

SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS

Report of the European Conference
on Sex Work, Human Rights,
Labour and Migration,
Brussels (2005)



Edited by A. Sorfleet



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF
SEX WORKERS IN EUROPE

I • C • R • S • E



Celebration!

Connection!

Challenge!

Table of Contents

Foreword (A. Sorfleet)	1
The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto: 10 Highlights	3
Report: The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration (A. Sorfleet)	4
Come Share Our Wares! Sex Work Art & Education Fair (1).....	8
From Participants	12
Come Share Our Wares! Sex Work Art & Education Fair (2).....	14
STOP the WAR on WHORES! (David Henry Sterry)	17
\$ex Workers Make History (Gail Pheterson & Margo St. James).....	21
International Union of Sex Workers! (Ana Lopes)	31
Sex Workers Join Britain's General Union! (Martin Smith).....	34
Patricia Kaatee, Liv Jessen and Janni Schulerud Talk Human Rights	37
Still Challenging "Place" (Laura María Agustín)	40
Sweden's Ban on Buying Sex (Jesper Bryngemark)	47
The German Prostitution Act (Stephanie Klee)	53
Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes in Italy (Carla Corso).....	58
The Mapping Project (Pye Jacobsson)	61
Sexyshock Video Box: <i>Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes</i>	65
The ICRSE Network (Petra Timmermans)	66
The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto	69
Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe	77
Recommendations from the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005)	85
Look WHO's in the NEWS!	87
Sex Work: European Legal Frameworks (Ashwini Sukthankar)	89
Sex Workers Stand Up for Rights (Ruth Frost)	91
From Participants: One Year Later	94
Afterword (A. Sorfleet)	96

Appendices

Appendix A: Financial Report	98
Appendix B: Organising Committee	99
Appendix C: Early Morning Dreams.....	100
Appendix D: 86 Organisations	102
Appendix E: Conference Programme	104
Appendix F: Application Form	105
Appendix G: Notes from Workshops	107
Appendix H: A Year for Networking	109
Appendix I: Trade Unions Talk Sex Work	114
Street Action: Protest Route	inside back cover

SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS: Report of the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005)

© 2007. All rights reserved. Unless stated otherwise, copyright to each separate contribution to this collective work reverts to the individual author(s) or artist(s) upon publication.

Cataloguing Publication Data

Sorfleet, A., 1965-

Sex Workers' Rights

Published by: International Committee

for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe

1. prostitution, sex work; 2. human rights;

3. labour rights; 4. migration, trafficking

Credits

Editorial team: Jesper Bryngemark,

Andrew Sorfleet, Petra Timmermans

Editing: Chris Bearchell, Irit Shimrat

Proofreading: Dan Allman, Elaine Ayres

Will Pritchard

Design & production: A. Sorfleet,

Michelle Cosgrove (printing coordination)

Cover photos: A. Sorfleet

Printing: Allander Print Ltd. (Edinburgh)

Conference organisers: Laura Agustín,

Licia Brussa, Jesper Bryngemark,

Marieke van Doorninck, Giulia Garofalo,

Pye Jacobsson, Marie Louise Janssen,

Marianne Jonker, Anna Konakova,

Anita Mangala, Vladimir Mogilynyi,

Marjan Sax, Ruth Morgan Thomas,

Petra Timmermans, Marjan Wijers

Funded by: Stichting Mr. A de Graaf,

Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official policy of Stichting Mr. A de Graaf.

About the ICRSE

The International Committee on the

Rights of Sex Workers in Europe

is a registered foundation in The

Netherlands. Our main goals are:

- to bring sex workers and their allies together on an international level
- to further social acceptance of and respect for sex workers
- to guarantee sex workers' civil rights
- to organise the support of sex worker allies

ICRSE works to further these goals by:

- building international networks of sex workers and their allies to improve or abolish oppressive laws
- promoting communication and information-sharing over the Internet and on paper
- organising conferences, study groups and meetings

As well, ICRSE aims to end the sexual stigma faced by women, gays and lesbians and transgendered people, and to promote self-determination for women in general.

To request copies of conference documents, you can reach us by:

- E-mail: info@sexworkeurope.org
- Telephone: +31 20 693 1300
- Or write us at: ICRSE, PO Box 51319, 1007 EH Amsterdam, The Netherlands

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!



The organisers and participants of the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration would like to express their sincere thanks to the following people for helping make the conference such a great experience and a fantastic success:

CONFERENCE COORDINATION • Meike de Sutter (hotel conference coordinator) and the Mercure Royal Crown Hotel staff, Dominique Andre (Brussels liaison), Monica Frassoni and the Greens/European Free Alliance (invitation to the European Parliament), Renato Sabbadini (liaison), Laurent Develay (EP coordination), Bart Staes and Geert Franken (visa support), Jenn Clamen (experience and wisdom)

CONFERENCE TRANSLATION • Laurent Michel and all the translation staff at Business & Conference Services (BNC), Brussels

DOCUMENT TRANSLATION • Marianne Schweizer, Marie-Jo and Kelly from Aspasia; Vladimir Moguilny; Regina Schmidt; Inken Seltmann; Agnieszka Mazus; Lubica Tornoczyova; Rábóczy Beáta; Martina Zikmundova; Romana Bayerova; Fernando Bessa; Katrin Schiffer; Markus Giesbers, Jesper Bryngemark; OC volunteers; AltaVista Babel Fish Translation (<http://babelfish.altavista.com>)

SUPER VOLUNTEERS • Bart Vandenbroucke, Ward Lutin, *Espace P*, Sexys shock, Liza Dimbleby (translation), Hanka Mongard (translation)

PHOTOGRAPHY • Jean-François Poupel, Quentin Deltour (*Espace P*), Maj Christensen, Jaana Kauppinen, A. Sorfleet

WEBSITE • Marleen Sweene, Petra Timmermans

OUR FABULOUS FUNDERS!

The ICRSE would also like to thank the following organisations whose generous support made the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration possible:

Asha Care Products, Cordaid, Filia, FNV Mondiaal, Global Fund for Women, Haëlla, Hivos, MamaCash, Novib, Stichting Mr. A. de Graaf, The Greens/European Free Alliance

AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO CAME AND TOOK PART...

The ICRSE would like to extend heaps of heartfelt gratitude to all the participants who took the time to attend the conference, and provided their support, inspiration, insight, input and help. It was you, ultimately, who made it possible for this conference to achieve its goals, and turned it into such a great success. Congratulations to all of us!

PHOTO: A. Sorfleet



Foreword

By A. Sorfleet

More than anything, I wanted to go to this conference in Brussels. Perhaps I should explain how it is that someone from Canada ended up writing the final report for an exclusively European conference about sex workers and their rights.

In May 2005 I attended a conference in Montreal: *Forum XXX: A Sex Workers' Rendez-Vous*. There, I had the good fortune to meet two sex workers who serve on a committee that was organising a European conference on sex work and human rights. As I listened to their plans to create a manifesto on sex workers' rights in Europe, I became increasingly excited.

Vancouver is a very long way from Belgium. Still, after reviewing the consultation I had written and designed for sex workers in Canada (*\$ex, Work, Education, Advocacy & Research!* or “\$WE@&R!”), the Organising Committee asked me if I would come to their conference and produce the final report.

The goals of this conference were to finalise and realise an authentic mandate from the sex workers of Europe, as well as a declaration of the rights to which sex workers are entitled under international law. Both documents required official endorsement by a democratic vote. Before I arrived, I felt that my role was only to observe and document this event.

I'm not sure that I succeeded in keeping my nose out. In fact, I made my

opinions known at almost every opportunity. It would have been hard not to. The entire conference was the most exciting and exhilarating—and empowering—sex worker gathering I have ever attended.

Most fulfilling for me was the opportunity to take part in one of the manifesto workshops. I got to work on the first section with a fantastic team of extremely talented sex workers. There were two sex workers from Germany, two from France, two from Switzerland, one from Italy, one from Sweden, one from Spain, one from the USA, and me.

We didn't end up finishing our section of the Manifesto in time for the afternoon plenary, where the conference delegation endorsed the other two sections. Our dedicated little editorial group worked on the draft at every possible opportunity. We worked on it over lunch and over supper. We worked on it late at night as well as during some of the other conference workshops. We were committed to getting it right, and getting it finished on time. And we did. We took it to the delegation near the end of the conference to be voted on.

The results speak for themselves. After some debate, the conference delegation wholeheartedly endorsed the Manifesto the evening before it was presented to the European Parliament.

Congratulations to everyone who took part in creating such a superb and important treatise. Congratulations to everyone who participated so genuinely and passionately in this democratic process: the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration. Hats off to you all! □

♥ Andrew Sorfleet is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art (OCA) in Toronto. He has worked in the sex industry for more than a decade. He was a founding member of the Sex Workers' Alliance of Toronto (1992-1995), and of the global Network of Sex Work Projects (1992-2006), and coordinator of the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver (1995-2005).

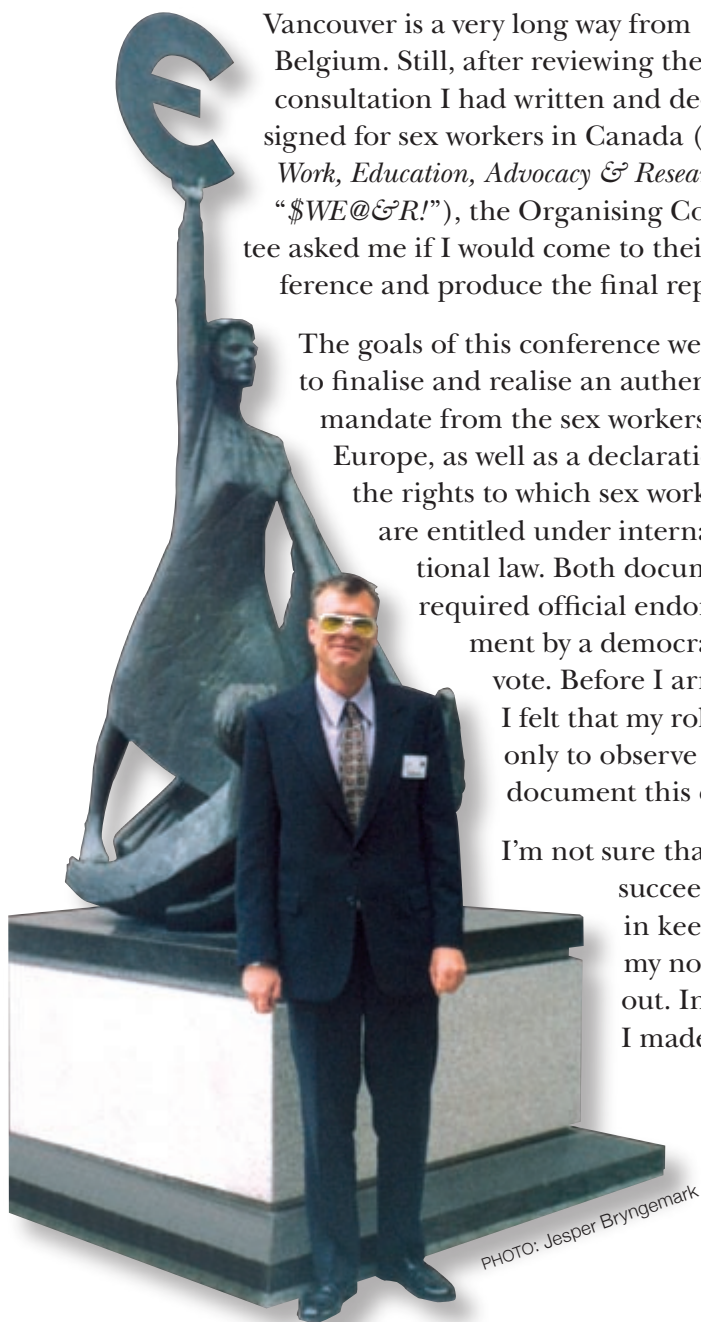


PHOTO: Jesper Bryngemark

WORKERS
THE WORLD
UNITE!



IONAL UNION
XWORKERS

Abolition des
Discriminations

The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto: 10 Highlights

The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto lists sex workers' demands for changes needed to create a more equitable society — one that acknowledges and values sex workers, our rights, and our labour. It was endorsed by approximately 120 sex workers from 24 countries in Europe at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels, Belgium (2005) and presented to the European Parliament. Ten sex workers stood up and each read aloud a statement selected from the document.

10 Sex Workers; 10 Statements:

1. We condemn the **hypocrisy** in our societies whereby our services are utilised while our profession or businesses are made illegal. Legislation that criminalises sex work results in abuse and in a lack of control for sex workers over our work and lives.

WE DEMAND an **end to legislation** that criminalises our partners, children and other family members for associating with us and being supported by our earnings.

2. **WE DEMAND** that our right as human beings to use our bodies in any way we do not find harmful be respected. This includes the right to establish **consensual sexual relations**, no matter the gender or ethnicity of our partners, and regardless of whether or not they are paying.
3. **WE DEMAND** an end to the discrimination and the **abuse of power** by police and other public authorities. Offering sexual services is not an invitation to any kind of violence. The credibility of sex workers must be respected.
4. **WE DEMAND** that our voices be **heard, listened to and respected**. Our experiences are diverse, but all are valid, and we condemn those who would steal our voices and say that we do not have the capacity to make decisions or articulate our needs.

5. **WE DEMAND** the **repeal of all legislation** that criminalises us; our clients; our families; those we work with; and any employer, organiser or manager who follows **fair practices**.

6. The threat of having our children taken from us removes our ability to seek **support and assistance**, if we need it, in relation to parenting or abusive relationships.

WE DEMAND an end to the **unjustifiable** practice of social service agencies and courts **taking our children** from us simply because we provide sexual services.

7. Registration and mandatory sexual health and HIV testing are a **violation of sex workers' human rights**. Such practices reinforce the myth that sex workers are a threat to public health, and promote the stereotypical view that sex workers transmit infections.

WE DEMAND an end to registration and mandatory testing.

8. The lack of opportunities to migrate can put our health, and indeed our very lives, in danger. We assert our **right to travel** and to work in any country without discrimination. Information about working in the sex industry and its different sectors should be made available.

9. **WE DEMAND** that our governments **prohibit** authorities from confiscating condoms and other safe-sex products from sex workers and sex-work establishments.

10. To improve our working conditions, it is important that sex workers have opportunities **to organise and to advocate** for our rights. We call upon trade unions to support us in our efforts to organise and in our struggle for fair working conditions. □

♥ For the full text of *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto*, see p. 69.



SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS

REPORT: The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration

By A. Sorfleet

Starting at the Beginning...

In 2002 a small network of Dutch sex workers and activists gathered in Amsterdam to organise a conference that would give sex workers an opportunity to respond to the proliferation of repressive new legislation and policies being enacted throughout Europe. In 2003 the group, Sex-work Initiative Group Netherlands (SIGN), approached sex workers and allies across Europe and invited them to join an organising committee which would raise funds and host a European conference on sex workers' rights. (Allies are people and organisations who—although not sex workers—work in fields of importance to sex workers, such as labour, migration, human rights and health.)

The response was enthusiastic. The committee registered a foundation—the International Committee for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe—a necessary formality that enabled the group to take on the legal responsibilities associated with organising such an event. In January 2004 the committee met for the first time, in Amsterdam.

The Organising Committee (OC) consisted of 15 members from several European countries, including female and male sex workers; migrant sex workers; former sex workers; and some people who had never been sex workers. In order to keep the working committee a manageable size, the committee did not attempt to represent every country in Europe. (For OC members, see Appendix B, p. 99.)

Protesters are to meet at Place de la Bourse.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



In preparation for the conference, the OC met several times, and subcommittees met more frequently. Conference supporters were sent e-mails; postings were sent to various e-mail listserves, and a conference website was created to promote the event. The OC's finance group raised nearly €220,000 for the event (see Appendix A, p. 98).

The purpose of this conference was established: develop a set of tools which could be used by sex workers to defend and extend their human, labour and migrant rights at home. These tools would include a manifesto—a list of demands for rights to which sex workers should be entitled; a declaration of rights already defined under existing international agreements and treaties; and a list of recommendations determined by delegates while at the conference.

The OC struck two working groups to draft a manifesto and a declaration. The Manifesto Working Group compiled a list of headings (with examples from existing sex worker manifestos) and sent it to a list of supporters—organisations, sex workers and allies—who were asked to provide their own statements to be compiled into a draft manifesto for the conference.

The Declaration Working Group set out three questions which were sent to supporters to answer:

1. What experiences have you had where your workers' rights have been violated?
2. What rights do you see as most important?
3. How could countries fulfil their legal obligations to ensure sex workers their rights?

The six-month consultation process collected 42 responses (including both individual responses and collective input from groups of sex workers and sex-work projects). Once responses to these questions were collected, the draft documents were circulated amongst OC members for feedback, and volunteers translated them into 13 languages.

Well-known human rights experts were approached for help with the Declaration. Notably, the advice and assistance of Alice Miller (USA),

Shivan Scanlan (Poland) and Jyoti Sanghera (Switzerland) proved indispensable.

Six months before the conference, the OC sent out an open call for applications from any wishing to attend. All sex workers who applied from European countries were accepted, as well as a few sex workers with special skills from outside of Europe. Applicants were encouraged to suggest possible workshop topics, submit plenary proposals, facilitate workshops, or contribute in some other way. Certain allies were specifically invited to participate in conference sessions because of their expertise in human rights, labour rights or migrants' rights. (*See Application Form, p. 105.*)

The OC had difficulty finding sex workers and allies from countries in southeast Europe, either due to a lack of sex worker support organisations, or because of the difficulties posed by international travel.

On October 15-17, 2005, delegates from across Europe convened to polish and endorse a sex workers' manifesto listing demands agreed upon by sex workers living and working throughout Europe, and a declaration of the rights to which sex workers in Europe are entitled under international law. This report documents the three-day event which resulted in this historic achievement.

Celebration, Connection and Challenge

Celebration

The sex workers' rights movement in Europe has much to celebrate, including a wealth of knowledge, research, materials, dedication and talent. Many activists have been committed to defending and promoting equal rights for sex workers for 20 years or more. Sex workers in Europe have a rich culture and history, and this legacy shone in Brussels. A large area near the plenary room displayed an impressive collection of art and educational materials (*see pp. 8-9 & 14-15*). There were books, cards and pamphlets—as well as drier documents like annual reports, legal briefs and research papers—in Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

There were beautiful works of art, produced by sex workers: lush photos, collages and books, which cleverly addressed some of the personal aspects



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Our escorts for the march await our arrival.

of sex work. A fantastic video booth ran for the duration of the conference. Sexyshock (a women's sex shop collective from Italy) and Carol Leigh (a.k.a. Scarlot Harlot), from San Francisco set up the booth, which offered delegates the opportunity to record their opinions and feelings on video. Sexyshock has distilled and produced an artistic video; a piece of prostitutes' history, included with this report (*see p. 65*).

The celebration culminated in a superb party expertly organised by Marjan Sax. A sumptuous buffet and exceptional live adult entertainment made for a fun venue for delegates to unwind. Sex workers and allies had come together from the corners of Europe and beyond to celebrate our accomplishments, our friendships and our dreams for the future—and that's exactly what we did.

Connection

One of the main objectives of this conference was to initiate and foster a network of sex workers and allies throughout Europe. Conference materials and documents as well as a translation service were made available in five languages: English, French, German, Spanish and Russian. In addition, volunteers offered translations in several other languages.

Bringing sex workers and allies together allowed participants to share their experiences and form connections that crossed borders and language barriers. The conference provided a rare opportunity to make the initial contacts needed to lay the foundation for a strong, expansive network.

...continued on p. 6. ➞



PHOTO: Jean François Poupel

ABOVE: **Johanna Sirkiä** (.fi) & **Petra Timmermans** (.nl)



PHOTO: Jean François Poupel

ABOVE: **Stephanie Klee** (.de)



PHOTOS: Jean François Poupel

ABOVE: **Carla Corso** (.it), BELOW: **Giulia Garofalo** (.it)



↳ continued from p. 5...

Such a network could document and track repressive legislation and policies regarding prostitution, migration and human trafficking, and their harmful effects on those who work in the sex industry. This network could also provide a mechanism for collective organising and lobbying for sex workers' rights.

Challenge

The third major purpose of the conference was to collectively produce tools sex workers and their allies could use to secure and defend human and labour rights for sex workers at home.

The *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* is based on international treaties signed by governments across Europe, and it outlines all the rights everyone should be entitled to under international law (see p. 77). It also highlights human rights abuses against sex workers across Europe. The assistance provided by our allies who work in human rights organisations (in particular, Alice Miller, University of Columbia; Jyoti Sanghera, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Shivan Scanlan, Senior Advisor on Anti-Trafficking Issues Human Rights Dept., Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) was crucial to the creation of this legal document. Your many hours of volunteer labour deserve a special mention, and we thank you.

The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto demands changes that would address European society's unequal treatment of sex workers (see p. 69). Conference participants split up into three working groups; each group undertook to examine, discuss and make changes to one-third of the Manifesto.

Participants then reconvened, and—following more discussion and debate—voted to endorse the Declaration and the Manifesto.

On the final day, conference delegates gathered at the European Parliament and officially presented these documents, which, for the first time ever, truly represented their collective voice.

Now, those who participated in this political event have tangible results: documents we can use as tools in our efforts to establish the recognition of sex workers' rights in our own countries.

October 14: Day 0 Registration

Approximately 200 delegates arrived from all over Europe to represent the concerns of sex workers in 28 European countries: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland (Eire), Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Scotland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine. As well, a handful of sex workers travelled from the United States and Canada to witness this unprecedented event.

Delegates were affiliated with sex workers' groups, community-based service groups and non-governmental organisations. Other delegates represented national governments, or international bodies such as the United Nations and the European Parliament. Still others came from universities, labour unions and activist groups.

In all, delegates listed affiliations with 86 organisations, and 29 participants described themselves as "independent." (*For a complete list of organisations with their website addresses, see Appendix D, p. 102.*)

A cocktail reception offered weary travellers a warm welcome to Brussels and to the conference, and allowed delegates to meet and socialise.

October 15: Day 1 For Sex Workers Only

The first day of the conference was reserved for sex workers alone. This decision provoked criticism and disappointment from certain allies, some of whom some had long demonstrated their commitment to the struggle for sex workers' rights.

No definite criteria were used to qualify applicants as "sex worker" delegates at the conference. The application form asked if you were currently employed in sex work; in which country or countries; and what types of sex work have you engaged in. To ensure that you were not required to reveal your identity when applying, you were allowed to use a false name. Only those who identified themselves as sex workers on the form were selected by the OC to attend the conference as sex worker delegates. (*See Application Form, p. 105.*)

Delegates in the "Ally" category had to be aware that sex workers' rights must be taken



into account in their work, and had to be committed to helping to develop strategies to reach the goals of the conference, and to supporting sex workers beyond the conference.

Our allies deserve strong recognition for their help, expertise and commitment. They have proved invaluable in important projects such as compiling the Declaration of the rights of sex workers as set out in various international resolutions and conventions. Their support has been central to our success.

However, only sex workers can determine our priorities and needs. Therefore, it should be understood that the decision to provide sex workers with the opportunity to meet on our own was absolutely necessary in order for us to reach an agreement on the final text that would become *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto*.

"I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciated the organisation, it was simply incredible.

Thanks to you and all the organisers of this conference! It was a wonderful opportunity to meet sex workers from other countries, even from outside Europe, and that was so interesting, I've been learning so much... Even if we sometimes had some 'conflicts' here and there, I really felt a union these last two days, and it is so motivating."

♥ Sex worker, France

...continued on p. 10. ➞

Place de la Bourse is the stock exchange in Brussels.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



Come Share Our Wares!



Sex Work Art & Education Fair (1)





PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE LEFT: **Laura Agustín** (.es) RIGHT: **Pye Jacobsson** (.se)



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE LEFT: **Gail Pheterson** (.fr) RIGHT: **Margo St. James** (.us)



PHOTOS: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: **Ana Lopes** (.pt), **Gail Pheterson** (.fr)
BELOW: **Anna Konakova** (.ru) with translator **Liza Dimbleby**



↳ continued from p. 7...

**“WHY are we here?
WHAT do we want?
HOW do we
get there?”**

During the first morning session, Ruth Morgan Thomas officially welcomed delegates to the conference on behalf of the Organising Committee, and set forth the agenda for the three-day convention.

Privacy concerns were addressed immediately. Only the official conference photographer, Jean-François Poupel, was permitted to take photographs at the conference. Journalists were not allowed entrance.

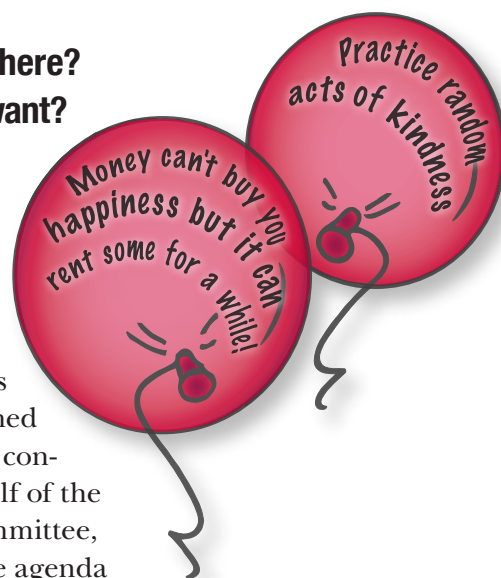
Ana Lopes, from UK-based International Union of Sex Workers, kicked off the event with a performance requiring audience participation. Decked out in a great feather boa, Ana asked each participant to blow up the red balloon on his or her chair, write something on it, and send it up into the room. Then each of us were to grab a balloon from the air, read it, write something else on it, and bat it around. It wasn't long before we were all chasing balloons all around the room, in a light-hearted and enjoyable start to a day of serious work.

We proceeded to initiate the Manifesto Working Groups. In addition, some participated in workshops on sex worker pride and on sex work and private life. Others joined a working group charged with conceptualising and planning a new network of sex workers and allies in Europe. (See *Conference Programme*, p. 104.)

October 16: Day 2 For Sex Workers and Their Allies

“Did you know?”

The first Sunday morning plenary session gave individual sex workers an opportunity to inform and educate everyone at the conference about issues related to labour, migration, human and sexual rights.



Stephanie Klee from HighLights (Berlin, Germany) talked about effects of the Prostitution Act (see p. 53). Laura Agustín spoke about some of the reasons migrant workers seek lucrative employment away from home and some of the realities they face as a result. (See *Laura Agustín's article*, p. 40.) Next, Carla Corso from the *Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle Prostitute* (Pordenone, Italy) spoke about sex workers' rights and the laws in Italy. (See *Carla Corso's presentation*, p. 58.)

Finally, Jesper Bryngemark informed us about the Swedish Government's legal approach to controlling prostitution and some of its effects on sex workers. In Sweden, purchasing sexual services is a crime but selling them is not. Thus sex workers are not subject to criminal charges, but their clients risk prosecution. According to Bryngemark, Sweden is keen to export this social-policy model, and other countries—both within and outside Europe—are considering adopting similar legislation. (See p. 47 for *Jesper Bryngemark's presentation*.)

“I found it a must for all people working on trafficking. We only see one side of the picture and spend half our time also having to do business with the ‘abolitionists.’ It was therefore a real education and the lessons learned are already being put to good use!”

♥ Shivan Scanlan, Senior Adviser on Anti-Trafficking Issues, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

“Sex workers and allies unite!”

After lunch was a plenary session where speakers shared their personal experiences of working in successful partnerships between sex workers and allies. Gail Pheterson and Margo St. James began the session with a lively presentation, including a slideshow of historic photos, about their partnership and the history behind the 1st and 2nd World Whores' Congress (1985 & 1986) (see p. 21).

Ana Lopes and Martin Smith then gave presentations about partnership resulting in the formation of the International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW) in London, and the creation of a sex workers' branch of Britain's General Union (GMB)—the third largest trade union in the UK (see pp. 31 & 34).

Kiss My A\$\$! – Cabaret Programme

- **Homage to Grisélidis Réal** – A poem about a great woman and a great fighter for sex workers' rights from Switzerland. Read by Sonja Verstappen from Belgium with Zigane music.
- **Scarlot Harlot from the United Sluts of America** – *Grab your make-up. Fix your hair. Prostitutes are everywhere!* A political satire in song and schtick about the dilemma of the post-modern slut and the struggle to maintain dignity and freedom. By Carol Leigh from the USA.
- **Mistress Zezetta Educates Her Slave Damien** – She teaches him how to put a condom on his cock—and how to suck and lick it! By Jean-François and Thierry from ACT UP, Paris.
- **Strip Act** – Ruth Frost first wanted to be a striptease artist at age six. After first becoming a fashion journalist, she achieved her ambition, now dancing at pubs and clubs across London.
- **Chicken!** – Short version of David Henry Sterry's the award-winning one-man show which toured the USA, Australia and Amsterdam. Based on his best seller, *Chicken: Self-Portrait of a Young Man for Rent*.
- **Comedy from Kyrgyzstan** – A beautiful central Asian country with not only a proud nomadic tradition, but also fantastic sex workers. By Shahnaz Islamova.
- **We Proudly Present** – Erotic award-winning and famous dancer from Scotland, Sarah Vernon!

Patricia Kaatee, Liv Jessen and Jaani Schulerud talked about the motives for—and consequences of—Amnesty International Norway's decision to give Jessen a human rights award for her work defending sex workers' human rights (see p. 37).

“Kiss My A\$\$!”

On Sunday night, conference participants and friends got together for dinner and a party aptly titled: “Kiss My A\$\$!” The venue was a night club, *Club le Cercle* (20 rue Sainte Anne, Brussels). A scrumptious Italian-style buffet, catered by the club, was spread out in several corners of the bar. Beer and wine were provided *gratis* for conference delegates for the first two and a half hours of the party!

The entertainment began at 10 PM: a variety show hosted by Sabina (who was billed as the one-and-only stripper from Finland), followed by disco dancing until 2:00 in the morning. (Read *David Sterry's report* on p. 17.)

...continued on p. 13. ➞

From Participants...

“The Brussels conference was a very important booster for us. As far as I know, this was the first international sex workers’ conference with several (six!) sex worker participants from Finland.

For the vice president of SALLI this was her first experience of an international sex workers’ conference. And although she has been doing great work for SALLI already before, I am amazed how she has become an incredibly efficient lobbyist after the conference.

I must confess that I was a little bit skeptical about the conference beforehand because I have already participated in several conferences, and I have learned how difficult the issues can be. But now I feel that this conference has made a difference. I believe the documents we produced can be powerful tools if we are able to use them.”

♥ Finland

“Thank you very much for empowering all of us so that now we are able to empower our colleagues around the world and spread the good inspiration and vibration that is still flowing around worldwide, thanks to the conference.”

♥ Denmark

“I am pleased to inform you that the membership assembly of Seksialan Liitto (United Sex Professional of Finland) decided on November 23, 2005 to endorse The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto, and to express its support for the demands in the Manifesto. The translation of the Manifesto into Finnish will be published later.”

♥ Johanna Sirkiä, Finland

“Thank you so much for having me there! I have been telling everyone about the conference. It took two days to calm down after I came home, I was so excited about everything.”

♥ Finland

“Only in the European Parliament did I understand the possibility of working with the Manifesto not only on the political front, but also in court cases. So I am encouraging the most famous lawyer in the prostitution field, Dr. Margarete von Galen, to write an article in my next HighLights Magazine in the context of fachzeitschrift prostitution, and with this article we can also work in the political sense. So I’m waiting for the German translation and I promise to help to check the German words.

Last week I went to a small brothel in Berlin and talked about the conference and colleagues were really happy because she saw something about it on German television. You see, the news is spreading.”

♥ Germany

Busloads of demonstrators arrive outside the stock exchange.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



↳ continued from p. 11...

October 17: Day 3 Sex Workers, Allies and Politicians

At 9:30 Monday morning, chartered buses started arriving at the hotel to transport conference participants to the European Parliament (EP) buildings in Brussels. Italian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Monica Frassoni, and the Greens/EFA Group, had invited delegates to present the results of the conference to the EP.

Chaos was narrowly avoided as busloads of participants were ushered through security and metal detectors and given official ID tags permitting us to be inside the building.

Once we were all seated in one of the committee rooms, conference organisers began by delivering their opening remarks.

“I want to stress that this conference has been about celebration, it has been about connection, and it has been about challenge. I certainly felt that this conference celebrated sex workers and our work, our labour. It has given us value and I hope that it has empowered many of us to fight the fight even more forcefully from now on. I certainly think that we have made connections, and I think they are strong, and I hope that we can maintain them as strongly in the future. But I also think this conference has been quite challenging for us. We have worked incredibly hard; from the energy and the commitment that all of the participants have put in to the development of the documents, to the participation in the workshops. It has been absolutely amazing.”

♥ Ruth Morgan Thomas, ICRSE Chair, from her opening statement at the European Parliament, October 17, 2005

What followed was an announcement of the official launch of the newly formed Network of Sex Workers and Allies in Europe. The conference recommendations were then read out to MEPs, who were provided with simultaneous translation in five languages.

...continued on p. 16. ↳



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE: Sex workers and allies in the European Parliament.



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Panayote Dimitras, MEP Vittorio Agnoletto & Ruth Morgan Thomas (.uk)



PHOTOS: Jean-François Poupel

ABOVE: Italian MEP Vittorio Agnoletto signs our Declaration.
BELOW: Press conference at the European Parliament.



Come Share Our Wares!

I, the unrepentant whore

I, the unrepentant whore,
have lived my life - unashamed
within that life there has been pain
and yet beside that pain has walked joy.
On looking back life has been good
I have loved, cried, laughed
through all experiences have I grown
becoming more complete.
I am content with who I am...
ARE YOU?

(GB)

♥ Ruth Morgan Thomas



(NL)

♥ Petra Timmermans

I wasn't molested as a child. No one beat me with a coat hanger. I was never burned by my evil babysitter's cigarette. I grew up in nice neighbourhoods where kids played ball, swung on swings, and rode merry-go-rounds. Santa slid down my chimney, the Easter Bunny hid chocolate eggs in my yard, and the Tooth Fairy left a quarter under my pillow. A rosy niceness shimmers on the surface of my childhood: roses swimming gently in beds, summery-smelling freshly-mown grass moaning, golden leaves falling like floating autumnal coins. You were happy where I grew up, and if you weren't, you had the decency not to mention it. My parents are in many ways embodiments of the American Dream. They came to the United States with nothing but the clothes on their back, and after twenty years of hard work, sweat, and sacrifice, they were getting divorced, totally broke, and deep in therapy.

(USA)

PORTRAIT of a SEX WORKER as a YOUNG MAN



♥ David Henry Sterry

**SEX
WORKERS
UNITE!**

(USA)

♥ Scarlot Harlot

SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS

14

"One of only two London strip clubs that still pay the dancers, instead of charging them to work. Come and see me there!" ♥ Solitaire



♥ Wonder Bra



(GB)

Report of the European Commission on Sex Work,

Sex Work Art & Education Fair (2)

Stone soup

Governments, with their funding for "peer" salaries, infiltrate underground, economically by impoverished communities by paying us to exploit and even compromise our friendships. This networks and relation also results in the fraying of the fabric of these communities. If one of us has a carrot, you have a potato and I have a bone, together we can make a pretty good soup. Instead, these government programs make us dependent on the meagre gruel they dish out. Eventually communities forget how to make soup—let alone grow vegetables.

FROM: Where Have I Been? Where are We Going?
1st Canadian Harm Reduction Conference, 2002

♥ Prof. Pete Piper

USA

♥ Scarlot Harlot



♥ Petra Timmermans



♥ Carol Leigh

BE NICE TO PROSTITUTES

♥ Scarlot Harlot

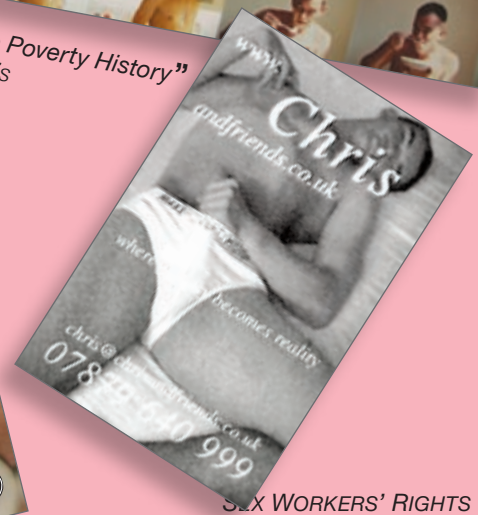
USA

Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brus



"Make Poverty History"

♥ Chris



SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS

To my friend Grisélidis

(Excerpt)

In my prostitute's heart the memories bleed; my admirers and lovers of the past, my joys, that still dance in my head, they burn my youth and I see the eyes of the clients who I have loved for the time of a trick, clashes body to body, and immense prudishness.



In my prostitute's heart where my sisters-in-arms rest, my eternal friends, my sisters in struggle, sometimes jealous, mocking, hurting; my proud sisters-in-arms, who respect their clients and who tattoo on their breast the symbols that tell them they are free and not dependent on anybody: whores but not submissive; "the real free women, that's us!"

In my prostitute's heart there is a real Friend who has taught us to keep our heads up high, to walk straight, without shame for what we are, always free to do that for which I am born and for which I fight: the freedom, the pride to be who I am, respect and honour.

I want us to continue that fight now that she is not here anymore. The fight for the right to equality, dignity, respect and freedom.

I salute you, sister prostitutes, sisters of the street, we are all daughters of the same mother, "Maria Magdalena."

♥ Claudette

↳ continued from p. 13...

Ruth Morgan Thomas proceeded to present the Declaration to the Parliament, and it received its first official endorsement. Italian MEP Vittorio Agnoletto (of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left) expressed

The crowd grows and red umbrellas start to fill the square.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



his full support and agreed—"happily," he told us—to sign our Declaration.

After the Declaration was officially received by the MEPs, a closing ceremony was held at the European Parliament to mark the official ending of the conference. Ten sex workers, one after another, each wearing a red sash stood up and read aloud one of ten statements selected from the Manifesto. Some wore colourful feather masks; others read their statements in their mother tongues. (See "10 Statements; 10 Sex Workers," on p. 3.)

Press conference

During the lunch hour, before participants went for lunch in the EP cafeteria, a panel of sex workers and allies held a press conference. (For a list of press clippings generated by the conference, see "Look Who's In the News!" on p. 87.)

Panel debate

At 2:00 PM, conference delegates reconvened in one of the committee rooms for a panel debate on how to implement conference recommendations both nationally and throughout Europe. Panelists included sex workers and allies from the conference as well as members of the European Parliament. MEPs were enthusiastic.

