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## Sex Working Community Mobilisation Training Report

ICRSE - SWAN- RED UMBRELLA ATHENS - POSITIVE VOICE

5-7/02/2019, HIGGS, Athens, Greece

### Introduction:

ICRSE, SWAN and Red Umbrella Athens/Positive Voice, organized a 3-day community mobilization training on sex working in Athens Greece. The goal of this training was to empower the sex workers' movement in Greece, to advocate for the decriminalization of sex work by highlighting the problematic nature of the Swedish model and help develop a strong network of allies against it.

The training provided a comprehensive introduction to the different directions legal frameworks have on sex work, their impact on sex workers lives, advocacy examples of the sex worker's rights movement globally and the legal situation in Greece. At the same time, this workshop aimed to open up a space for dialogue amongst community members and relevant stakeholders, gather their input and encourage the participants to engage in an action planning process.

Lastly, policymakers, political party representatives, media representatives and various stakeholders were invited to attend a press conference after the 3-day training in an attempt to increase their awareness on the rights of sex workers and highlight the urgent need for legal reforms.

### Background:

Sex workers in Greece face multiple challenges living and working stigmatized, marginalized and criminalized. Although there are few legal indoor settings, the majority of sex workers work illegally and many of them at the streets. There is a severe lack of legislation and policies to protect them, thus making them extremely vulnerable to violence from both state and non-state actors.

A contributing factor to all the above is the ongoing financial crisis which has already limited public spending and consequently the ability of the Greek government to properly plan for and deal with the challenges arising from the refugee crisis. The burden of this "double crisis" has been disproportionately affecting women of lower

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socioeconomic status, refugee and migrant women/young people, cis and trans female sex workers and injecting drug users as well as HIV positive individuals.

Red Umbrella Athens' establishment in 2015, coincided with the growing discussions among policymakers on the development of an effective model protecting victims of human trafficking and the reform of the current sex work law. Since then it has managed to tackle the prevalent narrative that equated sex work and sex trafficking, by advocating for sex workers rights through a series of activities and by developing a network of allies (other civil society organizations, policymakers etc). The strong collaboration with the sex worker community has enabled the RUA team to gather data and develop interventions that will help elevate the rights' literacy of the community and raise awareness about issues related to sexual health and harm reduction.

There is sex work legislation since 1999 (law 2734/1999) setting out the conditions and the criteria of legality. According to this law, prostitution is legal and highly regulated, but only in state-licensed brothels and not in hotels or at the streets. Municipalities are allowed to determine the number of licensed brothels. Brothels are not allowed on a closer distance than 200 meters from public buildings, i.e. schools, churches, kindergartens, playgrounds, health clinics and hospitals, sport centers, libraries, squares and nursing homes. Thus, it is impossible to have a state-licensed brothel in any Greek city.

Furthermore, according to the law 2734/1999, the prostitutes are not allowed to be married, but only be single, divorced or widowhood. The permission for prostitution lasts only for 3 years and requires a number of legal and medical documents (e.g. identity, passport, residence permits, HIV test results, chest X-ray). Law demands mandatory medical testing for STIs every 15 days, every 3 months for HIV , every month for syphilis which are one of the most strict regulations in EU. Furthermore, the law prohibits prostitutes to work together as well as more than 1 license per building. The use of an apartment for prostitution requires the consent of all the residents and the owners of the rest of the apartments. Finally, according to prostitution legislation, the assistant staff of brothels should be older than 50 years old and should have mandatory medical testing.

A proposal for a new law which would cut that distance in half, to facilitate the prostitution during the Olympic Games in Athens 2004 was debated but the Greek government decided (in December 2003) not to submit the proposal. Since then, no

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other proposals have been discussed or submitted regarding potential reforms of the current prostitution legislation.

Greek organization of People Living with HIV “Positive Voice” has drafted and proposed a series of reforms of the current prostitution legislation with the aim to promote sex workers rights with respect to dignity, free will and the protection of the health. The current law firstly should referred to sex workers and not to prostitutes, and thus like any other profession it would fall with the protective scope of the right to professional and financial freedom (article 5§1 of Constitution).

