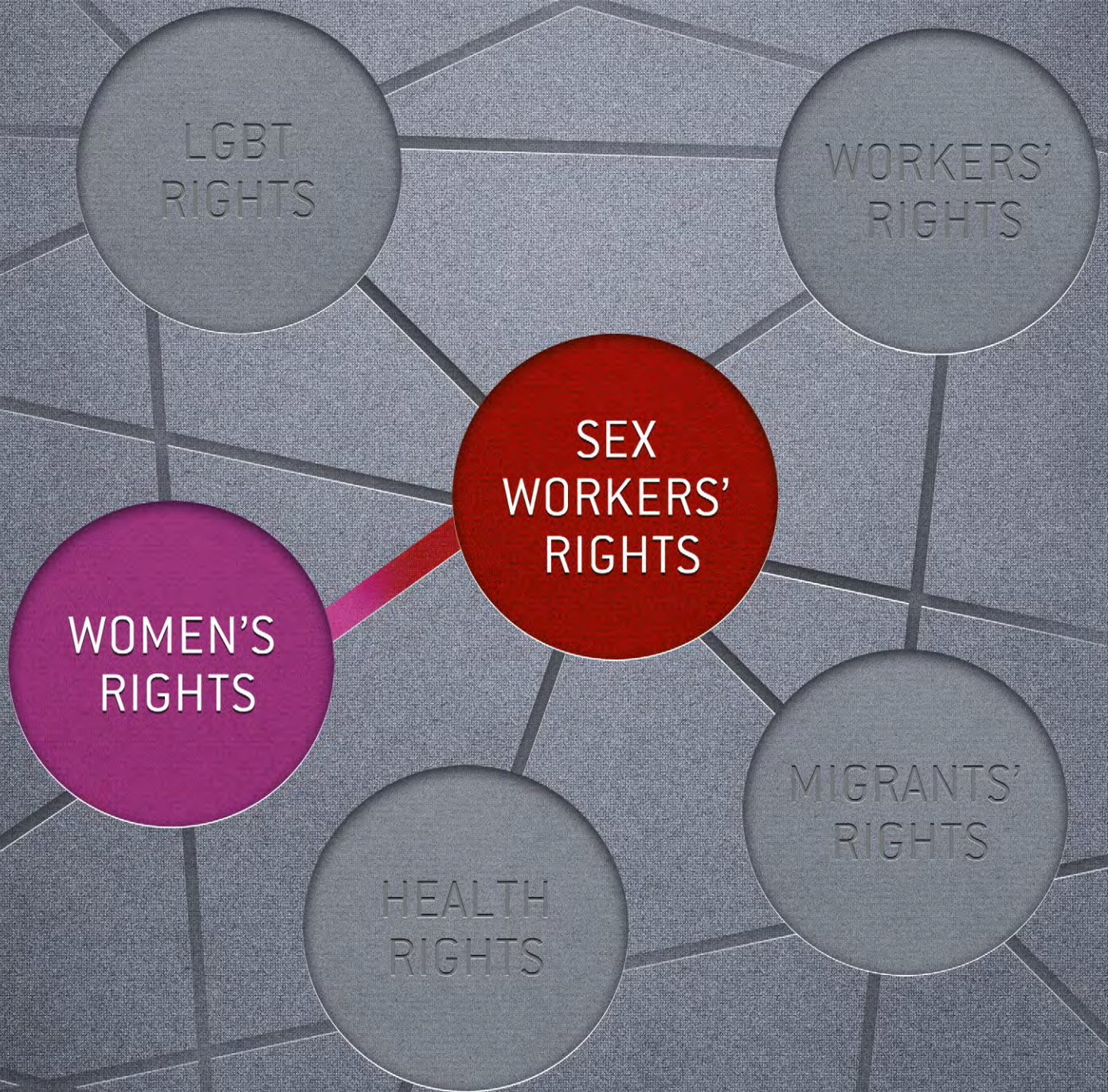


# FEMINISM NEEDS SEX WORKERS, SEX WORKERS NEED FEMINISM: TOWARDS A SEX-WORKER INCLUSIVE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT



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## **FOR AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS**

The struggle for sex workers' rights intersects with many other social movements. Contrary to the monolithic abolitionist discourse, which portrays all sex workers as "prostituted women" without agency, our communities are diverse and resilient. Sex workers are male, female and non-binary, LGBTQ, migrants and workers. Supporting sex workers' rights means understanding the diversity and complexity of our lives and involving sex workers from diverse communities in decision making, policy making and debates. This series of briefing papers will give sex workers, activists from other social movements and policy makers the tools to explore the intersection of sex workers' rights with other rights and social struggles such as those connected with LGBT people, women, workers, migrants and health.

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## **ABOUT ICRSE**

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) is a sex worker-led network representing more than 75 organisations led by or working with sex workers in Europe and Central Asia, as well as 150 individuals including sex workers, academics, trade unionists, human-rights advocates, and women's rights and LGBT rights activists. ICRSE opposes the criminalisation of sex work and calls for the removal of all punitive laws and regulations regarding and related to sex work as a necessary step to ensure that governments uphold the human rights of sex workers. As long as sex work is criminalised – directly or indirectly through laws and practices targeting sex workers, clients, or third parties – sex workers will be at increased risk of violence (including police violence), arrests, blackmail, deportations and other human rights violations.

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# **FEMINISM NEEDS SEX WORKERS, SEX WORKERS NEED FEMINISM: TOWARDS A SEX-WORKER INCLUSIVE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

**Sex workers in Europe and Central Asia often live and work in precarious and dangerous contexts. The reasons for this are the criminalisation of sex work, precarisation of labour, feminisation of poverty and structural, institutional and interpersonal violence against women and LGBT people. This briefing paper explores the intersection of feminist ideologies, women's rights and sex workers' rights, and the feminist ideals which are included and supported in sex work activism. It calls upon the feminist movement to consider the growing evidence in support of sex work decriminalisation, build an alliance with sex workers and their organisations, and actively support sex workers' rights and the decriminalisation of sex work.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Feminism has traditionally been a diverse social and political movement. It is made up of feminists who identify under different labels (liberal, radical, socialist-feminist, anti-capitalist feminist and more). Yet while there is little unity among feminists about a single definition of feminism, most can agree that feminism means equality among all genders and non-hierarchical practice of solidarity. Within this wide variety of forms and definitions of feminism, debates about sex work have often been an intense point of contention. Views within feminism are polarised about what labels to use ('prostitution' or 'sex work'); how to understand social relations in the sex industry; and how to address the situation of women engaged in sex work.

