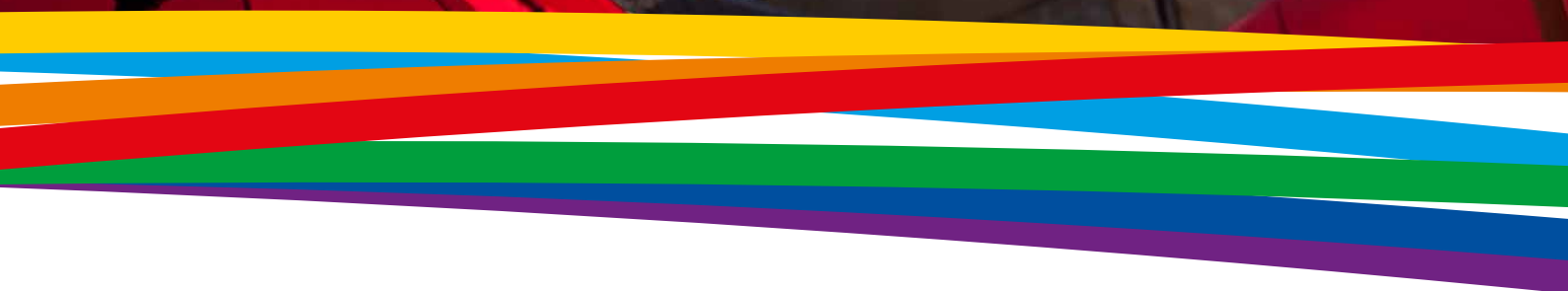


**“HANDS OFF
OUR CLIENTS!”**



**An Activism and Advocacy
Guide for Challenging
the ‘Swedish Model’ of
Criminalising the Clients
of Sex Workers in Europe**

ICRSE

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

www.sexworkeurope.org





“Hands Off Our Clients!”: Full Contents

SECTION #1: Creating Change	1:1
What is Sex Worker Rights Advocacy?	1:3
What is Sex Worker Rights Activism?	1:3
Creating Change: Combining Advocacy and Activism	1:4
The Swedish Model: What it is and How it Came About	1:5
Increased Violence in the Sex Industry	1:5
A History of Migration and Racism	1:6
How to Use This Guide	1:7
SECTION #2: Sex Worker Rights Advocacy	2:1
1 Identify the Issue and Define Your Goals	2:3
2 Groundwork: Preparing the Way	2:4
3 Research and Mapping: Understanding the Policy Playing Field	2:8
4 Planning and Strategy: Zeroing In	2:12
5 Building Coalitions and Alliances: Gathering Your Forces	2:13
6 Communications: What? When? How? And to Whom?	2:15
7 Evaluation: Celebrating and Sharing Successes – Recognising and Overcoming Difficulties	2:16
WORKSHEET #1: Five Principles for Undertaking an Effective Legislative Campaign	2:18
WORKSHEET #2: Building Your Case Against the Swedish Model	2:19
WORKSHEET #3: The Evidence	2:24
WORKSHEET #4: Template for a Workplan	2:29
WORKSHEET #5: Template for a letter to Potential Allies	2:30
WORKSHEET #6: Sample Briefing Papers	2:31
WORKSHEET #7: Sample Communications Strategy	2:43
SECTION #3: Sex Worker Rights Activism	3:1
1 Power and Interest	3:3
2 Strategy and Campaigns	3:10
3 Action	3:12
4 Organising	3:14
5 Sex Worker Resources	3:16
WORKSHEET #8: Planning a Campaign	3:17
WORKSHEET #9: Planning an Action	3:20
WORKSHEET #10: Tips for Organisers	3:23



SECTION

1

Creating Change

Sex workers and sex worker rights activists across Europe are concerned that governments are trying to bring in laws that criminalise clients – often referred to as ‘the Swedish Model’. We are concerned about how these laws will affect us, our work, our rights and our access to health and other services. This kit – which contains information, ideas and resources; has been designed by ICRSE to help sex worker rights collectives, organisations and activists carry out advocacy and activism that influences or challenges specific areas of policy or legislation of Swedish Model.

ICRSE wants to work towards creating a world where sex work is recognised as work, and where the human and labour rights of female, male and trans* sex workers are upheld and promoted in the same way as those of everybody else.