Taking into account, that in Attica region only approximately 10 out of 500 brothels have licensed, all the geographical restrictions should be abolished and every licensed place (apartment, brothel, house) should be over 100 meters only from schools and kindergartens unless other buildings surround them. Moreover, the license of sex work should not have time limitations or marital status like any other professions. It is suggested to abolish the authority of municipalities on the number of permits and on the working hours. Furthermore, it is proposed to allow the practice of sex work from more than one person in the same apartment or hotel but they should not be more than the number of the available rooms. The assistant staff should be adults without any other restrictions or requirements.

Laws demanding mandatory testing and mandatory registration create barriers to health care for sex workers. In Greece public health officers are responsible for enforcing laws to combat venereal diseases, and for organizing sexually transmitted disease services for registered prostitutes. As a result, most sex workers avoided registration, which made them liable for prosecution. All healthcare facilities and HIV prevention activities for prostitutes were limited to those who are registered. This is ineffective in public health terms: in Athens approximately 400 women are registered, while an estimated 5,000 more sex workers are not registered. Therefore, it is suggested to make accessible other prevention and health services and interventions than mandatory testing.

## Day 1:

The Advocacy and Communications Officer of Red Umbrella Athens (RUA), Maria Xanthaki welcomed the attendees which were mostly trans and male sex workers and representatives of civil society organizations working on LGBTQI issues, harm reduction, and trans/LGB sex workers. Along with the agenda of the three day training, complimentary material was given to participants including the legislative framework on sex work in Greece and the Greek translation of ICRSE's "Intersectional Activism Toolkit for Sex Workers and Allies".



Luca Stevenson introduced participants in the work of ICRSE and the core values of the organization. The 100 member-organizations of ICRSE represent 30 countries across Europe and Central Asia and share the same set of values on sex work.

These are:

- The recognition of sex work as work
- Support of self determination and self organization of sex workers
- Oppose the criminalization of sex work itself, clients etc

- Sex work is an economic activity and recognised as such.
- Involvement in sex work is for economic reasons.

ICRSE is present in international conferences, publishes resources and makes sure to provide educational opportunities to its members where appropriate. Luca highlighted the intersectional perspective sex work-related activism requires, as it is inextricably linked with migrant rights, health rights, women's rights, LGBT rights and labour rights. Although these links shed light on multiple forms of oppression SW face around the world, ICRSE focuses primarily on the exploitation faced within the sex industry (violence, labour exploitation) and disagrees with the notion that all sex work is trafficking. Lastly, Luca acknowledged that for many people around the world sex work can be an option among limited options, but this requires empowerment, rights and recognition and not attempts to remove sex work as an option through whole or partial criminalization.

### **Different sex work legislation models and advocacy examples**

A presentation on different sex work legislative models in Europe and what sex workers prefer followed which provided essential definitions to participants in order to help them understand better the situation. The differences between decriminalization and legalization were pinpointed and a definition of third parties and their involvement in sex work was given.

It was said: *“A third party is anyone who profits from sex work without working for sex (pimps, brothel managers). Third parties can be linked to exploitation, corruption, violence etc but not necessarily. “*

The legislative models were separated in 5 categories:

1. Full criminalization (Sex workers, clients and third parties, indoor & outdoor sex work are criminalized)
2. Partial criminalization (Soliciting, brothel keeping and third parties laws)
3. Nordic model (Clients & third parties/indoor sex work are criminalized)
4. Legalization (Often forced registration and health checks, with maintained criminalization or unlicensed venues and unregistered sex workers. The majority are forced to keep working illegally.)
5. Full decriminalization (Removal of all laws criminalizing sex work, sex workers, clients and third parties. Labour laws and protections can be implemented to protect sex workers from exploitation)

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More examples followed where municipal laws can overlap with sex work laws (e.g. mini skirts are illegal in Lille as they are linked to sex work). The laws on third parties can often be the only reason sex work is still criminalized in a lot of places.

The Amnesty International report on Norway was cited to underline the way in which migrants are targeted for two reasons and how the system drives them to homelessness as police call landlords of suspected sex workers asking them to evict them so that they won't be considered "third parties".