Many debates within the feminist movement have often been abstract and theoretical, disagreeing on whether to understand sex work as violence against women or as a form of labour. Sometimes, empirical evidence has been drawn upon to confirm these claims, but very often it has not been. Frequently, it has been claimed that the evidence is split in terms of the types of social and legal

remedies it recommends for improving the lives of women in the sex industry. Recently, however, there has been a dramatic expansion of available peer-reviewed, academic research on the topic. We now have a wide body of empirical data available, from which to draw conclusions about the appropriate strategies for ensuring the rights of sex workers. Put simply, these findings support the notion that decriminalisation protects sex workers' safety, health and wellbeing, while the criminalisation of sex workers, clients and third parties tends to harm them.<sup>1</sup> It is becoming clear that criminalisation, of any part of the sex industry tends to push sex workers into poverty, reduce their power in negotiations with clients, persecute them for working together (for safety), and lead to the deportation of undocumented migrant sex workers. Such academic evidence has also been reinforced by research and expertise produced by international bodies, human rights and health organisations, and sex worker rights groups themselves.

## FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON SEX WORK



**If we are going to call attacks on reproductive and sexual rights a “war on women,” then let’s talk about a war on women that has actual prisoners and a body count. It’s a war on the women engaged in sex work, waged by women who will not hesitate to use their opponents’ corpses as political props but refuse to listen to them while they are still alive and still here to fight.<sup>2</sup>**

**Melissa Gira Grant, sex workers’ rights activist**

Although there have been various – but for the most part Global North - feminist voices engaged in debates about the sex industry, the dominant positions are often described by dichotomies: with the debaters sometimes categorised as radical feminists vs sex radicals,<sup>3</sup> dominance vs liberal feminists,<sup>4</sup> neo-abolitionists vs non-abolitionists, among others.<sup>5</sup> While these binary categorisations do not always stand up to scrutiny, there are clear and oppositional differences between these feminists in relation to understandings of: consent; sexuality; gender norms; and most importantly, the appropriate role of criminal law to respond to violence and abuse occurring in the sex industry.

When analysing the two most prominent discourses in the present paper, we will use umbrella terms to describe the dominant feminist positions. However, it has to be acknowledged that the use of this binary distinction between “radical feminism”

and “sex work-as-work feminism” only focuses on the key common arguments within the two groups. In fact, there are numerous diverse voices that approach sex work from different theoretical and ideological perspectives within both those positions.

This section highlights the core arguments of competing feminist discourses on prostitution and sex work. While it separates these into two essential ‘camps’, it should be noted that 1) these two positions are not equally supported by feminists and 2) that despite the appearance of polarisation, feminist perspectives on prostitution to some extent have established significant common ground.<sup>6</sup> This common ground is routinely made invisible within the debates on sex work. Both condemn the current legal policies enforcing criminal sanctions against sex workers and both recognise that sex workers are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, an issue largely neglected in policy-making.

## **RADICAL FEMINISM**

Radical feminists were some of the first voices to be heard in debates surrounding the global sex trade and prostitution in the international arena. They have often made claims that all forms of prostitution are inherently exploitative and degrading to women and constitute gender-based violence. As such, they call themselves ‘abolitionists’, harking back to campaigns against trans-Atlantic slavery and arguing that sex work should be abolished. They characterise prostitution as an abuse of human rights, regardless of whether it is forced or voluntary.

Such feminists view prostitution in this way due to their understanding of female sexuality. According to dominance feminist Catharine MacKinnon, radical feminist theory “treats sexuality as a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive of the meaning of gender.”<sup>7</sup> This approach sees sexuality as gendered dominance and submission, lying at the root of women’s subordination to men. Under patriarchy, women are first forced to submit to male domination but, eventually, they submit to their own subordination. Women are gradually reduced from “a whole person to vagina and womb”<sup>8</sup> rendering them fit only for sex-labour.

In this vein, radical feminists do not accept commercial sex as a legitimate form of work, because it involves women’s sexuality: the source of their subordination. Thus, prostitution, for radical feminists, is subordination itself. They claim that sex is integral to the self of women, and therefore more damaging when alienated than other human activities which people undertake for waged labour (work).<sup>9</sup> Describing it in this way, they link prostitution (and often regard it as indistinguishable) with practices they define as “abuses of women” and “abuses of sex” including rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse of children, and pornography.<sup>10</sup>

‘Abolitionist’, or ‘neo-abolitionists’, have, in many contexts, formed an uncommon alliance with neoconservatives and evangelical Christians.<sup>11</sup> Conservatives and

Christian neo-abolitionists, many of whom oppose same-sex marriage and abortion,<sup>12</sup> believe that prostitution is wrong as it does not comply with traditional ideals of gender and sexuality, and social values rooted in heterosexual, patriarchal marriage and family. Hence, they frame prostitution as a moral issue and seek to abolish it to achieve social purity.

While radical feminist campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s were focused on the abolition of prostitution, in the last two decades this has coalesced more around the notion of 'sex trafficking'. The abolitionist movement – to a significant degree – managed to reconstruct the understanding of trafficking in the popular imagination to trafficking specifically for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Now, frequently when people refer to 'trafficking' the image that is conjured up is that of forced labour and migration into prostitution specifically, rather than into agriculture, domestic service or cockle picking, for example. This blurs the distinctions between forced and voluntary sex work, and conflates migration, sex work and trafficking in public discourse, policy-making and police practice.<sup>13</sup>

Neo-abolitionist groups in the USA and elsewhere have achieved numerous legal victories. They contributed to the enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000<sup>14</sup> that considered all migrant sex workers, even those not coerced, as trafficked. Importantly for the rest of the world, the act also included a provision that authorised the President to deny U.S. assistance and support to any government not making significant efforts to adhere to U.S.-defined "minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking."<sup>15</sup> Several laws adopted during the Bush administration also mirrored the neo-abolitionist conflation of sex work, migration and trafficking, and pressured foreign governments and civil society organisations to adopt anti-prostitution views and measures. Anti-prostitution funding conditionalities led to the withdrawal of rights-based legal, social and HIV-related services from sex workers, downsizing of programmes and the frequent use of neo-abolitionist rescue campaigns across the world.<sup>16</sup>

The neo-abolitionist movement has also inspired the signature abolitionist feminist policy, the criminalisation of the purchase, but not the sale of, sex. This has become colloquially known as the 'Swedish model', since the policy was first introduced in 1999 in this Nordic country. It has since been exported to several countries and gained increasing popularity as a policy framework across Europe since the early 2000s. However, while these legal 'reforms' attempted to address clients, they did little to remove the criminalising provisions that directly affected sex workers. In 2005, Lithuania penalised clients, whilst also retaining the penalisation of sex workers. In 2009, both Norway and Iceland adopted laws criminalising the purchase of sex, while simultaneously maintaining other laws, such as strict third-party regulations, which have led to sex workers being charged with a criminal offence simply for working together for safety. In June 2015, a law intended to fight human trafficking came into force in Northern Ireland, which contained a clause banning the purchase of sexual services. This was despite the fact that academic

research commissioned by the Ministry of Justice, carried out and presented to parliament by researchers from Queen's University Belfast ahead of the vote on the bill, had shown that 98 percent of sex workers were against criminalising the purchase of sexual services.<sup>17</sup>