Manifestation dans la rue

Chartered buses then took conference participants to Place de la Bourse, (the stock exchange), where we congregated under red umbrellas at 4:30 PM to begin a protest march through the streets of Brussels. Led by *Espace P* (a Brussels organisation that offers advocacy for sex workers), the demonstrators marched down the middle of the street (escorted by police), across avenue Anspach, along place de Brouckère, down boulevard Emile Jacqmain to boulevard d'Anvers, across, then along boulevard Albert II, and then through the red light district (rue de Matheus, rue d'Aerschot near Gare de Nord (train station), ending back at the Mercure Royal Crown Hotel (rue Royale 250) around 5:30 PM. (See *Protest Route*, inside back cover.) □

And now, may I proudly present the stories, presentations and articles by participants that became the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005) ... ↳



STOP the WAR on WHORES!

Excerpt from "The War on Whores: The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration," by David Henry Sterry

You may not know it, but there's a worldwide war on whores. All over the world, President Bush has tied US financial support to his agenda to criminalise both prostitutes and their clients. I found this out recently at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels.

For years there's been a debate raging between abolitionists who want to make any exchange of sex for money (voluntary or not) illegal, and sex workers who view the willing exchange of sex for money as a work issue, not a moral issue. These "abolitionists," many of whom have never had sex for money, often contend that any exchange of sex for money is slavery. The sex workers, all of whom have exchanged sex for money, are adamant that they should be able to make money in the sex business if that is their choice. And they insist that they should be able to do so in safe, sanitary conditions, with the same rights as any other worker to ply their trade.

Abolitionists have often used the idea of trafficking (the international buying and selling of sex slaves) to cloud the issue of the voluntary exchange of sex for money. Many claim that if sex work is decriminalised, trafficking will flourish. However, the fact is that in America, sex work is illegal, and there is trafficking. In the Netherlands, sex work is legal, and there is trafficking. Furthermore, it is clear that focusing so much energy on criminalising willing customers of the sex business depletes resources that could otherwise be used to fight real sexual slavery.

Traditionally people in the sex business have not had a voice in how they are treated. They have routinely been jailed, deported, beaten and silenced. Academics, social workers, lawmakers and do-gooders have spoken for them. And prostitutes are tired of it. That's one reason this conference was organised: so that sex workers could speak for themselves about the deadly serious issues at the core of the debate about sex for money.

Here's what happened to me at this historic gathering. On Thursday, October 14th I arrived, sleep-deprived, at the Mercure Royal Crown Hotel in Brussels, Belgium. Excited, thrilled—yet terrified that I would be shunned and ostracised as an ugly American stupid white male breeder. This is what it's

now like for an American abroad. Immediately upon my arrival, my fears were quelled: I was greeted sweetly and promptly given the task of assembling documents. I was quite pleased to be put to work, as I come from a long line of beasts of burden—and, as an ex-whore, I live to please.

While stuffing manifestos into whore-red folders, I heard my old friend Scarlot Harlot downstairs practising a speech in Russian. Apparently "bitch" is "bitch" all over the world. Why did I travel 6,000 miles to be here? "*Celebrate. Connect. Challenge.*"

That's what the folder said. Challenge the world's perception of sex workers/prostitutes/whores. Discuss attitudes, laws, policies, the right to work safely and to move freely. Connect with my European sex-worker-friendly brothers and sisters. Celebrate good times, come on!



Tribute to Grisélidis

(Excerpt)

Hello to all, my colleagues, my sisters, in fortune and misfortune.

"We, the whores, the revolutionaries, the femmes fatales, the dammed, the ones who are desired by those who need us to reach the Nirvana that their morals forbid them. We, the ones you can't do without, the geniuses, the whores, the only honest ones, the prostitutes..."

These are the words of Grisélidis, the godmother of all of us. I had the honour to be her friend, her sister-in-arms, and I am very proud that I have been asked to do this tribute at this conference.

She has taught me that the real whores are not those who are called like that. She has taught me to look them straight into the eyes: these intolerant people, the tight-assed, and the tight-hearted and to tell them: *"You are nothing; and we, the whores, are EVERYTHING."* Because we are the ones who possess the real power over body and soul, because our compassion for humanity is immense and endless, because your words are only vain and stinking, because your words are only the illustration of your frustration about our knowledge and our beauty. She has taught me not to let them speak in our name, in our place and that recognition will come from awareness.

I love you Grisélidis, you in your whores' paradise. I wish you lots of wine, gypsy music and beautiful ebony-skinned men who will offer you eternal ecstasy. You can finally rest, we will continue the fight.

♥ Sonja Verstappen



↳ continued from p. 17...

Kiss My A\$\$! Dinner & Party

Sunday night was the party/performance, at a nightclub in Brussels. The place was packed to the rafters with sex workers and allies in all their feathery finery. Wigs, slits, tits, stiletto heels, big hair, short skirts, silk, leather and lace. By the time the show started the atmosphere was electric, like being in a cloud just before a lightning storm.

After two beautiful poems by two beautiful Swiss sex workers about activist warrior Grisélidis Réal, Scarlot Harlot—looking like a cross between Mae West, the Statue of Liberty, and the Madam at a brothel in Heaven—brought the house down with her unique brand of vaudevillian sloganeering: *"Stop the Wars On Whores!" "Outlaw Poverty, Not Prostitutes!" "Keep the Government Out of My Underpants!"*

Solitaire has legs longer than I am, a river of black hair running down her impossibly long back, and huge spotlight eyes that shine on high-beam. When she paraded onto the stage in a tiny purple see-through teddy to the tune of *I Like the Way You Move*, a hot shiver ran through the room. Lean, lithe and lovely, she played the crowd like it was a violin and she was Itzak Perlman in lingerie. And when she bent over and moved her G-string to reveal a butt plug, the stunned pindrop silence—full of gaping mouths, stolen breaths and bugged-out eyes—was priceless. Shocking this crowd took some doing, but Solitaire did it in spades.

I was next, and as I looked out at all those beaming sex workers' faces from all over the world—the rentboys and ladyboys, the whores and the hustlers, the disenfranchised and the reviled, the hated and the desired, the objects of revulsion and lust—I was overcome. All these people had travelled many miles to be here, to try in some way to make the world more fair and humane and safe.



Strange and amazing to say a line, then wait and hear my words in Russian, then French. I had been a little worried that it would make my show too long and too weird. But for me it accentuated how we were doing something global, and yet incredibly personal. In my show I portray a client who is a tantric sex expert. My piece climaxes when she has the mother of all climaxes. I've always said that Orgasm is the ultimate international language, and this proved true on that Sunday night in Brussels. It felt like we all came together in a celebration of sex work and being human.

Gypsy Charms, my new Scottish stripper friend, asked me to play a client getting a lap-dance from her. After the dance I was to yell at her, growling gruffly about how bad her body was. To me this illustrated a subtle part of sex work that I experienced over and over when I was in the business, and which no one had really discussed at the conference: how clients inflict their sexual pain on the sex worker. How as a whore I absorbed so much sexual illness from my clients. As a race, humans seem to suffer so much sexually, and sex workers are a well into which the world dumps its sex misery. In the piece, I was told to reach up and touch her, which is strictly forbidden. When I did it, she reached back and slapped me. The crowd reacted audibly, happy to see an abusive client get some of his own back. I thought of the men standing outside the booths in Amsterdam, drunk and screaming horrible degrading things at the women behind the glass, laughing like sadistic barbarians.

After the show an amazing DJ ripped some crazy mad tunes, with all manner of Afro/Latino/Euro-trashing rhythms thrown into the pot to create a tasty stew. Boys danced with boys. Girls danced with girls. Boys danced with girls. Girls danced with boys. Trannies danced with everybody. It was a slamming jamming euphoric release. A celebration.

Street Action

So now we had to pile into a bus and go to the street demonstration. If you've ever tried to move 150 sex workers through the European Parliament you know how difficult that can be. Somehow we succeeded. Then suddenly there we were on the steps of the Brussels stock exchange. I thought ruefully of all the bankers who rent us, then revile us.

...continued on p. 20. ➞



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

Marianne Schweizer (.ch) & Claudette (.ch) read "Homage"



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

Scarlot Harlot (.us) from the United Sluts of America



PHOTOS: Jean-François Poupel

LEFT: Camille Cabral (.fr) & RIGHT: "Mistress Zetzta" (.fr)



↳ continued from p. 19...

We assembled on the steps with the red umbrellas we'd been given. It was a beautiful sight, like a field of blooming poppies with sex worker flowers growing under them. A huge banner read:

"SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS = HUMAN RIGHTS!"

Instantly it was a mob scene, as onlookers gawked and gaped, glued to the spectacle of the whistle-blowing whores dancing and chanting: *"Vous Couchez Avec Nous, Vous Votez Contre Nous!"* ("You sleep with us, you vote against us!")

Journalists hungrily buzzed about with notepads, microphones and movie and still cameras, hunting for the nectar of the right angle to make the news.

Suddenly there were sirens, and the police showed up. My first impulse as an American was that they were going to arrest us. Great! I thought, this is the best thing that could possibly happen. I saw us on the front pages of the *London*, *New York*, and *Los Angeles Times*; on the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera: 150 Sex Workers Arrested in Brussels!

Alas, sadly, they were only there to keep the peace. After about 45 minutes, we took off through the streets of Brussels, a police car clearing the road for us. It was a joyous celebration, and a challenge to the public: we're here, we're not who you think we are, and we're not going

away. As we moved through the streets of Brussels singing and chanting with our red umbrellas and our banners, we were cheered and waved at by walkers, drivers and passersby. Yet someone later told me that a couple of Belgians commented, *"They should all be killed."*

We passed a group of boys, maybe nine years old, on bicycles. They started cheering and shouting sweetly with boyish enthusiasm, staying with us for quite a while, having a fine

old time. I smiled as

I thought that maybe they'd grow up with an image of sex workers as fun, smart and political, instead of seeing them as the uneducated, drug-addicted wretches of society.

During the march, one of the members of our contingent was passing out cards for our organisation. She gave one to an onlooker, who looked at it, then at us, and asked what the card said. Our member translated: *"These are sex workers."* Onlooker scanned the card, looked at us, and asked, *"What's a sex worker?"*

Our member explained, *"People who work in the sex business, like prostitutes and strippers."* Onlooker's eyes went wide: *"I am a stripper and a prostitute. And transsexual. May I join you?"* Our member said we would love to have her. She introduced Onlooker to one of our own transsexual sex workers, and they walked arm in arm through the streets, exchanging life stories.

Yes, of course, there is much to do; the situation is dire. But I, for one, left excited, encouraged and inspired. From the streets of Brussels to the European Parliament, our voices are being heard. □

Assembling on the stairs.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



♥ David Henry Sterry is a writer, performer and teacher who lives in San Francisco. He is author of *Chicken: Self-Portrait of a Young Man for Rent* (ReganBooks/HarperCollins: 2002). To read this entire story, visit: <http://davidhenrysterry.com>



\$ex Workers Make History: 1985 & 1986 – The World Whores' Congress

Presentation by Gail Pheterson and Margo St. James (Transcript from "Sex Workers and Allies Unite!")

The successful partnership between Margo St. James and Gail Pheterson resulted in two international conferences attended by prostitutes and their allies from all over the world. In 1985 in Amsterdam, delegates at the First World Whores' Congress launched the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights and produced the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights (see pp. 30-31).

Gail Pheterson:

I am thrilled to be here, and I congratulate the Organising Committee. We're just thrilled to give you some history. It's not going to be 20 years of partnership; really, it's going to be on the First and Second Congress, 20 years ago. And I say it's a little of Gail Pheterson and a lot of Margo St. James, because I learned everything from Margo, as she was my first mentor in prostitution, and I am very, very grateful to one of my first heroes.

Leading up to the Congress: First of all, right from the beginning we decided to never disassociate from the word "whore," from the word "prostitute," and to claim that this is sex *work*. Any term that could be used against us—whether we work, whether we don't work, whether we've been accused of working, whatever—we're going to re-appropriate that word, and say, "What ever you call me, I deserve my rights."

Margo St. James:

In San Francisco I started COYOTE in 1973, and in '74 we had our first convention and our first Hookers' Ball. A songwriter friend of mine gave me the acronym for COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics). I ran in the first NOW [National Organisation for Women] Olympics in Golden Gate Park in 1974 and I won third overall. I would have had first or second place, but I couldn't shoot baskets [in basketball].

In Paris in 1975, I met with Simone Iff from the Ministry of Women's Rights [France], Constance and a couple of other women. A French filmmaker, Jacques Prayer, took me to rue St. Denis and introduced me to the women he'd been photographing since the '50s. He also photographed the First Congress in Amsterdam. Simone Iff was in charge of family planning, and she had the balls to stand up for the sex workers.

[This is a photo of] Constance, who was the oldest of our group—and she's gone from us now—with her dog Grobulia. She always had her little dog, and he went with her when she worked, and when she stood on the street on rue St. Denis with her keys rattling. We met with Simone Iff a few days ago and she had photos in her archives of Constance from decades past.

And of course this [next photo is of] our hero—who I met in '75 at an UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] conference where they were discussing prostitution—Grisélidis Réal.



In 1983 Priscilla Alexander—who worked with COYOTE—and I attended the Sexual Slavery conference [International Feminist Networking Against Female Sexual Slavery, Rotterdam, organised by Kathleen Barry and funded by the Dutch Government]. I had given Kathy Barry the information and contacts around the world to start her book in '77, however, I regret that very, very much. Barry, at the time of this conference, had decided never to appear at the same podium as a prostitute. We had a TV show arranged where we were to have a roundtable with her and Charlotte Bunch, and Priscilla Alexander and myself. And

...continued on p. 22. ➤



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Constance & Grobulia, 1st Congress**



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Grisélidis Réal, 1st Congress**



PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Constance & Grisélidis Réal, 1st Congress**

BELOW CENTRE: **Priscilla Alexander, 2nd Congress**



↳ continued from p. 21...

so we had to do the show separately; 15 minutes for them, and 15 minutes for us. *Alors*, we got the show done, and it worked out fine.

Gail Pheterson:

In The Netherlands, Martine Groen—who is here with us—had started a small group of sex workers. Violette and Margot Álvarez were in that first group, among others. This group provided the first energy in The Netherlands to begin to mobilise the first international conference. I had been in California which is where I met Margo in 1982 and '83. I started to communicate with Martine Groen to see what was happening in The Netherlands. Margo came to Holland after I went back—at the time I lived in The Netherlands—and she connected to those women she had met in France—and Grisélidis—and we started organising.

Next to The Red Thread in The Netherlands we began a Pink Thread. What we decided was that this was a movement for all women, and that prostitutes' rights were critical for the rights of all women—that any woman could be stigmatised as a whore; that there was no freedom for any woman unless there was going to be rights and freedom for prostitutes. But we realised that the sex workers were more of a target group, and we thought, "How we could use this Pink/Red Thread to extend solidarity so that the press, for instance, would not know who was who?" And this was the beginning of The Pink Thread, with Marjan Sax, Martine Groen and myself.

Margo St. James:

Getting the feminists to support prostitutes' rights was a difficult job in the States. One of the reasons I came to the continent here was to beat Dworkin and MacKinnon to the punch, and save you all from Kathleen Barry and her "sexual slavery." And with The Red Thread kicking ass—and The Pink Thread, you know, backing them up—I think we did just that. This [slide is of] a cartoon, of course, you can see the hooker is saying,

"Okay you can leave me out of your feminist Bible, but it will cost you 450 guilder per hour."

Gail Pheterson:

That was in the *First World Whores' News*. This was in one of our first magazines.

Margo St. James:

Who says I'm a victim, right? May I say more about the victim thing? Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin and Kathy Barry had a couple of victims that they would trot out every once in a while. I also ran into that at the UNESCO conference in '75 [World Conference of the International Women's Year (Mexico)], where UNESCO had a victim who was an ex-hooker. However, after I spoke to her privately, she said, "*Oh, I'm not really a victim. I'm just doing this because they're giving me a place to live and things to do.*"

This is a photo of Gail and Jan Visser from Stichting de Graaf in Amsterdam—which is a collection of prostitution information from around the world—and I think one of us had just said that we had this complicity between whores and dykes and a few precious men. So that's why he's holding his head. He didn't want to be precious.

Gail Pheterson:

So, organising the First Congress. Actually, I think that the moment that this idea came about—correct me if I'm wrong, Margo—was on rue St. Denis. We were all having lunch near la Palette, which was a café—the women from Paris will know it. We were there, and the French working women said, "*Révolution internationale! Révolution internationale!*" And that we should all be there, because we thought we were going to do a Dutch conference first. But they were so eager that we said, "Okay, let's do it."

So we went back to Holland, and The Red and Pink Thread started to organise. Grisélidis Réal started to call everybody she knew, and gave us all of her contacts, and pushed them, and mobilised them, and energised them. Mama Cash made a commitment and helped bring sex workers to the Congress. We couldn't have gotten funding any other way.

The Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (FATW)—based in Utrecht and Bangkok—was very different from the Kathleen Barry contingent talking about trafficking in the United States. We had many a dialogue and discussions, and we knew we wanted to be in alliance with each other. That the pro-rights and the anti-violence movements should not be contradictory—that we were all for rights, and we were all against violence.

...continued on p. 24. ➞



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Gail, Jan Visser & Margo, 1st Congress



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE CENTRE: Margo St. James, 1st Congress



PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE CENTRE: Lin Chew (FATW), 2nd Congress

BELOW: Terry van der Zijden (standing), 1st Congress





PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Grisélidis, Margot, & Cora (far right), 1st Congress**



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **2nd World Whores' Congress, Brussels, 1986**



PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE LEFT: **Margo & RIGHT: Gloria Lockett, 1st Congress**

BELOW LEFT: **Norma Jean Almodovar, RIGHT: Gloria, 2nd Congress**



↳ continued from p. 23...

FATW were instrumental in making an alliance with Asia—with the groups from Asia, with the women coming to work from Asia.

Okay, [next slide] here we are, it was Valentine's Day—that was Margo's idea—for the First World Whores' Congress in Amsterdam. There's Margo in the middle there, and we're sitting around. [This next slide] is also of the First Congress, Terry van der Zijden is standing in the middle there.

Margo St. James:

We joined up with the housewives; Selma James, the US group called "Wages for Housework." They were demanding wages for their housework, but they were a little bit to the right. We actually fell out in about '80 after Kathy Barry came out with her book.

Anyway, this was in Amsterdam, and we're getting ready for the press conference, and we had the police there. A chief from Rotterdam came, and we got into a big argument about licensing and registering individuals. We said, "No, just the places of business should have a licence, the women no, because it sustains stigma." And the policeman said, "*But we have to have registration for social control of women.*" So afterward — because he spoke English, but I had been listening to the translation from Dutch — I asked him to say it in English, which he did. I told him that he was the most honest cop I'd ever met.

[Next slide] That's Peggy Miller from Canada, Grisélidis, Eva from the UK, and Katia from France. These were sex workers from Switzerland, Grisélidis, Margot from The Netherlands, Cora from Germany. Then there's somebody from Sweden in middle of the picture with the wig and the hat — who you'll see is here — who was also at the First Congress and spoke brilliantly.

Gail Pheterson:

Just one thought here. This, of course, is not the history of the Congress, but the history of the protagonists of that Congress. I think it would be so wonderful if there were collections in all the countries of these kind of photos—to have the history of the activists who have meant so much.

Margo St. James:

On the screen now is what Constance was saying. I'll read it so that it will be translated for you:

"In 1975 there was the revolt of prostitutes who sat in churches, but nothing has changed. The French Government had mandated a High Magistrate to discuss with the prostitutes what could be done to improve the situation. His report was only about taxes and fines, which increased, and increase all the time."

This photo is of the First World Whores' Congress with Gloria Lockett—a Black woman from San Francisco and Oakland who joined COYOTE in '78—who says:

"They busted me, my man, and another Black woman. We were also working with seven White women who they made testify against us. We have some horrible laws we are fighting, and we have to keep fighting. They don't want women to think. They don't want women to like what they are doing. One of the reasons they were so hard on us was that none of us were on drugs. None of us were dependent on anybody but ourselves to make our living, and we liked what we were doing. They couldn't understand that so they came after us, and they think they got us. I don't think so."

Gloria is now running a group that we called CAL-PEP (California Prostitutes' Education Project). She's been funded through the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. She gets about half a million a year to run the program in Oakland and Berkeley and East Bay—across the Bay Bridge from San Francisco—and they're doing a great job. She's also on my board at the St. James Infirmary.

This is a picture taken at the First World Whores' Congress—the Hookers' Ball—Marjan Sax, Tania Leon, a friend of Gail's, myself wearing a feather boa, and my mother Dorothy, who is still alive and kicking and totally supportive. I couldn't have done it without her help. When someone called her to ask that I come to this conference she was overwhelmed and delighted, and she couldn't wait to tell me when I got back from shopping.

This is a picture of people at the Masquerade Ball at the Krasnapolsky Hotel in Amsterdam; that's Gail dressed up like a hooker. In fact, when she

...continued on p. 26. ➞



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Entering the European Parliament, 2nd Congress**



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Marjan Sax, Tania Leon, Margo & Dorothy, 1st Congress**

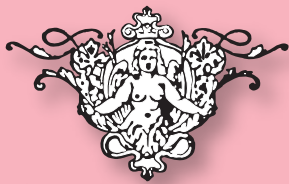


PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE LEFT: **Dolores French, 2nd Congress**

BELOW RIGHT: **Gail Pheterson dressed as hooker, 1st Congress**





I·C·P·R

WORLD CHARTER FOR PROSTITUTES' RIGHTS

(Produced by the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights founded at the First World Whores' Congress in Amsterdam, 1985.)

LAWS

- Decriminalise all aspects of adult prostitution resulting from individual decision.
- Decriminalise prostitution and regulate third parties according to standard business codes. It must be noted that existing standard business codes allow abuse of prostitutes. Therefore special clauses must be included to prevent the abuse and stigmatisation of prostitutes (self-employed and others).
- Enforce criminal laws against fraud, coercion, violence, child sexual abuse, child labour, rape, racism everywhere and across national boundaries, whether or not in the context of prostitution.
- Eradicate laws that can be interpreted to deny freedom of association, or freedom to travel, to prostitutes within and between countries. Prostitutes have rights to a private life.

HUMAN RIGHTS

- Guarantee prostitutes all human rights and civil liberties, including the freedom of speech, travel, immigration, work, marriage, and motherhood and the right to unemployment insurance, health insurance and housing.
- Grant asylum to anyone denied human rights on the basis of a "crime of status," be it prostitution or homosexuality.

WORKING CONDITIONS

- There should be no law which implies systematic zoning of prostitution. Prostitutes should have the freedom to choose their place of work and residence. It is essential that prostitutes can provide their services under the conditions that are absolutely determined by themselves and no one else.
- There should be a committee to insure the protection of the rights of the prostitutes and to whom prostitutes can address their complaints. This committee must be comprised of prostitutes and other professionals like lawyers and supporters.
- There should be no law discriminating against prostitutes associating and working collectively in order to acquire a high degree of personal security.

...continued on p. 27.

↳ continued from p. 25...

got interviewed by the press they put it in the press that she was a hooker, and so that sort of bore out the intent of them forming The Pink Thread to support The Red Thread—to confuse the public about, "Can you tell?" No, of course they couldn't tell. What are whores? They're just women.

Gail Pheterson:

So at the end of the First Congress there was a vote to form the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR). We made a *World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights*—up until five in the morning the last night of the Congress. And we had plans for a Second Congress at the European Parliament. The reason that we had these plans is that at the press conference there was somebody from the European Parliament who got very excited about this, and said, "*I want to open up the doors of the Parliament.*"

Now as you know the title was "World Whores' Congress." This goes back to what I said at the beginning about the word "whore." One of the position papers from the First Congress, stated that the word "whore" is used to stigmatize women, the word "prostitute" is used to criminalise women. Rather than disassociate from the social or legal labels used against us, we identify with both, and we demand our rights as whores, as prostitutes, as working women. Now this was about women and the impulse at that time was a feminist—and we used that word in this context—a feminist women's movement. We also were allied with men in the sex industry, with transgendered people in the sex industry, but the motor at that time was very much a women's movement. We nonetheless made sure to say—and this got developed as you'll see in the Second Congress—that we are in solidarity with all women in the sex industry.

Okay, [next slide] that's Annemiek Onstenk, in red, who was the person at the First World Whores' Congress press conference. She said, "*I'm going to open up those doors through the Greens.*" [Next photo], there's Nel van Dijk—sitting next to Margo—at the Congress, who supported the idea and spoke up for it. She was a Member of the European Parliament.

Grisélidis continued to be not only the networker, but the educator; always with a book, always to show this or that, always with her writing.

And next there are the countries that were represented. Those that are in—I don't know if that is rose or purple—were represented by sex workers. Those in white were represented by allies of sex workers. There were about 150 people—though it looks like more—and we didn't call them “sex workers and allies.” We called them “participants and guests,” and the reason was that in the whole middle section of the Parliament were sex workers and former sex workers, and they were the only ones who had speaking and voting privileges. But those people—beforehand in the preparations—chose the lawyers, the doctors, the social workers, the researchers, who they trusted. They were invited for the sidelines, and they could be asked questions by the sex workers. So there we are.

Margo St. James:

I've always felt that one person can start a movement, but they need some friends: a reporter, a journalist, an academic (*cum* Gail), a lawyer, and, of course, a hooker. Four people helped me start COYOTE, but I had a lot of help from the musicians and artists and politicians that I knew, who would always say in private, “Of course you're right, Margo,” but in public they wouldn't dare speak up. So we made it a popular thing—a fun thing—by producing the Hookers' Balls, by having events, by writing, getting things written, by making films—like Carol Leigh does now. This is before computers and before video, so it was a lot harder, but we did it.

Gail Pheterson:

I've just been told that we have two minutes, and we're just entering the European Parliament, so I think we'll go fairly quickly through the photos. There we are at the European Parliament. Annie Sprinkle is the photographer in the middle there: “*No taxation without representation.*” Helen Buckingham from London: “*Key themes: human rights, health and feminism.*” Pia Cove from Italy: “*The Italian Constitution equals social dignity, that's what we want.*”

Grisélidis represented France because at the last minute there was no French prostitute to come. But Carol from Marseilles called crying that day and said, “*Give them this message: We are absolutely determined to go to the World Court in the Hague to get our rights honoured from the point of view of simple human respect.*”

...continued on p. 28. ➞

HEALTH

- All women and men should be educated to periodical health screening for sexually transmitted diseases. Since health checks have historically been used to control and stigmatize prostitutes, and since adult prostitutes are generally even more aware of sexual health than others, mandatory checks for prostitutes are unacceptable unless they are mandatory for all sexually active people.

SERVICES

- Employment, counseling, legal, and housing services for runaway children should be funded in order to prevent child prostitution and to promote child well-being and opportunity.
- Prostitutes must have the same social benefits as all other citizens according to the different regulations in different countries.
- Shelters and services for working prostitutes and re-training programmes for prostitutes wishing to leave the life should be funded.

TAXES

- No special taxes should be levied on prostitutes or prostitute businesses.
- Prostitutes should pay regular taxes on the same basis as other independent contractors and employees, and should receive the same benefits.

PUBLIC OPINION

- Support educational programmes to change social attitudes which stigmatize and discriminate against prostitutes and ex-prostitutes of any race, gender or nationality.
- Develop educational programmes which help the public to understand that the customer plays a crucial role in the prostitution phenomenon, this role being generally ignored. The customer, like the prostitute, should not, however, be criminalised or condemned on a moral basis.
- We are in solidarity with workers in the sex industry.

ORGANISATION

- Organisations of prostitutes and ex-prostitutes should be supported to further implementation of the above Charter. □





PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: *In the European Parliament, 2nd Congress*



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: *"Bad Girls Go Everywhere," 2nd Congress*



PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE CENTRE: *Jeffrey from Australia, 2nd Congress*

BELOW: *Foundation Against Trafficking in Women, 2nd Congress*



↳ continued from p. 27...

Eva from England talked about the new law that had come in to replace the same idea of harassing prostitutes, especially immigrants. Norma Jean Almodovar who had written a book, *Cop to Call Girl*. She used to be a cop. She said: *"Let me tell you, there's a difference between a prostitute and a politician. There are some things that a prostitute won't do for money."* From Austria, *"We oppose the hypocrisy of making prostitution legal for taxes, but denying social rights."*

The Foundation Against Trafficking in Women, represented by Tang and Lin Chew. Nina from the Philippines, spoke for the right not to work as a prostitute—and about women's lack of choice—and, *"Why don't they trust us? Because we're not White, because they think we're prostitutes, so they don't believe we were forced."*

Right to safety in Australia, they talked about their *Ugly Mugs List* to identify dangerous men. In West Germany, they talked about the friction between German and foreign whores, but that they support foreign women to work, and any laws against them are racist, and in collusion with the profiteers.

Germany said that, *"Compulsory medical checks are the state's deepest invasion into the private world and rights of prostitutes."* Helen Buckingham again: *"Legalised prostitution will not stop AIDS; they'll just push us in brothels. That's not the way to contain the epidemic."*

Carla Corso—who's here now, who was a very, very central spokesperson at the Second Congress—was against separate clinics for prostitutes. She said, *"They're ghettos for us. All women have a vagina, so why should we divide ourselves into prostitutes and non-prostitutes? I think it's absurd."* And then here is a photo of Jeffrey from Australia, with safe sex. Dolores French did a demonstration on how you can put on a condom on a banana, and how you can do on a client so that he didn't even know. She started the organisation *Hooking Is Real Employment (HIRE)*.

Feminism was the other topic. Pieke Biermann says about the separation between feminism, the women's movement, and the prostitutes' movement, *"It's artificial, and I don't think it was invented by prostitutes, neither by feminists."* Terry van der Zijden—who's here right now—said, *"I think that working in prostitution is one way to become sexually autonomous, and if we experiment with sexuality within the framework of prostitution we have the possibility of arriving at self-determination in all other areas of our existence as women."*

Women from Austria said, “*What is the difference anyway between prostitutes and feminists?*”

Helen Buckingham went to her colleagues in a brothel and told them about a feminist meeting that she went to, and said, “*It should be about women like us, because it’s about money and our chances.*” And one of her colleagues says, “*Oh, is feminism about that? I thought it was about burning bras, and I’m not burning mine. It’s much too expensive.*”

Carla and Pia talked about their association for decriminalisation and against stigmatisation.

Transgender rights and young people’s rights were represented by Dolly, among others, who said that transvestites had a particular situation: not accepted by their families or nearest and dearest. She left home at 14 to go to Milan to earn money. Danny Cockerline—who died in 1995—was very central; he was the person to push and raise the issue of solidarity with transexuals and tranvestites. As a result of his interventions, the position papers gave greater solidarity with these groups. There he is with Jeffrey—leave the boy alone!

Porn: There was another panel on the alliance between prostitutes and porn stars. Annie Sprinkle, who said she preferred porn. She’d been a prostitute, and she thought that porn was a lot more fun and satisfying. There she is [on the screen] at was one of our evening activities—Danny and Annie and Veronica Vera.

At the press conference at the Second Congress we faced some harassment—luckily not a huge amount—so *we* set the conditions.

So, the final evening activity: Margo and I have a little, final thing. This was performed by Betty Pearl and Natascha Emanuels.

Margo: *You were a daddy’s Madonna. You smart little girl, you were raised a Madonna so you became a feminist. You’re trying to take back power.*

Gail: *You were daddy’s Whore, his pretty little woman. You were raised a whore so you became a prostitute. You are trying to take back power.*

Margo: *You think you’re politically liberated, but you’re so unhappy. You’re not liberated at all.*

Gail: *You think you’re sexually liberated, but you are so oppressed. You’re not liberated at all.*

...continued on p. 30. ➞



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Danny Cockerline & Annie Sprinkle perform, 1st Congress**



PHOTO COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Jeffrey & Danny Cockerline, 2nd Congress**



PHOTOS COURTESY: Gail Pheterson

ABOVE: **Natascha Emanuels & Betty Pearl perform, 1st Congress**
BELOW: **Hounded by the press at the 2nd Congress**



WORLD NOTES: BELGIUM

To Brussels with love

Just what were all those hookers doing in the hallowed halls of the European Parliament in Brussels last week? The moral outrage echoing in the corridors may have suggested that a recreation of Sodom and Gomorrah was being staged. Reason: about 125 prostitutes, including three men, were attending the Second World Whores' Congress. They were in Brussels at the invitation of the Green/Alternative European Link, an alliance of environmentalist and independent leftist parties.

Delegates to the three-day conference reaffirmed such objectives as decriminalising adult prostitution and abolishing red light districts. Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome was a pressing issue. Said Margo St. James, founder of the National Task Force on Prostitution, a US prostitutes' group: "People are too afraid to come out in the streets these days." But most of the women were irrepressibly optimistic. One wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the message:

**"GOOD GIRLS GO TO HEAVEN,
BAD GIRLS GO EVERYWHERE."**

↳ continued from p. 29...

Margo: *You were over-protected as a child. You're sick!*

Gail: *You were neglected as a child. You're sick!*

Margo: *All you care about is career and politics. You're obsessed.*

Gail: *All you care about is sex and money. You are obsessed.*

Margo: *You always say that women should be economically independent, but most feminists can't even earn their own living. You're stupid.*

Gail: *You could be economically independent, and what do you do? You keep men, and give them all your money. You are stupid.*

Margo: *You've had bad experiences with men; you hate men. You all hate men.*

Gail: *You've had bad experiences with men; you hate men. You all hate men.*

Margo: *You don't take care of your body, you never look fresh, you don't even use a deodorant. You stink!*

Gail: *You are diseased, you got VD. You use cheap perfume. You stink!*

Margo: *You think you know it all, but you don't know anything; you're naïve. You're arrogant.*

Gail: *You think you know it all, because you've been with so many men, but you are exploited. You are arrogant.*

Margo: *You are a lesbian; you don't like sex with men, but you sure could use a good fuck. You are lonely women.*

Gail: *You're either frigid or nymphomaniacs, but you could use some real love-making. You are lonely women.*

Margo: *You think that you're emancipated; I'm the emancipated woman. I've taken back power.*

Gail: *You think that you're emancipated; I am the emancipated woman. I have taken back power.*

Gail & Margo: *We are emancipated women.*

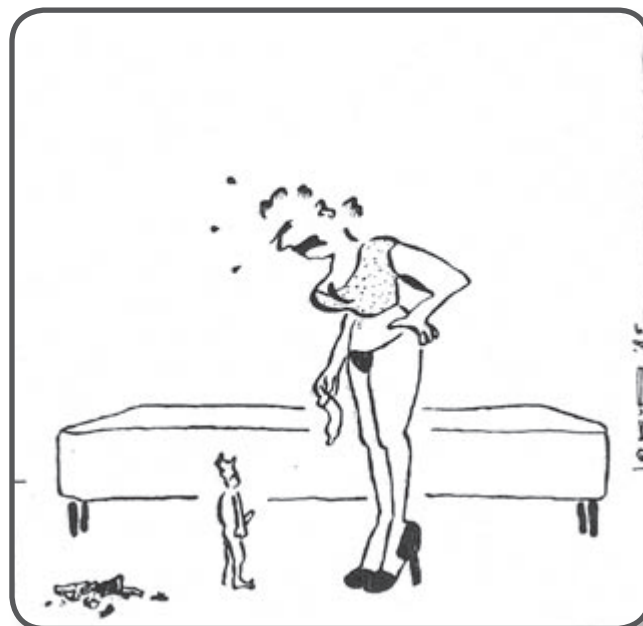
Margo: *Are you really a Madonna?*

Gail: *Are you really a Whore?* □

♥ Margo St. James founded the first prostitutes rights' group (COYOTE) in the USA. She lives in San Francisco.

♥ Gail Pheterson lives in Paris, France and is author of *The Whore Stigma: Female Dishonor and Male Unworthiness* (1986), *The Prostitution Prism* (1996) and editor of *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (1989), which features full transcripts of the First and Second World Whores' Congress.

ILLUSTRATION: *World Whores' News*, Issue 1, 1985



International Union of Sex Workers!

Presentation by Ana Lopes from the International Union of Sex Workers, London, UK

In the year 2000 I got a job in the sex industry and I realised that I had one of the best jobs in the world. But I had a few problems: I faced discrimination and stigmatisation, and I wasn't treated as a proper worker. I was appalled with this, and I thought, "why?" This is a brilliant job. I didn't know anything about the industry at that time. I didn't know that there was a sex workers' movement.

So I started speaking with other people in the industry. And then I called a meeting in my flat. We didn't have any money or any structure. We just got together—a few sex workers from different sectors and some allies, mostly friends from university who supported what I was trying to do. We decided that we needed an association as a platform to claim rights.

The International Union of Sex Workers—an informal collective of sex workers and allies—emerged in the year 2000. We first arose as a small coalition to plan a demonstration through Soho—London's red light district, on International Women's Day, in March 2000. We paraded through the streets of Soho accompanied by a samba band.

Since then we have made many contacts with sex workers from different sectors, and have begun publishing a regular bulletin, *RESPECT!* Our first issue features an article by Rona, recipient of the Sexual Freedom Coalition's "Sex Worker of the Year" award. Rona expresses pride in her work and makes a powerful case for social recognition and acceptance, which she hopes will lead to unionisation of the whole industry.

We called ourselves a "union" because we realised we were a collective of *workers*—and a collective of workers is a union. Since the beginning, we have been very clear that our main demands were the recognition of our work as legitimate, and the full

range of labour rights. And we called ourselves "international" because our industry has gone global, and it seems to make sense, if we are to respond effectively to the issues and problems we face, to organise on a global level too.

We started as a small group based in London but, having since set up a webpage and an electronic discussion list, we have truly become international. Nowadays, sex workers and allies from many different countries and regions of the world use the list to discuss issues of common interest, share information, etc.

Although we called ourselves a union, we weren't recognised as such. In 2001 we began approaching existing unions to demand that we be accepted as members. After

many negative responses, we approached Britain's General Union (GMB), which is one of the strongest trades unions in the UK.

Our strategy was to build on common ground. Knowing that the GMB had started to organise workers in sweatshops, we made them see that the arguments for organising sweatshop workers could also be applied to sex workers.

...continued on p. 32. ➔

Je suis fière d'être une pute!

PHOTO: Maj Christensen





PHOTO COURTESY: Ana Lopes

Sexing in the Street

Friday, March 8, 2000

On the same day as International Women's Day, March 8th, sex workers took to the street to celebrate the Sex Strike/Sex Pride carnival in Soho. The march began in Piccadilly at the statue of Eros, the god of love, and moved along to Soho led by samba drummers and dancers. The event was supported by the International Union of Sex Workers and the Sexual Freedom Coalition.



PHOTO COURTESY: Ana Lopes

IUSW at the Soho Carnival Parade, May 1, 2002

↳ *continued from p. 31...*

In March 2002 we finally joined a fully-recognised union. This means that we have achieved what seemed impossible, only two years after our first campaign. We are now recognised by the TUC (Trades Union Congress). And we established one major basic labour right for all sex workers in the UK: the right to join and be represented by an officially-recognised trades union.

Obviously, we have a long way to go. Other industries have been unionised for a very long time, but major unions like the GMB have no experience in organising sex workers. Moreover, workers in our industry have few experiences of unionisation—although sex workers have been

unionised at different times in various parts of the world, the industry has never before been unionised in the UK.