SECTION #1 Creating Change

Contents

What is Sex Worker Rights Advocacy?	1:3
What is Sex Worker Rights Activism?	1:3
Creating Change: Combining Advocacy and Activism	1:4
The Swedish Model: What it is and How it Came About	1:5
Increased Violence in the Sex Industry	1:5
A History of Migration and Racism	1:6
How to Use This Guide	1:7

SEX WORKERS TAKE ACTION!

SEPTEMBER 2012: MARRICKVILLE, SYDNEY – sex workers in rally to protest against Mayoral candidate Morris Hanna's anti-sex work policies.

JULY 2012: KOLKATA – when the International AIDS Conference 2012 was held in Washington, US government travel restrictions meant that many sex workers were excluded. In response sex workers and allies set up a Sex Worker Freedom Festival as an alternative event to protest their exclusion and ensure their voices were heard in Washington.

JULY 2012: WASHINGTON D.C. – 1000 sex workers, drug users and AIDS activists, many of them carrying red umbrellas, march on White House to protest the stigma. Protesters hold up signs: "Fight AIDS! No More Drug War!" and "Stop the Witch Hunt against Sex Workers". They chant "Sex work is work".

JULY 2012: PARIS – hundreds of people, including sex workers protested against proposals to make soliciting for prostitution illegal.

APRIL 2012: EL ALTO, BOLIVIA – Sex workers go on hunger strike to demand a solution to the month-long doctor's strike which had forced the closure of public hospitals across the country. About a dozen male and female sex workers, many with their faces covered, crowded into the lobby of a health centre. They chanted "Useless minister (Health Minister Juan Carlos Calvimontes), we want a solution!"

What is Sex Worker Rights Advocacy?

Sex worker rights advocacy is any action that aims to bring about desired political change in sex work policy, legislation and/or funding. Sex worker rights advocacy is a process of linked actions that, when combined, bring about change and, specifically it's about effecting policy change. It's about holding policy-makers and other decision makers to account for the needs and rights of sex workers and our communities. Advocacy can include awareness-raising, education and communication, and behaviour change communication.

Experience tells us that sex worker rights advocacy is most successful when we have a clearly defined desired outcome (what do we want to achieve) with realistic actions (what are we going to do) for specific actors to undertake. Sex worker rights advocacy should therefore always be targeted to a particular group of people asking them to do a concrete action toward a desired political change.

What is Sex Worker Rights Activism?

Activism is any conscious individual or collective effort to bring change either on a social, political, economical or environmental level. Activism employs many tactics from local grassroots community-based action to national or transnational campaigning.

The modern sex workers' rights movement was born in 1975, when street workers in Lyon occupied a church to protest police violence and harassment. This was not the first time that sex workers had acted collectively – several hundred prostitutes had marched in San Francisco in 1917 and in 1943 prostitutes went on strike in Hawaii. But this single action, involving several women in France in 1975, gave momentum to a movement that spread into church occupations throughout France and inspired prostitutes all over Europe.

Since 1975, the international movement for sex workers' human and labour rights has steadily grown stronger with sex worker-led groups and networks emerging all over the world. The movement has used a huge variety of methods to challenge stigmatisation, criminalisation, lack of rights, poor working conditions and institutionalised violence. Sex workers have used collective actions such as demonstration, strike, hunger strike, media campaign or cultural activism to fight for the recognition of their rights.

The sex workers' rights movement can be seen as a place where many other social issues are being debated and fought for: women's rights and bodily autonomy, migrant's rights and anti-racism, trans* rights, HIV/Aids and sexual and reproductive rights, economic justice, personal freedom and censorship are all issues that the sex workers' movement address and is concerned with.

SEX WORKERS TAKE ACTION!

MARCH 2012: ANKARA, TURKEY – Former sex worker A.T chains herself to the parliament building in to protest the bad conditions and criminalisation in brothels.

MARCH 2012: NAIROBI – Kenyan sex workers march through downtown Nairobi in broad daylight to demand respect for their trade and better treatment from the government, arguing it is a human rights issue. Wearing black and orange masks to cover their faces, a group of about 40 men and women stop traffic on a busy weekday morning.