While proposals for criminalising the purchase of sex arose in Sweden in the mid-1990s, they did not gain substantial support at first, taking four years for the law to be implemented. The public attitude to these legal reforms of prostitution changed considerably during this time. This was, in large part, due to new dynamics of migration, negative perceptions of mainly Eastern-European migrant women, the panic surrounding drug use (xenophobically associated with Sweden's migrant population), and the general increase in racism and anti-migrant sentiment in society.<sup>18</sup> The model also enabled the promotion of Swedish culture and Sweden's "moral righteousness" above others, allowing "Sweden [to] portray itself as a kind of moral beacon that others [particularly the European Union] will want to follow."<sup>19</sup>

In the neo-abolitionist discourse, the sex-worker is perceived as an object, not a subject. As commodified object, she cannot speak for herself. Thus, radical feminists speak on her behalf, representing the 'prostituted woman's' best interest. This means that those who speak on behalf of alleged 'victims of sex trafficking' are rarely the victims themselves. Instead, women tend to be spoken for by international or national non-government organizations (NGOs) based in the Global North, such as Canada and the United States. Rescuing and intervening on behalf of victims of trafficking has become a multi-million dollar enterprise, named by Laura Agustín as the 'rescue industry'.<sup>20</sup>

This kind of activity often also overlaps with celebrity humanitarianism, which tends to sensationalise issues surrounding sex work and trafficking, and fails to give an in-depth analysis of the root causes of trafficking, such as economic disparities and repressive migration control measures. Most recently in August 2015, Hollywood stars including Lena Dunham and Meryl Streep urged Amnesty International to reject a proposal to endorse the decriminalisation of sex work.<sup>21</sup> The quest for abolishing "modern slavery" has attracted numerous stars since the 1980s, including Demi Moore, Ashton Kutcher and Sean Penn, to join in the fight. Due to their celebrity status they have attracted much attention for the anti-trafficking cause, serving as supporters for abolitionist activists in gaining attention from donors, decision-makers and the public. Yet while their voices can be heard loudly in the global public arena, they rarely know much about the everyday lives of sex workers and migrant sex workers.<sup>22</sup> Although they could play an important role in amplifying social struggles to improve sex workers' lives, celebrity humanitarianism often oversimplifies both the problem and the solution, shifting attention away from structural drivers such as poverty, economic inequality between the Global North and South, gender inequality, and border and migration control.<sup>23</sup>



## 'SEX-WORK' FEMINISM

Contrary to the core ideology of radical feminists, the 'sex work as work' perspective holds that sex work is a form of work. Within this perspective, there are – again – a number of different positions. Some simply think that sex work is work and should be treated like any other form of labour, citing that the only reasons it is treated differently is due to the illiberal moral approach towards sexuality. Others think that while sex work is as legitimate as any other form of work, there is an inherent problem with work in capitalist societies. That is, the fact that being forced to work in order to survive limits people's options, so work should be critiqued as a social institution. 'Sex-work is work' feminists differ in the degree to which they see sex work as something which may be empowering or an overall positive experience (sex-radical feminists), and those who think that sex work is largely a negative experience, similar to many other forms of precarious work under capitalism. Most agree that while prostitution is always work, all types of work are shaped by the classed, gendered and racialised social relations in which they take place. Similarly, most agree that sex work is complex and that sexuality and sexual activity can serve simultaneously as a site of exploitation and victimisation and as a site of agency.



Sign realised by Glasgow Feminist Collective and Sex Worker Open University for a sex worker-inclusive bloc at Reclaim the night, Glasgow, 2015

Despite these differences within the 'sex-work-as-work' perspective, feminists taking this position in general share a number of core principles. The first is that, especially when faced with limited economic options, women should have the right to work in the sex industry free of prosecution. As such, 'sex-work is work' feminists argue that governments should eliminate laws that criminalise voluntary sex work and should aim at reducing the stigma associated with it. Most argue that sex work should be regulated according to existing labour law in any one country or region. Second, consent is at the centre of their analysis. They define sex work as a consensual exchange of money or other goods for sexual services,

thus constructing sex workers as subjects who have agency and power to claim consent. Simultaneously, however, most recognise that consent is not an absolute and not everyone has equal bargaining power in transactional sex (depending on their class or migrant status, for example). Third, as opposed to radical feminists, sex-work-as-work feminists give importance to making space for sex workers to speak for themselves. In fact, many theorists of these ideas and participants in its accompanying activism are themselves sex workers. Radical feminists have often attempted to depict the sex worker movement as solely a North American and Western European phenomenon with a Eurocentric approach in order to discredit sex worker voices as not speaking for those they claim are the most oppressed. This undermines the extensive and difficult organising undertaken by sex workers across the world, particularly in the Global South. Though the first two World Whores Congresses, organised by the International Committee for Prostitutes Rights (ICPR), in 1985 and 1986 involved no formal participation by Global South sex workers and the “dominance of the West was evident”, in 1997, the dominance of the West, and the United States in particular, was challenged dramatically by South and Central American sex worker attendees.<sup>24</sup> Today, sex workers’ movements and organisations exist from Uruguay through India and Japan to Turkey, allowing for the mobilisation of various sex worker movements and sub-communities representing the interests of sex workers of all genders.

## **THE GROWING EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE DECRIMINALISATION OF SEX WORK**

In contrast to the growth of the popularity of policies which seek to target the purchase of sex, growing support for sex workers’ rights has been expressed by a large number of NGOs, international bodies, decision-makers and academics over the last decade.

This positive trend is reflected in a wealth of alliances forged between the sex workers’ movement and activists from different sectors of civil society. Numerous organisations working in the fields of human rights, health, LGBTQ rights, women’s rights, or migrants’ rights, as well as trade unionists and representatives of the workers’ movement have expressed their support of sex work decriminalisation and spoken out against the adverse effects of the criminalisation of sex workers, their clients and third parties. These include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, AIDS Action Europe, CORRELATION network – European Network Social Inclusion and Health, International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network. Several United Nations (UN) agencies, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have also voiced their concerns about sex workers’ vulnerabilities to HIV, pointing to the criminalisation and repression of sex work and the attendant stigma, violence, and discrimination faced by sex workers

as the main factors contributing to increased risks of infection in the sex worker community.