The Sex Workers' Branch of the GMB represents male, female and transgender workers from all different sectors of the sex industry. Although other people who work in related trades (e.g., project workers, sex shop assistants, erotic writers) may join the branch, decisions are made solely by sex workers. Our branch is based in the London region and has 300 official members, who pay monthly dues. We'll soon form a national branch, and sex workers in other parts of the country can already join our branch. Compared to the total number of sex workers, our current membership is tiny. However, for a union branch, this is a strong membership. And given how hidden the sex industry is and that its unionisation is such a novel idea, our numbers are quite impressive.

A range of benefits can be gained from being in a trades union. Collective benefits include being able to use the union's political clout for lobbying. For instance, the UK's Home Office started a review of prostitution laws in 2004. Because we are organised, we were consulted on this; we have a voice.

Individual benefits include free legal advice, as well as various kinds of training. Members who desire improved working conditions can study self-defence, pole dancing, etc. Those who wish to leave the industry (or not) can take courses in language skills, resumé writing, information technologies skills, etc.

There are some problems that we must overcome, and some limitations to the potential success of our partnership with the trades union movement. First, it is not always easy to manage a partnership between a small grassroots group and a big, bureaucratic institution, such as a trades union. And sex workers may sometimes feel that union organisers and officers are "cold," or don't understand their issues. It's important for sex worker leaders and allies to function as "bridges" between the sex-work community and the trades union.

Although we are part of the GMB, we are a highly autonomous branch. That's a very good thing, as it means that we retain our identity and the power to make decisions. On the other hand, it also means that we can't expect lots of funding or other support from the union. So we'll need to find our own means of support.

Some sex workers may be suspicious about the idea of joining a union. There are certain barriers to recruitment, primarily because most of the work in this industry is semi-legal or illegal, which makes many of us want to remain anonymous. Although the union represents all workers, regardless of immigration status—and although personal data is kept strictly confidential and work names are accepted—fears concerning stigma and immigration status deter many sex workers from joining the union.

It is perhaps easier to organise sex workers within legal businesses. In fact, the GMB union has been recognised by two different table-dancing clubs in the UK. This has meant that union officers and volunteers can go into those clubs at any time; that workers have elected their union and health-and-safety representatives; and that work contracts have been negotiated with the union, and grievance procedures established. We have less power to act in flats/brothels, which remain illegal in the UK. Sex workers in illegal establishments can join the union and receive all the benefits available to any member, but have less power to negotiate with employers in these settings.

Finally, sex industry organising is complicated by the fact that many of us operate independently, isolated from other workers. These are not ideal conditions for fostering the sort of political consciousness that results in labour organising. And, as in any other industry, there is a degree of apathy among workers. Such issues have affected many unionised industries that have nevertheless achieved improved working conditions and a greater degree of worker control.

On a more positive note, our alliance with the labour and trades union movement has helped shift the debate about sex work from the feminist/moralist arenas into the labour rights arena—at least in the UK. There is more public acceptance of the reality that sex work is *work*; we have the support of the majority of the trades union movement on this issue.



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Sex workers brought cameras to document the event.

When it comes to our own movement, unionisation brings particular advantages. Many small sex worker organisations struggle for existence, either because they lack funding and volunteers, or because of internal fighting and a dearth of democratic mechanisms.

When we joined the union we realised that here was a structure that would be very useful for us. There are democratic mechanisms and procedures to which branches are encouraged to adhere. To a certain extent, we can ask for help from other union branches. Thus, the degree of demand upon individual sex worker

activists is reduced, which has the potential to alleviate burn-out.

Sex workers have been mobilising and organising to fight for their rights all over the world, and for a very long time. Only in certain places have they chosen to unionise. Unions may be old-fashioned organisations and may not be right for every group of sex worker activists. But they may, in many cases, prove to be a good way to establish sex workers' rights. Without a doubt, unionisation can help protect sex workers' labour rights and legitimise sex work. □

♥ Ana Lopes, PhD is an anthropologist. She has worked as a phone sex operator and a striptease artist, and is the author of *Sex Workers of the World Unite! Organising in the Sex Industry*.



Sex Workers Join Britain's General Union!

Transcript of a presentation by Martin Smith, a labour organiser who helped set up an official Sex Workers' Branch of Britain's General Union (GMB)

Hello, I'm Martin Smith. I'd like to say a few things very quickly about the GMB and our culture. And then I think it would be useful to make a few comments about how we actually dealt with the challenges of getting acceptance for a sex workers' branch and won active support within the union, and also how we negotiated the autonomy of the branch within the GMB structure.

We're a general union, as Ana said, and I think we were formed in 1889, so we've been around an awfully long time. And looking back, culturally we've always been a union that set out to organise invisible workers across the UK—the kind of workers that polite society wants to marginalise and push away. Of course in terms of your industry, it's the most marginalised industry you can imagine. We also organise in casinos, home workers, and in the textile trade. However, 120 years ago those were different groups of workers than we organise now—120 years ago it was the gas stokers, the men who shovelled the coal into the coke retorts so that polite society could turn on their nice gas lights in their Victorian homes. Again at the time a lot of people argued that those people shouldn't be unionised. They were unskilled workers. They didn't look like the rest of the trade union movement. The argument the GMB has made for all its history is that groups of workers have the right to organise and push ahead.

Our position is that no work is illegal. We've gone further than that in terms of paperless workers, and call for amnesty for paperless workers. We think it's very important that we take the position that simply putting a roof over your head and feeding your children should not be illegal—in

any state, in any particular time, in any part of the world. We demand equal treatment for all workers in law, and particularly with respect to the nature of their work.

The right to self-organisation is absolutely critical and essential to what we've always tried to do. And the truth of it is, whatever industry it is—including the sex industry—we will say to workers

that we'll actually support and train and give leadership and our experience to any group of workers that approaches us to organise. But we simply cannot organise an industry for the group of workers. So the challenge to sex workers coming to us is to say, "We will support you. We will take you into the union—but you actually have to face up to the personal challenge and the collective challenge of organising your own industry." And like any other group of workers that means defining exactly where the balance point is going to have to be

in this industry, between personal liberties and individual rights, and the collective responsibility and collective action through strength and the type of strength of action we need to take.

So for all those reasons when I was approached—having spoken at a sweatshop conference—by Ana Lopes, and I had a few people in front of me out signing volunteers up to take to the streets of East London and take on these issues. And Ana Lopes came up to me and looked me in the eye and said, "I'm a sex worker—can I join your union?" And apart from being, I think, one of the few people who managed to not be speechless for a few seconds, you can see in terms of the course of the GMB that we had no other option but to say yes. There was no reason at all to say no to sex workers coming into our union. The deal is that we'll take on and tackle issues.

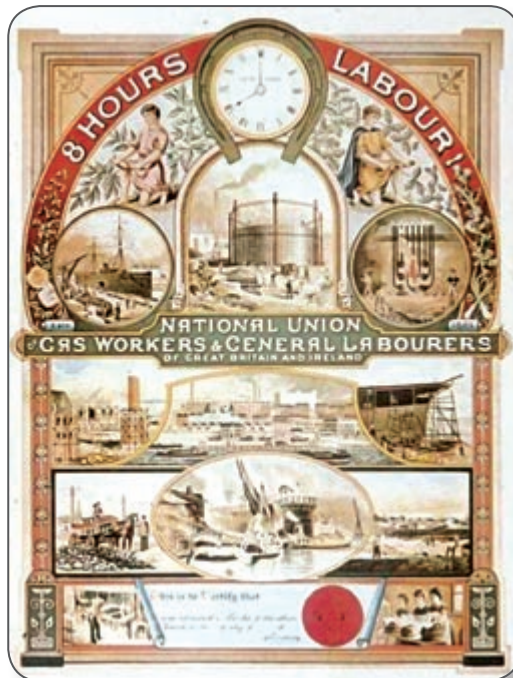


ILLUSTRATION: National Union of Gas Workers & General Labourers emblem commemorates their win of the 8-hour workday, 1889. © National Maritime Museum, London

We needed to create a level playing field at first. We needed to gain acceptance of this idea within the union, and we had to create safe space. It was very clear to us. We sat and we planned this very carefully. It was made clear to us that if we just approach our union open arms and said, “What do you guys think about organising sex workers?” without any kind of plan of how we’re going to manage the democracy of our union’s supporters, we would be shot dead at the first approach. We would have never been able to overcome the opposition. The core thing we did at the start was to decide to manage the media, and I think in hindsight that was very useful to do. When we actually announced what we were doing and we started bringing people together for the first meeting, the decision of the branch was that I would actually be the fall guy in terms of the media. Because we weren’t going to let the media get a hold of any of our members, of any of the activists, while we were still developing things. And I have to say, 90 per cent of the media that approached us, we bounced away as being not at all of any value to us, and that was the key, important point.

We had to approach this debate in the union, not on the assumption that just because we were passionate about the rights of sex workers and the right of sex workers to organise, everyone therefore would just fall in line, because of the strength of our passion and our commitment to the idea. What was key was that we recognised that opposition was going to be there. We had to make sure the opposition had nowhere to express itself, and it had nowhere to go. I think it was critical that we worked initially through the women’s committee—called the Equal Rights Committee—to make sure that we took the argument as it presented itself between feminism—or brands of feminism—and the labour approach to this. We had to tackle that very, very well, and, I have to say, I give a major credit to Ana for this. We got the support of all the women’s committees and all the active women in the union.

The TUC (Trades Union Congress) Women’s Committee is a committee in our trade union movement that wouldn’t necessarily have helped us enormously if they had voted for this in the end. But if we had taken a vote at this committee and lost it, it would have damaged us immensely. One of the proudest moments I had (not being at the meeting), was when Ana Lopes at the head of our delegation phoned me and said, “*Martin, I*

think we should move this motion.” I said, “*I’m not sure we should move this motion. If we move this motion and we lose Ana, you know we lose a lot.*” And she said, “*Martin, we’re going to move the motion, and we’re going to win.*” I have to say she was dead right, and I was immensely proud of that.

We also had to recognise that not all of the initial jokes and comments and ribaldry that came forward actually demonstrated real opposition, either. We actually had to consciously allow people to get used to the idea, and try and make a distinction between the real genuine opposition that was going to be a problem to us, and just people getting used to the idea. You have to allow people time on a very sensitive basis. And I think it’s a great credit to the way Ana has argued this within the union. That is to say, not that we believe there is no opposition in the union, and no opposition in the TUC, but there’s actually nowhere for it to go.

Another one of the proudest moments I had was when Ana moved the motion at our congress two years ago. Our union, although it’s over 50 per cent women membership across the country, it’s still dominated by men. And to see every single man in our congress—600 of them—stand up and applaud Ana coming down off the stage, and then vote unanimously in favour of it! It was, I think, something that Ana, even to this day, doesn’t realise the significance of that within the GMB. That wouldn’t have happened without some really detailed and hard, thought-through political manoeuvring.

In terms of the autonomy of the branch: we set up an adult entertainment branch, and we allow specific groups within that branch to organise in their area. If there are policies to be developed

...continued on p. 36. ➔

“Fierés” (Proud)

PHOTO: Maj Christensen





ILLUSTRATION: *Illustrated London News*, December 14, 1889
© National Maritime Museum, London

Gas Workers Protest, 1889

In March 1889, workers at the Beckton Gas Works were laid off. Gas workers all over London held protest meetings in response. At these meetings Will Thorne (a well-known public speaker from the Social Democratic Federation), suggested they start a union and the National Union of Gas Workers & General Labourers was born. Thorne became the union's General Secretary, and within a few weeks he had negotiated an eight-hour workday in the industry.

From the start the Gas Workers' Union promoted equality for male and female workers. Eleanor Marx, (Karl Marx's daughter) helped draft the union's rule book. Rule 2 stated: *"The union will seek to obtain for the same work the same wages for women as for men."*

March of the Bristol "White Slaves"

The Gas Workers' Union had established a strong branch in Bristol by October 1892, when Sarah Edwards (with the help of Enid Stacey, a prominent socialist) approached the union about working conditions at Sanders Sweet Factory. Sanders had increased work hours and took away their 15-minute meal-break after the workers had protested the long hours and large fines. Edwards was fired. The 300 women workers (nicknamed "Sanders' White Slaves") joined the union and went on strike.

Members of both the Gas Workers' and Dockers' Unions regularly joined the women on their daily fundraising marches. Police became increasingly hostile, and, in December, the marches were banned after a conflict with police. The women obeyed the ban and instead went to the Horsefair to collect donations. That evening police and militia charged the crowds with batons, swords and lances. Unbelievably, no one was killed, but many were injured.

Still, the strikers remained undefeated. Financial support for the union rose dramatically. During the strike, 25 women were arrested and charged, but the union successfully defended every case. The strike lasted until mid-1893, when Sanders finally agreed to many of the workers' terms, and improved working conditions.

The National Union of Gas Workers & General Labourers eventually grew to become Britain's General Union (GMB).

SOURCE: "The Bristol 'white slaves' strike and the Gas Workers' banners," by Peter Carter. Working Class Movement Library ([Web: http://www.wcml.org.uk](http://www.wcml.org.uk))

↳ continued from p. 35...

that relate to dancers, it's the dancers who make those policies. That's the principle we follow. The IUSW is part of the branch, but the branch exists as a branch of the GMB. The principle of the union as we organise in marginalised industries is to try and make sure we fit the union around the needs of workers, not demand that workers fit into the needs of the union. And that principle has informed what we've done. Generally speaking, I think it works, and generally speaking we try to give the maximum amount of autonomy to the branch to make policy.

I think there have been one or two occasions where the IUSW policy has been one thing, and GMB policy has been a different thing, and we've lived with that. We've found that actually the world doesn't come to an end because we disagree with each other. We don't have to control everything IUSW thinks, and they don't have to demand we stay on the same side. As long as we've accepted that difference, it's actually worked. At the end of the day, we have to stick to the fact that we are a union trying to organise to gain power for workers in this industry. It does mean people have to be members of the trade union. It does mean people have to be active in the trade union. It does mean people have to agree to the broad principles of the rule book of the union. It's very important that we take this industry seriously, and—once we create the level playing field for the workers in this industry—that we move ahead on the same basis that we would for any other.

So those were the points that I would add to what Ana said. I also wanted to congratulate the conference, and to say that maybe one of the greatest things that has happened here is that there was a very quick breakaway workshop of six trade unions in Europe. Just now, upstairs in the lobby, was the first time we've all met each other to say hello. Now I can't say we launched any major network or started any initiative, but this conference has been a vehicle for the six unions in Europe organising sex workers to say hello to each other for the first time. And maybe, just maybe, it's the beginning of a European network.

Thank you. □

♥ Martin Smith is a labour organiser with Britain's General Union. He lives in London, UK.

Patricia Kaatee, Liv Jessen and Janni Schulerud Talk Human Rights

Transcript from the plenary session "Sex Workers and Allies Unite!"

Patricia Kaatee is with Amnesty International Norway. Liv Jessen is head of Norway's national resource centre on prostitution, the Pro Sentret (Pro Centre) which offers information, counselling and outreach to sex workers. She received Amnesty International Norway's human rights award in 2004 for defending the human rights of sex workers. Janni Schulerud is with PION (Prostitutes' Interest Organisation Norway).



Patricia Kaatee:

I will just briefly say something about Amnesty International (AI). We are an international human rights organisation with 1.8 million members in almost 120 countries around the world, and we have branches in 80 countries. Our vision is of a world where everybody is able to enjoy their basic human rights and freedoms as set forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Amnesty's mission is to promote and defend everybody's human rights, and especially the right to physical and mental integrity.

In 2004 AI launched a campaign called "Stop Violence against Women." We did this because we acknowledge that violence against women is one of the fastest-growing and most serious human rights violations all over the world. According to the World Health Organisation, one in three women is being forced into sex, is beaten or raped at least once in her lifetime. The underlying cause of violence against women lies in discrimination against women, which denies women equality with men in almost every sphere of society. And control of women's sexuality is central to maintaining the subordination of women. Sex and sexuality are highly politicised: women's bodies are often used as political battlegrounds. This is true in war and also in peacetime. Society tends to be particularly violent towards women who are transgressing against society's norms of sexuality. So when we were deciding to whom we were going to give our human rights awards, we saw that even

though every human being is entitled to the protection of basic human rights and redress against abuse, many sex workers are facing discrimination, particularly in the criminal justice system. So, within the context of our "Stop Violence against Women" campaign, we looked to a person who had defended the human rights of one of the most marginalised groups in society: prostitutes and sex workers. A person who has relentlessly claimed that society has a duty to secure every woman her human rights and to provide her with social services. A person who has spoken up for the rights of women in prostitution, who are mostly invisible in the public sphere.

We decided to give our first human rights award to Liv Jessen, who leads the *Pro Sentret*. And I think that we as an organisation feel that, by that acknowledging the role that Liv has played in Norwegian society, we acknowledge the rights of people in the sex industry, and specifically of women in the sex industry. But our action has had consequences for the public debate in Norway that we had not foreseen, and it has changed the way in which Amnesty International Norway has been working for the rights of people in the sex industry. It has become the start of working together with organisations for women prostitutes and also with other women and men in the sex industry. It has been a challenging experience.

Liv Jessen:

I'll ask you a question: "What makes you a human being?" The famous Danish philosopher Knud Ejler Løgstrup says that what makes you human is the fact that you are acting according to your human nature. He talks about trust, mercy and compassion as important human standards; it's natural for all of us to act according to these standards. Aristotle stressed the fact each human being must exist in relation to other people, in dialogue with other people. But most philosophers describe a human being as a person with

...continued on p. 38. ➞



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

"Sex Workers of the World Unite!"

↳ continued from p. 37...

free will and, accordingly, one who is responsible for her choices. It is choice that makes you a human being; a subject in your own life.

A Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim talks about objectifying other people: "*By objectifying the other person, you attack the other person's freedom. One who is cunningly objectifying the other is master.*" What has this to do with sex work and prostitution? Or, more precisely, what has this to do with people who sell sex?

Since the 1970s there has been, at least in my country—and I hear in many other countries as well—a radical feminist theory stating that prostitution is to be considered as violence against all women. This theory lives alongside those stating that there are two kinds of women: the Whore and the Madonna; the indecent and the decent—we, and the others.

Radical feminist theory states that it is men who are in power, men who can choose. The prostitute is a victim—an object, or less—forced to sell sex for whatever reason. To look at prostitution in such a one-dimensional way leads to the same result as viewing it as a Whore/Madonna dichotomy. The prostitute will still be the "other woman"—not like me (a non-prostitute). I am a subject who can choose, and she is not.

Thus, the radical feminist theory leads us astray. This feminist movement with this theory, has to be an opponent to prostitutes as such. As long as they do not recognise the prostitute's right to choose, for whatever reason, her own life, they will deprive one group of women of their human right to self-determination. This is also why they never listen to prostitutes with whom they disagree.

These prostitutes "do not know what's good for them;" they have "false consciousness," because no woman can, in this analysis, choose prostitution.

Two Norwegian feminists, Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad, state in their book *Back Streets: Prostitution, Money and Love* that "*no one wants to rent out her vagina as a rubbish bin for hoards of anonymous men's ejaculations.*" This view rejects a person's right to choose prostitution. The only prostitutes these women accept are the repentant sinners, the survivors—those who have come to their senses. Prostitutes who disagree with them politically or otherwise are objectified and looked upon as children, not capable of making their own choices.

A radical feminist group in Norway says strikingly, "*We can of course not leave the politics of prostitution to the prostitutes, any more than we could leave drug policy to the drug addicts.*" As a longtime feminist and a former radical feminist—so I know what I am talking about—I have always believed that the essence of feminism was to fight for the rights of every woman to choose her own life; to be a subject in her own life; to be a hero in her own life. Whether I disagree with her choices is irrelevant: she has the right to choose. The right to choose is in fact what makes one human; what makes one a person.

All our efforts and achievements in the field of prostitution in the coming years should be based on the best of our humanistic tradition—solidarity and empowerment—rather than on condemnation, expulsion, or suffocating pity.

The radical feminist critics came after me very vehemently after AI awarded me this prize. They raised my status as the number one hated object in Norway. I have been there for many years, but this was one level higher than before. The bottom line was that they were very angry with me and with others who stood against the Swedish law [that makes it a crime to pay for sex; being paid for sex is not against the law]. They were fighting very, very hard for the Norwegian Government, or Norwegian politicians in different parties, to impose the Swedish law. At that time I had been working with Janni for about almost twenty years, and, she and Gitte were very, very, very good, on the front line of all the struggles and debates on fighting the Swedish law. So I definitely share this prize with at least those two, and many, many other women.

I will end by saying that what was most pleasant about getting this award was that I was passing through the Pro Centre one day—we have a drop-in centre where a lot of women sit all day—and I overheard one woman saying to the others: “Listen, listen—we won the prize!”

Thank you.

Janni Schulerud: (*Liv is translating*)

Janni is saying that a small delegation of Norwegian and Swedish sex workers went down to Amnesty and gave them flowers to thank them for putting these questions on the agenda, so pleased were they with this level of respectful recognition.

Patricia Kaatee:

I must say it was a very strange experience, because there had never been any whores as such at the offices of Amnesty International Norway. My secretary general wanted to do this well. I saw that he was struggling with his prejudices, but we had a good meeting. And through these initiatives, the living and working conditions of people working in the sex industry have come to the forefront of our work. I think that the human rights framework should and could be used more effectively

to promote the human rights of sex workers, because human rights are for everybody. Everybody has the right to be respected, regardless of their occupation, gender, or ethnicity. I also agree that the human rights movement has not been together with you enough in your struggle. I see that the feminist movement has supported you, at least in some countries, and I do hope that the “Stop Violence Against Women” campaign that AI is conducting will prove to be a vehicle that makes it possible to have a closer working relationship.

As a final note, last year we began discussing whether or not Norway should prohibit the buying of sex. And then this prize came, and the radical feminist movement saw it as an argument, which it was not. And suddenly AI was thrown into this debate. So I was really on the verge of tears when Janni and Jesper came with flowers and said, “We are supporting you, and we are so glad that you are going into this debate”—and I think it actually changed the debate to a certain degree. What you also see now within the feminist movement is a much more balanced debate about prostitution. Previously it was more “the prostitutes are the traitors.” But now we are seeing more differentiations within the debate. So it has been changing politics. □



Still Challenging “Place” – Sex, Money and Agency in Women’s Migrations

Excerpt from a presentation, and an article by Laura María Agustín

I am originally from Latin America, but I guess I’ve lived in so many countries and migrated so many times that I no longer have a national identity. I think it’s very important that the topic that I’ve been given is migration – it’s not trafficking. We understand that trafficking and forcing people to do things is a part of migration processes – and that they’re very important, and that we need to do things about them – but that the larger category to talk about is migration.

If you have talked to plenty of migrants, you realise that what they describe about their experiences is not what’s being defined as trafficking by the press, by a lot of government agents, by a lot of feminists, by a lot of people who want to help, but maybe haven’t listened to enough diverse voices.

Most people who come from different countries don’t call themselves migrants before they go anywhere. Most people are just thinking, “well I think I’ll go and see what happens in another country.” So I usually talk about this as informal travel.

We have all of these kinds of informal jobs that are available for migrants (construction, domestic labour – taking care of people’s grandmothers, sick people,

babysitters). You can have a university degree, or already be a professional in your country – be something that you were trained to do and you would like to do – but when you come to Europe, if you’re not going to be able to enter in a legal way and you really are trying to come and make some money, then you might become a domestic worker. You might make more money as a domestic worker – and you’ll certainly make more money selling sex – and so that becomes the priority for lots of people. So they’re coming, and they’re coming in informal ways. People are buying services to travel and to get work in informal sectors of the economy.

This is gendered labour in a lot of different ways. A lot of feminists now are talking about the feminisation of poverty, the feminisation of migration. Actually this really can’t be proved.

Women have been at least

half of migrants for at least 50 years. Looking at some work people have done in the 19th century, it seems that women were also half of the people who migrated then. But there is a disproportionate sector – a disproportionate amount of these informal jobs are available for women. That’s clear, we know. But there are other gender identities that are affected by that.

Let’s say I’m a man or a transgendered person and I would like to be a domestic worker. Well it’s not going to be easy to get those jobs. There’s an idea that it has to be a woman, and it should be a biological woman from the Third World. So that’s one kind of limitation.

In general, when people talk about these things, transgendered people are made to disappear. Some people count them as women. Some people simply leave them out. Many of them would like to do other kinds of jobs – not sell sex. It’s very difficult because of prejudice.



Soon banners and signs block the entrance.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



CENTRE PHOTO: Laura Agustín (right) & Alexandra Oliveira (credit: A. Sorfleet)

Male sex workers are ignored by almost everyone. People who count really think that maybe a third or half of migrants who sell sex are probably men. There's very little attention about that. So when you have this kind of obsession with looking at a particular group, then everyone else disappears.

The only way to protect the people who work in sex businesses is for governments to recognise those businesses in their formal accounts. That is the conclusion of the investigation done in four or five Asian countries in the mid-90s by the International Labour Organisation. When governments acknowledge that businesses exist then they have to keep track of them. They put them on the books. They have to give them licences. They have to carry out inspections. People who work in those businesses have to be covered by some kind of social security.

The following excerpt is reprinted from an article I wrote, published in *Women and the Politics of Place* (Arturo Escobar and Wendy Harcourt, eds. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. 2005).

Un-Gendering Migration, in a Way

It is striking that in the year 2005 women should so overwhelmingly be seen as pushed, obligated, coerced or forced when they leave home to get ahead through work. But so entrenched is the idea of women as forming an essential part of home if not actually being it themselves that they are routinely denied the agency to undertake a migration. So begins a pathetic image of innocent women torn from their homes, coerced into migrating, if not actually shanghaied or sold into slavery—the “trafficking” discourse.

This is the imagery that nowadays follows those who migrate to places where the only paid occupations available to them are in domestic service, caring labour or sex work.

The “trafficking” discourse relies on the assumption that it is better for (non-Western) women to stay at home rather than leave it and get into trouble, “trouble” seen as doing irreparable harm to women (who are grouped helplessly with children), while men are routinely expected to encounter and overcome it.

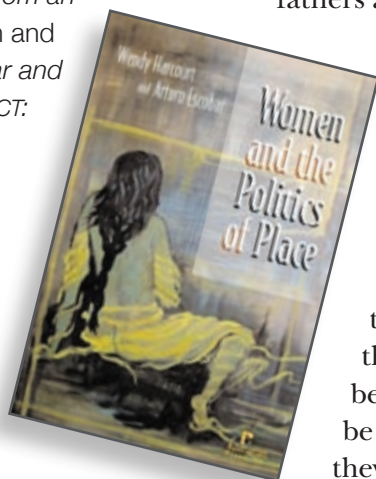


PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Wearing the rainbow flag as a cape...

In the sentimentalising that occurs around “uprooted migrants,” the myriad possibilities for being miserable at home are forgotten. Many women are fleeing from small-town prejudices, dead-end jobs, dangerous streets, overbearing fathers and boring boyfriends.

Home can be a suffocating place, as evidenced by the enormous variety of entertainment sites located outside of it. In many cultures, only men are allowed to partake of these pleasures, occupy these spaces; women who travel to the West find themselves able to participate in many. Moreover, the possibility that some poor women might *like* the idea of being desirable to First World men (who may be seen as “White,” “rich,” “exotic”), or that they might *like* being a dancer or artist—even if with a sexual element—is practically never considered. Valerie Walkerdine has criticised British middle-class abhorrence of little girls’ talent contests popular among the working class:

“Girls form ambitions and desires around aspects of femininity which are presented to them. In fact... the lure of “fame,” particularly of singing and dancing, offers working-class girls the possibility of a talent from which they have not automatically been excluded by virtue of their supposed lack of intelligence or culture.” (1997: 50)

The same can be said of Third World women with limited prospects. Whether or not people are misled about the meaning of an offer to work, their own desires must be taken into account when considering their later experiences. A trip abroad, away from the limited prospects of home, may

...continued on p. 42. ➞



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Protesters make time for a photo opportunity.

⇒ continued from p. 41...

represent the attempt to fulfil important personal desires, those considered essential to “self-realisation” and the acquirement of personal “identity” in the West. And if one of our goals is to find a vision of globalisation in which poorer people are not constructed solely as victims, we need to recognise that strategies for fulfilling desires that seem less gratifying to some people may be successfully utilised by others. As one member of Babaylan, a migrant domestic workers’ group in Switzerland, said:

“We look at migration as neither a degradation nor improvement ... in women’s position, but a restructuring of gender relations. This restructuring need not necessarily be expressed through a satisfactory professional life. It may take place through the assertion of autonomy in social life, through relations with family of origin, or through participating in networks and formal associations. The differential between earnings in the country of origin and the country of immigration may in itself create such an autonomy, even if the job in the receiving country is one of a live-in maid or prostitute.” (Hefti, 1997)

Nor do the bad beginnings or sad, frightening or even tragic moments of people’s migrations need to forever mark them nor define their whole life experience. Relative powerlessness at one stage of migration need not be permanent; poor people also enjoy multiple identities that change over life-courses composed of different stages, needs and projects. Granting agency to migrating individuals does not mean denying the vast structural changes that push and pull them. On the other hand, granting them autonomy does not mean making them over-responsible for situations

largely not of their own making. Global, national and local conditions intervene in individuals’ decisions, along with doses of good and bad luck. (Agustín 2003b)

Many situations come up during a migration in which migrants have to choose between doing things the “right,” or legal, way, or doing them so that they might turn out the way they want. This brings to mind the conversation I had with a Colombian woman through the bars of the detention centre where she was being held in Bangkok after spending a year in prison. Her anguish did not derive so much from her having been in prison as from her own feelings of guilt because she had semi-knowingly broken the law, allowing a fake visa to be prepared for her in order to get into Japan. Her family had helped her with this, and her resultant conflicts over love and blame were tormenting her. While this woman had been a victim, she had also made choices and felt responsible, and I would not want to take this ethical capacity away from her.

By insisting on the instrumentality of migrating under less than ideal conditions, one does not deny the existence of the worst experiences nor the necessity to fight against them. The abuses of agents who sell ways to enter the first world extend to migrants who work as domestic servants and in sweatshops, *maquiladoras*, mines, agriculture, sex or other industries, whether they are women, men or transgendered people. But these most tragic stories are fortunately not the reality for most migrants, according to their own testimonies. (Agustín 2005)

Dealing with Displacement

Research among migrant women doing sexual or domestic work reveals little essential difference in their migration projects and demonstrates that migrations that may have begun as a kind of displacement (a feeling of being pushed out, of having no reasonable choices) are not doomed to be permanently sad stories.¹ Even the poorest, and even the partially “trafficked” or “deceived,” look for and find spaces to be themselves in, run away, change jobs, learn to utilise friends, clients, employers and petty criminals. In other words, they do the same as other migrants and in all but the worst cases tend to find their way eventually into situations more to their liking, if still imperfect, whether that means finding a good family to

clean for or a decent brothel-owner or the right contacts to work freelance. Consider the story of one Moroccan woman in Spain:

"I arrived in Almería through a friend's mediation. I began to work as a domestic, I was badly paid and mistreated. Sundays I came to the edge of the sea and cried. One Sunday a Moroccan man saw me crying, I explained my situation to him, he took me to his house. I was a virgin, he promised he was going to marry me ... he got me a residence card... he found me work in a restaurant and let me stay in his studio. He told me I had to pay rent. I began to sleep with some clients from the restaurant ... Now, I would like to go to France, I want to get married... My sister who lives in Béziers says she's going to find me a Frenchman, to get a residence card."

(Lahbabi and Rodríguez, 2000: 18)

This testimony shows how migrant women, far from being passive victims, exploit their opportunities in any way possible. At the beginning, the woman is sad at being far from home and "out of place." The big trip has been made across the sea, and the sea is returned to for solace. A countryman, perhaps because of his association with home, promises more consolation. But by the end, the woman's tone has changed, setting her sights on yet another country, where she is prepared to live if she can find a husband.

"Place" Has Become an Endless Space to Move Through

People everywhere nowadays are exposed constantly to media images depicting world travel as essential to education and pleasure, and fomenting desire through the glamorous representation of places (see, for example, Mai, 2001). But since the majority of the world's poor and desperate do not migrate, many of those that do must be people interested in exploring and capable of taking the risks involved in uprooting (even if they also feel frightened or forced to do it).

"Place" for migrants is often set up in terms of a dichotomy: home (which you loved and were forced to leave) pitted against your new country (which is not yet home but which you don't want to be deported from). This classic focus is problematised by the work of many migration scholars. Consider the titles of two texts written about the Dominican diaspora: *Between Two Islands* (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) and *One Country*

in Two (Guarnizo, 1992). In this case, a large number of Dominicans are said to live in both Santo Domingo and New York City, or live between them, on the "bridge" they have built during the past 20 years.

Family arrangements in which one or both parents live in the US with none or some of their children, while their other children live on the island, are frequent. Although having more than one household in two different countries might be a source of emotional stress and economic hardship, it also arms family members with special skills to deal with uncertainty and adversity. They become more sophisticated than non-migrant people in dealing with a rapidly globalising world. (Guarnizo, 1992: 77)

The complicated relationships migrants have to home, which may or may not be a place they actually wish to visit or live in again, are too often excluded from discussions about them. People who sell sex also have private lives, go to films, bars, discotheques, restaurants, concerts, festivals, church parties and parks. Their wish to leave work behind and be ordinary is no different from other people's; in the context of urban spaces they become *flâneurs* and consumers like anyone else.

Underdog Cosmopolitanism

The term "cosmopolitan" is often applied to "sophisticated" travellers, "globetrotters" who are seen as carefree and urbane. According to this view, Most ordinary labour migrants are not cosmopolitans either. For them going away may be, ideally, home plus higher income; often the involvement with another culture is not a fringe benefit but a necessary cost, to be kept as low as possible. (Hannerz, 1990: 243)

...continued on p. 44. ➞

Some sex workers concealed their identity.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 43...

Here Hannerz fixes migrant identity in an early stage of reluctant leave-taking, self-protection and wariness toward the new, fails to reflect differences found among people of different ages, classes and cultures and forecloses the possibility that migrants don't remain "migrants" forever as they change and are accepted into new societies.

More seriously, here the lives of migrants appear to be a series of (dull) instrumental decisions in which travel and sophistication play no part. But the concept of the cosmopolitan does not necessarily exclude poor travellers. Jamaica Kincaid (1990) and Bharati Mukherjee (1988) both wrote novels in which a woman from a country on the "periphery" migrates to the "centre," initially to work as an *au pair*. The protagonists, Lucy and Jasmine, are portrayed as cosmopolitan, their discoveries about the metropole and their ability to reflect on cultures as astute as anyone's. They are migrants who begin with very little but who increase their cultural capital enormously as they travel. The cosmopolite eventually comes to have a special relationship *vis-à-vis* "place," considering the world his oyster, not his home.

In traditional centre-periphery theory, people who live outside the West are conceived as, literally, peripheral to the main story of modernity. James Clifford's travel theory (1997), which emphasizes flexibility and mobility rather than identity and fixed location, and encompasses such popular notions as New York City being "part of the Caribbean" and Los Angeles and Miami being "capitals" of Latin America, might have a place for ordinary working migrants, including those cleaning houses and selling sex.

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai's concept of the *ethnoscape*, a "*landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live; tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers and other moving groups and individuals*," seems open to including everyone. (1996: 33)

The wider issue is the disqualification of the experiences of postmodern working people who see mobility and adaptability as key to their futures. Whether these are maids, strawberry-pickers or sex workers, they are often allotted marginal spaces in actual geography, as well as in discourses of mobility. Why is it possible to view the illegal jobs of British women on the Costa del Sol as entrepreneurial (O'Reilly, 2000) while the illegal work of Rumanian or Moroccan women in the same location is seen as as "forced"?

It is common for migrant sex workers to have lived in multiple places. For a variety of legislative and social reasons, not least of which are the repressive policies of police and immigration everywhere, many migrant sex workers keep moving, from city to city and even from country to country. This itinerant lifestyle creates a particular relationship to place that impedes doing the things migrants are "supposed" to do: establish themselves and become good (subaltern) citizens. Moving a lot, migrants have met people from many countries and can speak a little of several languages, and some have inevitably learnt to be flexible and tolerant of people's differences. Whether they speak lovingly of their home country or not, they are on their way to overcoming the kind of attachment to it that leads to nationalist fervour and to joining those that may be the hope of the world, people who judge others on their actions and thoughts, and not on how they look or where they are from.

Sexing "Place"

Sex is sold in places. Though many commentators talk as though "the street" were the only place involved, in fact street prostitution is on the wane in many places and non-existent in others. In the "free markets" of advanced capitalism, products and services that used not to exist proliferate before our very eyes. Places to go have burgeoned, purchasable experiences continuously multiply, so the proliferation of sexually-oriented shows and services on offer is hardly surprising. In some of

"Discrimination: Shame!"

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



these sites you can see women from Ecuatorial Guinea working alongside women from Brazil and Russia, and women from Nigeria alongside others from Peru and Bulgaria. What's called the *milieu* are "workplaces" for those selling sexual services in them, people who wear erotic uniforms and spend many hours in the bar, socialising, talking and drinking with each other and the clientele as well as with cooks, waiters, cashiers and bouncers.

In the case of flats, some people live in them while others arrive to work shifts. The experience of spending most of their time in such ambiances, if people adapt to them at all, is another way to produce cosmopolitan subjects.

All this is not particular to people who have migrated. The places associated with commercial sex are treated in hegemonic discourses as disgusting, perverted or marginal, but the idea that they are few and irrelevant to the social mainstream is ridiculous, given that all kinds of sexual businesses together generate multi-millions in profits. The people involved include not only those who directly sell sex but consumers, business-owners, investors and non-sexual employees. Sites and forms embrace bars, restaurants, cabarets, clubs, brothels, dance halls, phonelines, saunas, massage and beauty parlours, escort services, films and videos, spectacles, puberty rituals, sex shops, stag and hen events, fashion shows, shipboard parties, Internet sites and sometimes art exhibitions and theatre plays, many of these promoting non-sexual products and services as well.

Clearly a great deal that societies consider to be "cultural" and normatively "social" are included in the range of activities that take in both commerce and sex. Yet societies' twin reactions to commercial sex—moral revulsion and resigned tolerance—have permitted its uncontrolled development in informal economies, which simply means that the places of sexual commerce are not counted. People who sell are stigmatised, activities bought are taboo and places are either treated as invisible or zoned into marginal areas. But none of this inhibits the growth and proliferation of businesses, nor their use for many mainstream purposes.

This is a key issue. Pole dancing, lap dancing and belly dancing exist on an erotic continuum that in many cases provides little more than an evocative



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

The demonstration made the news throughout Europe.

background for activities not sexual in themselves. Men who hold wealth and power routinely, in most cultures, use sexual spaces to do business, entertain clients, demonstrate their wealth, amass more cultural capital and reproduce their masculinity.

