyone knows what the red ribbon means. The red umbrella can have the same global impact!



The Sex Workers Rights Advocacy Training was organized by SWAN in partnership with ICRSE and with financial support of SHARP/OSI.



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



SWAN is a network of organizations advocating for human rights for sex workers (Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network) in Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia, which today consists of 16 NGOs from 15 countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine) most of whom have been specializing in health service provision to vulnerable population and haven't had any previous experience in including human rights element into their projects.

The aim of the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) is to unite and provide services to its members, scattered NGOs from 15 countries, in best prac-

tices, advocacy techniques, and media communication tools; to facilitate the exchange of local news; and to establish a bilingual flow of information on health and rights issues on an international scale. The Network aims at empowering sex workers and supporting them in advocacy for their own rights and health, since nobody knows the problems sex workers face better than sex workers themselves. SWAN's three year experience has proven that there is need and interest among sex workers, NGOs and journalists in receiving more information on sex workers' rights and sex work-related issues in other countries.

WWW.SWANNET.ORG



The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) was established as the legal entity in the Netherlands in 2004 to create a European network of sex workers and allies and as the organisers of the 2005 European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels, Belgium.

Since the conference the ICRSE Network has become an important regional network. Along with the translation and promotion of the ICRSE foundational documents, the Declaration and Manifesto, the ICRSE actively supports network members to collaborate on several political fronts, including, promoting positive images and news

about our activism and advocacy achievements, supporting national campaigns to oppose policy proposals that threaten to undermine the rights of sex workers, fighting and highlighting human rights abuses that are the result of anti-trafficking policies, opposing policy proposals developed at all government levels through letter writing campaigns and petitions, drafting alternative documents and linking regional members to global action campaigns and events in solidarity with other regional networks. The ICRSE website

www.sexworkeurope.org is a key tool in our network communications and it is an important resource for the public and other advocates.

Acknowledgements

SWAN project would not have been possible without the financial and information support of Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) and Health Media of Open Society Institute (OSI).