Several academics have also reiterated the importance of maintaining a distinction between sex work policies and anti-trafficking measures, arguing for an evidence-informed approach as the key means for enhancing sex workers' safety and wellbeing, and promoting their human and labour rights.<sup>25</sup>

“ **The academic literature – with a small number of detractors – very clearly demonstrates a strong consensus around the fact that harm reduction, beginning with decriminalisation of all elements of sex work, is key for ensuring the well-being of all sex workers, including the most vulnerable.**<sup>26</sup>

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This growing body of evidence involves detailed analyses of legal frameworks governing sex workers' living and working conditions, and the different factors affecting sex workers' health, wellbeing, and access to rights.<sup>27</sup> It is increasingly clear that the vast majority of academics and researchers studying sex work support rights-based approaches to sex work, oppose the criminalisation of sex workers and their clients, and denounce the lack of evidence that exists to show the benefits of legal models such as the 'Swedish Model' for sex workers' wellbeing. Indeed, this model has been carefully studied both by sex workers' rights organisations and academics.<sup>28</sup> Contrary to widely-promoted beliefs, there is no evidence that the implementation of the Swedish Model has contributed to either a decrease in the number of sex workers and sex work venues, or to any significant reduction in the trafficking of human beings in Sweden.<sup>29</sup> Empirical data, research and sex worker testimonies actually demonstrate the negative impact of the Swedish Model on sex workers' health, safety and human rights. For instance, Jay Levy's research, based on three-and-a-half years of participant observation at street sex work venues in Stockholm and interviews with sex workers, service providers, NGO professionals, police and other stakeholders, clearly shows that the legal framework's unintended consequences are the limitations to the distribution of safety information and condoms for sex workers by service providers and a continuing antagonistic relationship between police and sex workers.<sup>30</sup>



Protesters in front of the Swedish Embassy in London, in 2013. Photo credit: English Collective of Prostitutes

The criminalisation of clients in Sweden furthermore has pushed sex workers underground and frequently forces them to operate in unsafe or clandestine conditions. This has resulted in sex workers being rendered more vulnerable to violence and harassment and affected by increased stigmatisation and discrimination. A report evaluating the effects of the Swedish Model, published in 2015 by the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, RFSU, indicated a significant rise of negative attitudes towards sex work and sex workers.<sup>31</sup>

Decriminalisation, the removal of all laws that criminalise any aspect of sex work, is recognised as the best legal framework to advance sex workers' human and labour rights by the global sex worker movement. When sex work is governed through the same laws as other professions, workers are able to work as independent contractors or as employees, negotiate employment contracts and challenge exploitative labour practices. Research has also shown that, following decriminalisation, sex workers working in New Zealand found it easier to refuse clients when they did not want them,<sup>32</sup> were more likely to report crimes and that police were also more likely to take action.<sup>33</sup> The decriminalisation of sex work, along with a community empowerment approach to HIV, is also one of the most effective strategies to limit the impact of HIV on sex workers.<sup>34</sup>

## THE FEMINIST IDEALS OF SEX WORK ACTIVISM

Sex-work-as-work feminists have spoken out against human rights violations, violence and detrimental legal frameworks affecting sex workers for a long time. However, the reaction from the broader feminist movement has been rather mixed and not always welcoming to the inclusion of sex workers. Although sex workers and their allies have made invaluable alliances with feminists and women's rights advocates worldwide, they have also often suffered rejection and ridicule

at the hands of some radical feminist scholars and activists. In the following section, we aim to highlight how global sex worker activism reflects many widely supported feminist values and how the central demand of the movement - the decriminalisation of sex work - contributes to the safety, rights and collective power of sex workers, and therefore to gender equality.

## **SUPPORTING AGENCY AND SELF-DETERMINATION**

Sex worker activists and radical feminists have long been engaged in a debate over the agency of women in sex work.<sup>35</sup> Analogous to their disagreement over the framing of issues relating to the cross-border movement of sex workers, the two groups also have starkly dissenting views on whether one can recognise sex work as legitimate work and a respected choice or whether it symbolises coercion and a wholesale lack of agency.<sup>36</sup>

In other arenas, feminists have traditionally supported women's self-determination over both their work and their bodies. Yet, sex work is the only area of work in which radical feminists reject the possibility that women have the ability to consent and make choices. Since abolitionists argue that sex work is inherently abusive and harmful, they hold that sex workers cannot consent to their exploitation and as such, that sex work can never be a legitimate enactment of agency and choice. Some of these scholars go even further in stating that even if sex workers made a genuinely free choice to participate in sex work, their freely made choice hinders the freedom of other women, and therefore their choice should not be deemed legitimate.<sup>37</sup>

This ideological view on women's agency influences how sex workers are depicted, misrepresented and frequently silenced by radical feminists. Radical feminists often make the claim that women "who believe" they choose prostitution suffer from a "false consciousness", "cognitive dissonance" or the inability to recognise their own oppression.<sup>38</sup> Hence, they hold that their consent cannot be valid. Some radical feminist nevertheless admit that sex workers can engage in "voluntary prostitution",<sup>39</sup> but they state that they only represent a small minority in the West. This makes the assumption that choice is available in the Global North, but not in the Global South, reinforcing racist representations of women and sex workers from the Majority World.<sup>40</sup>

Constructing sex workers as passive victims, radical feminists thus disregard sex workers as potential partners in discussions about their situations and in policy-making. Those that attempt to speak out are de-legitimated as not 'authentic' or as an unrepresentative minority. Worse still, sex workers who are organising to change their conditions have been labelled as part of the 'pimp lobby'. For example, in France, sex worker activists were called "pimps dressed as prostitutes or prostitutes' allies" by French politician Henriette Zoughebi when STRASS, the French sex worker union, held a conference on sex work in the Senate in 2009.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, MEP Mary Honeyball tried to discredit ICRSE and other organisations, who openly opposed her resolution to the European Parliament recommending the criminalisation of clients, by describing them as "organisations comprised of pimps."

The existence of a vibrant sex worker movement in itself contradicts all these claims against the validity of sex workers' agency, as it testifies for sex workers' resilience and ability to organise for their rights, even from marginalised positions. Contrary to radical feminists, sex worker rights activists acknowledge sex workers as experts in their own lives. They affirm sex workers' ability to claim consent to sell sex, though they also emphasise that many choose sex work from the limited opportunities they are presented by a capitalist society.

