



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



ABOUT SWAN

The Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) is a sex worker-led regional network in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that advocates for the human rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. SWAN was founded in 2006 and was officially registered as the SWAN Foundation in January of 2012.

OUR MISSION: SWAN is a regional network of sex worker-led organisations and their allies that work to create societies in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia where:

- sex work is de-penalised and decriminalised.
- sex workers can live and work free from violence, stigma and discrimination.
- sex workers are empowered and actively engaged in issues that directly affect their lives and health.

OUR VALUES: SWAN's member organisations either work with or are led by sex workers, and sex worker leadership is an organising principle of our network. SWAN's work is overseen by a democratically elected Management Committee. SWAN operates with the following values:

- We recognise the right of sex workers to take agency in their lives, health and decision-making.
- We commit to actively involving sex workers in all levels of SWAN governance and protecting human rights.
- We recognise sex work as work, which is an unforced sale of sexual services between consenting male, female and trans adults.
- We seek to address the needs and engage the strengths of the diverse range of people who are sex workers, recognizing their intersectionality with other population groups (such as, migrants, people who use drugs, people living with HIV, LGBTI community and others) as well as their diverse range of work environments and lived experience.
- We prioritise support of sex worker-led initiatives but also support their allies to address the needs of sex workers.

OUR GOAL: Sex workers will enjoy human rights, safety, well-being, health and dignity in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

FOREWORD

2020 was a particularly challenging year for sex workers.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the structural issues and amplified the discrimination, stigma and violence sex workers face. Whilst this unprecedented pandemic affected everyone globally, sex workers and other marginalised communities were hurt disproportionately. Many sex workers could not access financial aid from governments. The health services they rely on were shut down, and the police crackdown on sex workers got worse due to media using sex workers as scapegoats for the increasing numbers of covid infections.

It was also a challenging year for sex work organising as lockdowns, and other restrictions meant activities and programmes could not go ahead as planned. This situation required swift reprogramming where possible and adjusting to new conditions. The deteriorating financial situation, restrictions on movement, and the impact of Covid-19 on family and community, incapacitated some activists and rendered already struggling community organisations more fragile. The loss of income in some organisations translated to the loss of valuable human resources, which further impacted the community as a whole as well as individual activists.

The need for action and adjustment to the new and unexpected situation was great, but even in such a harsh context, sex workers rose to the challenge, as they always do. All over the globe, sex workers initiated fundraising campaigns to help the most marginalised members of the community. Others ran crucial HIV testing services from their offices. Many groups invented systems to distribute food, masks, safer sex materials, sanitary products and other necessities. Advocacy and lobbying campaigns were launched for sex workers' inclusion in the support and safety measures and access to flexible funding for sex worker-led organisations.

SWAN also had to assess the region's rapidly changing situation and develop an emergency roadmap. First of all, we reached out to our members to ensure they knew that the network would provide any support we could. We organised webinars to assess the problems and needs of our members and stay in touch and fight isolation. Together with the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE), we produced a briefing paper focusing on the health needs of

sex workers and accompanying recommendations for the governments. Lastly, we lobbied for funders to act responsibly and be flexible in reprogramming activities so that sex workers' rights organisations don't lose their funding.

One year after the initial lockdowns started, sex workers and their organisations are still here. By drawing their strength from their community sex workers will prevail and come out of this tunnel even stronger. Once again, sex workers proved how empowering strong community bonds can be and that only by collaborating we can tackle the issues we face.

For all the lessons and showcase of resilience, we are proud of and thankful to our community.



OUR ACTIVITIES IN 2020

This Annual Report shows SWAN's work in diverse areas to achieve our objectives as laid out in our Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

1. Building the capacity of national and local sex worker-led initiatives and their allies to promote and advocate human rights- and evidence-based policy and programming.

1.1 Enabling exchange of experience and learning between SWAN members

One of the fundamental purposes of SWAN is to serve as a platform for learning and sharing between our members. This is done through identifying, documenting and disseminating good practices of SWAN members, facilitating mentorship or internship programmes, and organising trainings and meetings that enable groups to share their experiences and learn from each other. Due to the pandemic, learning and sharing in 2020 happened predominantly through web meetings and online trainings.