John Urry (1990) divides touristic gazing possibilities into "collective," in which the presence of other people adds to the experience, and "romantic," in which privacy is important. Both kinds of experiences are available in the sex industry, whose sites are used by clients to drink, eat, take drugs, get together with friends, do business, impress partners, watch films, travel, be with a variety of sexual partners and pay for a gamut of services. The sexual moment need not occupy a central place within the whole experience; for many, drinking and socialising in the presence of symbolic, decorative women or men may be more important. (Allison 1994; Leonini 1999; Frank 2002)

Meanings of Place

Many sites in sexual milieux are multi-ethnic, multicultural and they are even borderlands: places of mixing, confusion and ambiguity, where the defining "lines" between one thing and another are blurred. With so many foreign migrants employed in the sex industry, languages spoken include pidgins, creoles, signing and lingua francas, whether we look in Tokyo, Bangkok, Lagos or Sydney. Performance and experimentation are routine in spaces where sexual identities are malleable: anyone can buy or sell anything, unhampered by his or her everyday character. Many clubs would appear to be carnival sites, the world upside down, the sex worker like the *pícaro*, the half-outsider who substitutes trickery for dignified

...continued on p. 46. ➤



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

"Sex Workers Use Condoms, Do You?"

⇒ continued from p. 45...

work, living the role of "cosmopolitan and stranger ... exploiting and making permanent the liminal state of being betwixt and between all fixed points in a status sequence." (Turner, 1974: 232)

Cosmopolitan space seems to work against the grain of the "women and place" project and involve exactly that which does not fix people in places. I am aware that many will continue to lament migrants' loss of home and see involvement in commercial sex as singularly tragic. But imagine what would be said if men were the large group using commercial sex as a strategy to migrate to good wages: it would be seen as a creative, entrepreneurial move, and not characterised as a tragedy. So one must give credit where credit is due, recognise the resourcefulness of most migrant women and allow them the possibility of overcoming feelings of victimhood and experiencing pleasure and satisfaction within difficult situations and in strange places. □

♥ Laura María Agustín studies social, economic and cultural issues linking commercial sex, migration, informal economies and feminist theory. She currently lives in London, researching the situation of migrant workers in the city's sex industry. See http://www.nodo50.org/conexiones/Laura_Agustin/

Footnote

1. Studies that follow migrants over time show that there are gradual changes of levels of feeling alienated, strange, excluded and accepted or integrated to receiving societies.

References

- Agustín, Laura. 2006. "The Disappearing of a Migration Category: Migrants Who Sell Sex." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32, 1, pp. 29-47
- Agustín, Laura. 2005. "Migrants in the Mistress's House: Other Voices in the 'Trafficking' Debate." *Social Politics*, 12, 1
- Agustín, Laura. 2003a. "A Migrant World of Services." *Social Politics*, 10, 3, pp. 377-396
- Agustín, Laura. 2003b. "Forget Victimisation: Granting Agency to Migrants." *Development*, 46.3, pp. 30-36
- Agustín, Laura. 2001. "Mujeres inmigrantes ocupadas en la industria del sexo." In *Mujer, inmigración y trabajo*, Colectivo IOÉ, ed., pp. 647-716. Madrid: IMSERSO
- Allison, Anne. 1994. *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Frank, Katherine. 2002. *G-Strings and Sympathy: Strip Club Regulars and Male Desire*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Grasmuck, Sherri and Pessar, Patricia. 1991. *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo. 1992. *One Country in Two: Dominican-owned firms in New York and in the Dominican Republic*. Doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University
- Hannerz, Ulf. 1990. "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7, 2/3, pp. 237-251
- Hefti, Anny Misa. "Globalisation and Migration." Presentation at conference, Responding to Globalisation, September 19-21, 1997, Zurich
- Kincaid, Jamaica. 1990. *Lucy*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux
- Lahbabi, Fatima and Rodríguez, Pilar. 2000. "Les immigrés marocains en Andalousie: Le cas des femmes marocaines prostituées à Almería." Unpublished doctoral research, Université Toulouse-le-Murail and Universidad de Almería
- Leonini, Luisa, ed. 1999. *Sesso in acquisto: Una ricerca sui clienti della prostituzione*. Milan: Edizioni Unicopli
- Mai, Nicola. 2001. "Italy is Beautiful." In *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, R. King and N. Wood, eds., London: Routledge
- Mukherjee, Bharati. 1988. *Jasmine*. New York: Fawcett Crest
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2000. "Trading Intimacy for Liberty: British Women on the Costa del Sol." In *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe. Women on the Move*, F. Anthias and G. Lazaridis, eds., pp. 227-249. New York: Berg
- Turner, Victor. 1974. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Urry, John. 1990. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage
- Walkerdine, Valerie. 1997. *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

Sweden's **Ban** on Buying **Sex**: What **Happened** to Sex Workers' **Rights**?

Excerpt from a presentation, and article by Jesper Bryngemark

Hi everyone. My name is Jesper and I'm here to talk about how the Swedish law violates sex workers' rights, because this is a subject that is becoming increasingly important and increasingly relevant on a European level. Sweden has a tradition of exporting social policies, because we have a very strong image of ourselves as the social conscience of the world.

For instance, in 1979 Sweden banned child abuse — whipping your kids was made illegal. We thought this was very fine and good, so then this policy was promoted to other countries. So we know how to promote policies, and now Sweden is promoting its policy on prostitution as a sequel.

One reason this law became a reality in Sweden in the first place was that so few sex workers were ready to go public. Prostitution traditionally has been invisible in Sweden. Connected to this invisibility is the fact that the sex workers' movement in Sweden is very, very weak. And feminism is very, very strong in Sweden. The law looks nice in the eyes of politicians because it's the same old "abolitionist" bullshit, but it's dressed up in nice feminist clothing. Maybe if more sex workers had gone public and said: "Hello, you are stepping on our fundamental human rights by doing this," then maybe there would have been a chance to stop it at its root.

Sex workers have been opposing the spread of this law internationally, however. They have been going to Norway to help their Norwegian colleagues fight this law, and they are going to Finland to speak up against the law because Finland is also considering adopting the Swedish model. So the Swedish promotion campaign will be coming to your countries — it may even already be happening. Let me make it clear: You have to speak up before it's too late, because this model is very persuasive. So in order to combat this, stand up and make yourselves heard.

CENTRE PHOTO: Jesper Bryngemark (credit: Quentin Deltour, Espace P)

Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005)

Introduction

In 1998 the Swedish Parliament passed a law that prohibits the purchase of—as well as the attempt to purchase—sexual services. The law entered into force January 1, 1999. From an international legal perspective the law was unique in that it put criminal sanctions on the buyer, but not the seller in commercial sexual transactions.¹

Before long this law became known internationally as the "Swedish model," and like any issue connected to prostitution it soon became the subject of polarised debates in Sweden and in other countries. Advocates of this new legal construction celebrated it as a progressive solution to the "problem of prostitution," whereas adversaries described it as inefficient, moralistic and possibly harmful to sex sellers.

Historical Perspective

To put this law in a context, a few things should be mentioned about Sweden. Since the First World War, Sweden has been under predominantly social

...continued on p. 48. ➞

Protesters chanted slogans in French and in English.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 47...

democratic rule. The concept of social welfare through governmental rule is relatively strong and widely accepted. Compared to most other countries in Western Europe, the commercial trade in sexual services is traditionally not a very visible phenomenon in Sweden; for instance, there are no red light districts or publicly visible brothels. The sex workers' movement is weak compared to, say, Germany or The Netherlands.

Sweden also keeps up a tradition of exporting social policies. During the rise and expansion of the Swedish welfare state, Sweden mostly exported models of economic governance. It has been argued, however, that as Sweden's welfare system began to deteriorate by the end of the 1970s, focus changed to exporting moral policies, which are arguably cheaper.² One example of such a moral policy is Sweden's ban on child abuse in 1979, which in some contexts was considered proof of the progressiveness of Sweden's social policies.

When it comes to governing prostitution, Sweden has applied most known models of individual responsibility through the last 150 years. By the latter half of the 19th century, prostitution was subject to municipal regulation in most larger Swedish cities, as was the case in many other Western European countries at the time. Female sex sellers were subjected to mandatory registration as well as mandatory medical inspections. Those who did not comply risked prosecution under the vagrancy law. By the end of the First World War, however—following a general turn to abolitionism in continental Europe—the registration system was abolished. The focus of political arguments shifted away from prostitutes, to the procurers of prostitution. Nevertheless, female sex sellers were still arrested under the vagrancy law.

And the media ate it up!

PHOTO: A. Sorfleet



The vagrancy law was abolished in 1964. From this point onward, prostitutes disappeared from Swedish criminal law and became the concern of different kinds of social legislation. The laws on procurement remained, but it seems that they were now more harshly applied. Until this day, Swedish laws on procurement are much more strictly enforced than in the neighbouring Scandinavian countries where similar laws apply. Whereas tabloid newspaper publishers in Norway and Denmark do not usually face prosecution for publishing ads for sexual services, publishing such ads in Sweden would constitute a clear case of procurement following a court case in the late 1970s. (NJA 1979 p. 602) Since then, such ads are not published in Swedish newspapers.³

The 1980s saw the birth of a new feminist legal discourse where prostitution, among other things, was increasingly constructed as a form of “structural violence” against women. Traces of this discourse can be found as early as 1984 in a law reform on sex crimes, and to some extent this discourse also affected the laws against procuring at the time. In 1998, however, an explicit analysis of systemic patriarchy was used by a Government enquiry commission to introduce a new subject of individual responsibility—the client. The result was a new ban on the purchase of sexual services:

“Den som mot ersättning skaffar sig en tillfällig sexuell förbindelse, döms—om inte gärningen är belagd med straff enligt brottsbalken—för köp av sexuella tjänster till böter eller fängelse i högst sex månader.

För försök döms till ansvar enligt 23 kap. brottsbalken.”

In English:

“Anyone who provides himself with a remunerated temporary sexual relation shall be sentenced—if the act is not punishable according to the Criminal Code—for purchase of sexual services to fines or at most six months in prison.

Attempted purchase of sexual services is punishable according to the 23rd chapter of the Criminal Code.”

The law contained this wording until 2005 when it was incorporated into Sweden's Criminal Code (*Brottsbalken*). In addition to editorial changes, it was added that even cases where someone other than the buyer pays—or offers to pay—for sexual services are punishable.

The issue is sometimes brought up to what extent the remunerated sexual relation must be “temporary,” mostly by those who aim to criticise the law by pointing to its alleged logical flaws. The question is then raised whether a buyer in a stable commercial sexual relationship, who repeatedly sees the same seller and pays him or her for sexual services, is to be sentenced or not. In its law proposal for the 2005 alteration of the law, the Government admits that this issue is potentially problematic, but concludes that the word “temporary” should be kept in the law for reasons of terminological consistency (laws against procuring use the same wording). According to the Government this, however, does not imply that regular clients would be exempt from prosecution. (prop. 2004/05:45, pp. 104-105) Until today this issue has not been settled in any court and therefore remains unresolved.

The Law of 1998: Background

The ban on the purchase of sexual services originates in a Government enquiry commission report published in 1995 which proposed penalising not only the purchase, but also the *sale* of sexual services, as well as the production of pornography in cases where the final product “*depicts intercourse or is grossly offensive*.” The commission’s task was to investigate prostitution, and its findings largely consist of narratives that portray prostitution as a kind of gendered sex-slave trade. When entering this trade women are transformed into prostitutes who—aside from selling sex—have irreparable damages in common. According to the commission these damages stem from either earlier physical and mental violations; from prostitution in itself; or from both. (sou 1995:15, pp. 137-149)

The commission concluded that society must take a stance against such atrocities. Interestingly, the commission recommended that both parties of the transaction be equally punishable. According to the commission a law criminalising both the sale and purchase of sexual services would give women an incentive to stay out of the sex trade, whereas men would refrain from buying sex out of fear of getting caught. Arguments about “the women” (*i.e.* the sellers) being victims who should not be held responsible for the existence of prostitution were dismissed with the following argument: If we agree that “the men” (*i.e.* the clients) should be punished then we cannot conclude that the women should go free of



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Sex workers start the protest with a chant.

punishment. The women may be victims in the sex trade, but even the men can be seen as victims of a larger oppressive structure. This means that you cannot escape responsibility solely by means of your status as a victim. (SOU 1995:15, pp. 224-228)

Such arguments, however, gained little adherence by the Government. In its law proposal of 1998, the Government instead argued that it would be wrong to criminalise the “weaker party” (*i.e.* the seller) in prostitution. According to the Government there is no doubt that prostitution is harmful to society as well as to individuals. It would, however, suffice to criminalise the purchase (and the attempted purchase) of sexual services. Such a law would, in short, send a *moral message* to the population who would then hopefully learn that paying for sex is *wrong*. (prop. 1997/98:55, pp. 104-107)

Upon reading the Government’s law proposal, it becomes evident that the feminist or anti-patriarchal kinds of arguments that were so fundamental to the recommendations put forward by the commission in 1995 were not useful to the Government in 1998. Instead, the harmfulness of prostitution was now being described in terms of criminality and social despair, and the proposal was given to the Parliament without a trace of feminist arguments to support it. Still, in contemporary Swedish debates the law is generally defended by feminists, and is generally considered to be a product of feminist politics. A recent trend has, however, been to emphasize the alleged successfulness of the law as a tool in the struggle against sex trafficking.⁴

It should be noted that none of the visions put forward in the arguments above, neither before nor after the law was passed, is founded in empirical research. The preparatory documents give no

...continued on p. 50. ➞



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Protesters talk about human rights.

↳ continued from p. 49...

clue as to how the proposed measures would lead to the desired outcomes; the connection instead seems to be based on ideological reasoning and common-sense arguments. New claims that the law hinders sex trafficking also seem to be generally accepted without any reference to research.

Measuring the Law's "Effects"

I am sometimes asked to say something about the practical effects of the ban on purchasing sexual services. This is not an easy task: A law is merely a document; it neither talks nor acts on its own. The effects caused by the existence of a law are not particularly easy to assess. Yet political discourse often attributes laws with such active abilities and the law becomes a metaphor for such phenomena as police actions, court sentences, etc. Even within this kind of discourse, however, it is more or less impossible to assess the effects or results of the 1998 law, as it still has not been officially evaluated despite it being characteristic of a social experiment.

A few reports have been written, although none of them meet acceptable scientific standards for methodology. Two Swedish official reports (Socialstyrelsen 2000 and 2003) state that street prostitution appears to have decreased, but that no causal link can be drawn between this decrease and the law. The question, "What happened to the sex sellers who stopped working from the street?" is raised in both reports, but is left unanswered. According to the same reports, clandestine prostitution has increased since the law entered into force.

Soon after the law was passed, the Swedish Government put political pressure on neighbouring Norway to adopt this new legislation. In response, the Norwegian Government appointed

a commission to investigate the matter. The result was a report (Stridbeck *et al* 2003) which concluded that the only scientifically-proven effect of the law is that a majority of the Swedish population are in favour of it. Thus, the ambition to send a moral message to the population can be said to have been successful in part, but the question of whether or not the other goals have been met remains unanswered.

The law has proven difficult for courts to put into practice. Unless the client admits to the action, the prosecutor must present proof for two assertions:

1. that payment has been offered or given, and
2. that this payment relates to a sexual act.

In practice this means that police must catch the buyer and the seller in the act, and preferably record the bust with a video camera. A report issued by the National Police Board (Nord/Rosenberg 2001) instructs police to confiscate the condoms they find, as these can be used as evidence. Critics claim this practice gives sex sellers an incentive to not use condoms. According to the same report there are indications that since the law entered into force sex sellers have been exposed to more violence. Again, it is unclear what conclusions can be drawn from these claims.

In a report from 2001, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) expressed concern that the current legislation may have rendered prostitutes more vulnerable, and asked the Swedish Government to evaluate the effects of the law. (CEDAW 2001:79) The Swedish Parliament recently voted in favour of a proposal to undertake such an evaluation, but to my knowledge no investigation into the matter has been initiated as yet.

"Swedish Model" for Export

The Swedish Government has been promoting the "Swedish model" not only to Norway, but to governments around the world as an attractive alternative to other models for controlling prostitution. Whenever the adoption of Sweden's "solution to the problem of prostitution" has become subject of debate in any other country, Swedish media has been eager to report about it. There have also been several claims that efforts to export the law have been successful—that governments of other countries have adopted laws

similar to the Swedish one. Investigation into the legal sources, however, shows that these assertions are not well-founded. The two examples mentioned most in this context are Lithuania and South Korea.

In the summer of 2005, Swedish media reported that Lithuania—inspired by Sweden’s example—had amended its Criminal Code to make the purchase of sexual services illegal. But it turns out, Lithuania’s Criminal Code (Article 182) explicitly makes both the sale and purchase of sexual services equally punishable. Since sellers of sexual services do not go free, this legislation clearly is not an instance of the Swedish model. Instead, it is a classic example of a prostitution prohibition law.

For the last couple of years, representatives of the Swedish Government have been pointing out that South Korea has adopted Sweden’s law on prostitution.⁵ But an investigation into the matter reveals that in 2004 South Korea—after having been shamefully added to the US State Department’s “Watch List” of countries that are doing too little to counter trafficking—adopted two new laws against prostitution and sex trafficking.⁶ Article 4 of South Korea’s *Act on the Punishment of Procuring Prostitution and Associated Acts* criminalises any involvement in prostitution—be it selling, buying, or procuring. Article 6 does, however, exempt “victims of prostitution” from punishment. The word “victim” is defined in Article 2:1:4 as someone who:

- is “forced to sell sex”
- sells sex under influence of illicit drugs provided by a third party
- is underage or disabled, or
- “is trafficked for the purpose of prostitution.”

It is clear that South Korea’s laws differ considerably from Sweden’s original model. The South Korean laws criminalise the sale of sexual services, but make exceptions for people who can be construed as “victims,” whereas the important feature of the Swedish model is that sex sellers are not held legally responsible at all. South Korea’s legislation appears to have more in common with the classic idea of prohibition than it does with the objectives behind the Swedish law. It therefore still looks like hopes to make the “Swedish model”

a product for international export have yet to become real. □

♥ Jesper Bryngemark studies and teaches law. He lives in Malmö, Sweden.

Footnotes

1. In contrast, laws criminalising the buyer as well as the seller are common all over the world, for instance in the United States and throughout Asia. Such a set of laws is usually referred to as “prohibitionist” legislation.
2. For a more elaborate discussion on Swedish social policies and “symbolic legislation” from the 1970s onwards, see Tham (2001).
3. For historical accounts on Swedish prostitution governance, see Svanström (2006), Söderblom (1991), Frykman (1993) and Könshandeln (1995).
4. One example (out of thousands) can be found in *Rikskriminalpolisen* 2004:32.
5. See, for instance, Ekberg 2004:15.
6. US Department of State 2001:15.

References

Literature

- Ekberg, Gunilla. 2004. “The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services: Best Practices for Prevention of Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings.” *Violence against Women*, No. 10, Sage Publications, United States. pp. 1187-1218 (Updated version: http://www.kvinnefronten.no/Tema_politikk/Vold_mot_kvinner/1714/Gunilla_Ekberg.pdf)
- Frykman, Jonas. 1993. *Horan i bondesamhället*. Stockholm: Carlsson
- Svanström, Yvonne. 2006. *Offentliga Kvinnor. Prostitution i Sverige 1812-1918*. Stockholm: Ordfront

...continued on p. 52. ➞

Banners and placards soon block the entrance.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



PIRKTI MOTERĮ – GĖDINGA!

Be to, anksčiau ar vėliau VISI tai sužinos*



PHOTO: bow4rain

"It is Shameful to Buy a Woman!"
 "Moreover, sooner or later everybody
 will find out about it."

Curb Demand for Sex

NOVEMBER 14, 2005 — A huge publicity campaign has been launched in Lithuania aimed at lowering client demand for prostitutes. The campaign includes street posters with slogans such as *"She could be your daughter, sister..."*; a *Primer on the Male Demand for Prostitution* for police, government officials and business executives; and a letter-writing campaign from women's groups, protesting sex tourism in Lithuania.

Lithuania banned buying services from prostitutes in June 2005 in an effort to combat the sex trade. At a Parliamentary roundtable session held in September, Lithuania's *Action Plan for Combating Trafficking* was presented by Igoris Bazylevas, Deputy Chief of the Ministry of the Interior. The campaign is sponsored by European Women's Lobby, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and promotes community actions that confront customers. Police are using name and shame tactics that include airing surveillance video of men talking to prostitutes on a special television show. Police have also seized men's cars.

The campaign also has the support of the Baltic Network to Challenge the Legalisation and Decriminalisation of Prostitution Industries and Focus on the Demand, which held its first meeting on Sept. 30. The network aims to promote Sweden's model legislation which views prostitution as violence against women; to educate boys and men against buying sex; and to work with the media to raise public awareness in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania about the harmful effects from legally recognising prostitution as work. □

SOURCE: ITC News, November 18, 2005 (<http://www.lygus.lt/ITC/>)

↳ continued from p. 51...

- Söderblom, Tomas. 1992. *Horan och batongen. Prostitution och repression i folkhemmet*. Stockholm: Gidlunds
- Tham, Henrik. 2001. "Law and order as a leftist project? The case of Sweden." *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 409-426

Court cases

- *Nytt Juridiskt Arkiv* (NJA) 1979 p. 602

Official documents

- CEDAW. 2001. *Report of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on its 25th Session* (July 2-20, 2001)
- Nord, Anders and Rosenberg, Tomas. 2001. Rapport, Lag (1998:408) om förbud mot köp av sexuella tjänster. Metodutveckling avseende åtgärder mot prostitution. Polismyndigheten i Skåne
- Regeringens proposition (prop.). 1997/98:55: *Kvinnofrid*
- Regeringens proposition (prop.). 2004/05:45: *En ny sexualbrottslagstiftning*
- Rikskriminalpolisen. 2004. Människohandel för sexuella ändamål, Lägesrapport 6
- Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU). 1995:15: *Könshandeln. Betänkande av 1993 års prostitutionsutredning*
- Stridbeck, Ulf et al. 2004. *Sexkjøp i Sverige og Nederland: Reguleringer og erfaringer. Rapport fra arbeidsgruppe om rettslig regulering av kjøp av seksuelle tjenester*. Oslo: Justis- og politidepartementet
- Socialstyrelsen. 2000. *Kännedom om prostitution 1998/1999*. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen
- Socialstyrelsen. 2004. *Kännedom om prostitution 2003*. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen
- The US Department of State. 2001. *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection*
- *Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report* (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/4107.pdf>)

Internet sources

- South Korea *Act on the Punishment of Procuring Prostitution and Associated Acts* (official translation)
- South Korea *Act on the Prevention of Prostitution and Protection of Victims Thereof* (official translation) (<http://www.mogef.go.kr/dev/board/board.jsp?id=eud0100&menuID=eud0100>)
- Lithuania's Criminal Code (unofficial translation of relevant parts: <http://www.refocusbaltic.net/en/main/legislation/lithuania>)



The German Prostitution Act: Consequences for Sex Workers

Presentation by Stephanie Klee from HighLights-Agentur, Berlin, Germany

I greet all my colleagues, friends and everyone else present. And I wish for you—as well as for myself—that this conference and its results be heard, especially by the politicians and authorities in Europe, but also by people in our business—colleagues, brothel-keepers, our clients and all others concerned.

When I took part as a prostitute in the World Congress in Brussels in 1986, I felt great to be in the “hallowed” halls of the European Parliament and I was very impressed by the mere fact that I had been invited.

Still, at that time I never would have thought that we activist whores and callboys would be heard by politicians, or have a say and an influence on laws and the behaviour of authorities. But history has taught me something else!

Now in Germany we have had the so-called Prostitution Act since January 1, 2002. Its real name is the *Act on the Regulation of Prostitutes' Legal Affairs*. [In German, “*rechtsverhältnisse*” is about legal relationships between contractors, as well as legal situations in general.] I repeat: *Act on the Regulation of Prostitutes' Legal Affairs*. Not an “Act on Prostitution,” nor an “Act About Everyone Concerned in Prostitution.” It is expressly called the *Act on the Regulation of Prostitutes' Legal Affairs*.

In Germany we had fought for this for more than 20 years, and our demand has always been to *abolish all discriminating laws and all special regulations*. Our dream was that prostitution businesses could be treated just like other types of businesses. Therefore we were, on one hand, disappointed by

the Prostitution Act. It didn't go far enough for us—it was too little.

The Act contains exactly three articles. Article 1 has three paragraphs.

Paragraph 1: The “immorality” of prostitution is abolished. That means that whores and callboys now have the legal *right* to the payment clients agreed to. Clients can no longer refuse to pay the agreed-upon fee (such as after a quarrel, for instance, or because they claim to not have been satisfied).

In purely legal terms a prostitute can now provide the service first and demand the money afterwards—just as in other businesses. This also applies to payment within employment relationships. It sets the foundation so that whores and callboys can now

decide if they want to work as independent contractors (just like independent journalists or lawyers), or as employees with employment contracts.

To work as an independent contractor means that you are responsible for everything yourself:

...continued on p. 54. ➞

Yet it was a festive and cheerful crowd.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



⇒ continued from p. 53...

payment of taxes, insurances, advertisements, prospects for clients, and, of course, also for your work performance.

If you have an employment contract with a brothel, you can receive a regular wage (paid once a month, if you wish), and the employer pays your wage taxes to the tax authority, as well as fees for such employee benefits as sick-leave, unemployment, health-care insurance, and pension plan.

In practice, these provisions have had little effect on our work. To date there have been few employment contracts. The reasons for this are that:

- Our colleagues do not want it. We are used to getting paid every day, or after every guest.
- Brothel-keepers do not want it, since the law limits their rights as an employer in relation to their employees. If an employee is lazy or does not feel like working, the employer cannot command her to work. (See “Paragraph 3,” below.)
- Neither whores nor brothel-keepers have any experience with work contracts and social insurance. They are suspicious as to whether it all works like they are told, or if there is some catch hidden somewhere.

Paragraph 2 (of Article 1) says that a whore or a callboy may not waive his or her demand for payment from a client. In my view this is not a good solution because if, for instance, a woman works in a bar she may be collecting large sums of money from clients. If it should happen that one client does not pay, she might refrain from demanding payment for such reasons as:

- she is not willing to appear publicly in court, or

Protesters began to launch from the steps into the street.

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



- she is not willing to pay the costs of taking the matter to court.

Paragraph 3 (of Article 1) states that brothel-keepers have a *limited right of commandment* (limited rights in terms of authority, as I mentioned earlier), yet they still must fulfil the duties of employers whose employment relationships are subject to mandatory social insurance (such as paying wages, deducting taxes and paying for social insurance). This is a new rule which does not apply to any other type of business!

Article 2 is about modifications to the Criminal Code [*German Penal Code* – “*Strafgesetzbuch*” (*StGB*)]. The earlier provisions about “procurement of prostitution” (§ 180a *StGB*) and “pimping” (§ 181a *StGB*) were not completely abolished. However, they were softened a little which is an improvement. These changes were needed in order to allow for employment contracts, regulated hours and workplaces, and good working conditions (such as atmosphere, prices and ensuring condom availability). Before the new law, elements of a business such as a nice atmosphere were used shut down workplaces with good working conditions. So this is a huge improvement.

Article 3 says that the law enters into force on January 1, 2002.

This is the law — it is no more and no less. It is quite small, and it is very, very far from our initial demands. But, we saw this law as a beginning. We saw it as a first step from which further steps would follow. It was important to us that the positive effects of the Prostitution Act (the law signalled a paradigm shift in legal judgement) might be transferred to other laws such as the laws on permits for restaurants and other businesses, the planning and zoning laws, the law on public order, the regulations on restricted areas, the policing laws and the immigration law.

Through years of discussions with politicians we have understood that politics is always a matter of compromise and power, and that it is particularly difficult for a politician to imagine herself in the place of a prostitute, a brothel-keeper, or in the prostitution business. The Green Party (which at that time had a position in Government) were only able to come through with this tiny law against the Social Democratic Party Government and the Christian/Conservative parties in opposition.

What are the practical changes since January 1, 2002? Until now I have only described the law to you. What may look like one thing on paper can often look quite different in reality. I will start with the negatives, in order to end on a positive note.

Negative Effects

Politicians and authorities have made a huge mistake in not making the Prostitution Act widely known. Therefore hardly anyone in the business knows about it. After three and a half years the authorities are still not committed to making information about the law reach the people in the business. Too many whores, callboys and brothel-keepers do not know their rights according to the law, nor do they know how to use the law.

In addition, authorities have not consistently implemented the law into other legal levels. When they do, they use it only in a negative way; not in a positive way.

For example: Before, the planning and zoning authorities usually did not care much about our business, but nowadays they examine our businesses very closely. Things such as whether a brothel is situated in a residential area, or a mixed area, have suddenly become very important matters. Brothels which may have been there for five, ten or 15 years without any trouble with the neighbours are now being closed down. Please note that prostitution is not mentioned once in the planning and zoning laws, and the Prostitution Act in no way effects the planning and zoning laws.

Germany is a federation, which means that the laws are interpreted differently in different states (there are 16 states in total). Therefore, what may be possible in Berlin (our capital) may well be prohibited in Munich (Bavaria).

For example: In Berlin it is completely possible to receive a licence to operate a bar with prostitution. Alcohol can be served and consumed, exotic dancing and table-dancing is allowed, and you can offer prostitution—either in a room in the back of the premises, or in the house next door. For this, there is only one permit required—held by one person—and the authorities cannot arbitrarily repeal the permit. In Bavaria, however, none of this is possible. Of course there are plenty of such bars in Bavaria, but they are just tolerated by the authorities. The consequences are that



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

"Sex Workers Rights = Human Rights" led the procession.

these businesses have no legal rights, and can be closed down at any time. Therefore, as a brothel-keeper, you have no safe existence, no legal protection, and you live and work in perpetual insecurity. And that also applies to our colleagues who work there.

We have the impression that the authorities see us as guinea pigs. [In German: *"als ob wir der Spielball der Behörden sind."* Translation: "as if we are the play-ball of the authorities."] We must endure new regulations copied from other types of business, even though they have no clue about our industry or our business structures. They push us from one problem to another without consulting us.

For example: The tax authority in Bavaria requires that every brothel-like business have work contracts with the sex workers. One consequence is that the brothels must pay VAT (Value-Added Tax) and income tax, as well as wage taxes for money that employees have earned, which they receive directly from customers and then take home. Whereas the brothel-keeper only gets the rent for the room, he is still responsible for the taxes related to the employees' earnings.

In Stuttgart, the brothel-keepers have been made accomplices to the tax authority. Brothels are required to collect a standard daily tax from sex workers (from €12 to €25 each), regardless of the sex worker's income that day.

Some cities such as Cologne and Gelsenkirchen have imposed an additional "amusement tax" based on the size of the room which must be paid by the brothel-keeper or sex worker (or both). These different taxes are applied carelessly without regard for the structure of the business. And

...continued on p. 56. ➞



PHOTO: A. Sorfleet

See the sight, as sex workers unite!

↳ continued from p. 55...

after that, taxes are collected ruthlessly which, in many cases, leads to businesses going bankrupt or simply giving up.

The business of prostitution has not moved forward either. Those in the business do not trust the authorities and the politicians. After decades of discrimination no trust remains, instead there is fear that the small positive changes from the Prostitution Act could be repealed. If parts of the Prostitution Act were repealed and the old provisions about procurement and pimping were reintroduced, the only thing left would be to reinstate the “immorality” of prostitution law. Recent conservative political trends in Germany have led to fears that — even in our country — laws to punish the clients of “involuntary” prostitutes are being considered in response to human trafficking.

The CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Bavarian Christian-Social Party) Faction already have finished a law proposal that would make these transactions punishable with fines or up to five years’ imprisonment. With regard to punishing clients, I ask myself: How can a client recognise an “involuntary” prostitute? Does she have a sign on her forehead? And how will the police find these clients?

I fear a witch hunt. This along with endless regulation of prostitution businesses, would force us to withdraw once more, not act in public, and serious [In German, “*seriös*” means “respectable, reputable, with good intention”] people in the business will have to make way for the not-so-serious.

Positive Effects

As to the *positive* effects of the Prostitution Act, I see only three instances. However, they are three very important ones.

1. The mere fact that whores and callboys now have a legal right to collect their fees from customers (even if some workers still demand their money upfront):
 - strengthens self-confidence in some sex workers
 - promotes a positive understanding of the profession and professional conduct
 - slowly improves professionalism, along with possibilities for education; and
 - fosters respect for sex workers from clients, brothel-keepers, police and other authorities.

Increasingly more men and women are bringing their cases to court. This means sex workers are no longer silently swallowing the decisions of authorities, and are instead seeking their rights.

2. As new people enter prostitution with this law in place, there is a new generation of whores and brothel-keepers for whom paying taxes is normal, who want to operate legally, and who distance themselves from criminal activity such as using violence and force.
3. I see great advantages in the Prostitution Act for two groups among our migrant colleagues:
 - migrants who have residency and work permits can work in prostitution with an employment contract without problems with authorities
 - migrants allowed to work as independent contractors can now work as independent contractors for prostitution businesses as well. This works well, for instance, for all new EU citizens.

Expulsion from Germany solely because of involvement in prostitution is not possible anymore!

I am sorry to say that the Prostitution Act means no improvement for the large majority of other migrant colleagues working illegally, but this problem pertains to immigration laws. And in this respect, the EU is closing its borders rather than opening them. Temporary work contracts

like those issued for seasonal farm workers, or a Green Card solution like that used for workers in the information technology area, could be positive steps in future.

I am very unsatisfied with the law and its effects and the few positive changes. I often lose my patience. However I do believe that we will one day have equality — equality in terms of the conditions for prostitution businesses as compared to other businesses.

Only three and a half years have passed since January 1, 2002 and that is too short a time to successfully combat decades — or centuries — of discrimination. **But if we do nothing, if we say nothing and do not become involved, things will get even worse for us.**

My plea to all sex workers, brothel-keepers and customers is: commit yourselves to professionalising prostitution, and to tying it closer to the formal economy. And I plead for greater commitment on the part of non-governmental organisations, authorities and politicians to support our businesses.

Thank you for your kind attention. □

♥ Stephanie Klee is a sex-work activist, who works with HighLights-Agentur in Berlin, Germany.

- *HighLights-Agentur*
Emmentaler Str. 99
13409 Berlin, Germany
Tel./Fax: 0049 – (0)30 – 496 78 67
Funk: 0171 – 79 566 12
E-mail: highLights@t-online.de
Web: <http://www.highLights-berlin.de>



Prostitutes, **WE Salute YOU!**

*H*otel conference rooms used for the workshops and plenaries were renamed to commemorate some of history's more (in)famous sex workers who stood up for our rights and influenced society.

Paulo Henrique Longo

(1964–2004)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Paulo Longo was a rentboy before he became a clinical psychologist. He also wrote a regular newspaper column about gay rights. Longo was coordinator of Programa Pegação, a project for male sex workers where



he began as an outreach worker in 1989. In 1991 he co-founded the Network of Sex Work Projects, a global coalition of sex workers and advocates.

Throughout his career he denounced unethical research. He was known for his eloquent speeches about sex workers' rights which he gave at countless AIDS conferences, UN public health meetings and international forums. In 2003, Rio de Janeiro City Council honoured him for his work defending human rights for gay, bisexual and transgendered people — and sex workers.

Paulo Longo died of a heart attack at the age of 40.

PHOTO: <http://www.webzip.com.br/longo>

Grisélidis Réal

(1929–2005)

Born in Lausanne, Switzerland, Réal was a writer, a mother, a courtesan and a social worker. In 1939 she attended the School of Decorative Arts in Zurich. She also studied classical piano.



Her prostitution career began in Germany in 1960. In

1973 she became a militant activist when prostitutes occupied Chapelle Saint-Bernard in Montparnasse, France. She became known as “*Catin Révolutionnaire*” (“Revolutionary Whore”) and co-founded Aspasie, the first prostitutes’ association in Switzerland. She started the International Centre of Documentation about Prostitution at her home in Geneva. Réal considered prostitution “*an art, and a humanist science.*” She authored several books including: *Le Noir Est une Couleur* (1974), *Carnet de Bal d’une Courtisane* (1984), and *La Passe Imaginaire* (1992). In her later years Réal wrote poems about her battle with cancer that, curiously, moved audiences to laughter. She died at the age of 74.

Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes in Italy: We Demand

Presentation by Carla Corso from the Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle Prostitute, Pordenone, Italy

Prostitution must be recognised as a profession. Prostitutes are workers and must be recognised as such.

We demand that the rights of prostitutes—our human, labour and civil rights—be put on the same level as the rights of other workers. In particular, civil rights such as the right to protection of personal safety, the right to health-care assistance and the right to a minimum salary should be granted to prostitutes.

Prostitutes—including migrant prostitutes—must be able to work legally all over Europe.

Our governments must ensure working conditions that respect and guarantee prostitutes safety and health. All mandatory medical check-ups must be abolished, as well as mandatory registration by the police and all other discriminatory measures prostitutes must undergo.

One last appeal: The European Union must close all Temporary Detention Centres. Misery must not and cannot be criminalised. Temporary Detention Centres must be closed because they have even fewer guarantees and rights than prisons.

Immigration is not a crime; migrants should not be treated as criminals and be put in prison for having tried to change their life conditions.

What follows is a brief outline of the activities that the Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes ONLUS.¹ has implemented.



The Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes (CDCP) is a non-profit association that was founded by sex workers in 1982. Its main objective is to provide assistance to prostitutes.

The Committee is one of the founding members of TAMPEP International Foundation which was created in 1993. The Committee implemented and promoted the TAMPEP methodology right from the beginning by realising, assisting and monitoring a wide range of multi-disciplinary projects for sex workers in Italy. The Committee also acts as the

interlocutor for political forces and institutions on a local and national level. We have taken part in and organised public awareness campaigns to fight for respect for the dignity and rights of sex workers and against all forms of discrimination.

Among our activities, CDCP carries out street and workplace interventions for prostitutes; gives out health, legal and job placement information to male and female prostitutes; and liaises with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). We accompany prostitutes to health clinics and social services; we shelter women, and victims of trafficking; we offer cultural mediation. CDCP organises training courses for prostitutes and ex-prostitutes, social service and health clinic operators, male and female cultural mediators and serves as a consultant to NGOs and the public.

CENTRE PHOTO: Carla Corso (left) & friend (credit: A. Sorfleet)

Our message was loud and clear.

PHOTO: A. Sorfleet



The Committee operates a multi-regional project in the border towns of Trieste, in Northeast Italy and in San Remo, in Northwest Italy.

Progetto Stella Polare is a social protection project aimed at encouraging self-determination and giving support to women who wish to escape from severe slavery-like conditions and sexual exploitation. The Stella Polare Project is implemented by CDCP. This programme is financed by the *Dipartimento delle Pari Opportunità* of the Council of Ministers. Its local partners include: *Azienda per i Servizi Sanitari* N° 1 (ASSI), Triestina (local health board in Trieste); the Comune of Trieste; the Comune of Pordenone; the health board of Pordenone; and the Comune of San Remo. CDCP is also a member of the Northeast network of all projects present in the area and makes use of the national helpline against trafficking: 800 290290.