## COMBATting SEXISM AND MISOGYNY

Although sex work has been depicted by radical feminists as an institution that upholds patriarchy and white supremacy, radical feminists themselves have frequently contributed to creating and perpetrating sexist, racist and misogynist images of women selling sexual services. It is often claimed by abolitionist feminists that sex workers "sell their bodies" or "sell themselves." In addition to ignoring the labour process of sex work and the fact that all workers use their bodies to sell their labour, this reduces sex workers to their body parts and sexuality. These discourses also portray sexist images of sex workers as vulnerable and powerless victims, a classic patriarchal trope which denies women power and agency.<sup>42</sup> Several US government publications also use sexualised images of women, reinforcing traditional gender and sexual norms and using visual silencing of victims on their brochures.<sup>43</sup> Some even explicitly racialise the victim and the perpetrator, for instance with dark male hands covering the mouth of a white woman.<sup>44</sup> Not only are these images deeply offensive for sex workers or victims of trafficking, but they also regularly exclude the perspectives of cisgender male and trans sex workers, reinforcing the dominant cissexist and heteronormative image of sex workers as cisgender, heterosexual women. Creating and maintaining these stereotypes plays into the hands of patriarchal attempts to control female sexuality and perpetuate racist notions of masculinity and femininity.



Les Roses d'Acier (Steel Roses), established in Paris in November 2014 by Chinese sex workers protest against the law proposal to criminalise clients of sex workers in front of the National Assembly. Photo credit: 8 Mars Pour TouTEs facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Collectif8MarsPourToutes>)

Sexism and misogyny are often described as deeply embedded in sex work, however they arise as responses to many of women's acts and choices, whether that is wearing make-up, having an abortion, or selling sex. Sex worker rights activists therefore name misogynist sentiments and acts as the problem, and reject calls to change or eliminate behaviours that "provoke" misogyny. They argue that to attempt to eliminate sex work on the grounds that it supposedly provokes misogyny is to agree with those who state that some women's actions – such as selling sex – are essentially deserving of misogyny.

Contrary to the radical feminist notion of sex workers as occupying a submissive gender role by surrendering themselves to men's dominance, sex workers challenge gender expectations in various ways. They occupy public and nocturnal spaces and defy the idea that women should not stay out at night without being accompanied by a man. In addition, sex workers also demand compensation for something that is traditionally imposed on women as both emotional labour and a "natural function" in heterosexual sex taking place within marriage and for reproduction.

## **ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Violence against women is defined by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".<sup>45</sup> Other definitions also emphasise that gender-based violence targets a particular gender disproportionately and use a non-binary phrasing of gender. For instance, under the European Union's Victims' Rights Directive gender-based violence is understood as "violence that is directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity or gender expression or that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately",<sup>46</sup> including a reference to trans people.

In opposition to the radical feminist standpoint that sex work is a form of sexual violence, sex workers' rights activists and sex-work-as-work feminists reason that voluntary sex work does not fundamentally, always and already involve violence. Instead they point to the ways in which sex workers are exposed to real, concrete physical and sexual violence due to criminalisation and intersecting oppressions such as sexism, whorephobia, homophobia, transphobia, racism and classism. Globally, sex workers have a 45 to 75 percent lifetime prevalence of workplace violence and 32 to 55 percent chance of experiencing sexual violence in a given year.<sup>47</sup> Sex workers are not only vulnerable to violence by clients or people posing as clients, but often more so from private individuals, the police, immigration officials, and the judiciary. Claiming that violence is inherent in sex work renders invisible the actual violence that sex workers face and also serves to normalise violence against them. This contributes to rapes, sexual assaults and even the murders of sex workers often going unrecognised and unpunished.



Photo credit: STAR-STAR, Macedonia

Radical feminists claim that one of their key concerns is violence against female sex workers. Yet the legal frameworks promoted by them – namely the criminalisation of clients - have been proved to be detrimental to sex workers' health and safety.<sup>48</sup> The Swedish model that originally aimed at protecting sex workers by reinforcing gender equality, in reality appears to have pushed sex workers underground, exposing them to violence and harassment and setting greater barriers for them when attempting to access legal or medical services. These real-life consequences of sex work criminalisation are rarely analysed in radical feminist discourses. Similarly, little or no attention is paid to violence against trans sex workers. Though existing research is scarce on the extent of violence trans sex workers face, evidence confirms that they have for a long time been victims of horrifying hate violence, including beatings, mutilation, rape and murder in many parts of the world. According to the Trans Murder Monitoring of Transgender Europe, between 2008 and 2015, 65 percent of sex workers among the reported cases of murdered trans people with known occupations have been sex workers.<sup>49</sup> Hate crimes also disproportionately burden the community due to institutional transphobia and whorephobia, the impunity of perpetrators, and often high visibility and exposure of street-based trans sex workers to violence from law enforcement, organised gangs and people posing as clients.

Critically, police violence is one of the most pressing concerns for sex workers globally. In Europe, sex workers report alarmingly high levels of physical or sexual violence from police officers. In a research study by the Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN), 41.7 percent of sex worker respondents reported having experienced physical violence by police in the year before the survey and 36.5 percent reported having experienced sexual violence from police in the same time span.<sup>50</sup> Police often use arrests and detentions as a tool to control sex workers or retaliate against sex workers who resist their abuse. The targeting of sex workers not only occurs at their workplaces, but also outside of them, manifesting itself in gender and racial profiling. Sex workers from Central-Eastern Europe and



Central-Asia report that they are policed even when they are not working. Roma cis-women for instance, report facing constant harassment from the police in their daily lives.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to explicit police violence, sex workers in many European and Central Asian countries are subjected to routine fines either for non-compliance with prostitution laws or misdemeanour offences, such as littering, public indecency, lack of ID documents, and traffic violations – though this can also include more serious offences, such as drug possession. This policing of sex workers increases their economic insecurity and precariousness, resulting in limited bargaining power when it comes to negotiation with clients. Another major consequence of police harassment of sex workers and/or their clients is the displacement of sex workers to more dangerous areas.<sup>52</sup> As police repression prevents sex workers from working in groups and having opportunities for assessing clients, sex workers are pushed to more dangerous working environments, where their safety is under threat. They are also less likely to be reached by health and harm-reduction services.