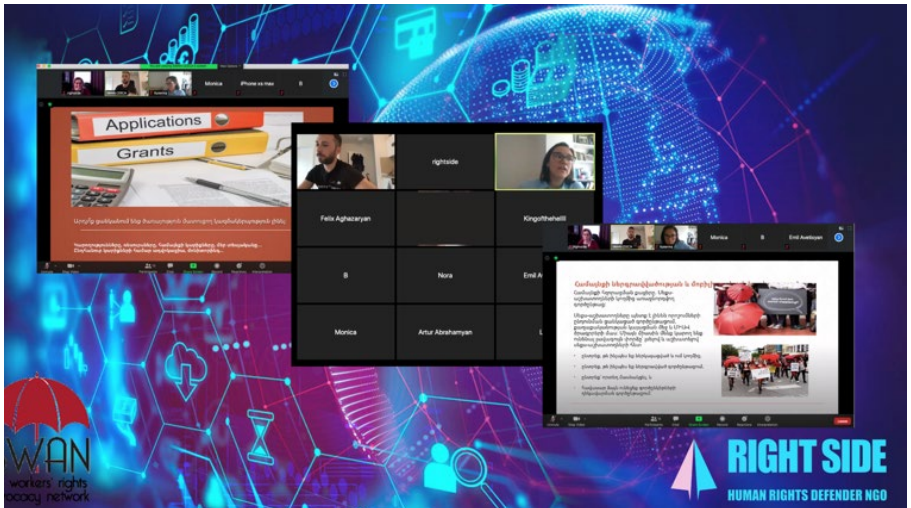
SWAN organised several web meetings with members to monitor the situation in the region, exchange information and gather input on various topics such as:

- Web meeting on COVID-19 and its impact on communities to assess the needs of sex workers during the pandemic, document and share resilience strategies, and coordinate advocacy messages to donors and governments. Part of the gathered knowledge was published, jointly with ICRSE, into the briefing paper on the [COVID-19 crisis impact on access to health services for sex workers in Europe and Central Asia](#).
- Web meeting on feminism and sex work in CEECA to consult our members to define a framework of collaboration or discussion with feminist groups, including abolitionist feminists within the region. The result of this discussion will be the basis of a new community resource by SWAN in 2021.
- UNAIDS strategy development to assess the previous UNAIDS strategy and community priorities to be addressed in the new strategy.

1.2 Provide training and technical assistance to members.

In 2020, through combining resources from different programmes and projects, SWAN tried to provide extensive training and support to its members in several areas tailored to their needs. This task was difficult to undertake due to complications and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic caused. The global restrictions prevented us from travelling and organising physical meetings. In the light of these crippling conditions, the SWAN Secretariat and our members had to make changes to the programmes' format and adjust to the new reality via online communication tools.

In Armenia, SWAN organised a series of [webinars](#) on [Sex Worker Implementation Tool](#) (SWIT) for Right Side NGO, a new member organisation in Armenia. Five separate webinars took place between the 5th and 19th of June 2020. Each webinar focused on different parts of the SWIT, such as Community Empowerment, Violence, Condom and Lubricant programming, Community-led Services, Programme Management and Organisational Capacity Building.



Through joint activities with [Eurasian Harm Reduction Association](#) (EHRA) and technical assistance grants, SWAN conducted six consultations and training with a group of sex workers on understanding the Global Fund in-country processes and preparing the Armenian CRG technical assistance application (The Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiatives (CRG SI)).

In Russia, under the RCF-SWIT programme, SWAN hosted two online webinars led by Sex Work Forum from Russia on community mobilisation and violence against sex workers. Community experts from Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine facilitated the sessions and exchanged experiences and knowledge from their countries. SWAN also supported national SWIT implementation in Russia, led by Sex Work Forum.

In Georgia, under the RCF-SWIT programme, Women for Freedom organised a summer school where they brought together community leaders for five days to discuss the SWIT.

SWAN Programme Officer provided technical assistance to the core group in developing the RCF-SWIT 2021 work plan. SWAN supported Women for Freedom in monitoring the Global Fund-funded services for sex workers in Georgia and advocating for improvement of these services, through small grants for improving the meaningful involvement of sex worker's community into Global Fund related national-level processes. For this purpose, Women for Freedom organised a series of community meetings in order to identify the issues, as well as five meetings with representatives from five different service-providing organisations. The monitoring process results were presented in one of the Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCM) meetings.