The project operates on different levels through the following activities:

- mobile street units interventions
- assisted repatriation—if requested by the victim—to the country of origin in collaboration with organisations present in the country
- basic information to immigrants in general (women and sex workers) on legal issues
- training on health aspects aimed at preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs), increase the use of contraceptive methods and also provide psychological support, accompaniment to local health centres
- seminars, conferences on social integration in order to combat exclusion and social isolation
- reception of exploited women who intend to abandon prostitution by availing themselves of Article 18 of the Legislative Decree N° 286/98 of the Immigration Law. (This programme oversees the re-integration, schooling, professional training, housing and job placement of the women under protection. (The programme comes to an end after 12 months as regulated by the above-mentioned Article 18, when it is supposed the victim has achieved complete emancipation and self-determination.)

Victims of sexual exploitation who decide to make use of the Social Welfare Work Programme and other forms of protection that the Italian law has provided (Art. 18, DL 286/98) present different



PHOTO: A. Sorfleet

The banner was carried by a contingent of sex workers.

problems, due in part to individual characteristics and personal experiences, and also because of factors such as ethnic origins and culture (as is the case of our Nigerian target population). These factors may lead to a critical situation at the moment of insertion into the Social Welfare Work Programme which renders the legalisation procedure very difficult.

Thanks to the experience of TAMPEP International and to the work that Stella Polare and other projects run by the CDCP, it has been possible to achieve a greater sensitivity when communicating with migrant sex workers, and to develop suitable intervention methodologies that could be applied in these cases.

Prostitution Scene

CDCP research indicates that the majority of sex workers present in Italian cities and regions are migrants. Few Italian sex workers are present on the streets, and about half of them also work indoors. The largest group of migrant sex workers are Nigerians. In some cities they represent 60 per cent of the sex workers on the street. Eastern European sex workers from Rumania have recently replaced the once-massive presence of Albanians.

In certain areas 10-15 per cent are transgenders, and more than 25 per cent in others.

Overall, 50,000 sex workers are estimated to be present in Italy. The following table (*see p. 60*) gives estimates of the proportion of migrant sex workers by ethnic origin. (Male prostitution has not been included.)

...continued on p. 60. ➞



Pia Cove (with bullhorn) at Red Umbrellas March in Venice, 2001.
(<http://www.parasite-pogacar.si>)

The Red Umbrella

The red umbrella was chosen as a symbol of sex workers' struggle for equality and rights during the street protest that ended the Brussels conference.

The parade of red umbrellas carried by marching protesters created a strikingly beautiful visual interruption of the daily bustle in Brussels' public streets.

The red umbrella was first used as symbol by sex workers in Venice, Italy during the 49th International Venice Biennale, June 6-8, 2001. The Red Umbrellas March began at the "Padiglione delle Prostitute" (Prostitute Pavilion) set up in a public space at Giardini, part of the famous international art biennial. Using megaphones, the Red Umbrella Marchers called attention to the struggle for sex workers' civil rights as they paraded across Venice through the city centre, before winding up at the A+A Gallery. Sites important to Venice's social history of sex work were identified along the march—noted were such famous Venetian courtesans as Veronica Franco and Gaspara Stampa, as well as present-day sex-work locations.

Participating activists, individuals, organisations and groups came from Australia, Cambodia, Germany, Italy, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA to take part in this World Congress of Sex Workers, held in conjunction with the Venice Biennale. Using street theatre, performance, video documentaries, exhibitions and media appearances, the Congress presented principles for sex workers' self-help, organisation, education and protection, and emphasized issues facing sex workers in Asia's huge, booming sex industry.

The World Congress of Sex Workers was organised in part by the *Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle Prostitute* from Pordenone, one of Italy's leading organisations for the protection of sex workers' rights.

The ICRSE has adopted the red umbrella as its symbol to honour all sex workers who have dared to resist discrimination and oppression. □

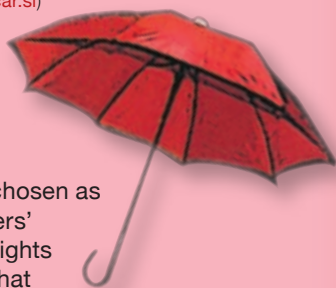


ILLUSTRATION: Petra Timmermans

↳ continued from p. 59...

Ethnic Origin of Migrant Sex Workers*

African	50%
Eastern European	35%
Latin American	13%
Asian	2%

* CDCP estimates

The Merlin Law on Prostitution

The Merlin Law of 1958 guaranteed the freedom of women prostitutes from state-sponsored brothels and obligatory health and police controls. However, we are dealing with a law that contains abolitionist tendencies. As a result, it punishes aiding and abetting prostitution, luring clients (a crime that was reduced in 1999 to an infraction for which you can be fined); and it excludes the possibility of organising prostitution in closed surroundings (public locales, clubs, and apartments).

In practice, for many years court verdicts have applied the Merlin Law in a very repressive manner. Therefore, prostitution is mostly carried out on the streets. For foreigners there are no specific prohibitions against the practice of prostitution nor is there a law that affirms the right to practice prostitution. The situation of immigrant women who practice prostitution is much worse than that of Italian women because the foreign women are often illegal immigrants. □

Footnote

1. The acronym, "ONLUS" stands for "Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale," a fiscal category for associations, foundations and cooperative societies.

♥ Carla Corso is a sex-worker-rights activist. She lives in Pordenone, Italy.

- *Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle Prostitute*
Casella Postal 67
33170 Pordenone, Italy
Tel: 39 – (0) – 434 – 572902
Fax: 39 – (0) – 434 – 640563
E-mail: lucciole@iol.it



The Mapping Project: Sex Workers Chart Europe's Legal Landscapes

By Pye Jacobsson from RiksOrganisationen för Sex- och ErotikArbetare (ROSEA), Stockholm, Sweden

Over the past decades Europe has gone through some major changes, geographically as well as politically. With those changes we've also been experiencing a lot of changes in the laws regulating the sex industry. The Mapping Project was an attempt to look at the legal situation in the different European countries from a practical point of view rather than a theoretical one. Focusing on implementation instead of just describing the legislation. Trying to answer some of the questions that a sex worker would have if choosing to work in one of the European countries, and giving a general idea of the political climate towards sex work.

The following model was used for all countries:

1. Background
2. Sex Work
 - a. Outdoors
 - b. Indoors
 - c. Striptease and live sex shows
 - d. Other sex work
 - e. Male sex work
3. Migration
 - a. Migrant sex workers
 - b. Protection of victims of trafficking
4. Managers and Clients
 - a. Pimping law
 - b. Clients
5. Other Laws Affecting the Rights of Sex Workers
6. Health and Rights
 - a. Health
 - b. Rights organisations
 - c. Unions

7. Recent Trends and Future Conditions

- a. Recent trends and political approach towards sex work
- b. The future: What might happen?



The project was displayed on the walls in the main conference hall, and information was added by conference participants throughout the conference. The goal was for The Mapping Project to be a tool for sex workers to use in their daily lives as well as in political work. And that the information should be updated on a regular basis through contacts with sex workers in each country, as the practice of the legislation changes much more frequently than the laws themselves. For example, can police action towards street-workers sometimes intensify due to political pressure?

It's important for sex-work activists to know about these changes, as sex workers' human rights are as negatively affected by the implementation of the laws as by the laws in a theoretical context.

...continued on p. 62. ↪

It was quite a sight to see!

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 61...

As an example, I've chosen Belgium to illustrate the work that was done prior to, and during, the conference.

Belgium

1. Background

Selling and buying sexual services is not illegal in Belgium.

Legal minimum age for sex work: 18. (Legal age of consent for sex: 16.)

Lately prostitution has become a focus of debate on the national and local agendas. Several law proposals have been submitted to the Belgian Parliament and Senate: Either to penalise the client, taking the “Swedish model” as an example, or to regulate prostitution according to the Dutch model. Some bigger cities have developed strategies in view of getting control over prostitution activities as well as first steps towards regulating prostitution. In 2001, in the city of Antwerp, a new “security system” was started in the district with window prostitution. About half the windows closed when new standards for security, hygiene and other things were established. The working conditions for the sex workers improved and got safer.

Antwerp's mayor has said that he thinks that sex workers should be treated as professionals.

2. Sex Work

a. Outdoors

In theory, soliciting is illegal, which should affect street prostitution. In reality, Belgium uses a “zoning model”: each municipality has the



right to choose where and when prostitution is acceptable. Working outside the areas or hours allowed can lead to a fine.

b. Indoors

Prostitution in a brothel may be restricted to certain areas. As a rule, these restrictions are strictly enforced in the entire country, but may vary from municipality to municipality. Women who work outside these restricted areas are committing a crime and may be fined. It is legal to work as a prostitute in a studio or an apartment. But it is illegal—and can be penalised as a crime—to rent an apartment to a prostitute.

There are very strict restrictions when it comes to advertising sexual services, but the law is only enforced occasionally.

c. Striptease and live sex shows

Striptease and live sex shows are legal.

d. Other sex work

Telephone sex is always illegal, since it is “offered by means of any modes of telecommunication.” It's mostly tolerated but, judicially, it remains a crime.

e. Male sex work

The same laws apply. There are all kinds of male sex work. From high-class escorts to street prostitutes. Usually in public prostitution areas, male prostitution is separate from female prostitution.

3. Migration

a. Migrant sex workers

There is no such thing as a work permit for employed prostitutes, because although working as a prostitute in itself is not illegal, employing a prostitute is a crime.

Working as a dancer is legal if the woman has an adequate work permit or her residence status allows her to work without a work permit. In theory, a woman may obtain a work permit as a cabaret artist, but since 1992 this work permit has not been issued.

If the woman is not an EU national, working in prostitution/sex work might lead to a loss of the residence permit or work permit, and even to expulsion, since this kind of work is considered to contravene public morality. The

Our parade of sex workers filled the street.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



reverse also applies: Women coming from EU member states have the right to work within the EU on a self-employment basis as a prostitute/sex worker.

b. Protection of victims

Victims of trafficking in women have special rights and are entitled to special support services. There is a “reflection period” of 45 days when the sex worker can make up her or his mind if she wants to give a statement to the police. One of the main conditions is that she break with her environment of exploitation and accept the assistance of a specialised centre.

After she has made a report/statement, the supposed victim will receive a declaration of arrival (“*aankomstverklaring*”) for three months, and after one extension of this declaration of arrival an inscription in the register of foreigners (BIVR), which is valid for six months. With both these documents, she is allowed to work with a permit for a maximum 12 months, renewed for a maximum 12 months at a time.

The document will be extended as long as the conditions (cooperation with the judicial authorities and no contact with the environment of exploitation) are fulfilled and as long as the investigation is going on.

When the judicial investigation is finished and the case is going to court, a victim of trafficking in human beings has the right to be represented by a lawyer. Once the perpetrators are convicted there is a possibility that the victim can stay for an undefined period. If the prosecution service closes the investigation—for instance, because they cannot find the suspects, lack of proof etc.—the apparent victim will receive no more documents and has to leave the country.

4. Managers and Clients

a. Pimping law

The pimp law criminalises a person who is living, totally or partially, on the earnings from prostitution by another person, as well as someone who is keeping a house or letting accommodation for prostitution (exploitation). How these laws are interpreted depends, however, on each police district.



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (*Espace P*)

The street was flowing with red umbrellas.

b. Clients

[Not known]

5. Other Laws

a. Other laws affecting the rights of sex workers

No income is without taxation. But only a small minority of self-employed sex workers do pay taxes, because sex workers have to pay high taxes and cannot reduce them because professional expenses are not recognised.

6. Health and Rights

a. Health

There are several different projects and health clinics which offer free and anonymous STI and HIV check-ups to sex workers. Some of the health facilities also provide free, anonymous Hepatitis B vaccinations.

Belgium has a special health regulation for people without papers.

Urgent medical help can always be obtained and is covered by a public social help fund (OCMW/CPAS), even for persons who are illegally in the country.

b. Rights organisations

[*Espace P* (Brussels) offers advocacy for sex workers, CAW-Mozaïek ADZON works with male sex workers, and *Vzw Pasop* (Ghent) provides outreach to sex workers.]

c. Unions

No labour rights, as sex work is not considered a profession.

...continued on p. 64. ➞



PHOTO: (Web: <http://superpanoramas.com>)

The European Union

The European Union (EU) is a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not just an organisation for international cooperation, nor is it a state intended to replace existing states. The EU is a unique relationship between nations which enables its members to jointly make decisions on national matters of common interest at the European level, democratically.

The EU was conceived after World War II, in hopes that it might prevent such horrific destruction and killing in the future. The idea was first put forward on May 9, 1950 in a speech by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman. May 9 is now Europe Day, to celebrate the EU's birthday. In 1952 six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands) agreed to cooperate, mainly on trade and economic issues.

The EU motto: "United in Diversity"

Now 27 countries comprise the EU (added were Denmark, Ireland, the UK, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta). Bulgaria and Romania became members starting in 2007. Any European country with a stable democracy that guarantees the rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities; a functioning market economy; and a civil service capable of applying EU laws can join. Turkey and Croatia began membership negotiations in 2005.

The EU's mandate now includes the following goals:

- to promote economic and social progress
- to assert the identity of the EU internationally
- to strive toward a European citizenship
- to develop an area of freedom, security and justice
- to maintain and build on established EU law.

The EU operates through five institutions:

- European Parliament (elected by EU citizens)
- Council (represents EU member governments)
- European Commission (the executive body)
- Court of Justice (ensures compliance with the law)
- Court of Auditors (responsible for auditing accounts).

For more information visit the official EU website at:

<http://europa.eu>

...continued on p. 67.

↳ continued from p. 63...

7. Recent Trends and Future Conditions

a. Recent trends and political approaches towards sex workers

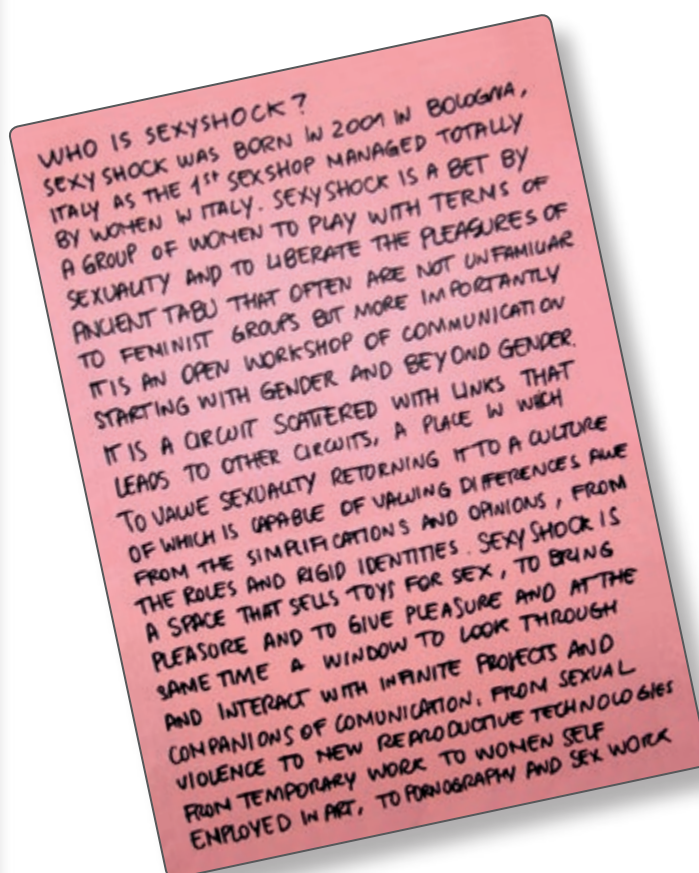
The current Prime Minister has announced that he wants the social exclusion of sex workers to stop. The more open mentality towards sex work has led to investments in the industry from "normal" business people. One example, also from Antwerp, is the Erotic Centre that is newly built, with alarms and security locks opened by fingerprints.

The women only pay for the shifts they actually choose to work. If they are ill they don't have to work; it's enough that they bring a medical certificate from their doctor. The owner of the Erotic Centre was planning to build student apartments at first, then realised that it was the wrong area for students, as it was in the red light district.

b. The future: What might happen?

The police in Antwerp want to start punishing the clients of streetworkers with fines. □

♥ Pye Jacobsson is a sex worker activist with the National Organization for Sex and Erotic Work (ROSEA). She lives in Stockholm, Sweden.



Sexyshock Video Box: Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes

Produced by Sexyshock in cooperation with the International Committee for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, *Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes* was recorded using a video box (created by Betty) which was installed at the 2005 European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels. (45 minutes. © 2006)



Sex workers from all over Europe met at a conference in Brussels to discuss, share, plan and network. Three intense days were spent conversing about sex work, migration and human rights. During this unique occasion, a manifesto and a declaration of rights were created, putting their issues and desires at the centre of the political debate in Europe; confronting the trivialisation, criminalisation and victimisation workers in the sex industry face. The goal of this event was to make the voices of sex workers in Europe heard.

Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes, (the DVD included with this report of that conference) is a collection of fragments—words and desires from conference participants—documented on video in a booth set up in a nearby lounge. Alone in this video box surrounded in soft pink tulle, the participant found a refuge from the uproar of the conference where you could express the challenges and struggles of being a sex worker while a discreet camera listened.

The Manifesto begins by stating that,

“Although sex workers in Europe come from many different countries and many different backgrounds, we have discovered that we face many of the same problems in our work and in our lives.”

In *Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes*, the subjects of this video share the complexity and nuances of their individual experiences with repressive policies and offer their own strategies for resistance as they continue doing their work.

♥ Sexyshock can be reached at:

Web: <http://www.ecn.org/sexyshock>

E-mail: infosexyshock@inventati.org

Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005)



Stills from video by Sexyshock

Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes (Not Guilty, Not Victims)



Special guests: Scarlot Harlot (above) & Wonder Bra



“... and opens a dialogue with the women who do street work. This is my strong wish.”



The ICRSE Network: Working Together Across Europe

By Petra Timmermans

One of the main goals of the Brussels conference was to create a Europe-wide network for sex workers' rights, and since the conference, that has been the major focus of our work. However, a network is a strange thing to talk about. It isn't a single organisation with a specific local focus, and it isn't one person responsible for answering phone calls and sending e-mails. A network must have shared goals, and a commitment from its members to work together and to support each other in order to reach those goals. In the year that followed the conference, the organisations and individuals who constitute the ICRSE Network have shown their commitment amply.

Two workshops were held at the Brussels conference to discuss forming a network. The workshops were attended by sex workers and allies, some of whom had experience in other networks, and others who had a rich knowledge about presenting and sharing information. Participants shared their concerns about how sex workers would get access to information-sharing and discussed some of the difficulties. For example, sex workers and their allies often fight similar battles locally, in isolation from each other. Participants had a clear desire to find creative ways to reach as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

With an increasing reliance on Internet communications, some participants offered ideas about how to reach sex workers who do not necessarily use the Internet on a regular basis. For example, mobile phones could be used. Other topics discussed were how to best communicate across different languages; how to effectively link into existing regional and international sex-work and ally networks; how to lead proactive and sex-work-positive information campaigns; and, finally, how to achieve these goals with uncertain funding. A long list of needs and wishes were drawn up, some of which we have been able to put into motion.

An e-mail listserve was established for conference participants to continue sharing information. Although the main language used on the listserve is English, participants do send information in their

first language. In some cases, members translate messages for each other, or use online translation programmes such as AltaVista Babel Fish (Web: <http://babelfish.altavista.com>).

In 2006 ICRSE received funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI) to redesign our website to enable members to upload information and announcements. The ICRSE website is continually being developed, with more changes are expected through 2007.

Next we will need to help Network members learn how to make use of our website's full potential. A website development group has been established to scrutinise and determine the website's facilitative role, and look for ways to further promote, develop and improve it. The group is also looking for alternative technologies for activism and information-sharing. Starting in 2007, regional representatives now play a more important role in posting information in languages from their region on the website and facilitating communication between languages, creating more opportunity for a diversity of sex workers' voices.

Since the conference in Brussels, the Network's members used the ICRSE website and e-mail listserve to appeal support for letter-writing campaigns, and for protests against laws and policies that discriminate against sex workers and the treatment of sex-worker murders by governments and media. Members also used the Network to disseminate international news reports, to promote local events such as art festivals and book launches, and to organise international participation in annual events such as:

- **International Sex Workers' Rights Day** – March 3rd
- **Pute Pride** (Paris) – March 17th
- **International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers** – December 17th

Since the ICRSE Network launch in October 2005, the Network's members have attended, organised, and otherwise took part in numerous international conferences and meetings. Many of these

forums provided excellent opportunities where members presented *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto* and the *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe*. Among these events were:

- **Sex Work Matters: Beyond Divides Conference**
– New York City, USA, March 29 - April 1, 2006
- **95th International Labour Conference Fringe Meeting on Sex Work** – Geneva, Switzerland, May 31 - June 16, 2006
- **Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers** – Johannesburg, South Africa, June 22-24, 2006
- **Meeting with United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on Violence Against Women**
– The Netherlands, July 2-11, 2006
- **United Nations Population Fund Consultation on Sex Work** – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 16-19, 2006
- **First Meeting of the Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia** – Budapest, Hungary, September 6-10, 2006
- **2006 Taipei City International Conference on Sex Industry Policies** – Taipei, Taiwan, November 24-30, 2006
- **Sex Work: A Profession in Need of Representation of Interests? European Trade Unions in Debate with Sex Workers** – Berlin, Germany, December 7-8, 2006

(For a full list of these events with summaries, see Appendix H: A Year for Networking: Promoting the ICRSE Worldwide, p. 109.)

A network is a collection of groups and individuals who recognise that there is more strength in numbers. Working together enables sex workers and their allies throughout Europe to support activities happening on a local level, as well as to strategise for broader collective endeavours. Isolation is something many sex workers are familiar with, but there will always be times when we need help from our friends and allies. The ICRSE Network brings friends and allies together. □

♥ Petra Timmermans is a sex-worker-rights activist and the ICRSE Network Coordinator. She lives in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



PHOTO: (Web: <http://www.kameda-lab.org>)

continued from p. 64...

The European Union

Citizens of the EU are free to live, work, study and retire in any EU country. You can travel across most of the EU without carrying a passport and without being stopped for checks at the borders. Wherever they are in the EU, EU citizens must have equal access to justice. EU member countries must therefore apply the EU's laws in the same way. Court rulings in one country (e.g. with regards to marriage, separation, divorce, child custody, and other kinds of civil disputes) can be enforced in another.

The European Parliament is elected every five years by the people of Europe. The current Parliament elected in 2004 has 785 members from all 27 EU member countries. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) do not sit in national blocks, but in seven Europe-wide political groups. The main job of Parliament is to pass European laws. It shares this responsibility with the Council of the European Union.

The Council consists of ministers from the national governments of all the EU countries. Each country has a number of votes in the Council which broadly reflects the size of their population. Meetings are attended by whichever ministers are responsible for the items to be discussed: foreign ministers, ministers of finance, ministers for agriculture, etc.

The European Commission represents and upholds the interests of Europe as a whole, independent of national governments. The Commission proposes new EU laws to the Parliament and Council, and ensures that members abide by EU laws and treaties. The Commission has 27 representatives — one from each EU country.

The Court of Justice ensures that EU law is equal for everyone, and that all EU countries interpret and apply EU laws in the same way. National courts may not deliver different rulings on the same issue. The Court (located in Luxembourg) has one judge from each EU member country.

In 2002 the EU introduced its new currency—the euro—in 12 member countries. The euro is managed by the Central Bank which sets interest rates and maintains price stability to control inflation. The Central Bank makes decisions independent of government. For more information on the euro, visit: <http://www.euro.ecb.int>





PHOTO: A. Sofielet

The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto



Although sex workers in Europe come from many different countries and many different backgrounds, we have discovered that we face many of the same problems in our work and in our lives. In this document we explore the current inequalities and injustices in our lives and in the sex industry; we question their origin; we confront and challenge them; and we put forward our vision of the changes needed to create a more equitable society — one that acknowledges and values sex workers, our rights, and our labour.

Background

In response to increasingly repressive legislation, policies and practices across Europe, a small group of sex workers and sex workers' allies in The Netherlands got together in 2002 to organise a conference to give sex workers a voice. They began by putting out a call across Europe, inviting sex workers, sex-work projects and sex-worker-rights activists to join them. An Organising Committee (OC) was formed (composed mainly of sex workers), and the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe was legally established to raise funds for, and host, the conference.

The OC decided that not only should the conference give sex workers a voice, it should also produce tools for defending our rights across Europe and for creating alliances with human rights, labour and migrants' organisations. One tool the OC saw the need for was a sex workers' manifesto—created by sex workers, for sex workers—setting out a shared vision of an equitable society.

The committee undertook a year-long consultation with sex workers across Europe, the results of which were then collated. It proceeded to create a draft manifesto, based on views shared by a majority of participants.

The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration was held in Brussels, Belgium, October 15-17, 2005. There, approximately 120 sex workers from 24 European countries fine-tuned the draft to produce *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto*, which they then endorsed.

On October 17, 2005 delegates presented the Manifesto to the European Parliament, at the invitation of Monica Frassoni, Italian Member of European Parliament (Greens / European Free Alliance).

Beyond Tolerance and Compassion: Recognise Our Human Rights

We live in a society where services are bought and sold. Among these services are services which are sexual in nature. The provision of these sexual services constitutes sex work. Sex work should not be criminalised.

Sacrificing sex workers' rights on the grounds of religious convictions or sexual mores is unacceptable. All people have the right to hold their own views on such matters, but these views should never be imposed on any individual, nor should they justify any political decision.

We wish to see a society in which sex workers are not denied social power.

We condemn the hypocrisy in our societies whereby our services are utilised while our profession or businesses are made illegal. Legislation that criminalises sex work results in abuse and in a lack of control for sex workers over our work and lives.

We oppose the criminalisation of those identifying themselves as sex workers—their partners, clients and managers—and everyone else working in the sex industry. Such criminalisation denies sex workers equal protection under the law.

Migration plays an important role in meeting the demands of the labour market. We demand that our governments acknowledge and apply fundamental human, labour and civil rights for migrants.

The right to be free from discrimination

WE DEMAND an end to discrimination and the abuse of power by police and other public

...continued on p. 70. ➤



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Sex workers march for human rights.

⇒ continued from p. 69...

authorities. Offering sexual services is not an invitation to any kind of violence. The credibility of sex workers must be respected.

WE DEMAND that crimes against us and our testimonies be taken seriously by the justice system. Sex workers should, to the same extent as anyone else, be presumed innocent until guilt is proven.

We assert the right to report abuses against us without risking prosecution.

Defamation of sex workers incites discrimination and hatred. We demand that sex workers be protected by anti-discrimination legislation.

The right to our bodies

Sex work is by definition consensual sex. Non-consensual sex is not sex work; it is sexual violence or slavery.

WE DEMAND that our right as human beings to use our bodies in any way we do not find harmful be respected. This includes the right to establish consensual sexual relations, no matter the gender or ethnicity of our partners, and regardless of whether or not they are paying.

The right to be heard

We assert our right to participate in public forums and debates where policies which could affect our working and living conditions are being discussed or determined.

WE DEMAND that our voices be heard, listened to and respected. Our experiences are diverse, but all are valid, and we condemn those who would steal our voices and say that we do not have the capacity to make decisions or articulate our needs.

The right to associate and gather

We assert our right to associate with others of our choice. This includes the right to join and form professional associations and unions; formal and informal business partnerships; political parties; and social-reform and community projects.

We assert our right to be in any public space, and our right to demonstrate publicly.

Abuse in sex work

It is true that abuse happens in sex work. However, abuse does not *define* sex work. Any approach that defines sex work as violence is a simplistic one that denies our diversity and experience and reduces us to the status of helpless victims. Such approaches undermine our autonomy and our right to self-determination.

Recognising the rights of sex workers would enable us to have infringements of our rights addressed.

WE DEMAND protection from those who threaten us and our families for exposing their abuse.

WE DEMAND that mechanisms be developed to allow us to remain anonymous when reporting grievances and crimes against us.

Young people in sex work

It is essential that education focus on empowering young people to have sexual autonomy.

WE DEMAND that support, services and outreach be provided to young people, in order that they may have real choices in their lives, including the possibility of alternative work. Young people should have a say on legislation and policies that affect them.

Our Lives

Being a sex worker

The “identity” and “social role” imposed on us by society often defines us as intrinsically unworthy and a threat to moral, public and social order. Labelling us sinners, criminals, or victims creates a stigma that separates us from “good” and “decent” citizens—in fact, from the rest of society.

This stigma leads to an exclusively negative and stereotypical view of “whores.” To protect ourselves, and to ensure that we have a place within society, most sex workers hide the means of our livelihood. Many absorb the societal stigma of shame and unworthiness, and live in fear of being

exposed. For this reason, many sex workers tolerate abusive treatment. Sex workers are socially excluded as a result of stigma and this leads to being denied health and social services; housing; and alternative work. It often forces separation from our children and isolation from our families and communities.

Societal prejudices promote divisions within the sex industry, based on such factors as migrant status, race, ethnic origin, gender, age, sexuality, drug use, work sector, and services provided. This worsens the social exclusion and stigma experienced by certain groups of sex workers.

We condemn such moralistic and prejudiced distinctions, and assert that *all* sex workers, and all forms of sex work, are equally valid and valuable.

We recognise that stigma is something we have common that links all sex workers, despite the enormous diversity in our realities at work and in our lives. We have come together to confront and challenge this stigma and the injustice it creates.

We assert that sex work is a sexual and economic activity which implies nothing about our identities, values, or participation in society.

Active citizenship

Sex workers should not be perceived merely as victims to be assisted, criminals to be arrested, or targets for public-health interventions. We are members of society, with needs and aspirations, who have the potential to make real and valuable contributions to our communities.

WE DEMAND that existing mechanisms for representation and consultation be open to sex workers.

Privacy and family

We assert our right to establish personal relationships, and to have self-determination within those relationships.

Labelling of our partners as pimps, exploiters, and abusers, simply because they are our partners, presupposes that we have no autonomy and implies that we are not worthy of love or of being in relationships; this denies us the possibility of a private life.

WE DEMAND an end to legislation that criminalises our partners, children and other family members for associating with us and being supported by our earnings.

The threat of having our children taken from us removes our ability to seek support and assistance, if we need it, in relation to parenting or abusive relationships.

WE DEMAND an end to the unjustifiable practice of social service agencies and courts taking our children from us simply because we provide sexual services.

Media and education

Our voices and experiences are often manipulated by the media; we are seldom given the right to reply; and our complaints in this regard are routinely dismissed.

The portrayal of sex workers in the mass media perpetuates the stereotypical image of us as unworthy, as victims, or as a threat to moral, public and social order. In particular, the xenophobic portrayal of migrant sex workers increases the stigma and vulnerability they already face. Such portrayals of sex workers gives false legitimacy to those within our society who seek to harm us and to violate our rights.

Furthermore, our clients are misrepresented in the media as being violent, perverted or psychologically disturbed. Paying for sexual services is not an intrinsically violent or anti-social behaviour. Such stereotyping silences discussion about the reality of the sex industry. It perpetuates our isolation and obscures the violence perpetrated by abusers posing as clients. Moreover, it prevents us from addressing the behaviour of the small, but significant, number of clients who do cause problems.

Since mass media perpetuates stigma that does us harm, we require that our governments support us and our clients in educating and informing

...continued on p. 72. ➔

"Stop Repression Against Sex Workers Now!"

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 71...

public officials and the general public, in order that we may participate fully in our society.

Combating violence against sex workers

Sex workers experience disproportionate levels of violence and crime. The stigma put upon sex workers has led to society and public authorities condoning violence and crimes against us, because they are seen as inherent to our work.

WE DEMAND that our governments recognise that violence against sex workers is a crime, whether perpetrated by local residents or other members of the public, by clients, by managers, by our partners, or by persons in positions of authority.

We require that our governments publicly condemn those who perpetrate actual violence against us. We demand that they take action in combating the actual violence we experience, rather than the perceived violence of prostitution, as put forward by misguided activists who seek to abolish all forms of sex work.

Time and resources now spent arresting and prosecuting innocent sex workers and non-violent clients should be redirected towards dealing with rape and other violent crimes against us.

Mechanisms must be developed to encourage and support sex workers in reporting crimes, including early warning systems amongst sex workers about potentially-violent clients.

Health and well-being

No one, least of all sex workers, denies that there are health risks involved in sex work. However, it is a myth that we are “dirty” or “unclean.” In reality, we are more knowledgeable about our sexual

health, and practise safe sex more skilfully, than the general population. Moreover, most of us act as sexual-health educators for our clients.

We call for the recognition of our role in society as a valuable resource for sexual well-being and health promotion.

Stigma remains a barrier to health care for sex workers. Prejudice and discrimination occur within health-care settings: some health-care workers subject sex workers to degrading and humiliating treatment.

WE DEMAND that all health-care workers treat us with respect and dignity, and that our complaints of discriminatory treatment be taken seriously.

In furtherance of the goal of the health and well-being of all sex workers, we demand that our governments provide access to:

- health services for all migrant workers
- needle exchange and drug-treatment options for dependent drug users
- treatment for people living with HIV, without which many may die unnecessarily
- transition treatment for transgendered persons who desire it.

NO registration, NO mandatory testing

Registration and mandatory testing of sex workers are not effective measures for preventing disease, particularly when there is no requirement for clients to be tested. One of the consequences of mandatory testing (where it still exists) is that some clients assume that sex workers are “healthy” and so resist the use of condoms, not recognising the threat this might pose to a sex worker’s sexual health.

Registration and mandatory sexual health and HIV testing are a violation of sex workers’ human rights. Such practices reinforce the myth that sex workers are a threat to public health, and promote the stereotypical view that sex workers transmit infections.

WE DEMAND an end to registration and mandatory testing.

The rights to travel, to migrate, and to seek asylum

The lack of opportunities to migrate can put our health, and indeed our very lives, in danger.

A steady stream of red umbrellas...

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



We assert our right to travel and to work in any country without discrimination. Information about working in the sex industry and its different sectors should be made available.

WE DEMAND that *all* people have the right to move within and between countries for personal and financial reasons, including seeking gainful employment and residence in the area of their choice.

WE DEMAND that the education and qualifications of migrant workers in all fields be recognised on a basis of equality.

Violence, coercion and exploitation related to migration and sex work must be understood and tackled within a framework that recognises the worth, and the fundamental rights, of migrants.

Restrictive migration legislation and anti-prostitution policies must be identified as contributing factors to the violation of migrants' rights. Focusing discussion on "trafficking" obscures the issue of migrants' rights.

Many trades are subject to the imposition of forced labour and of practices resembling slavery. However, if a trade is legal and the labour of its workers is recognised, there is far more potential for preventing abuse and for exposing and stopping the violation of workers' rights.

WE DEMAND that our governments prioritize and protect the human rights of victims of forced labour and of practices resembling slavery, regardless of how they came to be in their situations, and regardless of their ability, or willingness, to cooperate, or testify, in criminal justice proceedings.

We call upon our governments to give asylum to victims of such labour practices, and to provide support to them and to their families and friends. Failure to do so perpetuates their exploitation and further violates their fundamental human rights.

WE DEMAND the right to asylum for sex workers who are subjected to state or community violence because they sell sexual services.

WE DEMAND the right to asylum for anyone denied human rights on the basis of a "crime of status," such as sex work, health status, gender, or sexual orientation.



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

... winds it's way through Brussels' streets.

Our Labour

The body and mind are economic resources that people use in many different ways. We view all forms of sex work as equally valid. These include: stripping and nude dancing, engaging in street or indoor prostitution, providing escort services, engaging in remunerated phone sex, and performing in pornography.

For some, the exchange of sex for money is part of their private lives. These individuals do not define remunerated sex as work.

For many others, sex becomes work. Some work independently, others collectively. Many are "employed" by third parties. For all of us, remunerated sex is an income-generating activity and, as such, must be recognised as labour.

Alienation, exploitation, abuse and coercion do exist in the sex industry, as in any other industry, but they do not define us or our industry. It is possible to limit such problems when the workers within an industry are formally recognised, accepted by society at large, and supported by trade unions. The establishment of labour rights enables workers to use labour regulations to report abuses, and to organise against exploitation and unacceptable working conditions.

The lack of recognition of sex work as labour, and the criminalisation of activities within and around the sex industry, results in sex workers being treated like criminals, even when we do not break any laws. Many laws treat us as legal "minors," as though we were unable to make informed decisions. Such treatment alienates us from the rest of society and, by preventing us from working collectively and safely, reduces our ability to control our work and our lives.

...continued on p. 74. ➞



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Accompanied by our escorts.

⇒ *continued from p. 73...*

Treating sex workers like criminals increases the likelihood of uncontrolled exploitation, abuse and coercion. Many of us are forced to tolerate unacceptable working hours, unsanitary working conditions, unfair division of income, and unreasonable restrictions on freedom of movement. Certain groups of sex workers, such as migrants, are disproportionately affected by unacceptable working conditions.

WE DEMAND that legislation ensuring just and favourable conditions of work, remuneration and protection against unemployment be extended to include sex workers.

WE DEMAND that sex work be recognised as gainful employment, enabling migrants to apply for work and residence permits, and that both documented and undocumented migrants be entitled to full labour rights.

WE DEMAND that a European Commission Ombudsman oversee national legislation governing the sex industry. This can be a newly-created post or can be added to the work of an existing ombudsman.

Professional and personal development

We assert our right to join and form unions.

As sex workers, we require the same possibilities for professional development as other workers. We assert our right to develop vocational training and advice services, including offering support to those who choose to work independently and to those who wish to establish their own businesses.

We call for support to be provided to sex workers who wish to further their education or to look for alternative employment.

WE DEMAND that anti-discrimination legislation be applied within the sex industry. We further demand that, given the specific difficulties sex workers face as a consequence of stigma, anti-discrimination legislation be applied to sex workers seeking alternative employment.

Taxes and welfare

We acknowledge citizens' obligations to financially support the society in which they live. However, given that sex workers do not receive the same benefits as other citizens, and given that our right to equal protection under the law is routinely denied, some sex workers do not feel this obligation.

WE DEMAND that we have access to social insurance, including the right to unemployment and sick-leave benefits, pensions and health care.

Sex workers should pay taxes on the same basis as other employees and independent contractors, and should receive the same benefits. Taxation schemes should not be used as a means to register sex workers, and should prioritize efforts to remove stigma and protect confidentiality. Information on taxes must be accessible and easy to understand, and must be provided in many languages for migrant workers. Tax collection schemes should be transparent and easily understood by workers in order to avoid exploitation and abuse by employers.

The purchase of appropriate goods and services—including health services, where paid for—should be tax deductible.

Health and safety at work

Our bodies are our business. In order to maintain our health, we require free or affordable safe-sex products and access to health services.

WE DEMAND that our governments prohibit authorities from confiscating condoms and other safe-sex products from sex workers and sex-work establishments.