Examples where legalization works as backdoor criminalization were given, as mandatory health checks (forced HIV testing in Greece and Austria) and multiple restrictions related to drug use, consent of neighbours etc make it virtually impossible to work legally. Migrant sex-workers from the EU are allowed to work but not non-EU migrants. Even EU citizens can be deported if they are caught selling sex in the UK, Norway, Sweden etc. There have been many cases of Romanian sex workers that have been deported from these countries.

The two examples of New Zealand and one state in Australia, were an approach of full decriminalization which instead uses labour laws and protections to regulate sex work were given to participants. It was also mentioned that migration laws apply before the right to sex work. There were questions on that which concluded in the fact that we can agree or disagree on whether a country has a right to decide what kind of migrants it needs as the standard procedures that refer to the demand for migrant workers do not apply for migrant sex workers. This was particularly mentioned due to the estimates in Western Europe that 80% of sex workers are migrants (including those by choice, only option, forced), hence the efficiency of these legislative models was question in regards to the above percentage.

Luca urged participants to always interpret statistics on sex work cautiously, as most of sex work still remains underground. What a comparison between the Swedish and the New Zealand model can show though, is that the latter contributes in the decrease of HIV cases and in the decrease of violence towards sex workers, as they are able to report it without being prosecuted. Lastly, the NZ model shows that it had no effect on the number of sex workers.

There is a difference between the law and its spirit and the implementation. For instance in Sweden even though the law sees sex workers as victims, this is not applicable to migrants and sex workers. Luca gave insights from the recent adoption of the Swedish

model and how it led to more incidents of violence. Recently there was an incident where a gang attempted to rob a client, the sex worker tried to protect him and got shot.

Most solutions are limited in criminalizing wholly or partially and as every method of criminalization its based on the enforcement of the police. Participants asked Luca to explain more about the political motivation behind this and he responded that it is linked to the narrative that prostitution is violence against women and hence clients (the perpetrators) are to be criminalized.

*One of the participants pointed out: "It is really interesting that this approach is endorsed by both feminists (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) and conservative/right-wing parties."*

Besides the criminalization of the client, the Swedish model offers exiting programs, something which ICRSE endorses and thinks that should exist and be well funded.

In practice however, these programs can be quite problematic as the eligibility criteria are often absurdly unrealistic. In France for instance, it is required that the individual stops sex work beforehand and in cases where a person is a sex trafficking victim, denouncing the perpetrator is also a prerequisite. This criteria is put in place to access

a welfare benefit of 300€/month which is half of the welfare benefit that exists for everyone else. All of the above can make exiting programs inaccessible for sex workers.

The extensive welfare programs that Sweden and France offer do not extend to migrants. A case of 15 Nigerian women



that approached the local agency in Nice to get the benefit, resulted in 3 of them getting a residency permit and the rest being deported.

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An example from New Zealand, where a sex worker that worked in a brothel was sexually harassed by her boss. As she was a registered worker, labour laws applied and the boss had to pay her 25.000\$

### ***Criminalizing Clients in France: Impact on the lives of sex workers.***

The second session of the day was focused on the impact of client criminalization on the lives of sex workers and more in depth examples from the recent implementation in France.

In 1999 Sweden criminalized the purchase of sex and 20 years later many countries have followed including Norway, Iceland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, France, South Korea, Canada. This growing momentum resulted in recent debates on the endorsement of the Swedish model in Spain, Israel, Greece and many other countries.

Although academic research suggests that criminalizing sex work is leading to more vulnerability and worse conditions for sex workers, in 2014, the European Parliament passed a memo that supported the criminalization of clients and was widely supported by both the right and left wing parties. Relevant combined data that supports the above argument has been published by both the Lancet and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

### **Participants were asked to contribute by attempting to assume possible consequences if the Swedish model was to be implemented tomorrow in Greece?**

- *“Clients have many inhibitions and they will turn to indoor spaces and sex workers they already know.”*
- *“The transaction will be less fair as well as the rules because the clients will use their alleged “victimhood” in their favour.”*
- *“Violence incidents will be more and third parties will thrive. Sex workers will starve.”*

Luca explained that the Swedish model impacts the number of clients buying sex and consequently the income of sex workers. In addition, the negotiation power of clients increases and people that rely on sex work as their only source of income are pushed to loosen the boundaries they set. All these result in sex workers being more exposed to violence and less able to negotiate how they choose clients and sex safety.

