



Sex Workers Ageing with HIV
Impact of criminalisation and discriminations

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**International Committee on the Rights of Sex
Workers in Europe**

www.sexworkeurope.org

Who we are?




- ICRSE: European network of organisations and individuals founded in 2005
- Today: 99 organisations in 33 countries in Europe and Central Asia
- Sex worker led (majority of sex workers on Board and as staff/consultants)
- Three main areas of work:
 1. Communication (list-servs, social media...)
 2. Advocacy (campaigns, resources, public events...)
 3. Capacity building of sex workers (trainings, resources, technical support...)



Presentation Outline

- Sex work/ers | who, what, where, why?
- Data and evidence
- Intersection of discrimination
- Impact of criminalisation
- Precarity
- Violence
- Mental health
- Recommendations



Sex work/ers who, what, why, where?

- “**Female, male and transgender** adults and young people...**exchange** money or goods **for sexual services**, either regularly or occasionally...”
- **Sex work varies** ...in the degree to which it is more or less “formal” or organized” and type of working environment (street, brothel, independent..)
- **Economic Activity:** “full-time occupation, part-time, or occasionally to meet specific economic needs”
- Overlap with other key populations and marginalised groups (people who use drugs, MSM, trans, migrants, Roma, single mothers...). Many EU countries, large majority of sex workers are migrants either from other European countries or Global South.

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Guidance note on HIV and sex work. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; 2009–2012:

http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sub_landing/files/JC2306_UNAIDS-guidance-note-HIV-sex-work_en.pdf



Limited data

Remarks:

- **Little nationally representative data** on HIV prevalence, HIV testing, condom use or treatment coverage as few countries have accurate population size estimates and most available data are from surveys that are based on variable sample sizes and use different methods.
- Most countries report **data for female sex workers; lack of data on male, transgender or other subgroups of sex workers who may be at increased risk of HIV.**
- Often focus on street-based sex workers who might be more at risk than indoors
- Many sw don't disclose their activity

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Thematic report: Sex workers. Monitoring implementation of the Dublin Declaration on Partnership to Fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia: 2014 progress report. Stockholm: ECDC; 2015.

Criminalisation
& legal
oppression

Mental Health

Violence /
police
violence

Poverty

Discrimination
+ disclosure



Criminalisation and legal oppression

Criminalisation: sex workers, clients or third parties

Swedish Model: clients criminalisation (and ongoing sex workers criminalisation in most cases)

Legalisation: 'back door' criminalisation (Turkey, Greece...)

Legal oppression: municipal by-laws or criminalisation of migration / poverty

Mandatory testing

Criminalisation of HIV non-disclosure, exposure or transmission



Discrimination

- Discrimination in health settings (insults, refusal of treatments)
- Discrimination in housing, access to justice etc

Sex work and HIV exposure:

- HIV+ sex workers outed by other sex workers to clients or police (Poland) > loss of clients / criminalisation
- Health professionals disclosing status
- Police / media outing sex workers (Greece 2012) > suicide



Violence / Police Violence

Main concern for sex workers in the region

More than 40% (86/206) of respondents reported that they had been physically abused by police, while 36.5% (77/211) reported that police had sexually assaulted them. [http://](http://swannet.org/files/swannet/File/Documents/Arrest_the_Violence_SWAN_Report_Nov2009_eng.pdf)

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Ukraine:

'About five years ago, I was detained at the district police station. e police beat me in the kidney area and in the ribs and on the head—they didn't beat me on the face, so that there would be no visible bruising—then they raped me, with my arms tied to the radiator. After this incident I was depressed and considered killing myself. '



Legalife, Kiev, Ukraine, March 8th 2017

HIV+ SEX WORKERS



"I am a sex worker living with HIV. A client asked me to have unprotected sex with him. I refused, which led to him beating me and threatening me with his dogs. I was raped without a condom".

Carusel/ICRSE (Romania sex worker training, 2015)



Precarity/poverty

- Large number of sex workers living in poverty (trans, migrant, asylum seekers, single mothers, sw living with disability...)
- Reduce sex workers capacity to negotiate condoms > increase vulnerability to HIV (Chinese sw in France – Prep)
- Impact on stress / mental health
- Criminalisation of clients first impact is increased poverty + vulnerability
- No pension / social support: many sw continue work in old age



Mental Health

Impact of stigmatisation and discrimination, criminalisation, violence, poverty > mental health issues (depression, anxiety...) and suicide.



Recommendations:

- More research / data needed on issues faced by sex workers living with HIV – importance of intersectional approach
- Combat violence
- More and better inclusion of sex workers in services and patients groups. Not just tokenistic inclusion but embracing our demands – in particular:
- More vocal support against all forms of criminalisation.



Thank you !

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