JUNE 2011: SEOUL – Hundreds of sex workers rally near a red-light district to protest a police crackdown on brothels. A crowd of about 400 people, mostly women wearing baseball caps, masks and sunglasses, chanted slogans like, “Guarantee the right to live!”

DECEMBER 2009: COPENHAGEN – Prostitution is legal in Denmark, but during the the Copenhagen Climate Summit in, Copenhagen’s Mayor sent postcards to hotels in the city, discouraging them from arranging liaisons between guests and local prostitutes. In response, Danish sex workers offered free services to anyone from the conference who visited them with one of the postcards.

Creating Change: Combining Advocacy and Activism


The most effective movements for change target and influence the actions and decisions of power – politicians, heads of government departments, policy officers, police commissioners – through a variety of mechanisms that can include persuading them of our perspective or argument; convincing them it would be politically, economically or socially expedient to adopt all or some of our demands; or by exerting pressure that raises the stakes or makes it difficult for them to ignore us.

If we want to challenge the Swedish Model, we need to identify the key pillars and sources of power that support the model; the ideas; the organisations, individuals and institutions that support it; understanding the processes through which the decisions will be made and implemented, as well as trying to motivate and mobilise those who are or would be against it.

When we use sex worker rights advocacy we attempt to enter or directly influence the structures of power by inserting our views and perspectives into the policy-making process at key strategic places and moments.

In contrast, it is useful to think of sex worker rights activism as action from below. It also aims to influence decisions and decision-makers, but uses our collective power to bring about change. Often our compliance helps to form the pillars on which their power depends. Recognising this gives us power to withhold our cooperation and organise determined movements to intervene.

Ideally we combine advocacy and activism – using a groundswell of support from below to strengthen the negotiating power of our advocacy and, if advocacy fails or reaches an impasse, we can assert our collective power and force changes – or even remove those who refuse to make them.



“It says that no prostitution is prostitution out of free will. It means that everybody is a victim. If you scream and shout that you’re not a victim you are suffering from a false consciousness. And if you try to convince them that you’re not even suffering from a false consciousness, they will say: ‘Well you’re not representative’.”

**PYE JACOBSSON , SWEDISH
SEX WORKER AND ACTIVIST**

The Swedish Model: What it is and How it Came About

Sweden was the first country to use a radical feminist argument – that sex work is inherently male violence against women – to justify new legislation that criminalised buying sex, while selling sex remained legal. In 1999, the Swedish government introduced the Sexköpslag, which criminalised clients but retained laws criminalising brothels and others profiting from sex work¹. This model is frequently referred to as the ‘Swedish’, ‘Nordic’ or ‘End Demand’ model. The criminalisation of sex workers’ clients is often part of a new legal framework that aims to eradicate sex work and trafficking by ‘ending demand’.

The Swedish government claims that criminalising the purchase of sex and sex workers’ clients has significantly reduced the number of sex workers. They cite the decline in the number of street-based sex workers in Sweden – a fact which a number of researchers attribute to the growth of other ‘hidden’ forms of sex work. In several countries that have adopted the Swedish Model, police surveillance and arrest of clients has displaced sex workers. Sex workers are increasingly using the internet to solicit customers or have moved to venues that masquerade as other businesses such as massage parlours, hair dressers and hotels.


Increased Violence in the Sex Industry

In Sweden, women on the streets have reported greater competition, declining prices and harsher conditions. To compensate for fewer clients, women accept clients who are drunk, aggressive or refuse condom use. Since client criminalisation in Sweden, sex workers are at greater risk of violence and infectious diseases.

Sex workers face major obstacles in reporting violence and coercion, given that exposing oneself as a sex worker to a police officer can lead to more harassment and the risk of deportation. Likewise, a client encountering a sex worker who has been coerced, or is in danger, is unlikely to report it to the police for fear of incriminating himself. The Norwegian National Police Board found that the Swedish law has made it harder to gather evidence against individuals who have coerced or exploited sex workers.

In Edinburgh, sex workers reported 66 incidents of violence in 2006, compared with 126 after the implementation of kerb-crawling measures the following year. In Montreal, during a three-month period of widespread anti-client sweeps in 2001, sex workers reported three times the amount of violent incidents, and five times the amount of violent incidents with a deadly weapon than prior to the sweeps.