- A TSW asked about the ways in which law is enforced in countries that the Swedish model applies. Luca responded that in France there were 1000 arrests

of clients buying sex from the street and repeated that any form of criminalization has serious impacts on sex workers lives.

- Two allies asked Luca to explain the roots of sex work. He said that from his experience, an over simplified explanation on the roots of sex work is poverty.

Luca elaborated on the consequences that criminalization has:

1. Sex workers have to work deeper underground
2. Limited access to services and support
3. No trust in the police = limited access to justice
4. Increased violence against sex workers , in particular trans sex workers in France, Norway
5. Increased stigma

Division between definitions is clear:

- Trafficking should involve **coercion**
- Sex work or prostitution involve choice, limited choice or no choice.

Participants asked about the relation of the extent in which choice exists and client criminalization. Luca responded the sex workers that have sex work as their only choice, will not have more choices if clients are criminalized.

Luca continued by presenting data from a research in France that Medecins du Monde implemented after the adoption of the Swedish model in the country. A participant asked if the criminalization of third parties would be acceptable and necessary. The recent example in the United States was given, were websites that sex workers used to communicate with clients were banned, resulted in pushing sex workers to the streets and their position more vulnerable.

The rationale of the Swedish model aims to send a message that prostitution is wrong. Legislators and NGOs that support criminalization admit that things have gotten worse for sex workers but accept it as a “necessary evil” in order to eliminate prostitution in the future.

### **Are there criminalization laws in Greece?**

Maria Xanthaki continued by presenting recent discussions on client criminalization in Greece. At the moment there is a discussion that focuses on the protection of women

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victims of violence, prostitutes and fine/imprison clients. The approach of eliminating prostitution by eliminating demand.

Since 2001 the Greek Association of Women Lawyers supports the criminalization of clients. The General Secretary for Gender Equality, Fotini Kouvela has endorsed the positions of the ex health minister Andreas Loverdos that led the witch hunt in 2012, that supported the punishment of clients along with the punishment of sex workers as he considered them a public health threat. The question that arises when the practice of publishing personal data of sex workers for public health reasons is used proverbially, is why shouldn't the data of the male clients that asked and payed for unprotected sex be treated equally.

Most recently, the Project Management Team of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality aimed to:

- Prepare and formulate proposals and legislative interventions within the framework of the national strategy for gender equality which will protect women from violence and the exploitation of prostitution.
- Study the Scandinavian legislative model to tackle prostitution
- Prepare and formulate relevant proposals and legislative interventions (2017-2018)

Their preposition was client criminalization in 2018 and in specific their recommendations included:

- The act of attracting, accepting or acquiring sexual contacts from a prostitute, even occasionally, in return for a fee or promise of remuneration or a consideration in kind or a promise of such consideration, shall be condemned with the fine provided for the infringements of the fifth order (1500 euros). If it occurs with a repeat offense, it is punished with a fine of 3,750 euros.
- Punishment of a 3-year imprisonment and a fine of 45,000euros, for the act of attracting, accepting or gaining sexual contacts from a prostitute, even occasionally, if the person is a minor or particularly vulnerable, apparently or knowingly the perpetrator due to a disease, a disability, a deficiency or a pregnancy

The aim of their recommendation was to essentially eliminate prostitution and rehabilitate sex workers via exit programs (social benefits, houses, etc.) The model that they followed was similar to the Swedish and French law.

A discussion about the impacts of the Swedish model implementation in Greece followed:

- *“The need of men to have sex will prevail.”*
- *“Rape incidents will rise.”*
- *“The financial crisis has resulted in a rise of people working for sex.”*
- *“It will still be done in the dark.”*
- *“Sex will never cease to exist. So is prostitution.”*
- *“They do not know the ID of the clients and even if they call the police the police will not come.”*
- *“They do not feel safe with the police.”*

A TSW shared a story about an incident of violence that she endured and said that what she always did was to ask for the money beforehand. She also mentioned that the situation was better when the border was tight. Ever since migrants started coming in, the amount of clients that wanted to buy sex fell more than half (10 to 3).



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## Day 2

Anna Kouroupou, RUA Director welcomed participants on the second day of the training and announced that RUA will be working for a third day, focusing on sex workers that work through ads.