## **OPPOSING PRECARISATION OF LABOUR AND FEMINISATION OF POVERTY**

The precarisation of work – processes producing a lack of labour protection, insecurity, instability, and social or economic vulnerability – has been a growing concern for feminist academics and activists over the past three decades, intensifying in the current context of austerity and crisis.<sup>53</sup> When discussing precarious working conditions, many academics and activists point to the feminisation of poverty, an idea dating back to the 1970s and popularised in the 1990s by United Nation agencies. Globally, women are more likely to be poor, employed in precarious, low-paid labour, and less likely to have access to land, loans and education. Precarious employment is characterised by non-standard forms of work, insecurity and exploitative conditions. This often includes illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment, but also comprises of home work, temp-work, subcontracting and self-employment.<sup>54</sup>

When feminists recognise sex work as work, they also emphasise that sex work in most cases is a precarious form of labour. Sex workers, like many other workers with limited economic options, including women with low socio-economic status, undocumented migrants and trans people, are in many contexts pushed out from the formal economy, being left without labour protection. Already marginalised groups have been further affected by the economic crisis in Europe. Since the 2008 economic downturn, many European states have implemented austerity measures which significantly targeted social and health budgets, social protection and education. This has contributed to the increase of poverty and social exclusion, inequalities and unemployment in Europe that all shrink people's opportunities, especially those who are traditionally excluded from the labour market.

Consequently, women's employment in the formal economy has decreased due to dramatic cuts in public sector jobs where women form the majority of employees. Women are also hit hard by cuts in essential social services, such as childcare and health services. In the rhetoric surrounding state support and 'benefits' across the Western world, the stigma of female poverty and single motherhood has become embedded in public policy in many countries: women are all too often the victims of supposedly gender neutral measures, such as austerity policies.<sup>55</sup> In the UK, it was for instance estimated that women are bearing 70 percent of the budget cuts, with the cuts particularly impacting single mothers.<sup>56</sup>

As a result, we see rising numbers of sex workers in countries with declining availability of jobs in the formal economy, for instance in Greece. In the crisis-stricken country, where previously the majority of sex workers were Eastern-European migrants, now Greek national women form the largest sex worker group.<sup>57</sup> In the UK, the majority of sex workers have previously worked in health, social care, education, childcare or charities,<sup>58</sup> sectors which are feminised and which have seen severe cuts in recent years.

Precarisation and exploitation disproportionately affects (undocumented) migrant workers. Many of those seeking refuge in and migrating to Europe choose selling sexual services out of very limited options to earn their living. As a result, in a lot of European countries migrants may constitute up to 75 per cent of sex workers.<sup>59</sup> They may lack permanent, ongoing documentation and may be subjected to violence and labour exploitation. While sex work is not criminalised in the majority of the European states, migrant sex work is often regulated through immigration policies and therefore indirectly criminalised. In Finland and Sweden, for example, selling sex is a sufficient reason for deportation, and in many countries immigration officials are part of the policing of sex work. Also, in countries where sex work is legalised, such as Austria or the Netherlands, working permits in the sex industry for non-EU migrants are unavailable or very difficult to obtain. This leads to migrants working in more precarious sections as they remain outside the protection of the law.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the gravity of the situation of migrant sex workers, the increasing use of the "trafficking" concept and legal framework has failed to protect and support victims of trafficking and migrant sex workers. On the contrary, it has frequently been used as an anti-sex work and anti-migration tool, justifying raids in sex work venues and deportations of migrant workers.<sup>61</sup> Police raids and so-called rescue operations in sex work settings have not only been proved inefficient in identifying actual victims of trafficking, but have also undermined sex workers' safety, deprived them of their earnings, and forced them to work underground or in isolation whenever their workplaces are shut down following police actions.

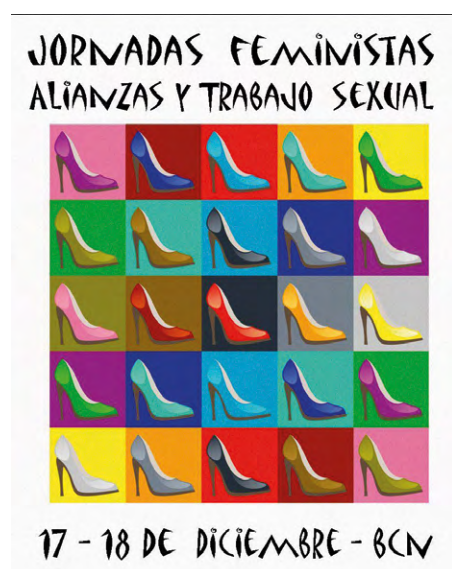
When understanding precarious working conditions in the sex industry, the analysis must also focus on the regulatory frameworks in place. In countries

where third parties are criminalised, work in the informal sector or outside the formal economy leads to insecure, irregular and flexible labour, lack of contractual arrangements with third parties who manage the sex industry and hazardous working conditions. In environments where sex work is legal under compliance with certain regulations, such as The Netherlands or Germany, sex work has remained a stigmatised profession and has not reached equality status to other autonomous professions. In many states, sex workers have to pay taxes despite the fact that they do not enjoy labour rights. For instance, in Austria, the Ministry of Finance declared that even if the sex worker is considered to be employed under taxation law, this does not mean that sex work is automatically considered to be a gainful employment under labour law.

Self-employment of sex workers is also common in legalised settings. In some cases, it is the only lawful form of employment for sex workers, such as in Hungary. Although self-employment is sometimes framed as a form of employment that increases the freedoms for workers, in reality poverty rates are higher among self-employed workers.<sup>62</sup> Self-employed sex workers are not fully covered by labour laws and policies, do not access the full range of benefits and entitlements waged workers can and often they cannot organise collectively as workers to better their working conditions and to end exploitative practices.

## A FEMINIST MOVEMENT THAT SEX WORKERS WANT TO SEE

Sex workers and their organisations have called upon feminists, LGBT and human rights advocates to join their fight against criminalisation, stigma, exclusion and violence by practicing solidarity with sex workers, in part by incorporating the voices and demands of sex workers into their own campaigns. Several feminists and women's rights organisations have supported campaigns of sex workers against



Flyer of the 'Feminist Conference: Alliances and Sex Work', organised on 17-18 December 2015, in Barcelona (Spain). Photo credit: <http://trabajosexual.org/>

attempts to criminalise sex workers themselves, their clients and third parties. Many women's rights organisations have supported initiatives that try to include sex workers' demands when their lives and livelihood are discussed in the international arena. In 2014, ICRSE mobilised sex worker allies to oppose the so called 'Honeyball Report', a resolution before the European Parliament on prostitution and sexual exploitation, developed by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Mary Honeyball, which conflated sex work with slavery and called for the criminalisation of sex workers' clients. In just a few weeks, ICRSE drafted a letter against the resolution, which was then endorsed and signed by 560 organisations - including national feminist groups such as the German Women's Council and the Romanian Feminist Centre.

In 2015, Amnesty International voted on the adoption of a "Draft policy on state obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of sex workers." The policy led to a clash between neo-abolitionists and 'sex-work feminists' and Amnesty International received a great deal of support and endorsements from many civil society actors, including women's rights organisations. A petition by NSWP to call on Amnesty's delegates to adopt the draft policy received over 10,000 signatories, and an open letter by ICRSE in support of the policy was signed by nearly 250 groups, including global organisations, such as the Association for Women's Rights in Development, the Global Fund for Women, the International Women's Health Coalition, the International Community of Women Living with HIV and national alliances, like the Federation for Women and Family Planning (Poland).