¹ Clients are criminalised under the Swedish Penal Code Chapter 11 (previously under the Sex Purchase Act, 1999). Laws requiring a landlord to terminate the lease if a tenant (or others) uses the premises for sex work include: Penal Code chapter 6 s.12.2; Land Code 12 s. 42.1.9; Condominium Act 7 s.18.8. Brothel-keepers and procurers are criminalised under the Penal Code chapter 12 s. 12.



“I am not working to make a fortune. I am working to pay for my normal life. Everyone works at jobs to make money to keep living. It is the same with me. It is my choice and I don’t want anyone to take my living from me.”

**DANA, STREET-BASED
SEX WORKER, GLASGOW**

Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare found that the criminalisation of clients may lead to an increase in exploitation of sex workers by third parties. Thai sex workers have likewise reported that, since the prohibition on US soldiers purchasing sex, their working conditions have become more dangerous. Often, soldiers will only meet sex workers in isolated locations or request that one woman service multiple soldiers to avoid drawing attention.

In many countries, landlords have the legal right to terminate leases and evict without notice if they suspect their tenant is a sex worker – even when the selling of sex is not a crime. This also affects individuals who live in low-income social housing, for whom it can have a particularly severe impact. In Norway, police are known to pose as clients and call sex workers' advertisements in order to find out their address. They then threaten to charge the landlord under pimping laws unless they evict the sex worker immediately. Women lose their deposits, which can amount to three months rent. Once listed as evicted sex workers, it is difficult to rent a new home. In 2011, this was part of a campaign orchestrated by the Oslo police named Action Homeless.

A History of Migration and Racism

When suggestions to criminalise clients arose in Sweden in 1995, it did not gain substantial support and the majority of commentators were opposed to any criminalisation. Four years later, 1999 the Swedish government implemented the Sexköpslag – the law banning the purchase of sexual services. The law was presented as groundbreaking, and it was claimed that “Sweden had taken the leading position when it comes to fighting prostitution”.

Similarly, ‘The Swedish Model’ initially was met with scepticism among other Nordic countries. In 2004, the Norwegian government investigated the Swedish and the Dutch model and concluded that prostitution was a social, not a criminal matter. But five years later the Norwegian government enacted a new law criminalising those who attempt to, or have, purchased sexual services. The ban was claimed to be not only be the best, but also the only measure to fight international human trafficking.



...racist myths played a central part in the campaign to criminalise the purchase of sex in Sweden.

The criminalisation of clients is not a human rights-based response to sex work.

SO WHY THE ABOUT-TURN ON PROSTITUTION POLICY IN SWEDEN AND NORWAY?

The complete changes in approach by the Swedish and Norwegian governments can be best understood with reference to changes in migration flows and government's attempts to regulate and control irregular ('illegal') migrants.

In Norway public opinion changed radically in favour of the Swedish Model with the arrival of black streetwalkers in Oslo in 2005. Several national politicians expressed fear that Norway was being "flooded by foreign whores and criminals". This combined with existing fears about the increasing number of sex workers from Eastern Europe that had given rise to myths of and 'foreign' sex workers with 'life threatening diseases' and an increase of 'pimp-managed prostitution from the Baltic countries'. These racist myths played a central part in the campaign to criminalise the purchase of sex in Sweden.

Sweden has invested extensively in exporting this legal framework to other countries. In recent years, criminalising (or further criminalising) of clients has been discussed by law-makers in India, France, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, the Philippines, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Canada. Justifications in each country have sometimes departed from the Swedish conceptualisation, but all are based in the belief that sex workers are both damaged by sex work, and in turn, damaging to society.

There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that legal measures criminalising clients, brothel-owners, managers and support staff within the sex industry eliminate or significantly reduce sex work or trafficking in persons in the sex industry. The available evidence suggests instead that such measures are increasing repression, violence and discrimination against sex workers. This diminishes sex workers' access to health care, social services and housing. The criminalisation of clients is not a human rights-based response to sex work.

How to Use This Guide

Some of the content in this Guide relates to information on other pages and reference sources on website. As a result 'hyperlinks' have been added where appropriate to direct the reader to this related information. To make best use of these links, the guide is best accessed as an electronic document – although it can be printed out as a hard copy.