She began presenting on the consequences the legal framework on sex work has in Greece.

The law referring to sex work was introduced in 1834 and was brought due to public health concerns after a syphilis outbreak. Street-based sex work was and still remains illegal. She talked about the experiences of sex workers in Greece since the 1980s. Violent arrests, and tortures were part of everyday life for sex workers. Today even though there is less police violence, there are daily fines and arrests which don't lead to imprisonment but to accumulation of fines and debt. There are 650 brothels in Athens that operate without a license.

Aggeliki Sougle, RUA lawyer continued talking about the first legislation of 1834 which was referring to women prostitutes and aimed to protect public health from syphilis. The sex workers at the time had to acquire license from the police if they wanted to get out of brothels and were also obliged to carry a health booklet with their picture on it.

The law was revised in 1999 and in this last reformation the law stopped being gender specific. That last reformation was not gender specific. Today there are 3 licences. 1 for brothels, 1 for sex workers and 1 for brothel housekeepers.

A report from the Greek Ombudsman stated that there is no place in the region that a brothel could be legally opened and abide by the distance and other criteria demanded in the current law. The research that RUA has done to investigate how many licences related to sex work have been issued showed that no men have such licences.

All these licences have a 3 year duration. The licences are issued from local governments so in a lot of cases if a SW has a licence from one place and moves to another, they should repeat the process. The licence referring to the helping staff has an age minimum which is 50 years old.

- There was a question from a participant on whether it is considered “flagrante delicto” when policemen go on dates with sex workers from ads to arrest them. The lawyer responded that this is the only case where this charge is actually accurate.

Today, street-based sex workers that get arrested on the streets go on trials where the accusation is that they were caught red-handed (flagrante delicto) even though this is not truthful. This accusation and hence trial and verdict is only based on what the policeman has to say and nothing else thus allowing arbitrary arrests to happen on the grounds of the perception of each policeman. The court decisions are not enclosed in envelopes and are delivered at the homes of SW thus violating data protection laws. The structure of the legislation pushes to illegality.



The owners of the brothels usually bribe policemen in order to stay out of trouble. Nowadays, migrant sex workers can still be arrested if they work in brothels. It is illegal to work in your house or in a place that is not a state brothel.

- A SW asked if carrying a lot of condoms can be used as a evidence of selling sex on the streets. The lawyer replied that this has happened.
- Another question on whether it would it be possible to support a case were a false accusation a TSW drinking coffee to be arrested even if she's not working at the time. The lawyer responded that situations differ from place to place as different working areas with different police jurisdictions have different approaches to the ways that they treat sex workers.

A TSW that volunteers at RUA said that she always wears her name tag from RUA when she leaves her house as she is visibly trans and could be arrested for selling sex on the street in the Omonia area.

The issue of mandatory testing was discussed.

- Participants asked if there is any evidence that mandatory STI checks help. Luca responded that there is none that supports that mandatory testing is effective in the protection of public health and that there is no relevant case that has gone in the European Court of HR.
- A TSW said that there should be insurance coverage for mandatory testing and that medical records should be protected.

The discussion continued on whether health checking should be mandatory for sex workers. Luca mentioned that there is a long history in which protection has been used as an argument that led to rights violations. Mandatory testing is not a norm in general and most countries don't force it.

A participant mentioned that the way that we perceive public health protection can be split in different measures that we decide to take and can involve regulation or coercion. For instance, in the cases of airborne diseases and epidemics, coercion could be considered to be ethical. For sexually transmitted diseases, the majority of measures that are taken are based on sex negative approaches which are not evidence-based and end up not being helpful at all.

***A MSW said: "Stop filing sex workers and clients" "Sex workers are not obliged to have to report to everyone their health status".***

The issue of mental health in having health service access is also unaddressed. The example of the protection that SW in Amsterdam experience with the panic buttons that are linked to the police was brought up as a good practice that could help SW.

A TSW mentioned that the Labor Force Employment Agency should include sex workers and RUA should advocate to the Ministry of Labour so that criminal record and military obligations are not relevant to SW licensing.