Маанилүү даталар



<p>Жалган куран айынын 1</p> <p>Дискриминация жок</p>	<p>Кулжа айынын 26</p> <p>«Колдоо. Жазалоого болбойт»: гумандуу багчисаясаты үчүн глобалдуу компания</p>	<p>Жетинин айынын 25</p> <p>Аялдарга карата зомбулукту жок кылуу үчүн күрөшүүнүн эл аралык күнү</p>
<p>Жалган куран айынын 3</p> <p>Секс-жумушчулар укуктарынын эл аралык күнү Белгилөөнүн тарыхы 2001-жылы Индияда өткөрүлгөн секс-жумушчулардын фестивалына 25 000ден ашык секс-жумушчу чогулган учурдан башталат. Ушул убакыттан бери уюмдар жана секс-жумушчулардын топтору бул датаны белгилешет.</p>	<p>Баш оона айынын 31</p> <p>Ашыкча доза алуу жөнүндө кабардар болуунун эл аралык күнү</p>	<p>Бештин айынын 1</p> <p>КИЖС менен күрөшүүнүн эл аралык күнү</p>
<p>Бугу айынын 17</p> <p>Гомофобия, бифобия, интерфобия жана трансфобияга каршы күрөшүүнүн эл аралык күнү</p>	<p>Аяк оона айынын 14</p> <p>Секс-жумушчулардын сыймыктануу күнү 2019-жылдан баштап, бул күн секс-жумушчулардын сыймыктануу күнү деп жарыяланган. Ал секс-жумушчулардын өзүн таануу, секс-жумушчулар тарабынан башкарылган уюмдардын жана алардын жетишкендиктеринин көрүнүшү маселелерине арналган.</p>	<p>Жетинин айынын 25 - Бештин айынын 10</p> <p>Гендердик зомбулукка каршы 16 күндүк активизм</p>
<p>Кулжа айынын 2</p> <p>Секс-жумушчулардын эл аралык күнү 1975-жылы ушул күнү 100гө жакын секс-жумушчулар жана тарапташтары алардын эмгегин криминалдаштырган жана эксплуатациялоочу шарттарына, дискриминациялоо жана укук коргоо органдары тарабынан зомбулукка каршы Францияда Лисон шаарында Сен-Низье чиркөөсүн күйөтүп алышкан.</p>	<p>Жетинин айынын 20</p> <p>Трансфобиянын кесепетинен каза тапкан трансгендер адамдарды эскерүү</p>	<p>Бештин айынын 17</p> <p>Секс-жумушчуларды зомбулуктан жана ырайымсыздыктан коргоонун эл аралык күнү.</p> <p>2003-жылы алгачкылардан болуп бул күндү доктор Анни Спринкл жана АКШ секс-жумушчулардын Аутрич-долбоорунун кызматкерлери белгилеп баштаган; Бул күнү Вашингтон штатынын Сиетл шаарындагы Жашыл дарыядан киши өлтүргүчтүн колунан каза тапкан секс-жумушчуларга аза күтүү кызматтары өткөрүлдү. Ушул учурдан тарта секс-жумушчулар жана алардын тарапташтары дискриминацияга каршылашын көрсөтүп, зомбулуктан каза тапкандарды эскерүү үчүн чогулушат.</p>

In Kazakhstan, under the RCF-SWIT programme, SWAN provided technical assistance to NGO Amelya to conduct a series of SWIT trainings in different cities. With technical assistance grants to improve the sex worker's community's meaningful involvement in Global Fund-related national-level processes, NGO Amelya organised one-day training for capacity building with sex workers on project development and proposal writing. In the framework of this project, the group has also developed a code of conduct for CCM members.

In Kyrgyzstan, SWAN member organisation Tais Plus implemented the RCF-SWIT programme's activities, including continuing the monitoring of services led by the community, further SWIT implementation focusing on chapter 5 and development of a [2021 calendar](#) highlighting all SWIT chapters to distribute among stakeholders. Additionally, Tais Plus organised a session at HIV2020 and presented the SWIT in theatre format.

In North Macedonia, SWAN continued collaborating with [STAR-The first sex workers collective in the Balkans](#) to implement the RCF-SWIT programme activities. Within this project, the Macedonian organisation implements national activities by and for sex workers on different SWIT chapters. The primary approach is peer-to-peer support and education through community workshops. Additionally, in the framework of the project, SWAN had supported the sex workers' campaign in North Macedonia for 17th of December - The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, titled [SKOPJE RED LIGHT DISTRICT 2020](#).