WE DEMAND that our governments provide free or affordable access to sexual health care for *all* sex workers, including access to vaccinations for preventable diseases.

WE DEMAND that the health-care needs of sex workers be included in all health insurance schemes and that, as with other occupations, sick pay be available for work-related illness.

Violence within any workplace is a health-and-safety issue. Our employers have an obligation to protect us and to take action against those who violate our safety while we're engaged in work.

WE DEMAND that our governments take our health and safety seriously, and promote safe working environments in which violence and abuse will not be tolerated. To this end, we urge governments to establish emergency helplines through which sex workers can anonymously seek advice and report abuse.

Working conditions

The fact that we engage in sexual activities for a living does not preclude our right to decide whom we have sex with, which sexual services we provide, and the conditions under which we provide those services.

We assert the right to engage in sex work without coercion; to move within the sex industry; and to leave it, if we choose.

No other person must be allowed to determine the nature of the services we provide or the conditions under which we provide them, whether we are employees or "self-employed." We reserve the right to refuse any client and to refuse to provide any service.

WE DEMAND the right to fair conditions of work, including entitlement to the minimum wage, to work breaks, to minimum rest periods, and to annual leave. Such conditions should also apply to those who are nominally "self-employed" within a collective workplace.

WE DEMAND an end to unacceptable practices such as requiring sex workers to consume alcohol or drugs at work, or to pay excessive costs for food, drink, services, or clothing in the workplace.

WE DEMAND that health and safety be made a priority in our workplaces and, for those who work independently in public places, that their health and safety also be protected. We demand that employers comply with privacy protection legislation; that our personal information be treated confidentially; and that any abuse of such personal information be taken seriously by relevant authorities.

Legislation which regulates working hours and conditions is complex. It is important that clear and accurate information about our rights be

provided to sex workers, and displayed within our workplaces. Such information must be provided in many different languages to ensure that migrants can understand it.

To improve our working conditions, it is important that sex workers have opportunities to organise and to advocate for our rights. We call upon trade unions to support us in our efforts to organise and in our struggle for fair working conditions.

We call for the establishment of designated areas for street prostitution. Such area designations must be made in consultation with, and with agreement from sex workers. This is necessary in order to enable those who work in public places to do so safely, without compromising any individual's choice of work venue. Such areas would enable us to work collectively and would facilitate delivery of appropriate services for sex workers. In addition, police could ensure that sex workers within designated areas are protected from interference by criminals and other undesirables.

Decriminalisation of sex work

As we have already stated, the criminalisation of activities related to sex work and the *de facto* criminalisation of sex workers are unacceptable. We have also already specified a number of areas where law reform is required, including our right to use our earnings to support our family and loved ones; our right to freedom of association; our right to freedom of movement within and between countries; and our right to have designated public areas where sex workers and clients may meet one another (without infringing upon an individual's right to work where they choose). The following demands identify other specific areas where law reform is required:

...continued on p. 76. ➞

Umbrellas are followed by rainbows.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 75...

WE DEMAND the repeal of all legislation that criminalises us; our clients; our families; those we work with; and any employer, organiser or manager who follows fair practices.

WE DEMAND that our right to work individually or collectively, as either independent workers or as employees, with the full protection of labour rights, be respected.

WE DEMAND that our right to rent premises from which to work, to advertise our services, and to pay those who carry out services for us be respected.

WE DEMAND that sex-work businesses be regulated by standard business codes and that, under such codes, businesses, rather than sex workers, be registered.

WE DEMAND that criminal laws be enforced against those who perpetrate fraud, coercion, or abuse (including child sexual abuse), forced labour (including child labour), violence, rape, or murder upon sex workers in order to make sex work safe for all. □

♥ This English version of *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto* has been edited for clarity. The unedited version is available in French, German, Spanish and Russian, as well as English, on the ICRSE website at: <http://www.sexworkeurope.org>



Declaration of the **Rights** of **Sex Workers** in Europe



This Declaration was endorsed by approximately 200 delegates (sex workers and allies) from 28 countries in Europe at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, held in Brussels, October 15-17, 2005. The final day of the conference, it was presented to the European Parliament, at the invitation of Monica Frassoni, Italian Member of European Parliament (Greens/European Free Alliance). There, it was endorsed and signed by Vittorio Angoletto, Italian Member of European Parliament (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left).

Introduction

Why do we need this Declaration?

Europe has adopted a variety of approaches to the sex industry and to female, male and transgendered sex workers—including migrant sex workers. While some countries have accepted sex work as labour and even introduced labour rights for sex workers, others have criminalised a wide range of practices associated with sex work. In certain countries, sex workers' partners and/or clients have at times been criminalised, and being a sex worker has been made a "status crime."

The recent proliferation, at local, national and international levels, of legislative measures that restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of sex workers has been rationalised as a means of combating organised crime and promoting public health. However, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organisation have explicitly stated that repressive legislation restricting the rights of sex workers actually undermines public-health policies. It does so, they explain, by using practices central to safe sex (such as possession of condoms) as evidence of criminal activity, and by driving the sex industry underground.

Such measures fly in the face of the European Parliament's 1986 *Resolution on Violence Against Women* [Document A2-44/86]. This Resolution called for the decriminalisation of prostitution; a guarantee of equal rights for prostitutes; and the protection of prostitutes' independence, health

and safety. Moreover, many anti-prostitution measures violate the obligation states have under international human rights legislation to respect, promote and protect the human rights of all persons within their territories, without discrimination.

There is strong evidence that migrant workers in all sectors face ever-growing levels of abuse and exploitation. Yet European responses to increasing international migration have focussed on restrictive legislation, with little attention paid to protecting migrants' rights and freedoms. As of October 2005, Bosnia and Turkey are the only European countries to have ratified the UN *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, which came into force July 1, 2003.

Sex workers' organisations—and projects providing services to sex workers—in Europe have accumulated substantial evidence that discriminatory legislation and behaviour occur throughout the health-care and social-security, housing, employment, education, administrative law and criminal justice systems. There is no country within Europe—regardless of the legal status of sex work—where sex workers have not reported discrimination and other violations of their human rights.

Examples of discriminatory legislation

IN AUSTRIA, sex workers are subjected to mandatory sexual health controls, but other sexually active citizens are not. This discriminatory practice promotes the stereotyping of sex workers as "unclean."

IN FINLAND, sex workers who work together for their mutual protection may be prosecuted for "pimping" one another. This violates their rights to peaceful assembly and association and to favourable conditions of work.

IN FRANCE, a sex worker's child, upon reaching the age of majority, may be prosecuted for "living off" the sex worker's earnings. This violates sex workers' rights to respect for their private and family lives.

...continued on p. 78. ➞



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Sex workers demonstrate empowerment.

↳ continued from p. 77...

IN GREECE, where sex work is legal and sex workers are registered, sex workers who marry are not allowed to continue to work legally; their licences are withdrawn. Sex workers are therefore forced to choose between their right to marry and found a family, and their right to livelihood and to the practice of their profession. No person should be forced to make such a choice.

IN ITALY, police confiscate and throw away or burn sex workers' possessions with impunity. This violates sex workers' rights to property, to equal protection under the law, and to protection from discrimination.

IN THE NETHERLANDS, sex work is legal — unless one is a migrant sex worker. Migrant sex workers constitute the only category of employees excluded from getting legal work permits. (All other non-nationals can obtain legal work permits, as long as they meet the conditions laid out in the *Law on Migrant Workers*.) This violates migrant sex workers' right to be free from discrimination.

IN PORTUGAL (and in many other countries), sex workers may lose custody of their children solely because of their occupation, in the absence of any specific evidence of harm or the incapacity to parent. This violates their right to be free from arbitrary interference with their family life and to non-discrimination.

IN ROMANIA, sex work is illegal. As a result of pressure from the Romanian Government, the Austrian Government has terminated the work permits of Romanian sex workers. Thus women who have worked *legally* in Austria may face retribution on their return to Romania. This violates their right to seek gainful employment in a country other than their own.

IN RUSSIA, police have subjected sex workers to threats of being sold into slavery, and have forced sex workers to have sex without payment. These practices violate sex workers' rights to security of the person and equal protection under the law.

IN SLOVAKIA, health-care workers have discriminated against sex workers with impunity. They have refused medical care to sex workers, and have made derogatory comments to pregnant sex workers, alleging that they are not fit to bear children. This violates sex workers' right to protection by the state of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health care, as well as their right to found families.

IN SPAIN, sex workers in brothels are not only required to undergo sexual health exams conducted by the brothel-owners, but also to pay excessive fees for these health exams. Moreover, test results are not kept confidential. In condoning these violations of medical codes, the state is failing to uphold sex workers' rights to privacy and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health care.

IN SWEDEN, politicians and policy-makers have threatened to withdraw from public debates in which sex workers are permitted to participate. This violates sex workers' right to freedom of expression and opinion.

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, where street-based sex workers are criminalised, authorities employ Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to restrict sex workers' freedom of movement. In some cities, posters bearing the names and photographs of sex workers have been printed and distributed. This violates sex workers' rights to privacy and to participation in public life, and exposes sex workers to discrimination and violence.

Under international law, it is a fundamental human right that "*all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.*" Yet the examples above, and many other recorded violations, clearly demonstrate that sex workers in Europe are routinely denied equal access to legal protections. These workers have compelling reasons to avoid using the judicial system to challenge discrimination, violence and other abuses.

History of the Declaration

The process leading to the creation of this Declaration began with the formation of the Sex-work Initiative Group Netherlands (SIGN), a network of Dutch sex workers and sex-worker-rights activists interested in organising a conference and advocating for the rights of sex workers in Europe. In June 2003, SIGN members solicited participation from sex workers and sex workers' organisations across Europe to join them in planning a conference.

In January 2004, an international Organising Committee (OC) was established, composed of fifteen individuals. Most were current or former sex workers—including migrants—from several European countries. The OC did not have representatives from every country or group in Europe. However, it was supported by a large number of sex workers, sex-worker-rights activists and organisations that work with sex workers from across Europe and beyond.

The OC decided that this *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* would provide a framework for organising the conference; would meet the ongoing need to raise awareness of sex workers' human rights; and could serve as a tool with which to examine and challenge violations of these rights.

The OC established a legally constituted organisation—the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)—in order to coordinate this conference, as well as undertake new initiatives. In addition to producing this Declaration, the ICRSE made a commitment to develop strategies to gain political recognition and public acceptance for the principles contained in it.

This Declaration outlines the rights to which all persons in Europe—including sex workers—are entitled under international law. It then sets out measures which ensure that sex workers in Europe are accorded these rights. This Declaration of rights is based on the following 17 documents:

- The United Nations [UN] *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 1966
- The UN *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 1966
- The UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 1979

- The UN *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, 1990
- The UN *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951
- The International Labour Organization [ILO] *Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour* (N° 29), 1930 and *The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention* (N° 105), 1957
- The ILO *Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention* (N° 87), 1948
- The ILO *Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention* (N° 143), 1975
[NB: Article 2 of the *Migrant Workers Convention*, 1990, defines a migrant worker as any person “who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.”]
- The *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, 1950
- The UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948
- The UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals*, 1999
- The UN *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, 1993
- The UN *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*, 1985
- The ILO *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, 1998
- ILO *Recommendation Migrant Workers* (N° 151), 1975
- The *European Social Charter*, 1961 & 1996
- EU *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, 2000

...continued on p. 80. ➞

Happy, smiley protesters.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



TO REITERATE: This Declaration is not a demand for special rights to be given to sex workers. Rather, it is based on the principle that the act of selling sexual services does not constitute grounds for the denial of the fundamental rights to which all human beings are entitled under international law.

Solidarity

This Declaration is based on an extensive consultation process conducted across Europe. Individuals and groups with widely differing experiences and perspectives were brought together. This emphasized those issues sex workers have in common with other marginalised groups whose rights are not always respected. Furthermore, the Declaration assists sex workers in Europe to make connections in other parts of the globe. Although specific to Europe, this Declaration speaks to people around the world in the language of rights.

Using this Declaration

Information is powerful. Knowing our rights is the first step in being able to stand up for them with authority. By examining existing rights, it is hoped that the Declaration will serve as a tool to empower sex workers in justly defending themselves and one another.

Beyond this, the Declaration aims to act as a benchmark by which sex workers can judge what has been achieved so far, what progress is currently being made, and where to direct future efforts. It provides a basis for organisations and groups to lobby for the recognition of universally accepted rights, and to advocate for sex workers in particular cases where their rights might be in dispute.

Protesters march down boulevard Albert II.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



Moreover, the Declaration offers guidance to organisations and institutions seeking to achieve equitable, non-discriminatory policies and practices.

Finally, it is hoped that this Declaration will help in the long-term aim of winning public recognition that respect for the human rights of *all persons* is integral to a healthy society.

(Want to become a supporter? *OR*, Do you have evidence of any attempt (success *or* failure) to promote human rights for sex workers? Please contact the ICRSE at: info@sexworkeurope.org)

Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe

All individuals within Europe, including sex workers, are entitled to certain rights under international human rights law. The rights all European governments are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil include:

- the right to life, liberty and security of the person
- the right to be free from slavery, forced labour and servitude
- the right to be free from torture and from inhumane or degrading treatment
- the right to be protected against violence, physical injury, threats and intimidation
- the right to be free from arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, home, or correspondence
- the right to be free from attacks on honour and reputation
- the right to marry and found a family
- the right to liberty of movement and residence
- the right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's own country
- the right to seek asylum and not to be returned to a dangerous or otherwise unacceptable situation
- the right to equal protection under the law, including the right to a fair trial
- the right to protection from discrimination and from any incitement to discrimination
- the right to freedom of opinion and expression
- the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and protection against unemployment

- the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- the right to peaceful assembly and to freedom of association
- the right to organise and, in particular, the right to form and to join a union
- the right of documented and undocumented migrants to information
- the right to effective remedies against injustice
- the right to participate in the cultural and public life of the society
- the right to benefit from state obligations to combat prejudices and practices, customary or otherwise, based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped gender roles.

These human rights are established in international treaties that European governments have agreed to uphold. Moreover, most treaties contain a clause stipulating that these rights should be upheld without discrimination. Specifically, there must be no discrimination based on a person's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, or *other status*. Moreover, the United Nations Human Rights Committee has stated [in General Comment 15] that,

"Each one of the rights of the Covenant must be guaranteed without discrimination between citizens and aliens."

Although these rights apply to all human beings, the experience of sex workers all over Europe is that states do not respect, protect, fulfil and promote their rights on a basis of equality with the rights of other nationals.

The signatories of this Declaration hereby declare the rights of sex workers in Europe, and urge European governments to enforce these rights.

I. Life, Liberty and Security

Sex workers have the right to life, to liberty, and to security of the person, including the right to determine their own sexuality. In respect of this right,

1. No person should be forced to provide sexual services against her or his will, or under conditions to which she or he does not consent.



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

It was a beautiful sunny day for a parade.

2. Condoms are vital for the protection of life and security. Therefore, the confiscation of condoms from sex workers should be prohibited.
3. The governments of all countries should investigate murders of sex workers and other violent crimes against sex workers, and should punish all perpetrators of such crimes, including law enforcement officials who commit such crimes.

II. Privacy and Family Life

Sex workers have the right to be free from arbitrary interference with respect to their private and family lives, their homes and their correspondence, and from attacks on their honour and reputation. In respect of this right,

4. No person should be denied the right to establish and develop relationships.

[NB: In accordance with a judgement of the European Court of Human Rights, the right to privacy includes the right, "*to establish and develop relationships with other human beings, especially in the emotional sphere, for the development and fulfilment of one's own personality.*"

(*Dudgeon v United Kingdom*, Judgement of the European Court of Human Rights (1981) 4 EHRR 149)]

The labelling of sex workers' partners and adult children as "pimps" is discriminatory, and implies that it is not appropriate for sex workers to have private or family lives, or for other persons to establish or develop relationships with them.

5. Sex workers have the right to determine the number and spacing of their children. Current or former engagement in sex work should not be considered grounds for challenging a person's fitness to be a parent or to have custody of her or his children.

...continued on p. 82. ➞



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Police escorts lead the way back to our hotel.

↳ continued from p. 81...

III. Health

Sex workers, regardless of immigration status, have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health. In respect of this right,

6. No person should be subjected to mandatory sexual health and HIV screening. All health tests should be conducted with the primary goal of promoting the health and rights of the person affected.
7. Information about sexual health and HIV status should be kept confidential.

IV. Freedom of Movement

Sex workers have the right to freedom of movement and residence. In respect of this right,

8. No restrictions should be placed on the free movement of individuals between states on the grounds of their engagement in sex work.
9. No restrictions should be placed on the freedom of movement of individuals within states, or within their own communities. All regulation, at any level, that seeks to control sex workers must not infringe upon their rights to freedom of movement, including the freedom to leave and return to one's residence, visit family, or access services.

V. Freedom from Slavery and Forced Labour

Sex workers have the right to be free from slavery, forced labour and servitude. In respect of this right,

10. Measures should be taken to ensure that sex workers enjoy full labour rights, are fully informed of such rights, and have access to the full range of measures and standards intended to end exploitive working conditions.
11. Measures should be taken to provide appropriate assistance and protection to victims of trafficking, forced labour, and any practice resembling slavery, with full respect for the protection of these persons' human rights. Residency permits should be provided to ensure effective access to justice and legal remedies, including compensation, irrespective of willingness to collaborate with law enforcement. Trafficked persons must not be returned to situations that will result in further harms.

VI. Equal Protection Under the Law, and Protection from Discrimination

Sex workers have the right to equal protection under the law, including access to effective remedies. They also have the right to protection from discrimination, and from any incitement to discrimination. In respect of this right,

12. Where a sex worker has not committed an offence and the selling of sexual services is not illegal, law enforcement officers must be prohibited from abusing their authority by interfering with or harassing this worker. When engaged in criminal investigation or arrest, officers must respect the rights of all accused and defendants, regardless of their status as sex workers.
13. States are responsible for investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating crimes committed against persons, regardless of involvement in sex work and of immigration status. Measures should be taken to ensure that proponents of the criminal justice system are able and willing to properly respond to crimes reported by sex workers. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors and members of the judiciary must be adequately trained, and their work must be overseen in an appropriate manner. Moreover, evidence submitted by sex workers in the course of criminal proceedings should not be dismissed on the basis of their profession.

14. No person should have her or his legal belongings arbitrarily confiscated or destroyed by law enforcement agencies.

In respect to the right to protection from discrimination,

15. No person should be discredited in any civil or family court because of her or his current or former engagement in sex work.
16. Measures should be taken to protect sex workers and their dependents from discrimination in the areas of employment; housing; legal services; childcare; and the provision of medical, social and welfare services; and services provided by private insurance companies.
17. There should be public and professional education with the objective of eliminating discrimination against sex workers.

VII. Marriage and Family

Sex workers have the right to marry and to found families. In respect of this right,

18. Current or former engagement in sex work should not restrict or prohibit a person from marrying the partner of her or his choice, or from founding a family and raising children.
19. Governments should ensure that current or former engagement in sex work does not prevent any person, or her or his family, from accessing health care. Governments should ensure that public authorities and health services do not discriminate against sex workers and their families, and that they respect sex workers' rights to privacy and to family life.

VIII. Work and Working Conditions

Sex workers have the right to work; to free choice of employment; to just and favourable conditions of work; and to protection from unemployment. In respect of this right,

20. Governments should recognise sex work as work. The lack of acknowledgement of sex work as labour, or as a profession, has adverse consequences on the working conditions of sex workers, and denies them access to protections provided by national and European labour legislation.

21. Sex workers should be able to determine, without interference or pressure from others, the nature and conditions of the sexual services they provide.
22. Sex workers are entitled to safe and healthy workplaces. Accurate and up-to-date information about health and safety should be available to sex workers, whether self-employed or employed by others. No sex worker should be required to consume alcohol or other drugs as a condition of employment.
23. All persons are entitled to be treated respectfully within their workplaces, and to be free from sexual harassment. Sex industry workplaces, like all other workplaces, should promote respectful treatment, and freedom from abuse and harassment.
24. Sex workers should be entitled to employment and social security benefits, including paid sick leave; paid pregnancy and parental leave; holidays; and the right to unemployment benefits in the event that their employment is terminated or they decide to leave sex work.
25. Sex workers should not have to pay inflated rates for rentals or for essential items — such as food or services — within the workplace on the grounds of its being a sex-work venue.
26. No person should be barred from employment or dismissed from alternative forms of employment on the grounds of having previously engaged in sex work.

IX. Peaceful Assembly and Association

Sex workers have the right to peaceful assembly and association. In respect of this right,

...continued on p. 84. ➞

It felt as if we turned a corner that day...

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



Prostitutes, **WE** Salute **YOU!**

Hotel conference rooms used for the workshops and plenaries were renamed to commemorate some of history's more (in)famous sex workers who stood up for our rights and influenced society.

Mata Hari

(1876-1917)

Born Margaretha Geertruida Zelle in Leeuwarden, Holland, Mata Hari (Malay for "Dawn") claimed she was raised in Java by temple priests where she was taught to dance naked.



Described as "hypnotic" and "charming" her dancing earned her rave reviews as she delighted audiences throughout Europe—including German officers during World War I. She performed at some notorious private parties (once she rode naked at a lesbian fête in Paris), and even played a few opera houses in Italy.

Convicted of spying in France without a shred of evidence, the infamous courtesan was sentenced to death by firing squad. Wearing a long grey dress and gloves, she refused to be bound or blindfolded when she faced her execution at dawn.

SOURCE: *An Underground Education*, Richard Zacks. New York: Doubleday, 1997

Divine Brown

(1969 -)

Born Stella Marie Thompson in San Francisco, California, this American street-walker gained public recognition when she was caught having oral sex with British actor Hugh Grant, in a car on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard strip in 1995. Both Brown and Grant were arrested causing considerable damage to Grant's public image. Brown, however, made a considerable amount of money from the ensuing publicity and has appeared on a number of television shows.



PHOTO: ROBB'S OFFICIAL CELEBRITY OOPS!

↳ continued from p. 83...

27. Engagement in sex work should not be considered grounds for limiting sex workers' ability to cooperate, unite and create associations to express their opinions; engage in collective bargaining; and advocate for their rights.

X. Freedom of Movement

Sex workers have the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their own country. In respect of this right,

28. Engagement in sex work should not be considered grounds for limiting any person's right to leave or return to her or his own country, and any return must be conducted with full regard for her or his safety and security.

XI. Asylum

Sex workers have the right to seek asylum and cannot be returned to situations of inhuman and degrading treatment or torture. In respect of this right,

29. Governments should ensure that those participating in sex work have the right to seek asylum, and that they will not be returned to unacceptable abusive situations.

XII. Public Participation

Sex workers have the right to participate in the cultural and public life of their society. In respect of this right,

30. Sex workers should have the right to participate in the formulation of the laws and policies that affect them. □

♥ This English version of the *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* has been edited for clarity. The unedited version is available in French, German, Spanish and Russian, as well as English, on the ICRSE website at: <http://www.sexworkeurope.org>



Recommendations from the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005)

The following summary of recommendations was formulated by sex workers and their allies at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration held in Brussels, October 15-17, 2005. These recommendations—endorsed by the approximately 200 delegates (sex workers and allies) from 28 European countries—relate to state policies, human rights, labour rights, migration/trafficking and violence. They were presented to the European Parliament on October 17, 2005, at the invitation of Monica Frassoni, Italian Member of European Parliament (Greens/European Free Alliance).

Background

In response to increasingly repressive legislation, policies and practices across Europe, a small group of sex workers and sex workers' allies in The Netherlands got together in 2002 to organise a conference that would give sex workers a voice. To start, they put out a call inviting sex workers, sex-work projects and sex-worker-rights activists across Europe to join them. An Organising Committee (OC) was formed (composed mainly of sex workers) which then established a legally constituted organisation—the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe—to raise funds for, and host, the conference.

The OC decided that not only should this conference lend sex workers a voice, but it should also produce tools needed to defend our rights throughout Europe, and create alliances with human rights, labour and migrants' organisations.

The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration was held in Brussels, Belgium, October 15-17, 2005. During the conference, workshops were organised for sex workers and allies to share experiences, knowledge and expertise, so that the realities of the situations for sex workers across Europe could be analysed. These recommendations are the product of these workshops.

Prostitution Policies

Policies that aim to make sex work invisible and that exclude sex workers from public places serve to amplify the stigma associated with sex work, the social exclusion of sex workers, and their vulnerabilities.

We reject the double standard that only allows prostitution when it is hidden. All laws and measures that undermine the dignity and self-determination of sex workers must be abolished. Sex workers have the right to represent themselves. They should take part in any debate on laws, policies and measures that affect their lives. Sex workers' efforts to organise themselves should be supported.

Sex Workers' Rights **ARE** Human Rights

Governments should protect the basic human and civil rights of every sex worker, regardless of gender or national origin. These are common and accepted rights that apply to every citizen and that governments have already agreed to protect—yet sex workers are still denied these rights.

Sex Work **IS** Work

Sex workers are workers, and must be recognised as such.

...continued on p. 86. ➞

Now onward into Brussels' red light district.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



Prostitutes, **WE** Salute **YOU!**

Hotel conference rooms used for the workshops and plenaries were renamed to commemorate some of history's more (in)famous sex workers who stood up for our rights and influenced society.

La Malinche (c.1505–1529)

La Malinche, known also as Doña Marina, was born into a noble family in Paynalla (Veracruz region, southern Mexico). Her mother sold her into slavery after her father died, and declared her dead, to cheat her out of her inheritance. Once the property of the Chief of Tabasco



she learned to speak Maya. Given to Hernán Cortés along with 19 other slaves, gold, clothes and food, she was baptised in March 1519. Able to interpret in Nahuatl and Maya, she then learned Spanish and soon became Cortés's secretary, and then his mistress, bearing him a son. As interpreter she actively encouraged negotiations over bloodshed. Some consider her a traitor, but many Chicana women identify with this potent historical figure—the outcast who became the Mother of the Mexican Nation.

MURAL: *Cortés y la Malinche* (1926), José Orozco

Phryné (c.350 BC)

Born at Thespieae in Boeotia, with the name Mnesarete, this famous Athenian courtesan was called “Phryné” (toad), because of her sallow complexion. Her extraordinary beauty earned her so much wealth that she offered to rebuild the walls of Thebes, which had been destroyed by Alexander the Great (336 BC), on condition that the words “*Destroyed by Alexander, restored by Phryné the courtesan,*” were inscribed upon them. She once even avoided a criminal conviction by revealing her flawless breasts to the court—because physical beauty was seen as a mark of divine favour. She was also said to have been the model for Praxiteles's statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite.

OIL ON CANVAS: *Phryné before the Areopagus* (1861), Jean-Léon Gérôme



SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS

↳ continued from p. 85...

Governments should protect sex workers' labour rights just as they do the rights of other workers. In particular, sex workers have the right to social security, health care and minimum wages.

Sex workers—including migrant workers—should be legally allowed to work.

Governments should ensure safe and healthy working conditions for sex workers, similar to those enjoyed by other workers. Mandatory medical checks and police registration—which apply only to sex workers—as well as other discriminatory measures, should be abolished.

Migrants' Rights **ARE** Human Rights

The EU should conduct a human rights impact assessment in all anti-trafficking and migration policies and programmes in order to protect and promote the rights of migrant sex workers and trafficked persons.

The European Union should protect the human rights of migrant sex workers and trafficked persons, and in particular their right to legal remedies and to effective access to justice. To this end, it should provide them with appropriate residency permits.

Migrant sex workers and trafficked persons, regardless of their immigration status, should have access to support services, including housing, education, vocational training, psycho-social counselling and legal assistance.

Violence Against Sex Workers

Sex workers must have the right to unite; to work together, and to protect themselves from violence. Laws that prohibit sex workers from working together should be abolished.

When faced with violence, sex workers should have the right to receive support and protection, regardless of their immigration status. □

♥ This English version of the Recommendations from the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, Brussels (2005) has been edited for clarity. The unedited version is available on the ICRSE website at: <http://www.sexworkeurope.org>



Look WHO's in the NEWS!

The European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration and the sex workers' demonstration in Brussels made news around the world! Here's the list of reports:

- Live Report from Brussels, by Matthew Charles, *BBC News*, October 17, 2005 (Web: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>) (This video clip was also published online.)
- "European sex workers called for their profession to be recognised as work," *Reuters*, October 17, 2005 (Web: <http://today.reuters.com>)
"You shouldn't hide yourselves, you shouldn't be ashamed," she said. "All societies should accept and give [the same] sort of statute to this profession as to any other."
- "La prostitution en question," *Le Soir, Bruxelles*, October 17, 2005 (Web: <http://www.lesoir.be>)
"Elle exige également que les travailleurs du sexe obtiennent les mêmes droits que les autres travailleurs en ce qui concerne l'accès à la sécurité sociale, aux soins de santé et aux allocations sociales."
- "Sex workers demand labour rights," *Associated Press*, October 17, 2005 (Web: <http://www.ap.org>)
"I believe this Declaration is important not only for sexual workers, but it also could become very important for the European civil society. If they're recognised as workers, they can pay taxes and have the same duties and same rights as everyone else," Agnoletto said."
- "Sex workers meet in Brussels to demand labour rights," *News From Russia*, October 18, 2005 (Web: <http://newsfromrussia.com>)
"Meeting under the auspices of Italian deputy Vittorio Emanuele Agnoletto, some 120 sex workers from 23 countries held a conference to exchange personal experiences from the street and major issues concerning prostitution, including the public image of the profession and working conditions."



FOTO: AP

Prostituees eisen in Brussel erkenning voor beroep

Sp/Its (Web: <http://spitsnet.nl>)
dinsdag, 18 oktober 2005

Een Franse prostituee poseert tijdens een bezoek aan het Europarlement in Brussel met de Europese vlag. Zo'n 120 prostituees uit 23 lidstaten hebben gisteren in het Europarlement een einde geëist aan de beperkingen die sommige lidstaten opleggen aan hun beroepsgroep. De prostituees, die zichzelf 'sekswerkers nosmen', willen dezelfde rechten, bijvoorbeeld wat betreft sociale zekerheid, als 'gewone' werknemers binnen de EU.

Volgens organisator Ruth Morgan Thomas worden in Europa steeds meer wetten doorgevoerd die prostituees en de seksindustrie in het algemeen benadelen. De wetgeving ten aanzien van prostitutie varieert van lidstaat tot lidstaat.

- "Les filles de joie dans la rue," *La Dernière Heure*, October 18, 2005 (Web: <http://www.dhnet.be>)
"Les slogans sont durs, les mots clairement pas mâchés. 'Ni coupables, fières d'être p... !' La petite centaine de prostituées venues des quatre coins d'Europe n'ont pas bloqué la circulation pendant des heures, leur message a néanmoins été très distinctement entendu."
- "Rights: Sex workers ask to be seen as workers," *Inter Press Service*, by Stefania Bianchi, October 18, 2005 (Web: <http://www.ipsterraviva.net>)
"Camille Cabral, representing French sex workers, said it was time to end the stigma associated with the sex industry. 'You shouldn't hide yourselves, you shouldn't be ashamed,' she said. 'All societies should accept and give (the same) sort of statute to this profession as to any other.'"
(For excerpt, see sidebar, p. 88.)

...continued on p. 88. ↗

RIGHTS: Sex workers ask to be seen as workers

BRUSSELS – A group of sex workers from across the European Union is demanding the same social rights as other employees, and calling for an end to “repressive policies” against prostitution.

Some 120 male and female sex workers from 23 countries met at the European Parliament Monday (Oct. 17) to urge the European Union (EU) to end discrimination against the sex industry.

“What we do is work and we want it recognised as that,” Ruth Morgan Thomas, a Scottish sex worker and organiser of the conference told media representatives Monday (Oct. 17).

Under the auspices of the Italian Socialist Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Vittorio Emanuele Agnoletto, sex workers from the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) discussed labour issues, migration and human rights. The committee is a Dutch-based lobby group of current and former prostitutes.

“We organised this conference in response to the increasingly repressive legislative policies and practices across Europe against sex workers and the sex industry,” said Morgan Thomas.

The sex workers say “repressive policies” on migration, public order and morality have led to the increasing vulnerability of sex workers. They insisted they were against all forms of human trafficking and exploitation.

“Anti-prostitution and anti-migration policies negatively affect the rights of sex workers, whereas increasing emphasis on citizen security, law and order and closing borders have impeded the growth of rights movements in general,” they said in their statement.

Camille Cabral, representing French sex workers, said it was time to end the stigma associated with the sex industry. “You shouldn’t hide yourselves, you shouldn’t be ashamed,” she said. “All societies should accept and give (the same) sort of statute to this profession as to any other.”

The ICRSE says regulating the sector would curb exploitation and boost prostitutes’ willingness to pay tax in return for rights and social protection.

“Many problems could be solved if sex workers were treated the same as any other labour issue,” Ana Lopes, a British-based sex worker originally from Portugal told media representatives.

The cause of the sex workers is being championed by Agnoletto, who endorsed the sex workers’ Declaration. He says he will initiate a debate on the issue in the European Parliament.

“I believe this Declaration is important not only for sexual workers, but it also could become very important for the European civil society,” he said. ...

↳ continued from p. 87...

- “SexarbeiterInnen-Konferenz darf nicht ohne Echo verhallen: Menschenrechte müssen auf nationaler Ebene sichergestellt werden!”
Frauensolidarität, October 25, 2005
(Web: <http://www.frauensolidaritaet.org>)
“„Die Stimmen von über 200 SexarbeiterInnen und ihren UnterstützerInnen dürfen nicht ungehört bleiben“, fordert Cristina Boidi, Koordinatorin des Vereins LEFÖ, nach der 3-tägigen Konferenz von Sexarbeiterinnen vergangene Woche in Brüssel.”
- “Sex workers ask EU to respect their ‘rights’,”
Cybercast News Service, by Eva Cahen, October 28, 2005 (Web: <http://www.CNSNews.com>)
“According to the group, sex workers are often excluded from the application of human right and labour laws in many countries, merely because government policies ‘aim to make sex work invisible.’ The group also complains that prostitution is not recognized as legal labour.”
- “Continental Drift: As the EU struggles to unite, prostitutes are forming unions and courting politicians. Is legalisation next?”
Nerve, by Alastair McKay, January 3, 2006
(Web: <http://www.nerve.com>)
“Pride apart, on that day in Brussels, the rights of sex workers — or more accurately, the absence of such rights — was given an unprecedented airing. The European press broadcast the concerns of male and female prostitutes across the continent...”
- “Sex Work: European Legal Frameworks,”
International Union Rights, by Ashwini Sukthankar, Vol. 12, Issue 4 (pp. 8-9), 2005
(Web: <http://labourstart.org/ictur/>)
“The event brought together sex workers and allies from Europe and elsewhere — including trade unionists, anti-trafficking activists and human rights experts — for discussions of laws, policies and strategies...”
(To read the article, see p. 89.)
- “Sex Workers Stand Up for Rights,” *The Erotic Review*, by Ruth Frost, Issue 71 (pp. 33-41), 2005
“Escorts, geishas, courtesans, lap dancers, rentboys... The erotic consciousness of the open-minded public is full of curiosity and a lot of positive feeling towards those whose profession it is to bring erotic pleasure to others...”
(To read the article, see p. 91.) □

Sex Work: European Legal Frameworks

By Ashwini Sukthankar. Published in *International Union Rights*, Volume 12, Issue 4, 2005, pp. 8-9, by the International Centre For Trade Union Rights, London, UK. (Web: <http://labourstart.org/ictur/>)

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe organised a conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels from October 15-17. The event brought together sex workers and allies from Europe and elsewhere—including trade unionists, anti-trafficking activists and human rights experts—for discussions of laws, policies and strategies, culminating in a day of meetings at the European Parliament, and finally a march through the city streets.

Much debate centered on comparisons between different legal frameworks in Europe. Stephanie Klee, a German sex worker, described the strengths and weaknesses of the law passed in that country in 2002. She noted that, on the one hand, it allocates rights and responsibilities around the sale of sexual services in several important ways.

For example, it creates obligations for sex workers to pay taxes and register themselves; with respect to clients, it clarifies that they may not deny payment of an agreed price to sex workers on the grounds that they were not satisfied; in terms of employers, it imposes a duty to pay health care and grant paid leave to sex workers they employ. Klee identified several problems also, including the fact that the law makes no provision for migrant sex work through the amendment of immigration regulations.

Furthermore, implementation of the law's provisions has been imperfect and inconsistent. The lack of outreach and training by the state has meant that sex workers' inexperience with the labour rights framework and distrust of state has inhibited their enjoyment of the protections that the law affords.



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Volunteers hand out leaflets.

Also, the law has been implemented in different ways in different regions of Germany: thus, while Berlin has interpreted it in ways that are largely favourable to sex workers, Cologne has used it to institute a severe “pleasure tax” that applies to the sex industry alone.

Jesper Bryngemark, an activist from Sweden, highlighted the provisions of the abolitionist law passed there in 1999, and its impact. The law states that, while the selling of sex is not illegal, buying sex is. The law has resulted in many sex workers leaving the streets and seeking other spaces for sex work, including advertising on the Internet. However, those who do not have other options besides street-based sex work have experienced great hardship.

For example, the increased police surveillance has meant that undocumented sex workers are at even greater risk of being apprehended and deported. Also, the heavy emphasis on enforcing the law and prosecuting clients has meant that sex workers have frequently found themselves becoming unwilling participants in investigations, sometimes even filmed and strip-searched by police hoping to secure evidence of a transaction of money for sex. And, since police have also been seizing condoms as evidence, there is a strong disincentive for sex workers and their clients to carry them, resulting in riskier sexual practices.

Many of the conference participants noted that other European countries, including Finland and the UK, are considering drafting similar legislation, and urged sex workers' groups and their allies to unite in opposition to such proposals.

...continued on p. 90. ➞



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (*Espace P*)

Past Gare de Nord, heading into the red light district.

⇒ continued from p. 89...

Several sex workers from France commented on the impact of the 2003 *Law on Domestic Security* that was proposed and promoted by Nicolas Sarkozy, the Minister of the Interior. The law creates a misdemeanour of “passive solicitation,” allowing police to arrest and prosecute anyone who is offering to sell sexual services. The determination of whether or not she is, in fact, soliciting may be based on a reading of her dress and her attitude, which, many participants noted, was a violation of core liberties.

A plenary session on collaborations between sex workers and allies was an insight into both current and historic partnerships. Gail Pheterson, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Picardie, and Margo St. James, founder of the San Francisco-based sex-worker-rights group Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) described a personal history of alliances between sex workers and supporters spanning several decades.

Pheterson described, for example, advocacy efforts in support of a sex workers’ group in The Netherlands, Red Thread, by an allies’ group calling itself Pink Thread. The Pink Thread argued that there could not be freedom for any woman until there was freedom for sex workers, and attempted to shape common ground with feminists, pointing out that society’s failure to recognise women’s unpaid domestic labour as work could be analogised to the lack of recognition for sex work.