## Day 3



Luca started presenting the history of the sex worker movement in Europe and listed the main reasons that sex workers had to organize:

- Resist and denounce arrests, fines, police abuse
- Change legal system to decriminalize SW

Sex workers are also fighting for:

- End violence against sex workers (police, clients, public)
- Change the society and stop stigmatization which fuels violence

The sex workers movement is at the intersection of many other struggles:

- Violence against women
- Transphobia – for trans rights
- Health / HIV
- Against poverty

- For migrants rights and against racism

Historically the movement started on June 2nd 1975 where 100 SW occupied a church in Lyon to protest police violence. Since then, June 2nd is celebrated as Sex Workers Rights Day. The movement inspired other movements such as in London where the English Collective of Prostitutes was created.

Still in most EU countries sex work is criminalized or penalised.

Sex workers can be:

1. Directly criminalized with offences related to selling sex or soliciting (street working)
2. Indirectly criminalized (laws on pimping, laws on communicating, brothels targeting sex workers)
3. Indirectly criminalized as members of other communities (trans, ROMA, PWUD)

The police who implement the law is often corrupt and responsible of violence and abuse against sex workers. Sex workers fight to change the laws about sex work and to stop police violence.

Sex workers demand change of the laws: decriminalization of sex workers, clients and third parties in order to end police violence and corruption and fight against exploitative and violent third parties and criminals.

The majority of sex workers are women, many of them are mothers and single mothers. Sex workers are at high risk of violence and organise to end stigma and criminalisation that legitimates violence.

The movement in Europe is relatively weak compared to India, Thailand, Argentina. There is a deep connection between the trans rights movement and the sex worker movement. We know that most trans women that are murdered are also sex workers. Between 2008 and 2014, 1731 cases of trans murders were recorded and 65% of them were known to be sex workers.

Anna added that a lot of trans people that die are not registered as trans, thus the numbers could be even higher.

The case of Monica Jones and the issue of police profiling of trans women of colour that work for sex was brought up. Many sex workers that are victims of violence are also migrants.

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Maria Xanthaki announced that ICRSE and RUA will collaborate for the next 2 years on a project that will work on SW, migration and trafficking.

Luca proceeded with the action planning activity by providing an outline of the key points that should be taken under consideration.

Public action 101

- How we can organize and what we need to consider.
- Aims and targets, symbolical location, safety and police contact, trained spokesperson.
- Organize big conferences and public events to raise visibility.

A participant asked if Luca and ICRSE have done any trainings to police forces. He said no but there is an example in Ukraine where the sex worker organizations trained them after a series of incidents of police targeting them.

An example was given that in some places sex workers carry cards from organizations that are very vocal in the media in order to defend themselves from violent incidents with threats of going public.

Luca urged participants to try not to neglect seeing change happening because they get demotivated. Most of the participants shared their ideas and opinions.

Brainstorming session:

- Meet with the Minister of Justice to address the issues that sex workers face especially the prosecution that they face. Submit a series of demands.
- Organize a meeting that sex workers (M, F, T) participate and discuss actions.
- Incorporate theater and art forms that involve sex workers. Graffiti that brings forward the issues that SW face.
- There is a need to create a collective that is comprised by sex workers only.
- Make sure that SW are involved in every part of the process.
- Organize something on June 2nd.
- Sex workers dressed up like politicians discussing the issues they face.
- Lobbying with the Ministry of the protection of citizens.
- The government should take initiatives that train the clients by campaigning and address violence etc
- Find academics that can support evidence that correlate with our advocacy goals.

- Translate academic resources that refer to sex work in Greek.
- Use celebrities in order to raise awareness
- Organize trainings that educate sex workers about the terminologies that are used to advocate etc.

RESEARCH	ADVOCACY	PUBLIC EVENTS
Led by SW: - Migrants - Refugees - Indoors - Street - Trans	Conference - Sex Workers - Allies Produce material that includes recommendations	2nd of June + Pride Campaign End Stigma

After the brainstorming/action planning session finished, Anna Kouroupou and Maria Xanthaki presented briefly the history of RUA and what it has achieved so far. The participation and the implementation in various communication and advocacy activities with and by the sex workers' community was highlighted as the key element of our success.