In Ukraine, member organisation [Legalife](#) and SWAN continued implementing the RCF-SWIT programme frame in 2020. Legalife Ukraine continued building capacities of sex workers on SWIT roll-out and implementation, engaging with the Global Fund-supported HIV/AIDS programmes and participating in the local HIV/AIDS coordination councils. More than 300 awareness-raising sessions were organised in 10 regions in 2020, and more than 350 sex workers who are members of the initiative groups were covered with these sessions.

As part of technical assistance small grants for improving the meaningful involvement of the sex workers' community into Global Fund related national-level processes in Ukraine, Legalife developed a methodology for community-led monitoring of HIV services in Ukraine and conducted an online survey of 100 sex workers to produce a report. The report will be used for national advocacy targeting CCM to make Global Fund funded HIV services more accessible for sex workers.

2. Advocating for regional and global stakeholders to increase the degree to which they meaningfully involve sex workers and address their needs in their programming around rights and health in the CEECA region.

2.1 Building and documenting consensus among sex workers on priorities and positions.

2.1.1 In 2020, we initiated the development of two new briefing papers:

- Feminism and Sex Work
- Migration and Sex Work

The methodology and consultations were developed in 2020. The papers will be finalised and launched in 2021.

2.1.2. CEDAW, General Recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.

We joined the global community in campaigning for the CEDAW Committee to recognise, respect and protect the human rights of sex workers. Our demand was for the Committee to make a clear distinction between trafficking and sex work and recognise the need for different sets of measures when addressing the needs of victims of trafficking and sex workers. This process started in 2019 with written submission to the CEDAW Committee and oral statement during the CEDAW hearing and continued with submitting [Written commentary](#) to draft Recommendation in 2020.

2.2 Making the voices of sex workers heard and influential.

As a sex worker-led network, we must maintain and deepen the dialogue with our member organisations, stay connected and support the national movements through amplifying their voices using different channels and advocacy opportunities. Usually, this is done by attending local and international meetings throughout the year, ensuring sex workers' voices and demands are heard. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the working environment has changed this year. Most conferences and meetings were cancelled or postponed and national or regional dialogues were delayed. However, we used every given opportunity to raise and amplify community voices.

- **Attended meetings/forums/dialogues:**
 - Sex Worker Donor Collaborative webinar - Supporting Sex Workers Rights During COVID-19;
 - Ensuring sustainability of services for key populations in the EECA region: Taking stock of budget advocacy efforts to date: SWAN participated in budget advocacy partners dialogue, organised and led by EHRA in December 2020 and contributed to discussions on advocating for meaningful involvement of sex workers in national level costing of services, sustainability and transitioning discussions;
 - SWAN hosted a session at the [Digital Sex Workers' Rights Festival](#)

organised by ICRSE with representatives from Tais Plus (Kyrgyzstan), SW Forum (Russia) and Ameliya (Kazakhstan) speaking on the situation of sex workers in these countries, the impact of Covid-19, and other the key issues sex workers face;

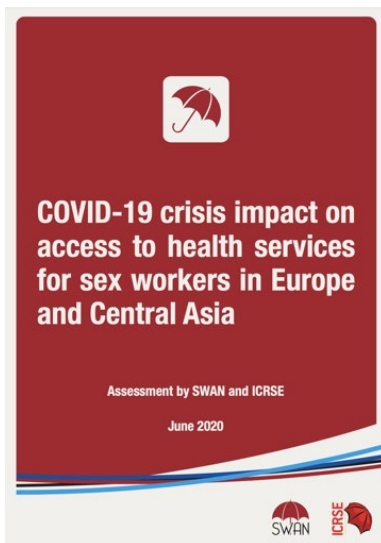
- Donor conference for vulnerable populations in South-East Europe, Drug Policy Network South-East Europe (DPNSEE), 6th of August 2020, Zoom platform;

- **Written submission to the Government of Ireland** for the [Review of the Operation of Part 4 of the Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences\) Act 2017](#). The review focused on “Legislation that aims to protect those offering sexual services and that criminalises the purchase of sexual services, its implementation and the impact of such enforcement on those offering those services and on the purchaser of those services”;
- **Written submission to Government of Scotland** in regards to their public [Equally Safe - challenging men’s demand for prostitution: consultation](#) seeking views on “how to challenge men’s demand for prostitution in Scotland, reducing the harms associated with prostitution and supporting women involved to exit.”
- **UNAIDS strategy planning:** SWAN Secretariat and members participated in numerous regional meetings and dialogues and contributed to the development of the new UNAIDS strategy
- **GFATM strategy planning:** SWAN Secretariat and members participated in numerous regional meetings and dialogues and contributed to the development of the new GFATM strategy
- **Statement:** A [public statements](#) on COVID19 and demands of sex workers was written focusing on the effects of the pandemic and the needs and demands of sex workers in CEECA.
- **Statement:** A [public statement](#) to call for stronger donor engagements and support for sex workers and their organisations was published.