The Pink Thread also pointed to the ways in which any woman who is sexually non-conforming can be labeled “whore,” whether or not she sells sex.

Martin Smith, head of organising at the British union GMB, and Ana Lopes, a member of one of GMB’s affiliates, the International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW), spoke of coming together on the

basis of the understanding that the right to be represented by a union is fundamental.

Smith did point out a number of the limitations in the relationship between a small, autonomous group of workers like the IUSW, with limited resources for organising, and a large, bureaucratic institution. He noted also the numerous barriers to organising, including concerns about confidentiality, immigration status, isolation, and competitiveness in some sectors.

He also pointed out the semi-legality of some sectors as a hurdle — for example, while several strip joints have signed recognition agreements with GMB, brothels, which are illegal in the UK, pose a problem. At the same time, he also pointed to the numerous benefits accompanying unionisation, such as the ways in which it forced a public acceptance of sex work as legitimate work, and shifted the debate from the realm of morality to a labour rights framework.

Finally, Patricia Kaatee from Amnesty International, Norway and Liv Jessen, head of the Pro Centre, a sex workers’ group in Oslo, described the impact of Amnesty having chosen a sex-worker-rights activist for its annual human rights award, in the context of the organisation’s Stop Violence Against Women campaign.

Liv Jessen, the recipient of the award, talked about the ways in which the award helped create a space to be able to challenge the idea that all prostitution is violence against women.

For labour movements, it is worth highlighting one of the opinions that was expressed repeatedly over the course of the conference. Many conference participants argued persuasively in favour of the recognition of sex work as both a job and a profession, in spite of the fears of the possible negative impact of regulation by the state.

One of the benefits that would accompany state recognition, many sex workers noted, was access to desperately-needed social protections, such as health-care and pension benefits.

The lingering question was, what kind of legal framework could be proposed that would extend these benefits simultaneously to migrant sex workers? □

♥ Ashwini Sukthankar is Director of the International Commission for Labour Rights, in London, UK.

Sex Workers **Stand Up** for Rights!

By Ruth Frost. Originally published in *The Erotic Review*, Issue 71 ("Love For Sale"), 2005, pp. 33-41.

Escorts, geishas, courtesans, lap dancers, rentboys... The erotic consciousness of the open-minded public is full of curiosity and a lot of positive feeling towards those whose profession it is to bring erotic pleasure to others. Diaries of callgirls are currently riding high in the bestseller charts and *Memoirs of a Geisha* is set to be the hit film of this spring.

However, the views of the moral majority and the official line of government are not necessarily so positive. The negative moral judgements placed on those who work in sex cause damage even to the extent of their basic human rights being abused.

While culturally where culture is celebrated, legally there is a growing tide of repression. Often this is led by politicians, social workers, academics, abolitionists, those who have never actually worked in the sex industry, without sex workers themselves being given a voice.

Historic steps were recently taken to begin to correct this however. Some 200 sex workers from around Europe gathered in Brussels, Belgium, in October 2005 for the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration. At the conference they endorsed a declaration and a manifesto of sex workers' rights, which they then presented at the European Parliament and had signed by an MEP before taking to the streets in a vibrant demonstration.

The event was the culmination of over two years of work. Sex-work Initiative Group Netherlands (SIGN), a network of Dutch sex workers and sex-work activists, initiated the process in June 2003 by asking participation from across Europe in planning a conference. In January 2004 an international Organisation Committee was established, comprising 15 mostly current or former sex workers from across Europe.

This committee decided a declaration of rights would provide a framework for organising a conference and examining and challenging violations of sex workers' rights. A new legal body, the

International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) was formed to coordinate the conference and act as a base for future initiatives.

The Manifesto and Declaration

ICRSE sent out consultation papers to sex-work groups all over Europe, then collated the responses to form a draft manifesto of sex workers' wishes. Meanwhile, it drew together all the rights that have been agreed to in international treaties and covenants and are being ignored or abused in the case of sex workers, to form a declaration.

"This Declaration outlines the rights to which all persons in Europe—including sex workers—are entitled to under international law," the introduction to the Declaration states.

"[It] is not a demand for special rights to be given to sex workers. Rather it is based on the principle that the act of selling sexual services does not constitute grounds for the denial of fundamental rights to which all human beings are entitled under international law."

Abuses of sex workers' human rights are numerous and varied across Europe, irrespective of the legal status of sex work. (See sidebar, "Human Rights Abuses," p. 93.) Laws view those working in the industry at one moment as helpless victims with no choice in their fate, and at the next as an evil menace to society.

...continued on p. 92. ➞

Marchers head toward the red light district.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



↳ continued from p. 91...

The Manifesto states,

“The ‘identity’ and ‘social role’ imposed on us by society often defines us as intrinsically unworthy and a threat to moral, public and social order. Labelling us sinners, criminals, or victims creates a stigma that separates us from ‘good’ and ‘decent’ citizens—in fact, from the rest of society.”

Although the legal position varied between countries, there was not a single country where there were not complaints about discrimination and violation of human rights.

The Manifesto is more of a wish-list document of needs and desires. *“We condemn the hypocrisy in our societies whereby our services are utilised while our profession or businesses are made illegal,”* it states.

As well as the human rights issue, at its heart is a wish for sex work to be seen as just that—work. *“Remunerated sex is an income-generating activity, and, as such, must be recognised as labour,”* the Manifesto states.

There are benefits to society from recognising and treating sex work as work, the Manifesto points out, including payment of taxes by sex workers.

Violence, migration and labour conditions are major themes:

“Offering sexual services is not an invitation to any kind of violence... Sex work is by definition consensual sex. Non-consensual sex is not sex work; it is sexual violence or slavery.”

Umbrellas reflect in a window in the red light district.

PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)



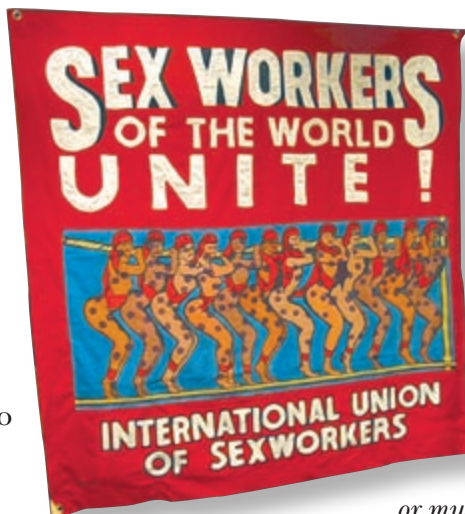
Customers are included:

“Paying for sexual services is not an intrinsically violent or anti-social behaviour. Such stereotyping silences discussion about the reality of the sex industry... and obscures the violence perpetrated by abusers posing as clients. Moreover, it prevents us from addressing the behaviour of the small, but significant, number of clients who do cause problems.”

A demand for the right of non-abusive clients to buy sexual services is included in the Manifesto.

The Manifesto does not deny that problems exist but says that time and resources spent currently on arresting and prosecuting workers and non-violent clients should be redirected to the actual problems.

“We demand that criminal laws be enforced against those who perpetrate fraud, coercion, or abuse (including child sexual abuse), forced labour (including child labour), violence, rape, or murder upon sex workers in order to make sex work safe for all.”



The Conference

In Brussels, around 200 sex workers from 30 countries gathered for a weekend of hammering out the final wording of the Manifesto and Declaration, plus networking, workshops, sharing of experiences and celebration of their profession. From ages 20 to 70, males to females to transgender, street workers to strippers, the variety reflected the profession. It was a colossal undertaking, with translation into four languages.

The first day was strictly sex workers only. It included workshops on topics including balancing sex work and private life, and media awareness.

On the second day sex-work allies were included, to give both parties the opportunity to learn from each other. Workshops included “Working Conditions” and “Positive Experiences.”

Presentations were given by sex workers on issues such as migration, and included a case study of how the Swedish model violates rights. Allies such as Martin Smith of the UK union GMB, which has

recognised and welcomes sex workers, shared their experience of partnership.

The meetings to agree on the wordings of the Manifesto and Declaration were often passionate as issues close to people's hearts and experiences were discussed. Final agreements were reached and on the second night, celebrations took place in the shape of a dinner and party at a club in Brussels, which included performances and readings from attendees.

On the Monday, the group arrived at the European Parliament. Monica Frassoni—an Italian Greens/European Free Alliance member in the Parliament—welcomed us, and hosted our time in the Parliament. The Declaration was presented and then endorsed by Italian MEP, Vittorio Agnoletto. This historic event was presented in a press conference that afternoon, which led to much favourable coverage across Europe.

The sex workers then travelled to the stock exchange and held a street demonstration, marching from the exchange through the business and red light districts of the city, carrying red umbrellas as symbols of sex-work pride (a tradition started by the sex workers of Venice, Italy, in 2001). Cards were given out with the ICRSE e-mail address. In the red light district, girls in their windows cheered and waved.

Marchers chanted in numerous languages but the most common refrain was:

"Vous couchez avec nous, vous votez contre nous!"
(*"You sleep with us, you vote against us!"*)

Banners read, *"Sex Workers of the World Unite!"* And *"Sex Workers' Rights = Human Rights."*

It was a fantastically celebratory way to end an historic weekend. The ICRSE intends for the documents to become a point of reference to aid sex workers in being knowledgeable about—and therefore able to fight for—their rights. Agnoletto will present the Declaration for debate and a draft resolution at the European Parliament.

Ultimately sex workers are not asking for special treatment, just to be granted the same human rights as all. □

♥ Ruth Frost is a striptease artist. She lives in London, UK.



HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

The Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe includes a section documenting abuses of sex workers' human rights. "Under international law it is a fundamental human right that 'all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law,'" the Declaration states. Below are some of the examples of human rights abuses.

SPAIN • Sex workers in brothels are required to undergo, and pay excessive fees for, sexual health checks by owners, the results of which are not kept confidential, thus violating their right to privacy and medical codes of practice.

FINLAND • Sex workers cannot work together for their own protection without facing prosecution for "pimping" each other, violating their right to peaceful assembly and association and favourable work conditions.

GREECE • Sex work is legal and sex workers are registered, but cannot marry. If they do, they lose their licence and can no longer work legally. Sex workers are therefore forced to choose between their right to marry and found a family, or the right to livelihood and practise a profession.

AUSTRIA • Sex workers are subjected to mandatory sexual health controls, but other sexually-active citizens are not, promoting the image of sex workers as "unclean" and violating the principle of non-discrimination.

FRANCE • A sex worker's child, upon reaching legal adulthood, may be prosecuted with "living off" the sex worker's earnings, violating the rights of sex workers to a private and family life and to be free from arbitrary interference with this right.

ITALY • With impunity police confiscate and dispose of sex workers' possessions. This violates sex workers' right to own property and the state's obligation to provide an effective remedy with respect to the right to own property and equal protection under the law.

NETHERLANDS • Sex work is accepted as legal work but migrant sex workers are the only category of migrant workers to be excluded from getting legal work permits, thus violating the right to non-discrimination.

PORTUGAL • Sex workers lose custody of their children through social services or family courts solely because of their occupation, and not based on any specific evidence of harm or incapacity to parent, violating their right to be free from arbitrary interference with family life.

SLOVAKIA • Health workers may with impunity refuse medical care to sex workers, violating their right to protection by the state of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

SWEDEN • Politicians and policy-makers have threatened to withdraw from public debates if sex workers are also to participate and sex workers have been systematically excluded from public debate, violating their right to freedom of expression and opinion.

UNITED KINGDOM • Street-based sex workers are criminalised and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are used to restrict freedom of movement. In some cities posters identifying sex workers have been printed and distributed in communities, violating the right to privacy and to participate in public life. □

From Participants: One Year Later...

In October 2006 Petra Timmermans asked participants how they felt about the conference one year later.

“For me — as one of the ‘old’ sex workers — the most impressive part was meeting with the politicians in the European Parliament when we presented our Manifesto, because I would have never believed it before. I took part also in the conference in Brussels in 1986 with a friend and colleague. (We were working on the street at this time.) We came for ourselves and slept in our VW van.

Years after we liked to talk about our experience. That we as sex workers sat in the Parliament and talked with each other over interpreters speaking in different languages, and we ordered from the waiters drinks and papers. This we presented proudly to our colleagues. For most of them it was unbelievable. And even today it is far away from the daily work in the brothels.

But now as an active sex worker I was sitting on the desk in the Parliament and we worked out a paper with our rights and our demands. A paper which we can read over and over, that we can present and discuss with the politicians in our city or state. We can try to understand the European context. In our lives and work we have been international for many years, and hopefully we will influence the politics in Europe with our international network and help of all of us.

Maybe this is a good sign. In former days we slept in the van. Now we stayed in a four-star, luxury hotel. This might be a good sign for our way up. It is hard, it takes time, but we are successful.

I wrote for German AIDS Help a 2007 calendar for sex workers with information about health and STIs and HIV. But also about our profession and rights and some small sentences about the conference in Brussels. The calendar is printed in German, English, Spanish and Russian.”

♥ Stephanie Klee, HighLights, Germany

“The work done in Brussels has been used several times since in Greek Helsinki Monitor’s advocacy and on November 29, 2006 we will present the conference and the Greek translations of the Declaration and the Manifesto, which I am sending you separately, to the Greek media in the framework of the presentation of our Equal Project.”

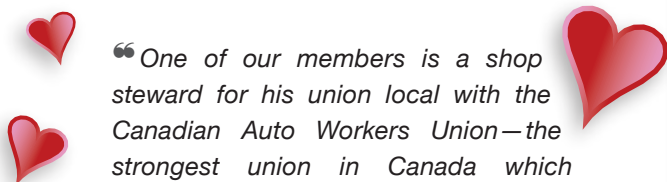
♥ Panayote Dimitras, Greece

“This conference was the second most inspiring and exciting moment of my life as a sex worker activist (the first was the moment sex workers in the UK joined an official union). Our fight for rights is a difficult one, our movement is somewhat fragmented and we often fight amongst ourselves... We need events such as this ambitious conference to remind us that together we are strong, together we can do it! After the conference I felt proud of ourselves, I felt we will accomplish our mission. We can overcome any obstacles!”

♥ Ana Lopes, International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW), UK

“The conference gave me a firm background of knowledge and a sense of belonging to a community while I tackled various radio interviews this year. I did the interviews as ‘dancer spokesperson for IUSW,’ on the topic of the extremely strict and damaging new rules the Scottish Executive is considering bringing in to strip clubs in Scotland (banning nudity etc.). Although the conference was more focused towards the prostitution area of sex work, the knowledge it gave me about human rights law and the belief in our right to work helped greatly with my confidence in speaking up for our rights.”

♥ Solitaire, Scotland



“One of our members is a shop steward for his union local with the Canadian Auto Workers Union—the strongest union in Canada which represents office workers, restaurant workers, and other workers as well as auto workers. We are very excited to take this Brussels conference report to the CAW and to the Canadian Labour Congress too! Won’t they be interested to learn about the fringe meeting at the 95th annual meeting of the ILO, and about the Verdi Union conference too! You guys did a fucking fantastic job!”

♥ Committee to Unite Prostitutes, Canada

“There were six Portuguese delegates at the conference. As there has never been a movement in Portugal, the conference was an opportunity for some Portuguese sex workers and allies to get in touch with the wider movement. After the conference, some of these delegates put together a national meeting to mark the International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers. That was a very interesting meeting with almost 30 sex workers and allies. It was an opportunity to discuss topics as the violence against sex workers and the need to create a sex workers’ movement in Portugal. We also presented the results of the Brussels conference and The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto. No association has come out of it (yet) but the event promoted a debate about sex workers’ rights—in the media, within sex-work projects, and even within the labour movement!”

♥ Alexandra Oliveira, Portugal



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Reflections on a job well done.



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

Organising Committee opens the conference.



PHOTOS: Maj Christensen

Sex workers at the European Parliament.





PHOTO: A. Sorfleet

From Brussels with LOVE!



PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel

LEFT TO RIGHT: Monse, Uschi, Claudette, Sylvie, Martha (.ch)



PHOTOS: Quentin Deltour (Espace P) (BELOW) Maj Christensen (ABOVE)

From European Parliament to back streets behind our hotel.



Afterword

By A. Sorfleet

Sex Workers' Rights is beautiful and persuasive because it features you. Your contributions—thoughts, words, visions and work from some of the most experienced and influential voices in the sex-worker-rights movement—make this historic event fruitful. This comprehensive record shows how *we* can assist our sisters and brothers in their efforts to organise, and gain for themselves recognition of their human and labour rights. Thank you for your dedication, patience, faith, perseverance and volunteer labour. *Congratulations is in order!*

Uniting for Sex Workers' Rights!

During the conference in 2005 six European trade unions held an impromptu workshop to meet each other and consider future networking on sex workers' labour rights issues. Since then, there was a fringe meeting of the International Labour Conference in June 2006 to discuss the role of trade unions in sex workers' struggle for labour rights (*see p. 114*). In December 2006, another trade union forum to debate union representation for sex workers was held, this time by Verdi Union in Germany (*see p. 112*). The right of *all* workers to establish and join their own associations is fundamental to the International Labour Organisation (*Convention 87*).

Sex worker unionism worldwide also includes the Victoria branch of the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union; Sex Trade Workers Industrial Union (SEIU Local 790), San Francisco; Women's Network for Unity, Cambodia; Movement of Greek Prostitutes (KEGE), Greece; UNITE, New Zealand. Sex worker organising has also been happening in India, South Africa, Ireland, Argentina, and Trinidad and Tobago.

National and international union interest in our labour rights is exciting and encouraging. It would not be possible, however, without the grassroots organising that is happening on a local level. Without the little sex worker associations, guilds, cooperative societies and support groups, even this conference would not have been possible. This conference in Brussels happened only because there was the capacity for one little local group in The Netherlands to reach out to other local groups spread across Europe and invite them to work collectively to achieve some goals in common.

The Road Ahead

The voice of one person alone is often hard to discern. Many voices together have a better chance to challenge injustice in the world. Fifteen people working collectively... Or 150; or 1,500 people—organised, fighting for a common cause—eventually change does come. There are well-organised, well-funded forces out there that aim to make sure that prostitution is NOT legally recognised as work—as a profession—anywhere in the world (see sidebar, p. 52). There's only one way to oppose them.

Sex workers must stand united and defend their work, their livelihood, their professions. Only organisations with unified, *formal* membership can represent sex workers in their bid for direction and control over the profession. Our sisters and brothers need our help—all of our skill, experience, wisdom and support that comes from having fought in these battles already. Likely they will need our volunteer labour and money too. But, to quote Martin Smith (p. 34), we can't do it for you:

"You have to face up to the personal challenge and the collective challenge of organising your own industry. And like any other group of workers that means defining exactly where the balance point is going to have to be in this industry, between personal liberties and individual rights, and the collective responsibility and collective action through strength and the type of strength of action we need to take."

In the meantime, I say:

"PROMOTE SEX WORK: HIRE A HOOKER!"

One last thing: I want to thank our editorial team, Petra Timmermans and Jesper Bryngemark and also Ruth Morgan Thomas for their thoughtful work and their unwavering support during the long process completing this project. I also want to thank all of the book's contributors for so generously and cheerfully providing your work. I am also very grateful to my friends and family at home, without their solid support I could have never accomplished this report. In particular I want to mention Chris Bearchell who volunteered her editing skills to the Manifesto and Declaration; Chris died in February 2007 of breast cancer. □

♥ Andy Sorfleet lives and works in Vancouver, Canada. He is a founding member of the Committee to Unite Prostitutes. You can reach him by e-mail at: andy@walnet.org



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Inside the Hallowed Halls of the European Parliament.



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

LEFT TO RIGHT: Marianne Jonker, Carla Corso, Camille Cabral & MEP Vittorio Agnoletto at the European Parliament.



PHOTOS: A. Sorfleet (BELOW), Jean-François Poupel (ABOVE)

Looking back, it was a joyous success!



Appendix A: Financial Report

The full financial operations for the conference up to December 31, 2005 are set out in the ICRSE Foundation Audited Accounts. The purpose of this report is to highlight the main components in the financial statements.

Income

(Up to December 31, 2005)

The Organising Committee Finance Working Group raised **€217,977**. A further payment of **€1,500** from the Stichting Mr. A. de Graaf grant was paid in 2006. The Organising Committee would like to thank the following organisations for their generous support:

Hivos	€ 50,000
Mama Cash	48,000
Cordaid	35,000
NOVIb	30,000
Global Fund for Women	15,568
Stichting Mr A. de Graaf	15,000
FNV Mondial	10,000
TAMPEP International Foundation ..	4,000
Haella Foundation	3,500
Fillia Frauenstiftung	2,000
Asha Care Products	500
TOTAL	€ 213,568

Expenditures

(Up to December 31, 2005)

Expenses amounting to **€153,464** was spent on the following:

conference organisers	€ 25,642
administration	2,880
website development	2,410
OC expenses	9,700
expenses for participants	112,832
TOTAL	€ 153,464

PHOTO: Maj Christensen



Future Expenditures

A commitment of **€31,610** was made to cover final expenses for the conference listed below:

conference organisers	€9,353
administration, including audit	3,000
website development	757
OC expenses	2,700
final report & documents	15,800
TOTAL	€ 31,610

A commitment of **€28,654** was made to the on-going development of the ICRSE Network for 2006/2007 to cover the following:

coordinator	€ 18,654
administration (incl. audit)	4,000
steering group expenses	4,000
international meetings	2,000
TOTAL	€ 28,654

A contingency fund of **€4,294** has also been set aside.

In addition, in January 2006 the ICRSE received a grant of **€20,475** from the Open Society Institute to develop an interactive website to facilitate communication among network members. □



Appendix B: Organising Committee



Marianne Jonker
(The Netherlands)



Pye Jacobsson
(Sweden)



Marjan Sax
(The Netherlands)



Marieke van Doorninck
(The Netherlands)



Petra Timmermans
(The Netherlands)



Vladimir Moguilny
(Russia)



Giulia Garofalo
(Italy)



Laura Agustin
(England/Spain)



Jesper Bryngemark
(Sweden)



Ruth Morgan Thomas
(Scotland)



Anna Konakova
(Russia)



Marjan Wijers
(The Netherlands)



Licia Brussa
(The Netherlands)



Marie Louise Janssen
(The Netherlands)



Anita Mangala
(Germany)

Appendix C: Early Morning Dreams...

TO: The Organising Committee (OC) FROM: Petra Timmermans DATE: October 21, 2005



This morning I woke up at 4:00 AM after a dream where I was making a thank-you speech at the European Parliament (EP) introducing each of you to the audience so that everyone could acknowledge your work. Clearly my subconscious is trying to work out my regrets and frustrations about my personal conference experience. My biggest regret is that we never took the time to thank ourselves, the entire OC, for all the work we did collectively to make this incredible event happen. And I do think it was incredible.

MARJAN SAX ♥ Thank you for sacrificing your ability to participate in the conference because you were so busy dealing with all things financial. You and the green money-box were inseparable and you managed to handle the reimbursements and payments despite my neglecting to give you clear information about what to expect.

Thank you also for a fantastic party! Everyone I spoke to enjoyed themselves and although many of us OCers were unable to stay because we were finalising the Manifesto, Declaration and Recommendations for Day 3, the moment we walked into that club we relaxed, enjoyed the show, danced and laughed. People loved the show, the music was great—and you should be very proud of doing this without much support from the rest of us on the OC.

I also want to thank you for making some very late runs to the airport to make sure that people caught their flights.

MARJAN WIJERS ♥ Thank you for working so hard on getting some very important allies to the conference. The importance of your work became very clear to me when Panayote Dimitras asked in an amazed voice how we ever managed to get Cees Flinterman to attend and participate in the conference and when I saw Martin Smith get visibly excited to find himself in the same space as five other union representatives.

The rest of you may not know this but Alice Miller, Joyti Sanghera and Shivan Scanlan worked together with us to fine-tune the Declaration, making it a much stronger document—and they did this until three in the morning missing the fabulous party. Marjan, you called in all your cards on this one and really went out of your way to convince many of the invited Day 2 allies that your conviction about the importance of this event should be theirs, and they listened.

And a very special thank-you for the little things—like bringing lunch to us at the registration desk—for picking up and dealing with the photocopies we needed and for buying me new printer ink when mine ran out at a particularly crucial moment!

MARIANNE and MARIE-LOUISE ♥ Thank you for creating a magical space out of a drab conference room. The Asha Salon was beautiful. I also want to personally thank you for asking me if I needed help, not once but over and over. I apologise for the many occasions where I was not very nice to either of you, or where I just did not trust your offer of help and came in rather aggressively to make sure it was being done “right” (as if I knew what that even was). Marianne, I was not there for the press conference but I heard it was a success.

JESPER ♥ Thank you for taking on the job of programme coordinator, along with the support of Laura, Giulia, Ruth, Marjan, Marieke and myself. By the end, the programme committee had grown to include almost everyone on the OC. It was an enormous task, but I know from participants that the programme clearly let them know that this was not another conference where we would talk about nice ideas, but one where we would work together to produce concrete outcomes.

And work you did, along with Giulia! It was so important that the “Beyond Compassion” Manifesto group did what you did. I think it was a pivotal moment, where the Manifesto clearly shifted from our project to the collective process of the sex workers at the conference. I think even the French translators sensed the importance, because they worked two unscheduled hours to help your group communicate with each other.

Jesper, thank you also for the work you and Giulia did on the art space. People really enjoyed the exhibition about Grisélidis and the World Whores’ Congresses. Chris’s piece made me laugh.

ANITA ♥ Thank you for being our voice of reason and for your consistent reality checks around how we were “talking” about and to sex workers. I think the Manifesto reflects this input. I did not get much of a chance to see you at the conference but it sounds from your e-mail that you made some really good contacts for the future. Thank you also for taking on some of the more boring jobs, like helping Marianne clear up the salon and picking people up at the airport.

GIULIA ♥ Thank you also for working on the art space—it was fantastic! Giulia, if it wasn’t for you we would not have had that fantastic presentation by Gail and Margo. I was so sorry that you missed Gail’s personal “Thank you” for going to see her and asking her to drag out the old suitcase of photos and documentation. None of that would have happened if you had not taken the initiative to go and visit her.

Thank you also for organising the Video Box! I for one am very excited to see the material that came out of that project. From an idea that many of the OC were a little hesitant about, to the most brilliant closing event of the conference! You were right; people really did want to do something with their energy after the EP day and people really loved the red umbrella drama. I think we have the beginnings of a red umbrella campaign that will be taken on by sex workers internationally. It is brilliant, visual—the cameras love it, and it makes everyone smile!

I am so sorry that I took all the flyers back with me to the hotel, and so grateful that Bart was able to pick them up for us; I was shattered. I did try to meet all of you by walking towards the march but every two feet I ran into someone who was missing a train or plane and who needed to be dealt with. I really regret not participating in the march because by that point I really did need some joy.

Thank you also for taking on the difficult job of dealing with the press. At one point I walked into the media meeting

and saw you and Marianne and Camille Cabral bravely battling it out: not an enviable experience.

PYE ♥ Thank you for getting The Mapping Project to the conference. I hope that you got some feedback and I really look forward to your report so that we can get it up on the website to continue your hard work. Thank you for being a public voice of Swedish sex workers. You made yourself very clear to our abolitionist “guests” at the EP and it was a great moment.

Thank you also for your help with the networking workshops. In hindsight I think that this was something I just should have said no to doing, as I was very thinly stretched and it should have been left in your very capable hands. I apologise for “taking” control of these workshops without any discussion with you about what roles we would take on.

LAURA ♥ I heard from several people that they were impressed by your plenary presentation. Thank you for your critical voice throughout the conference preparation process. At times it was very difficult going, but you were and are right that it is never enough to just say words like “rights for migrants” and “labour rights” without really paying attention to what that means in real life and for real people. I think the programme content and both the Manifesto and Declaration are stronger documents for this.

Thank you also for the eleventh-hour intervention at the final sex workers’ manifesto plenary and for helping us work through those difficulties in communication with the Spanish delegation.

LICIA ♥ Thank you for sitting at the registration table for endless hours and for helping to troubleshoot with our Spanish and Italian-speaking participants when I was unable to deal with their grievances. I think we also need to acknowledge that it was through your continued contact with Pia Covre, along with Giulia, that we managed to get two Italian politicians to support our conference and sign our Declaration! Despite the regret about the lack of political presence and support on EP day, I think we need to congratulate ourselves for what we accomplished in a time when we are finding very few politicians who are willing to stand up and publicly declare that they share our goals and concerns. Thank you for encouraging Hanka to volunteer as a translator and for tolerating the crazy airport run.

RUTH and MARIEKE ♥ I think more than the other OC members we were recognised and thanked by individual participants for our work in the conference. Marieke and I, because we had been corresponding with all the participants leading up to the conference (so they already knew us by name) and Ruth, because of your visibility as chair of the plenary sessions. To you both I add my thanks to those you have already received.

I really regret that I or we did not take the time to say these words publicly so that everyone’s involvement and hard work could have been recognised. The idea for this e-mail came in a dream but the words are heartfelt. Together we have awakened an excitement in many sex workers to (re)mobilise to do more work, and I think we were really successful in showing our allies that sex workers’ issues and demands are not outside of the scope of their own political work. I wrote this at 4:00 AM but then I went back to bed to dream about other things. *Kisses to you all!* □

♥ Petra Timmermans

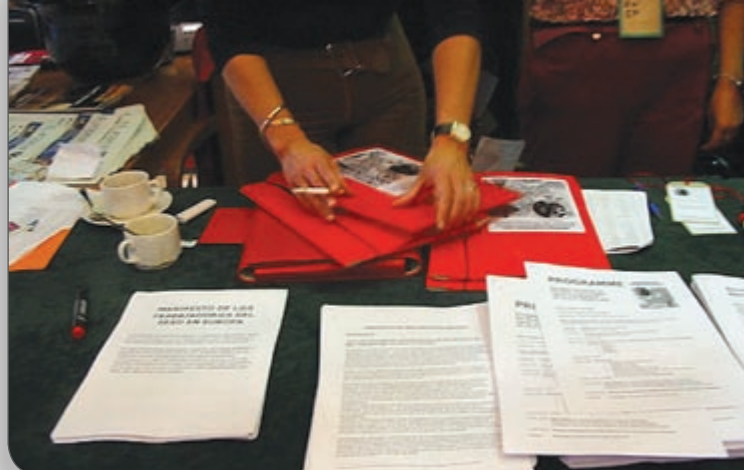


PHOTO: Maj Christensen

Conference volunteers prepare for...



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

... the arrival of the delegates!



PHOTOS: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Volunteers were from Brussels sex-work project Espace P.



Appendix D: 86 Organisations



Listed in alphabetical order with website addresses.

- AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) Paris (<http://www.actupparis.org>)
- AK Asyl Göttingen
- Amnesty for Women e.V. (<http://www.amnestyforwomen.de>)
- Amnesty International Norway (<http://www.amnesty.no>)
- Anti-Trafficking Centre (<http://www.atc.org.yu>)
- Aspasia (<http://www.aspasie.ch>)
- Association of HIV Affected Women and their Intimates (<http://www.aids.lt>)
- Association Service e.V.
- Association Study & Defence of Right to Gender Identity (<http://a-trans.planetaclix.pt>)
- *Autres Regard*
- *Blagidynist* (Nikolaev Regional Charitable Foundation) (<http://www.blago.mk.ua>)
- Bliss Without Risk (<http://www.rozkosbezrizika.cz>)
- Britain's General Union (GMB) (<http://www.gmb.org.uk>)
- CA Odysseus (<http://www.odysseus.net>)
- Cabiria (<http://www.cabiria.asso.fr>)
- Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE)
- Centre for Independent Social Research
- Centre for Research and Comparative Legal Studies on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (CERSGOSIG) (<http://www.cersgosig.informagay.it>)
- *Collectif femmes de droits, droits des femmes* (<http://collectif.fem.droits.free.fr>)
- *Comisiones Obreras* (<http://www.conc.es/dona/index1.htm>)
- *Comitato per i Diritti Civili delle Prostitute ONLUS* (<http://www.luccioleonline.com>)
- *Comité de Apoyo a las Trabajadoras del Sexo* (CATS)
- *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (<http://www.cgil.it/org.diritti>)
- *Coordinamento per la Difesa delle Persone Prostituite*, Roma
- Correlation Network (<http://www.correlation-net.org>)
- Dona Carmen e.V. (<http://www.donacarmen.de>)
- *Espace P* (<http://www.espacep.be>)
- *Espaço Pessoa – Centro de Encontro e Apoio a Prostitutos(as) do Porto*
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (<http://www.etuc.org>)
- Federation of Hellenic Information Technology & Communications Enterprises (SEPE) (<http://sepe.gr>)
- Genders (<http://www.genders.lv>)
- Gisti (<http://www.gisti.org>)
- Global Labour Institute (<http://www.global-labour.org>)
- Greek Helsinki Monitor (<http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>)
- Hetaira (<http://www.colectivhetaira.org>)
- HighLights-Agentur (<http://www.highlights-berlin.de>)
- HIVOS (<http://www.hivos.nl>)
- Hydra (<http://www.hydra.org>)
- *Indymedia Estrecho Entránsito* (Research and Action Against Precarity) (<http://estrecho.indymedia.org>)
- Infoshare Aids Russia (<http://www.infoshare.ru>)
- Institute of Political Science, University of Leipzig
- *Instituut Voor Geschillen* (<http://www.instituutvoorgeschillen.nl>)
- International Commission for Labour Rights (<http://www.ictur.labournet.org>)
- International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights
- International Union of Sex Workers (<http://www.iusw.org>)
- La Strada Poland (<http://www.lastrada.org.pl/main.html>)
- LEFÖ Information, Education & Support for Migrant Women – TAMPEP Austria (<http://www.lefoe.at>)
- LIMES – *Espai per a la recerca acció*
- *Línia d' Investigació i Cooperació amb Immigrants Treballadores del Sexe*
- Mama Cash (<http://www.mamacash.org>)
- Maria Magdalena
- Movement of Transgender Identity (MIT) (<http://www.mit-italia.it>)
- *Nash Mir* (Our World) Gay and Lesbian Centre (<http://www.gay.org.ua>)
- Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM), Utrecht University

Jesper Bryngemark sporting his red sash.

PHOTO: Jaana Kauppinen



- NGO AIDS-i Tugikeskus (<http://www.tugikeskus.ee>)
- Observatori del Sistema Penal i els Drets Humans (<http://www.ub.es/ospdh>)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (<http://www.ohchr.org>)
- Open Society Institute (<http://www.soros.org>)
- Organisation for Security & Cooperation in Europe (Human Rights Department) (<http://www.osce.org/odihr>)
- Outhouse – Irish Network Male Prostitution (<http://www.outhouse.ie>)
- Prévention Action Santé Travail pour les Transgenres (PASTT) (http://transmonde.net/etre/assocs_pastt.htm)
- Pro Sentret (<http://www.prosentret.no>)
- Prostitutes' Education Network (PENET) (<http://www.bayswan.org>)
- Prostitution Information Centre/Wallenwinkel (<http://www.pic-amsterdam.com>)
- Prostitutes Interest Organisation Norway
- Pro-Tukipiste (<http://www.pro-tukipiste.fi>)
- Redaktion Sexsicher/DHIVA (<http://www.sexsicher.de>)
- RiksOrganisationen för Sex- och ErotikAretare (ROSEA) (Swedish Association of Sex & Erotic Workers)
- De Rode Draad (The Red Thread) (<http://www.rodedraad.nl>)
- Salus (<http://www.salus.org.ua>)
- Sexyshock (<http://www.ecn.org/sexyshock>)
- Shop Den Haag (<http://www.shop-den Haag.nl>)
- Soa Aids Nederland (<http://www.soaids.nl>)
- Sophie, Volkshilfe Wien (People Assistance) (<http://www.sila.or.at>)
- Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Research (<http://rokkansenteret.uib.no>)
- TAIS Plus NGO (<http://www.volvox.in.kg>)
- TAMPEP International Foundation (<http://www.tampep.com>)
- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>)
- United Sex Professionals of Finland (SALLI) (<http://www.salli.org>)
- Verdi (United Services Trade Union) (<http://www.verdi.de>)
- Vzw Pasop (<http://www.pasop.be>)
- Website Secretary Academy (<http://www.secretaryacademy.net>)
- Women in Informal Employment Globalising & Organising
- Women Into Work (<http://www.wiw.org.uk>)
- XENIA – Beratungsstelle für Frauen im Sexgewerbe
- Young Women Christian Association of Belarus/ La Strada Belarus Programme (<http://www.lastrada.by>) □



PHOTO: Maj Christensen

ABOVE: **On our way to the European Parliament.**



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

ABOVE: **Talking it up in the red light district.**



PHOTOS: Maj Christensen (ABOVE) Jean-François Poupel (BELOW)

ABOVE: **On the steps of the EP.** BELOW: **Monse & Claudette**



Appendix E: Conference Programme

Day 0: Afternoon

- Registration of conference delegates
- Cocktail reception and informal welcome

Day 1: Morning

Sessions

- Welcome speech and introduction
– *Ruth Morgan Thomas*
- Kick-off performance – *Ana Lopes*
- **Plenary:** Why Are We Here? What Do We Want? How Do We Get There? – *Organising Committee*

Day 1: Afternoon

Workshops

Participants had a choice between six concurrent two-hour workshops, as well as sessions organised by other conference participants.

- Creating a Sex Workers' Manifesto (three concurrent workshops)
- Towards a Network of Sex Workers in Europe (Part 1)
– *Pye Jacobsson, Petra Timmermans*
- Sex work and private life: How to deal with private relations – *Sabina*
- *Fière d'être un travailleur du sexe*
– *Jean-François Poupel, Thierry Schaffauser*

Sessions

- **Open space:** Sessions organised by conference participants: Male sex workers' group, Radical self-organisation, Transgendered sex workers' group, Migrants' group, Media awareness group.
- **Plenary:** Presentation and endorsement of *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto* – *Organising Committee*

Day 2: Morning

Sessions

- **Plenary:** Did You Know? Sex workers share their knowledge, experiences and skills with allies:
 - Labour – *Stephanie Klee*
 - Migration – *Laura Agustín*
 - Human and sexual rights – *Carla Corso*
 - How the Swedish model violates sex workers' rights – *Jesper Bryngemark*

Workshops

Participants had a choice between seven concurrent two-hour workshops.

- Towards a Network of Sex Workers in Europe (Part 2)
– *Pye Jacobsson, Petra Timmermans*
- Declaration – *Ruth Morgan Thomas*
- Making our media – *Carol Leigh, Sexyshock*

- Sex workers share their knowledge, experiences and skills with allies (four concurrent workshops):
 - Violence against sex workers
 - Working conditions
 - Abolitionist policy
 - Positive experiences of sex work

Day 2: Afternoon

Sessions

- **Plenary:** Sex Workers and Allies Unite! Presentations of successful examples of partnership:
 - Looking back on 20 years partnership
– *Gail Pheterson, Margo St. James*
 - Labour – *Ana Lopes, Martin Smith*
 - Human rights – *Patricia Kaatee, Liv Jessen*
- **Plenary:** Conclusions – Final session to present results from workshops regarding a sex workers' network and the *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe*.