## **LISTEN TO SEX WORKERS AND CAMPAIGN AGAINST CRIMINALISATION**

Women's rights advocates who have backed the sex worker movement's demands have been recognising sex workers' claims that any form of sex work criminalisation has major negative effects on sex workers' rights. In Europe, criminalising sex work is achieved through the criminalisation of sex workers, e.g. by outlawing soliciting or advertising, the criminalisation of their clients, or the criminalisation of third parties by penalising owners, bosses, managers, administrators, procurers, or landlords through criminal or administrative laws and by-laws. Furthermore, sex workers may be indirectly criminalised through the criminalisation of behaviours and activities adopted by marginalised and vulnerable communities, such as the criminalisation of drug use and possession, the criminalisation of certain sexual orientations or gender identities, as well as homelessness.

Sex work criminalisation disproportionately burdens different sub-groups of women. Similarly to how sexual and reproductive health advocates know that poor women without access to international travel or private doctors are exposed to the highest risks when having abortion, sex worker rights activists also emphasise that the most precarious sex workers are affected by criminalisation the most. Detentions, raids, deportations and evictions often excessively target

(undocumented) migrant sex workers, street-based sex workers, trans sex workers and sex workers who use drugs as they are often more visible to law enforcement than other sex worker sub-communities and suffer from intersectional stigma and bias. These communities, in many countries, are exposed to social cleansing actions in gentrifying areas, police extortion and raids, detentions, arrests, and forced HIV and STI testing.

Criminalisation by the state is a systematic effort to punish sex workers who do not conform to the normalised ideal of reproductive, monogamous sex between committed heterosexuals and binary gender roles. Similarly to how sex workers fall short of complying with these cissexist and heteronormative criteria, LGBT people are also seen as engaging in sexual practices that do not fall under the category of heterosexual sex taking place within marriage and for reproduction. As a consequence, various aspects of non-conforming identity and orientation – including sexual orientation, gender identity, and engagement in sex work – remain criminalised globally through formally existing laws and other legal measures and forms of oppression. LGBT people are often policed not only by anti-LGBT, cross-dressing laws but by anti-sex work laws and policing practices as well – for instance, through the common practice of harassing ‘walking-while-trans’ that targets trans women based on the perception that they are all sex workers.<sup>63</sup>

Historically, sex workers have been among the populations that have been disproportionately affected by HIV. Until today, in many countries of the region, HIV prevalence among sex workers of all genders is considerably higher than in the general population, although they engage in safer sex behaviours. Feminist allies and sexual and reproductive rights activists have been vocally supporting the decriminalisation of sex work, as they understand that criminalising legal frameworks triggers discrimination, abuse, and other forms of violence against sex workers by police, clients, third parties or the media, further contributing to their marginalisation. The overall stigma and human rights violations have far-reaching implications with regard to HIV risks, since they deter sex workers from using healthcare facilities and significantly impede the accessibility of HIV prevention, testing, treatment, care, and support.<sup>64</sup>

Those feminists who recognise sex work as a form of labour, generally oppose carceral feminism.<sup>65</sup> Carceral feminism is an approach based on the belief that increased policing, prosecution and imprisonment are the primary solutions to violence against women. What this standpoint does not address is that police are often the perpetrators of violence themselves, regularly targeting trans women, women from low socio-economic background or migrants, and their actions often involve bias on the basis of class and race. Carceral feminism also ignores that policing and criminalisation have a different impact on less wealthy, more marginalised women than on middle-class, white women. Victims of gender-based violence or trafficking, who are queers, immigrants, women of colour or trans, or have other intersectional vulnerabilities, such as homeless women or women who

use drugs, might not be seen as eligible of the victim status, and therefore they might not benefit from the same police protection and victim support. They can be even further deprived of their rights by arrest, detention, deportation or violence.

Seeing imprisonment as a primary means to end violence against women neglects the fact that the prison industrial complex is a patriarchal institution and prisons are always sites of institutional and interpersonal violence. Besides the negative real-life effects for marginalised women, calls for increased policing also contribute to the justification of large budgets for police and anti-trafficking measures, while long-term organising of sex workers' groups against violence, community programming, shelters or legal aid are lacking much needed financial resources.

## **OPPOSE REPRESSIVE MIGRATION CONTROL**

'Sex-work feminists' furthermore challenge the anti-trafficking rhetoric in that it side-lines issues that are relevant for sex workers. Focusing its attention on criminal responses to sex work and trafficking, it does not address the abusive system of migration control, such as repressive visa requirements or lack of labour protection. It also fails to give a detailed analysis of migrants' diverse understanding and experience of vulnerability and resilience and criminalises specifically gendered and sexuality-related forms of migration in terms of trafficking and exploitation. "Sexual humanitarian social interventions", as Nicola Mai<sup>66</sup> phrases anti-trafficking efforts, only categorise certain migrants as "deserving victims", leave the majority of migrants without appropriate support and real help, worsening migrants' vulnerability to exploitation.

## **INCLUDE TRANS PEOPLE IN YOUR MOVEMENTS**

Sex worker rights advocates contradict the core ideals of so called Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF) and Sex Work Exclusionary Radical Feminism (SWERF). These often loosely organised collectives, frequently going hand-in hand and claiming that they are radical feminists, spread messages of hate and exclusion against transgender women and cisgender female sex workers in particular, and transgender people and sex workers as a whole. Some TERFs claim that trans women are would-be rapists, that they are "men invading women's spaces" and "forcing penises on lesbians";<sup>67</sup> thus reducing trans women to the genitals in a similar way to how SWERFs refer to sex workers as selling their bodies. They also question trans people's mental health and maintain the notion that trans people are mentally ill, an example of pathologisation that we see in SWERFs associating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), characterised by anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing, and hyper-alertness, with sex workers.

The women's movement we want to see is one which situates gender injustice within patriarchal, capitalist, white supremacist societies, and is inclusive of trans people and sex workers. It is one that acknowledges that criminal justice systems are generally oppressive, and therefore do not see increased policing, prosecution,

and imprisonment as the only solution to violence against women, trans people and gender inequality. We support women's organisations who engage in community interventions, long-term organising and mobilisation against the complexity of violence against women and trans people, including economic and gender inequalities, repressive immigration control, and the lack of accessible social security nets and services. We strongly endorse those who call for evidence-informed policies instead of moralising approaches to sex work and demand the inclusion of sex workers in decision making, policy making and debates.