2.3 Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders:

As a regional sex worker network, SWAN strongly values cooperation, partnerships and solidarity with other regional and global networks and NGOs representing key populations. In 2020, SWAN continued to work closely with its partners across the region and globally.

- SWAN is a part of a sex work consortium led by NSWP together with other regional networks: Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), Caribbean Sex Work Coalition (CSWC) and La Plataforma Latino América de Personas que EjeRcen el Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS). Through the Sex Worker Networks Consortium, we received our third grant from RCNF for 2019-2021, where SWAN is supporting national SWIT implementation in seven EECA countries. The Robert Carr Fund has provided additional funding for Covid-19 Emergency Activities in these seven countries. The top-up grants were distributed as small national grants to support the current needs of sex workers concerning the Covid-19 epidemic, including but not limited to emergency food packages, transport costs for collection and distribution of medications and personal protective equipments.



- Together with ICRSE, we collaborate and communicate regularly. In 2020 we issued a joint [paper on the COVID-19 crisis impact on access to health services for sex workers in Europe and Central Asia](#).
- SWAN participated and supported the campaign '[European Testing Week](#)' an initiative that was launched by the [EuroTEST initiative](#).

- We collaborate with regional key population networks (EHRA, ECOM, ENPUD, EWNA) on different regional causes:
 - Regional consortium (SWAN, ECOM, EHRA, AFEW International, Dance for Life, Teenergizer) conducted targeted campaigns to Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding their decision to abort HIV funding and raise the issues of worsening funding environment for key populations in the EECA region. The campaign included letters from the consortium, submissions, direct dialogue and oral statements, and an [Open letter to the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Collaborations](#) signed by numerous key populations and allies in the region.
 - SWAN joined EHRA led Radian programme as an expert partner on the sex work component in the project named '[Overcoming legal barriers for key populations - on the way to 90-90-90](#)' supported by Elton John Foundation. Project activities support groups in Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan to establish and run paralegal networks of key populations.

3. Strengthening SWAN as a sustainable, well-governed network responsive to its members' needs.

Sex worker-leadership and meaningful involvement of sex workers are core elements of SWAN. In 2020, SWAN continued to improve its governance and boost organisational strength.

3.1 Maintaining good governance of SWAN as a sex worker- led network and strengthening the SWAN Secretariat.

- The SWAN Steering Committee and Management Committee meetings: Due to travel restrictions, a physical meeting was not possible. However, web meetings were organised for both Committees with full participation of Committee members.
- Secretariat – new Programme Officers/Consultants: Trajche Jasnushev joined the SWAN team as the new Programme Officer. Additionally three independent consultants were engaged to collaborate in various SWAN activities such as developing briefing papers or act as experts in programmes.

3.2 Improving communication and increasing visibility about the needs and achievements of SWAN and its members.

SWAN website, listserv and social media accounts continuously store and share brief news stories and more in depth reports on the ongoing trends and activities in the region and globally, as well as examples of good practices from SWAN members, meetings and trainings SWAN organised or participated in, and key dates that are important for sex worker community. (i.e. [17th of December](#), The International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers and [2nd of June](#), The International Sex Workers' Day).

- Use of social media

SWAN Facebook and Twitter page engagements keep increasing. As of 31/12/2020, SWAN has:

- 3,684 followers on [Twitter](#).
- 1,378 likes on SWAN [Facebook](#) page.

- New SWAN webpage

After careful assessment and many discussions, a new website was designed and launched to keep our communications efforts up to date. Our new website is available in [English](#) as well as [Russian](#). We hope that the new design and improved structure will significantly improve the user experience.



OUR DONORS

The programmes reported on above have been implemented through the support of Open Society Foundations (OSF), Robert Carr Fund (RCF), EHRA-EECA Regional Platform and Red Umbrella Fund (RUF).

We thank our donors and allies for the collaboration and support!