At a policy level, RUA provides legal support to sex workers and also advocates for the decriminalization of sex work, by supporting its recognition as work and thus actively critiquing the trafficking paradigm that conflates representations of sex work, mobility, and migration. At a scientific level, RUA participates at conferences related to psychology, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis, presenting research data and highlighting the issues sex workers face, thus increasing awareness among the scientific community (e.g. at HepHIV Conference in Malta 2017 and Bucharest in 2019, the AIDS 2018 Conference, at a University in Paris). Red Umbrella Athens is a member of various international networks «ICRSE – Sex Work Europe», «SWAN – Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network», «NSWP – Global Network of Sexworkers» and «TAMPEP – European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers».

On May 25th 2017, Red Umbrella Athens (Greece) and the Hellenic Association of People Living with HIV "Positive Voice", organized a conference on policy issues regarding sex work in Greece. Its success lied in the fact that it was the first time this

topic was discussed by representatives from the government, political parties, civil society, the scientific community and above all sex workers. A summary of the conference was published at the international networks ICRSE & NSWP.

Furthermore, RUA implements various communication and advocacy interventions to increase public awareness on sex workers' rights. For instance, the RUA team participated at the international campaign Zero Discrimination supporting people living with HIV/AIDS. It participated at the PRIDE festival and parade of Athens and Thessaloniki in June 2017 while in 2018 it participated in 2 more cities (Patras and Heraklion). Meetings are constantly conducted with national stakeholders (e.g. Minister of Interior, general Secretary of Equality and Human Rights, the Mayor of Athens, nurses and doctors of public hospitals) and organizations of Civil Society (e.g. PRAKSIS, Doctors without Borders).



## Conclusion:

The three day training was an opportunity to create a space for dialogue and knowledge among participants, empower sex workers and educate civil society representatives on issues that sex workers face. The attendance of sex workers was not the one expected even though the organizers were providing a stipend for 3-day attendance, but the conversations that occurs within these three days were very interesting and useful. Sex workers in Greece are a community in the making, taking smalls steps towards extroversion and claiming their rights. Red Umbrella Athens will use the input gained from the participants and utilize this report to advocate for legal reform that respects all sex workers. Red Umbrella Athens will continue organize similar activities (focus groups, trainings) hopefully with the support of ICRSE and SWAN which increases their impact.



## **ANNEX 1**

### **Agenda**

#### **Sex Working Community Mobilisation Training in Athens**

##### **Tuesday 5 February**

11.00-11.30am Registration

11.30-12.00pm Welcome and Introductions, M. Xanthaki, Communication & Advocacy coordinator of Red Umbrella Athens (RUA)

12-1.30pm Legal frameworks and examples of what sex workers advocate for by L. Stevenson, Coordinator, International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe- ICRSE

1.30-2pm Discussion

2-2.30pm Coffee Break

2.30-3.15pm Criminalization of clients in France: What are the consequences in sex workers' lives? By L. Stevenson

3.15-4pm

- Are there any laws criminalizing clients in Greece? By M. Xanthaki, Communication & Advocacy coordinator of Red Umbrella Athens (RUA)
- Discussion on pros and cons of the implementation of legislations regarding clients' criminalization

4-4.30pm Closing points- End of the day

##### **Wednesday 6 February**

11.00-11.30am Registration

11.30-12.30pm

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- The legal framework in Greece and its consequences in sex workers' lives by A. Kouroupou, director of RUA & A. Sougle, lawyer of RUA
  - What Red Umbrella Athens' advocate for sex work legislation? By M. Xanthaki, Communication & Advocacy Coordinator of RUA

12.30-1.30pm Discussion in 3 subgroups on ideas to improve sex work legislation in Greece, coordinators M. Xanthaki & L. Stevenson

1.30-2pm Discussion

2-2.30pm Closing points/ End of the day

#### **Thursday 7 February**

11.00-11.30am Registration

11.30am-1pm

Short historical background of the international sex worker rights movement and an update on what it's going on internationally at the moment. Sex workers' rights activism and advocacy, by L. Stevenson Coordinator of ICRSE

- Red Umbrella Athens' activities by A. Kouroupou & M. Xanthaki

1-2.30pm

Advocacy tools to promote sex workers' rights, by L. Stevenson

- Group discussion on future activities in Greece

2.30-3pm Coffee break

3-3.30pm Presentation of the main training's results by M. Xanthaki