## **SUPPORTING THE RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL POLICIES**

Although sex workers' rights are seldom mentioned specifically in international human rights law, sex work, as illustrated previously, has been discussed in consultations leading up to drafting and adopting policies, but mainly from the perspective of "exploitative and forced prostitution". In this section we provide a brief summary of international conventions and policy frameworks that can be used by sex workers and feminist allies to raise awareness of the negative impact of different legal frameworks on sex workers, violence by state and non-state actors and human rights violations.

### **UN WOMEN AND UN CEDAW**

Sex workers' demands for the decriminalisation of sex work and the recognition of sex workers' rights, as highlighted earlier, have also been supported by several UN agencies. UN Women in particular stated in its "Note on sex work, sexual exploitation and trafficking"<sup>68</sup> document in 2013 that "[T]he issues of sex work, sexual exploitation and trafficking are complex issues which have significant legal, social and health consequences. Due to such complexity, it is important that we do not conflate these three issues which deserve to be considered in their own right. We cannot consider sex work the same way we consider trafficking or sexual exploitation which are human rights abuses and crimes." Furthermore, the document stresses that the conflation of sex work and trafficking has the potential to undermine sex workers' right to health and self-determination and can impede efforts to prevent and prosecute trafficking.

The UN CEDAW Committee (UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), although not having an official position on sex work, has been increasingly addressing sex workers' issues from a perspective of sex workers' human rights. In 2008, the CEDAW Committee issued ground-breaking recommendations on sex workers' rights following a submission from TAIS PLUS (Kyrgyzstan). In response to a submission from ICRSE member SZEXE (Hungary), the CEDAW Committee recommendations for the first time recognised sex workers' rights to workplace health and safety in 2013. This is a global milestone for sex workers' rights.<sup>69</sup>

The CEDAW Convention<sup>70</sup> (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) obliges countries who have ratified it to take all appropriate measures to ensure the protection of health and safety in working conditions (Article 11(1)(f)) and to repeal all national penal provisions that constitute discrimination against women (Article 2(g)). The Convention also requires states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care (Article 12 (1)).

The CEDAW Committee in recent years also expressed concerns over violence and discrimination against trans women, including trans sex workers. For example, in March 2015 it recommended that the Kyrgyz state ensure inter alia transgender women's access to sustainable, non-discriminatory and non-prejudiced services, such as shelters, legal aid and counselling, and to protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation.<sup>71</sup>

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Two recent European policies could also have relevance on preventing and combatting violence against sex workers, though they don't explicitly refer to sex workers. The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CAHVIO or Istanbul Convention)<sup>72</sup> is the most comprehensive, detailed and legally binding response to violence against women and gender-based violence to date. In about 60 substantive articles, the Convention details how to better prevent, protect against, prosecute and integrate policies to combat gender-based violence.

State parties to the Convention accept that its provisions override any conflicting national law and require national legislation to be brought into alignment with the aims and measures of the Convention. In implementing the Convention, states must not discriminate on grounds of gender identity, particularly when taking measures to protect the rights of victims. Thus, trans people, and particularly those affected by multiple discrimination (e.g. ethnic or migrant background), enjoy protection from the Convention.



Sex workers and feminists protest against violence against women at Reclaim the night, Belfast, 2015



States Parties must also introduce specific criminal offences (Arts. 32–39) for physical violence; psychological violence; stalking; sexual violence, including rape; sexual harassment; forced marriage; female genital mutilation; forced abortion; and forced sterilisation. The Convention demands that states act proactively with “due diligence” in preventing, protecting against, investigating and sanctioning gender-based and domestic violence. In particular, they must train professionals in close contact with victims, set up treatment programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and for sex offenders and work closely with civil society.

## THE EU VICTIMS’ RIGHTS DIRECTIVE

On the European Union level, the EU Victims’ Rights Directive (VRD)<sup>73</sup> also presents an opportunity for addressing violence against sex workers. Under the Directive, all victims of crime have the right to receive a wide variety of support and information (Ch. 2), to participate in criminal proceedings (Ch. 3) and to be protected (Ch. 4). All victims should be treated without discrimination, including based on gender identity and gender expression. The directive foresees training practitioners and any officials likely to come into contact with victims.

An individual assessment should take place for every victim to prevent repeated victimisation and retaliation. The assessment should take into account whether the crime was hate or bias-motivated and whether it was gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is understood as “violence that is directed against a person because of that person’s gender, gender identity or gender expression or that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately”. If a sex worker falls victim to gender-based violence, bias or hate crime, the individual assessment should qualify them for specialist protection and support services, including free and confidential victim-support services (independent of whether the crime is reported or not); shelters, trauma support and counselling; and legal aid and reimbursement of expenses.

During criminal investigations and proceedings, “measures to avoid unnecessary questioning concerning the victim’s private life not related to the criminal offence” must be in place. The victim has the right to a hearing without the presence of the public; to have their privacy protected, including the personal characteristics that were taken into account in the individual risk assessment (e.g. gender identity); and to be protected from and avoid contact with the offender.

All EU member states must have transposed the Victim’s Rights Directive into national law by 16 November 2015. It is directly enforceable, which means that a victim can claim the rights established under this directive, even if the respective member state has not implemented it. Member states also must collect statistics on the numbers and types of crime and the gender of victims and report this data to the European Commission on the implementation of the Directive.

# **7 STEPS TO MAKE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS SEX WORKER INCLUSIVE**

- 1** Reach out to and establish contacts with local sex workers, sex worker groups and organisations in order to identify common issues and assess the situation of sex workers.
- 2** Empower sex workers to be more visible within your community by encouraging their participation in your protests, marches and key events, such as International Women's Day or during 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.
- 3** Raise awareness within your community on the human rights issues sex workers are facing.
- 4** Take a sex worker inclusive approach when developing or implementing projects, e.g. partner with sex worker organisations to have solid plans in place to reach out to and involve sex workers in the planned activities.
- 5** Engage in campaigns and policy discussions relevant to the issues of sex workers.
- 6** Call other feminist and women's rights organisations for an intersectional, trans and sex worker inclusive approach.
- 7** Speak out for the full decriminalisation of sex work, highlighting the precarious situation sex workers of all genders live in.

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- <sup>4</sup> Cavalieri, S. (2011). Between Victim and Agent: A Third-Way Feminist Account of Trafficking for Sex Work. *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 86, pp. 1409-1458. Cavalieri describes the dominance school of feminism as offering a critique of gender and sexualised privilege in society, but failing to account for the individual circumstances of particular women's lives. Liberal feminism views the individual as the agent of their own life and women autonomously choosing to engage in sexual labour as they would choose any other form of employment.
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