Workshops

Participants have a choice between six concurrent two-hour workshops.

- Press: Making the most of the media
– *Harriet Langanke*
- Internet and sex work – *Sami Kivelä*
- Writing for fun, mental health, or profit
– *David Henry Sterry*
- Going deeper, learning from each other (three concurrent workshops):
 - Human rights
 - Labour
 - Migration/trafficking

Day 2: Evening

- Kiss My A\$\$! dinner party and cabaret

Day 3: Morning

Sessions (at the European Parliament)

- Welcome speech – *Monica Frassoni, Member of Greens, European Parliament*
- **Presentation:** Conference conclusions, recommendations, and the *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* are presented at the European Parliament.
- Press conference during lunch

Day 3: Afternoon

- **Panel debate:** sex workers, allies and politicians discuss how to implement conference recommendations.
- **Performance:** Sex workers dramatically present *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto*.
- **Street action:** sex workers and allies parade through the streets of Brussels carrying red umbrellas, banners and placards.

Appendix F: Application Form

Application form for participation in the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels, Belgium, October 15-17, 2005

Please note that the number of participants at the conference is limited. Completing this form does not guarantee a place at the conference. The application closes by mid-August, and after that we will make a selection of participants. The selection is based on the information you enter in this form, so please take your time and fill it out thoroughly.

Selection criteria

We welcome sex workers who roughly share the political aim of the conference and who are genuinely interested in working towards change. Both current and former sex workers are welcome to attend. By sex workers we mean people engaging in prostitution, stripping, phone sex or any other kind of erotic economic activity.

We invite sex workers living and working across Europe, working in different industry sectors, who may be migrants/non-migrants, documented/not documented, male/female or transgender.

In support of sex workers we invite allies who will commit themselves to our goals. Allies are non-sex workers and organisations who work in fields of importance to sex workers, such as labour, migration, human rights and health. Allies are aware that sex workers' rights should be taken into account in their work and are committed to help to develop strategies to reach the goals of the conference and to support sex workers beyond the conference.

We also invite politicians who want to help sex workers reach these goals.

We have 120 places for sex workers, 80 places for allies and 40 places for politicians.

A. Contact details

To be filled in by all applicants. (* = required)

If you are a sex worker you may use any name you wish. However, your address and e-mail contact information must be accurate. Once your application has been approved we will need your real name in order to make travel and hotel arrangements. This information will be kept confidential.

Family name: *

First name: *

Postal address: *

Country: *

Phone number: *

E-mail address: *

(Please give an address that you will check regularly, most of our communications with you will be via e-mail.)

Sex workers, please go to section **B**. **Allies**, please go to section **C**. **Politicians**, please go to section **D**.

B. Sex workers (Days 1-3, October 15-17)

Please answer these questions if you are a current or former sex worker. (For instance, street worker/hustler, escort, erotic performer, massage, stripper, pro dom/ domme, porn model, actor/actress, telephone/Internet sex worker or doing any other kind of paid sex.):

- Are you working in sex work now?
☐ Yes
☐ No
- If yes, in which country/countries do you now work?
- What kinds of sex work have you done?
- Please tell us a bit about yourself and your work or migration experiences or anything else that you think we should know:
- What languages do you speak and/or understand?
- We need people who are willing to help out with translation in the small group workshops. Can you help?
☐ Yes, with the following language(s):
☐ No
- One of the evenings, we are having a celebration party. Would you like to perform? Please tell us what you would like to do (dance, music, comedy, poetry, or other):
- There will be a gallery space at the conference to display artworks by sex workers. Would you like to have your photography, painting, graphic art, textile art, or multimedia art work etc. on display? Please briefly tell us what you would like to submit:

We are able to pay for the travel costs for some of the sex workers attending the conference, but not for all. You will make it possible for us to assist sex workers with no financial means to attend if you are able to travel on your own budget or find your own funding elsewhere. Please see our list of sources, or try to see what is available to you in your country.

- Please specify your needs for funding: *

Thanks for taking your time. Please continue with section E.

C. Allies (Days 2 & 3, October 16-17)

Please answer these questions if you represent an organisation that is not a political party:

- What is the name of your organisation?

...continued on p. 106. ➞

↳ continued from p. 105...

- Tell us about your organisation: (In what field does it work, human rights, health, migration etc.? How is it organised and financed? On what levels does it operate, etc.?)
- What is your role in the organisation?
- What is the mission statement of your organisation?
- Website (if any) of your organisation:
- Please describe the relation of your organisation to sex workers: (Are sex workers part of the organisation? Does the organisation provide services to sex workers? In what ways does the organisation deal with sex-work issues, etc.?)
- If your personal views on these matters differ from the official views of your organisation, please tell us a bit about that too:
- Have you been asked to officially represent your organisation at the conference, or are you coming for other reasons (for instance because of personal interest)?
- There will be a gallery space at the conference to display artwork about sex work. Does your organisation have any promotional, political, or educational posters, visual material etc. that we could display? Please briefly tell us what you would like to submit.
- We expect of the allies to pay their own costs for travel and accommodation. However, we can give partial or full reimbursement to a limited number of attending allies. If you need any reimbursement of your expenses, please indicate the reasons here:

Thanks for taking your time. Please continue with section E.

D. Politicians (Day 3, October 17)

If you are a politician or a representative of a political party, please answer these questions:

- Tell us about your party (what is the name of the party; on what democratic levels does it operate, etc.):
- Please describe briefly the views of your party on sex work and how your party deals and has dealt with sex-work issues:

LEFT TO RIGHT: Jelena Djordjevic & Giulia Garofalo

PHOTO: Jean-François Poupel



- What is your role in the party?
- If your personal views on these matters differ from the official views of your party, please tell us a bit about that too:
- Have you been asked to officially represent your party at the conference, or are you coming for other reasons (for instance, because of personal interest)?
- Website (if any) of your party:

Thanks for taking your time. Please continue with section E.

E. Your visions and expectations

To be filled in by all applicants. (= required)*

Please read the conference summary.

The main goals of the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration are to put sex workers' rights back on the European agenda and to change the current focus on trafficking to one on migration, labour and human rights. We especially welcome participants who are genuinely interested in working with us towards these goals.

- Using a few lines, please tell us why you are interested in participating in the conference: *
- What subjects would you like to see discussed at the conference?
- Please tell us a bit about your contact with sex workers' networks in your country/countries and your previous experiences of sex-worker-rights activism, if any:

In order to make the most out of the conference, we welcome participants who are willing to actively contribute to its content.

- Do you have any ideas on how you might contribute to the conference? (For instance, can you lead a workshop on issues related to sex work? Are you willing to help take notes during workshops? etc.) Please tell us about it here and we will contact you for further discussion:

F. Practical issues

To be filled in by all applicants. (= required)*

- Please tell us if you have any disabilities, allergies or other special needs we should know about:
- Would you like us to send an official invitation letter to help you obtain financing? *
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- Do you require an official invitation letter to obtain a visa? *
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

Thank you for filling out this application. ☐

Appendix G: Notes from Workshops

Compiled by Marjan Wijers. Notes from some workshops were not available.

The following excerpts have been edited for clarity.

October 16: Day 2 Morning

(Sex workers share their knowledge, experience and skills with allies)

Workshop: Violence against Sex Workers

Facilitator: He-Jin Kim

Types of abuse and/or violence

Abuse and/or violence by members of the public:

- insults, spitting, throwing bottles
- aggression, unwanted touching

Abuse and/or violence by customers:

- rape, lack of help when being assaulted
- pressure from groups of men to provide sex for lower prices
- groups of men seeking to assault sex workers
- intimidation, men who refuse to leave and continue to circle around after their offers have been rejected
- demands for lower prices
- refusal to have safe sex
- stigma, prejudice, or inconsiderate treatment

Abuse and/or violence by police:

- treating sex workers like criminals
- arrests, “sweeps” (multiple arrests targeting a given area)
- strip searches, cavity searches
- verbal abuse, including threats
- demands for free sex and other services
- withholding food and drink
- treating sex workers in ways that lack respect and compassion

Abuse and/or violence by media:

- promoting puritanical attitudes about sex work

Abuse and/or Violence by politicians:

- making public statements about sex work that are ignorant, prejudiced, or moralistic

Abuse and/or violence by colleagues:

- territorial disputes between sex workers over work locations
- entrapment, beatings

Strategies for avoiding violence

- a. Make violence visible.
- b. Recognise that there are people who want to work in sex work.
- c. We should promote common rights rather than special rights for sex workers.
- d. Sex workers should continue to share their knowledge and make recommendations at national and international levels.
- e. Laws should be changed so that sex workers are allowed to work together in teams.
- f. Rape is violence and must be recognised as violent crime regardless of whether the victim is a prostitute or not.
- g. Sex workers need to be empowered to ensure that useful laws are enforced.
- h. How can sex workers build collective power?

Recommendations

1. Prostitution should be made legal. Sex workers should have the right to unite and should be able to work together legally. This would address the lack of protection for sex workers in the workplace, and would enable sex workers to better represent themselves and their own points of view.
2. Sex workers should be involved in any discussions regarding law reforms (local, national, international) that could affect them.
3. Police as well as other members of the justice system should be taught how to use tools that have been developed for dealing with domestic violence.
4. Migrant sex workers who are victims of sexual violence should have their rights recognised and should be offered support—regardless of their immigration status.

Workshop: Working Conditions

Facilitator: Carla Corso

Recommendations

1. Sex workers’ human rights, especially those of migrant workers, should be recognised. Sex workers—including migrant sex workers—should be permitted to work legally.
2. Prostitution should be made legal, and should not be classified as an aberration. The Swiss model for the prostitution profession should be adopted.

...continued on p. 108. ➞



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Spreading the word in Brussels' red light district.

↳ continued from p. 107...

3. Sex workers' and migrants' labour rights must be recognised. Sex work should be recognised as a legitimate trade. Sex workers' trade unions should be established.
4. No mandatory medical exams for sex workers.

Workshop: "Abolitionist" Policies

Facilitator: Katharina Cetin

"Abolitionist" ideology

- "Abolitionism" is a political movement which promotes the belief that, in order to end sexual slavery, all prostitution must be abolished.
- "Abolitionists" assume that most women do not want to work in prostitution, and see all prostitution as involuntary; therefore prostitution is slavery. Prostitution is considered to be violence against *all* women.
- When asked if they have ever consulted sex workers themselves, "abolitionists" typically respond: "You cannot ask women who are in difficult situations." (But isn't feminism supposed to be for *all* women to take part in!)
- Feminist arguments for "abolitionist" policies (for example, "If we can get rid of prostitution, we will get rid trafficking in women") cause problems for sex workers.
- People always consider their own ideology to be the *only* right one (whether it be Marxism, capitalism, Christianity, feminism, etc.). Ideology is, therefore, used as a way to exercise power over others.

Recommendations

1. Not all problems can be solved using laws. More flexible policies and solutions need to be developed. We need stronger forms of deliberative democracy.
2. In many countries, prostitution is tolerated if it remains hidden. But if you are visible — like a prostitute who works on the street — you can be arrested. Such moralistic double standards reinforce stigma. Campaigns must be waged to reduce the stigma attached to sex work.
3. Allies and sex workers need to really work together to build and support organisations and networks that involve sex workers.
4. Female, male and transgendered sex workers must be included.

October 16: Day 2 Afternoon

(Going deeper, learning from each other)

Workshop: Labour

Facilitators: Stefano Fabeni, Catherine

Recommendations

1. **Recognition and identity** – Sex work is work and a profession; sex workers are workers and must be recognised as such.
2. **Rights claims** – We demand labour, social and human rights equal to those of other workers (such as social security, health care, minimum wages, etc.)
3. **Networking and unionisation** – We seek to join with other trade unions in the pursuit of these rights.

Workshop: Migration/Trafficking

Facilitators: Veronica Munk, Jo Bernado

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the European Union (EU) implement human rights impact assessments into all anti-trafficking and immigration policies in order to protect and promote the rights of migrants, sex workers and trafficked persons.
2. We recommend that the EU provide adequate residency permits and ensure effective access to justice in order to protect the human rights of migrants, sex workers and trafficked persons — particularly the right to access to legal remedies.
3. We recommend that the EU provide effective access to services — including general medical services, housing, education, vocational training, psycho-social counselling and legal assistance — in order to protect the human rights of sex workers and trafficked persons regardless of one's immigration status.
4. We recommend that EU member states adopt and implement the following international/regional instruments and agreements, in order to better protect and promote the human rights of migrants, sex workers and trafficked persons:
 - a. UN Conventions on Migrant Workers
 - b. ILO Migrant Workers Conventions
 - b. *European Convention on Trafficking*
 - c. *Palermo Protocol*
 - d. *EU Directive on Short-Term Residency* □

Appendix H: A Year for Networking – Promoting the ICRSE Worldwide

Compiled by A. Sorfleet and Petra Timmermans

The ICRSE Network launched in October 2005. Since then, network members have attended, organised, and otherwise taken part in numerous international conferences and meetings. Many of the forums provided excellent opportunities for the network to present The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto and the Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe. Among these occasions are some of the events listed below.

Sex Work Matters: Beyond Divides Conference

New York City, USA

March 29 - April 1, 2006

(Web: <http://sexworkmatters.net>)

Organised by colleagues of New School University and the City University of New York, this conference provided a forum where scholars, activists and analysts explored theoretical, sociological, political and economic dimensions of sex work in a globalised world. Dialogue about sex work has been polarised – either all prostitution is exploitative and must be abolished, or prostitution is work that must be recognised as a legitimate profession where workers are entitled to legal protections. This event was free and open to the public. Roundtable and panel discussion topics included:

- Sex work matters: Opportunities and challenges in sex-work activism and research
- Multiple roles: Sex workers, activists and academics
- Sex work and the state
- Policing violence and sex workers
- Researching sex work: Issues in methodology
- Sex-worker outreach and activism
- Issues of identity and intimacy in sex work
- Decriminalisation and beyond

4th European Social Forum

Athens, Greece, May 4-7, 2006

(Web: <http://athens.fse-esf.org>)

The European Social Forum was claimed to be “a major event in the movement against neo-liberal globalisation and war, deregulation of labour and poverty, climate change and environmental destruction, violation of democratic rights and sexism, racism and the threat of the far right.” Thousands of activists from around Europe met to discuss perspectives of this “Movement of the Movements,” to network and to organise solidarity. As a result, the *Declaration of the Assembly of the Movements of the 4th European Social Forum* was produced. Topics at the forum included:

- What is wrong with current anti-trafficking politics?
A migrant and labour rights perspective for a new European agenda



- Reforms of the social insurance system and the struggles of workers against restrictions of their rights
- Labour relations and collective agreements
- Social equalisation: struggles for social and political rights against social exclusion of migrants and refugees
- European citizenship and migration
- Migrations and development: recognising migrants' contribution to destination countries and to the development of countries in the South
- Universal social standards, rights and freedoms in Europe: The Basic Income Project
- Human trafficking: Aspects of a contemporary slave trade
- Migrant labour and migrant struggles in the process of precariousness
- The trafficking of human beings: Is there coherence amongst policies in Europe in order to fight female trafficking effectively?

Protecting Workers in the Sex Industry: What Could Unions Do? 95th International Labour Conference Fringe Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

May 31 - June 16, 2006

(Web: <http://www.ilo.org>)



The 95th International Labour Conference (ILC) is the annual meeting of the 178 member states of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Held at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva, the conference was a forum for heads of state, government officials, labour ministers and senior representatives of workers and employers to discuss a host of issues, such as changing patterns in the world of work, child labour, occupational health and safety, technical cooperation initiatives, employment relationships, labour inspection and the application of international labour standards worldwide. The 95th ILC also provided an opportunity for trade unions in Europe with sex-worker locals to hold a fringe meeting to discuss future steps unions could take to protect workers in the sex industry. (For a report on this fringe meeting, see Appendix I: Trade Unions Talk Sex Work, p. 114.)

The International Labour Organisation is the United Nations (UN) specialised agency which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally-recognised human and labour rights. It was founded in 1919 and is the only surviving major creation of the *Treaty of Versailles* which brought the League of Nations into being. It became the first specialised agency of the UN in 1946.

...continued on p. 110. ➞

↳ continued from p. 109...

The ILO formulates international labour standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations which have established minimum standards for basic labour rights: freedom of association, the right to organise, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, and other standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work-related issues. It provides technical assistance primarily in the fields of:

- vocational training and vocational rehabilitation
- employment policy
- labour administration
- labour law and industrial relations
- working conditions
- management development
- cooperatives
- social security
- labour statistics and occupational health and safety

The ILO promotes the development of independent employers' and workers' organisations and provides training and advisory services to those organisations. Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique three-part structure where workers and employers participate as equal partners with governments in its work.

Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers

Johannesburg, South Africa, June 22-24, 2006

(Web: <http://www.soros.org>)

This meeting was organised and sponsored by Open Society Institute (OSI)'s Sexual Health and Rights Project and Law and Health Initiative. Sex workers, service providers, human rights advocates, researchers and others discussed how legal and regulatory environments affect sex workers' health and human rights.

The meeting addressed the growing backlash against sex-worker-health strategies that focus on dignity and human rights for sex workers. In some countries, HIV-prevention projects that promoted sex workers' empowerment, condom use and human rights have had their funding eliminated.

The meeting intended to build connections between sex workers' groups and allied professionals to promote sex workers' self-advocacy as well as joint-advocacy for rights-based policy development globally.

The 35 participants included sex workers, service providers, researchers, legal and policy experts, and human rights activists. The conference objectives were:

- to reach a common understanding of the elements that regulate sex work globally and map the various regimes of official control
- to formulate core principles for public health, human rights and harm reduction approaches to sex work
- to explore issues which arise within and between constituencies in order to reduce barriers, expand common principles and increase shared goals

OSI provided resources for participants which included:

- case studies of different jurisdictions with specific legal and regulatory frameworks
- a resource guide to donor support for sex-worker policy and service initiatives
- materials and research related to sex workers' health and rights on compact disc

OSI has published the meeting's recommendations in a report titled: *Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers: A Report from Johannesburg, South Africa*.

OSI is a private operating and grant-making foundation which aims to build free and open societies — to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal and social reforms. On a local level, OSI funds and implements a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health, independent media, and arts and culture. At the same time, OSI works to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses.

Meeting with United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

The Netherlands, July 2-11, 2006

(Web: <http://www.unhchr.ch>)

The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations' Human Rights Council on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, Yakin Ertürk, met with representatives from government, non-governmental organizations, UN officials and victims of gender-based violence during her fact-finding mission to The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht to gather first-hand information on domestic violence, violence against immigrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, and violence against women in the context of human trafficking and prostitution. Findings and recommendations from her meetings were presented in a report to the UN Human Rights Council. The Special Rapporteur expressed concern that, "*gender equality issues are increasingly associated with immigrant women*." Ertürk also called for the empowerment of women working in prostitution, which is a legal profession in The Netherlands.



Revisioning Prostitution Policy: Creating Space for Sex Worker Rights and Challenging Criminalisation

Las Vegas, USA, July 9-12, 2006

(Web: <http://www.desireealliance.org>)

The conference on prostitution laws and policies ended with a rally July 13th outside the Las Vegas Regional Justice Centre to support sex workers' rights and legalised prostitution in the USA.

Organised by the Desiree Alliance, this conference was sponsored by the University of Nevada and the Women's Research Institute of Nevada. A coalition of health professionals, social scientists, professional sex educators, sex professionals and their supporting networks, Desiree Alliance is a Project of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs (SEE), a non-profit organisation. Goals of the Alliance include:

- to improve understanding of the sex industry and its human, social and political impacts
- to build leadership and constructive activism in the sex worker population to advocate for sex workers' human, labour and civil rights
- to promote ethical and unbiased research into sexual subcultures
- to promote saner and more sensible policies relating to adult sexual health and behaviour
- to educate and empower the public to have healthy and rational attitudes about sexuality.

United Nations Population Fund Consultation on Sex Work

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 16-19, 2006

(Web: <http://www.unfpa.org>)

A consultation on the subject of sex work was held by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA works to ensure universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health to all couples and individuals. UNFPA supports countries by using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that: every pregnancy is wanted; every birth is safe; every young person is free of HIV/AIDS; and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. Specific goals of UNFPA include:

- universal access to reproductive health services by 2015
- universal primary education and closing the gender gap in education by 2015
- reducing maternal mortality by 75 per cent by 2015
- reducing infant mortality
- increasing life expectancy
- reducing HIV-infection rates

Network of Sex Work Projects Meeting

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 16-19, 2006

(Web: <http://nswp.org>)

The meeting had two goals: 1. to identify priority issues for global advocacy; and 2. to review the role and structure of the NSWP and make recommendations about ways to improve or reform it. Proposals for a new NSWP structure and two mission statements were drafted to be circulated for feedback from the regions.

Financial support for the meeting was provided by the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS and the local host organisation was Davida, Rio de Janeiro. Participants in the NSWP meeting included representatives from 14 networks and sex-work organisations who could stay on after the UNFPA meeting, as well as representatives from Africa and Europe. A report is available from the NSWP website.

Formed in 1991, NSWP is an informal alliance of sex workers, supportive individuals and organisations that provide services to sex workers. With members in more than 40 countries, the NSWP aims to:

- promote sex workers' health and human rights, including the right to work in a safe environment, free from abuse, violence and discrimination
- advocate for policy reform at regional and global levels
- facilitate opportunities for sex workers to be heard at relevant international forums, and
- develop partnerships with technical support agencies to work on independently-financed projects.

1st Meeting of the Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Budapest, Hungary, September 6-10, 2006

(Web: <http://www.tasz.hu>)

At this international meeting, Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SWAN) members discussed the future of the network and participated in seminars about working with media on sex-work issues and the role media can play in advocating for sex workers' rights. Representatives from SWAN-member non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 15 countries participated, along with a technical coordinator from the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Paris, France, September 13, 2006

(Web: <http://assembly.coe.int>)

At a hearing organised by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) discussed with experts the variety of legal situations that exist for prostitution within the Council's 46 member-states. A resolution was proposed to address the fact that differing attitudes toward sex work hinder the international cooperation needed to fight forced prostitution (the only form of prostitution unanimously condemned in Europe). According to PACE Chairperson Minodora Cliveti, "Prostitutes — most of whom are women — are usually faced with stricter penalties than the clients in those countries which criminalise prostitution."

In addition to the the topic of discrimination against women, the hearing also addressed public-health issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention and drug use. The hearing was open for NGOs, media and the public to ask questions and offer comments. Sex workers' perspectives were provided by Chris Student (European Network of Male Prostitutes) and Terry Van der Zijden (Trades Union of Prostitutes, The Netherlands). The committee has prepared a report of the hearing titled, *Prostitution: Which Stance to Take? An affront to human dignity, or a profession like any other?*

Violence and Patriarchy: A European Campaign Against Violence on Women

Trieste, Italy, October 6-7, 2006

(Web: <http://www.european-left.org>)

Organised by the European Left Feminist Network (EL-FEM), the purpose of this international conference was to analyse, propose solutions to and fight the abuse of women — sexual, physical and emotional — and to examine the existing link between abusive behavior and patriarchy, including the feminisation of poverty, domestic violence and prostitution.

...continued on p. 112. ➔



PHOTO: "twskyline" (Web: <http://www.flickr.com>)

Sex Workers Protest – September 6, 2006

Taipei sex worker leader dies

TAIPEI CITY – On August 3, 2006, Xiou-Qin Kuan – sex worker activist and former leader of the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (COSWAS) – threw herself into the ocean near her childhood town. Her body was found two days later.

Xiou-Qin had been running an underground brothel with a few of the previously-licensed prostitutes who lost their right to work when Mayor Chen Shui-bian revoked their licences in 1997. A very caring person, Xiou-Qin had been helping keep quite a few of her colleagues afloat financially during this time of great difficulty.

Recent obscenity sweeps launched by the DPP Government—amidst investigations into corruption on the part of the President and his family—had made it extremely hard for Xiou-Qin and her friends to conduct business as usual.

A memorial service for Xiou-Qin was held on August 29, 2006. Other memorial events included a photo exhibition and a screening of the film, *Life of Xiou-Qin*.

Since Xiou-Qin's death, COSWAS has organised a series of actions; not only to remember Xiou-Qin and her work, but also to galvanize various forces to protest against hypocritical politicians and their expedient policies, and to push for the decriminalisation of sex work.

On August 23, 2006, sex workers along with COSWAS members and other labour organisations protested in front of the Presidential Palace to call for the decriminalisation of sex work, and to demand that President Chen be responsible for the process.

The incumbent President is none other than the former mayor of Taipei who initiated this nightmare for sex workers. More than a hundred people turned up to chant slogans, demanding his apology and resignation. A short scuffle with police resulted.

There was a demonstration on September 5, 2006, staged in front of Taipei City government buildings to protest Mayor Ma Ing-Jiui's policy to increase obscenity sweeps.

On September 6, 2006, another demonstration was held in front of the office of Executive Yuan to protest the Premier's law-and-order policy to eliminate criminal elements. In the past, such "elimination" policies have targeted helpless sex workers, rather than hard-core criminals. □

↳ continued from p. 111...

2006 Taipei City International Conference on Sex Industry Policies

Taipei, Taiwan, November 24–30, 2006

(Web: <http://coswas.org>)

The conference examined illegal prostitution (soliciting, facilitating and selling sex is illegal in Taiwan) as a political theme that politicians must address. Designed to be an exchange between foreign guests, representatives from Taiwanese NGOs and Taipei City government officials; the participants discussed models and policies for the sex industry from Sweden, The Netherlands and New South Wales, Australia. Twelve experts were invited from the three countries, including the Swedish politician Maria Carlshamre. Conference events included:

- Urban planning and commercial sex display
- Sex workers' cultural festival
- Sex and politics cultural night
- Rally and street protests

Sponsored by the City of Taipei, the conference was held during an election campaign. Conference organisers (COSWAS) took advantage of the increased media attention and raised the issue of decriminalisation.

Licensed prostitutes, activists and many other supporters formed COSWAS on Labour Day, May 1, 1999, to promote a public awareness of, and support for, the rights and working conditions of sex workers and the decriminalisation of sex work.

Sex Work: A Profession in Need of Representation of Interests? European Trade Unions in Debate with Sex Workers

Berlin, Germany, December 7–8, 2006

(Web: <http://www.verdi.de>)

Organized by the Hans Böckler Foundation in cooperation with Verdi (United Services Trade Union), experts at the conference discussed:

- workers' rights for sex workers
- common interests of trade unions and sex workers: first impressions
- the European sex workers' movement
- the labour movement and prostitution
- women's movement and sex work in Germany
- overview of the situation in the seven countries represented at the conference
- legalising sex work and the struggle against trafficking of women
- reports on the situation of participating countries from the points of view of sex workers and trade unionists.

Participants in the debate included representatives from the following organisations:

- *Bund Demokratischer Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler* (Federation of Democratic Scientists)



- *Bundesverband Sexuelle Dienstleistungen* (Federal Association for Sexual Services)
- *Comisiones Obreras (CCOO)* (Union Confederation of Workers Commissions), Catalonia, Spain
- *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) Frauen* (Confederation of German Trade Unions Women)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC/EGB), Brussels, Belgium
- European Federation of Food, Agriculture, Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT)
- European Private Services Union (EPSU/EGÖD)
- Hydra, Berlin, Germany
- International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
- International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW), GMB Branch, UK
- La Strada, Poland
- *Mitternachtsmission* (Midnight Mission), Dortmund, Germany
- *Prostitution Kollektiv Reflektion* (Prostitution Collective Reflection), Basel/Bern/Zürich, Switzerland
- *De Rode Draad* (The Red Thread), *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging* (Netherlands Federation of Trade Unions)
- Sophie, *Volkshilfe* (People Assistance), Vienna, Austria

Correlation European Network Social Inclusion and Health Seminar Series

(Web: <http://www.correlation-net.org>)

Many people in the EU cannot get access to basic health, or social services. They are not one group or category of people, but often they share common disadvantages like being homeless, stigmatised, involved in risky behaviour; having low social or economic status; they may be excluded socially, be in conflict with the law, or may have entered the country illegally or be a member of an ethnic minority. Many use drugs or are involved in sex work. These conditions pose a threat to these people's health and well-being, as well as to public health in general. This seminar series was intended to bring a broad range of experts (decision-makers, service users, service providers, grassroots organisations and researchers) together to share their experience and discuss:

- **Internet** – September 29-30, 2006, Prague, Czech Republic
- **Policy** – October 26-28, 2006, Dublin, Republic of Ireland
- **Empowerment** – November 16-18, 2006, Turin, Italy
- **Outreach** – March 1-3, 2007, Helsinki-Tallinn, Finland

Women into Work: Women, Human Rights and Prostitution Symposium Seminars

(Web: <http://www.wiw.org.uk>)

Since *Paying the Price: A Consultation Paper on Prostitution* was published by the UK Home Office in 2004, and the subsequent Home

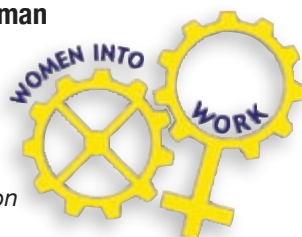


PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (Espace P)

Stopping for a moment to take stock of the day's events.

Office publication of *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy* in January 2006, the debate about the impact of prostitution legislation in both the UK and Europe has intensified.

The purpose of the Women Into Work (WIW) seminars was to bring high-level individuals together to debate prostitution and human rights in an effort to influence policy. Seminar topics included:

- **How can we end child sexual exploitation?**
– Durham, UK, October 10, 2006
- **When can “sex work” be a free choice?**
– Manchester, UK, November 14, 2006
- **Legislation to ensure human rights**
– Vienna, Austria, January 16-17, 2007
- **Victims of trafficking and migrant sex workers**
– Sheffield, UK, March 21, 2007
- **Zero tolerance: Solution or oppression?**
– London, UK, May 16, 2007

A report from the seminars offers significant, additional information for organisations in the UK and Europe that provide services and support for women in the sex industry.

Women Into Work is a trans-national development partnership project which aims to involve disadvantaged women in identifying barriers and promoting innovative solutions to unemployment (or low-paid employment) using peer research. WIW partners jointly develop tools to combat the discrimination such women face to be disseminated across Europe through a variety of forums.

WIW partners include the Hallam Centre for Community Justice (Sheffield Hallam University), UK Prison Service, UK National Probation Service, Job Centre Plus and volunteer organisations that provide services for vulnerable women (i.e. homeless, drug users, refugees, prostitutes, and others in conflict with the law). In addition, two trans-national partners from Greece and Austria who focus on domestic violence against women and prostitution/trafficking legislation are also involved.

Funded through the European Social Fund, WIW is managed by Supporting Others through Volunteer Action (SOVA)—a leading UK volunteer mentoring organisation that works with the criminal justice system. SOVA's mission is to increase the effective involvement of local communities in crime reduction, rehabilitation of offenders and community safety. SOVA works to strengthen communities by involving local volunteers in promoting social inclusion and reducing crime. (Web: <http://www.sova.org.uk>) □

Appendix I: Trade Unions Talk Sex Work

Report by Marianne Jonker and Marjan Wijers

On June 8, 2006, during the 95th International Labour Conference in Geneva, three unions met to answer the question: “What can unions do to protect workers in the sex industry?”

Three trade unions with sex workers’ branches—Britain’s General Union (GMB), Verdi (United Services Trade Union) from Germany, and *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging* from The Netherlands—took the initiative to organise a fringe meeting during the 95th annual meeting of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva. All three unions have sex workers for members and officers. This was the first time an ILO fringe meeting was organised specifically to look at what unions can do to protect and promote the rights of sex workers. Many ILO officers attended the fringe meeting.

Speakers agreed that sex workers’ issues are an area of work in the global economy that requires more attention. They recognised that the debate is still contested in some parts of the global trade union movement, but advocated to start from a very simple position, the fundamental right of all workers, without any distinction whatsoever, to join and establish organisations without prior authorisation. This right is protected under *Convention 87* of the ILO.

Disagreement often arises over the question of whether sex work is work or not. However, as put by Simon Steyne, Trades Union Congress International Officer and Member of the ILO Governing Body:

“We have to remember that the sex sector is a massive part of the global economy and employs millions. So, it doesn’t matter if you don’t like it, it still is.”

And,

“Making weapons is far less moral, but those workers are still workers.”

Rather than getting stuck in moral debates, according to him, it is better to listen and talk to those workers and hear them when they discuss their need to organise themselves.

In the meantime, seek shelter under a red umbrella.

PHOTO: A. Sorfleet



The right for sex workers to unite and organise trade unions was also put forward by Benjamin Abit, Vice President of *Prostitution Kollektiv Reflektion*, Switzerland:

“Sex workers need the same protection with regard to labour, social and human rights as any other worker. This includes integration into social security and health-care systems and a guaranteed minimum wage. Moreover they have the right of support and protection in case of violent attacks independently of the migratory status.”



Catherine Stevens, secretary of the Sex Workers’ Branch of the GMB (UK), outlined the main demand of united sex workers:

“The recognition of our work as legitimate work and the full range of labour rights.”

To this end it is necessary to organise on an international level:

“Our industry has gone global and it seems to make sense to organise on a global level too, if we are to respond to the issues and problems we face.”

At the same time the sex industry is not easy to organise and there are several barriers that keep sex workers from joining unions:

“Most of our work in this industry is semi-legal or illegal, so many of us want to remain anonymous. Many of us work independently, isolated from other sex workers. And, as in any other industry, there is a degree of apathy among workers.”

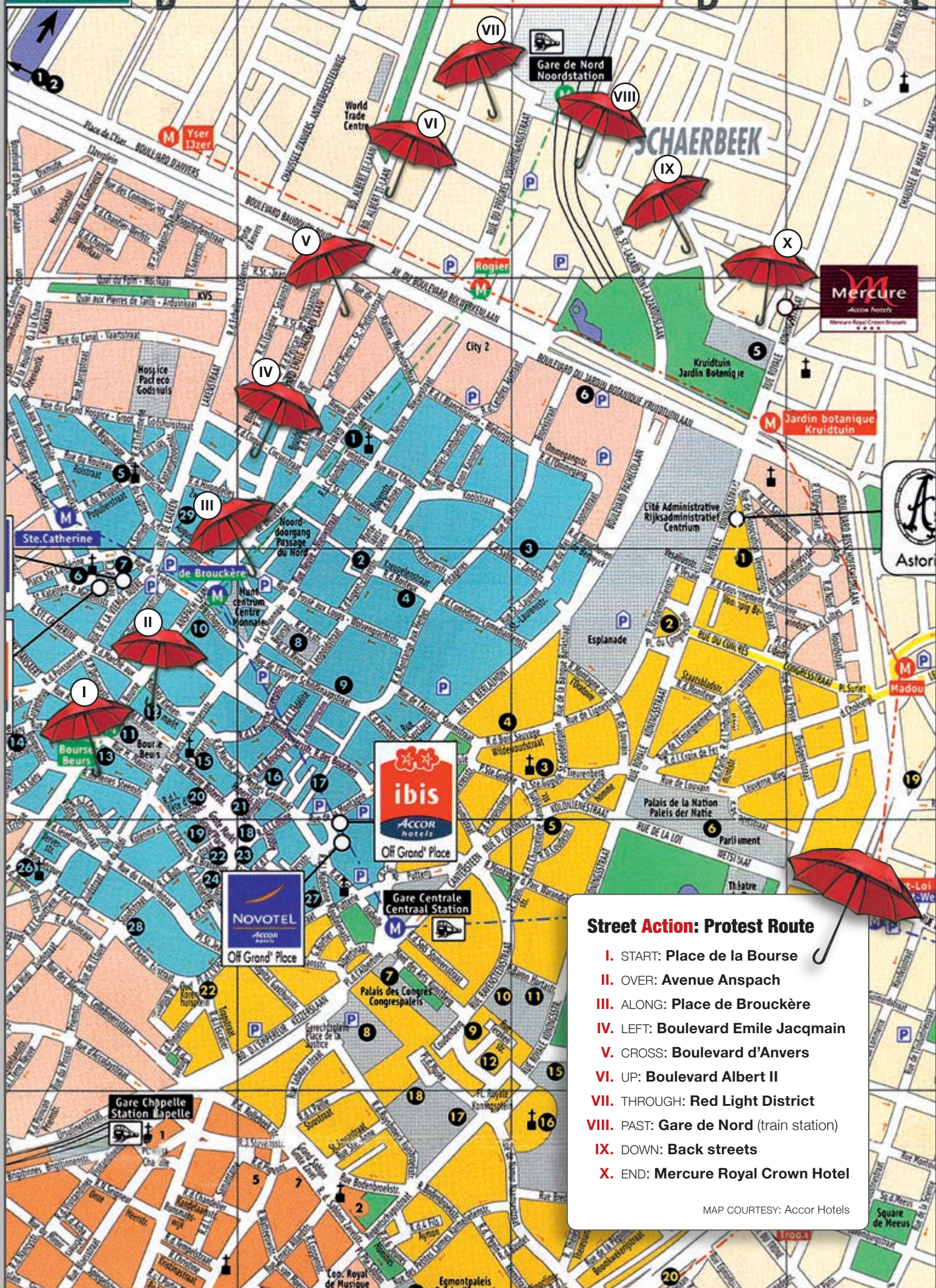
However, most of these issues are common to many different industries that have been unionised for a long time and that have achieved better working conditions and greater worker control over their work.

Another obstacle that prevents sex workers from organising was mentioned by Marianne Jonker (former president of *Vakwerk*) representing the ICRSE:

“Many sex workers don’t identify themselves as sex workers. For many, it is something that they do for short-term aims. They do not dare to use the words ‘sex worker’ to define themselves, and want to work and stay anonymous.”

This wish has to be respected, also by unions, if only because of the social exclusion and discrimination that sex workers who are open about their work face.

She also stressed the importance of financial and other support from (international) unions in the face of the restrictions now placed on funds from the US Government, which requires those who receive money to “oppose prostitution.” This has had huge negative implications for effective HIV prevention, human rights protection and public-health promotion. Moreover, trade unions have an important role in reducing forced labour; empowering sex workers; improving their bargaining power; and helping them talk to each other about work, stigma and discrimination. □



Street Action: Protest Route

- I. START:** Place de la Bourse
- II. OVER:** Avenue Anspach
- III. ALONG:** Place de Brouckère
- IV. LEFT:** Boulevard Emile Jacqmain
- V. CROSS:** Boulevard d'Anvers
- VI. UP:** Boulevard Albert II
- VII. THROUGH:** Red Light District
- VIII. PAST:** Gare de Nord (train station)
- IX. DOWN:** Back streets
- X. END:** Mercure Royal Crown Hotel



**International Committee on the
Rights of Sex Workers in Europe**

✉ PO Box 51319
1007 EH Amsterdam
The Netherlands

E-mail: info@sexworkeurope.org

☎ Telephone: +31 20 693 1300

Web: <http://www.sexworkeurope.org>

♻ Printed in Europe on recycled paper.