



SUMMARY OF THE ICRSE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019



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This document presents the proposed framework for the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) Strategic Plan 2016–2019. The development of this strategy included an analysis of key organisational documents, as well as a survey with members and interviews with key stakeholders of ICRSE, ensuring crucial contributions from sex workers and their organisations.

Building on the previous achievements of ICRSE and as a follow-up to the Strategic Plan 2011–2014, this Strategic Plan represents the ambition of members and partners of ICRSE to establish the network as a legitimate and credible advocate of sex workers' rights in Europe and a strong ally to other rights-based networks and movements.

The strategy outlines a robust capacity-building process of ICRSE that would support the organisation in implementing its mission and achieving the strategic goals and objectives developed through the strategic planning process. Additional interventions in the organisational structure and governance documents are aimed at strengthening the network and sustaining the developed capacities for the benefit of sex workers and their allies.

I. BACKGROUND

Sex workers in Europe and Central Asia face widespread stigmatisation and criminalisation, including the criminalisation of third parties and penalisation of sex workers' clients. This is accompanied by very limited recognition of their human rights, including health and labour rights. Recognition of sex work as work and respect for sex workers' fundamental rights varies from country to country, but there is an increased tendency to criminalise the different aspects of sex work, including clients and third parties directly or indirectly involved in sex work.



The conflation of sex work and trafficking remains a serious issue for all sex workers, but particularly migrant sex workers who are often targeted with anti-migration laws, policies and practices of detention and removal. This conflation leaves migrant sex workers and those who have been trafficked for the purposes of sex work fearful of state attention and working in isolation, vulnerable to violence and without access to vital services and protection.

Political trends directly affecting sex workers across Europe include:

- Criminalisation of sex work, including sex workers and clients
- Anti-migration policies and practices
- Conflation of trafficking, sex work and migration
- Gentrification (targeting of street-based sex workers)

Known as 'End demand' or the 'Swedish Model', the criminalisation of clients in Europe was first implemented in Sweden in 1999 with the stated goal to reduce prostitution (understood as violence against women) and trafficking (defined as a criminal activity and violation of human rights). Many countries have since then considered, passed and sometimes rejected similar bills. In 2005, Lithuania penalised clients whilst retaining penalisation of sex workers. In 2009, Norway criminalised the purchase of sex whilst retaining other laws that directly affect sex workers, such as strict pimping laws. 'Operation Homeless' in Norway threatened landlords with pimping charges if they did not evict suspected sex workers from their accommodation. In France, a law was voted for by the National Assembly in 2014 before being put on hold by the Senate. The Senate Special Committee removed the amendment on the criminalisation of clients after a massive outcry from sex workers' and a hundred other organisations.

Northern Ireland was the first country in the UK to pass a similar law in October 2014 despite academic research denouncing it. The criminalisation of clients became effective in June 2015. A Bill proposal in Scotland did not receive cross-party support and was not debated (2013), whilst an amendment to the Modern Slavery Bill in the UK Parliament that pro-



posed the criminalisation of clients to reduce trafficking was rejected. The European Parliament voted in February 2014 in favour of a non-binding resolution on prostitution and sexual exploitation ('Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality', proposed by MEP Mary Honeyball) that encouraged member states to criminalise the clients of sex workers.

While the criminalisation of clients as a legal framework has not readily been taken up in all European countries, the legacy of this type of approach can be seen in the general increase in criminalisation of sex workers. This criminalisation can be seen through the implementation of municipal by-laws and/or police practices that arbitrarily target sex workers. Additionally, in numerous countries of the region, selling sexual services is directly penalised in accordance with criminal law (e.g. in Albania) or administrative code (e.g. in Lithuania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Slovenia). These repressive legal frameworks render sex workers particularly isolated and unsafe. Left without control over their working conditions, criminalised sex workers are thus exposed too often to violence and harassment by both state and non-state actors.

Even in those European countries where sex work is legalised or regulated, sex workers are targeted by restrictive zoning ordinances or – as in Austria, Greece, Hungary, and Latvia – must undergo mandatory health checks, which represent a human rights violation and a form of punishment. In Germany and the Netherlands, both pioneers in adopting more liberal (but regulatory) prostitution laws, debates on rolling back those laws are frequently affected by prejudices and extreme stigma towards sex workers as 'vectors of disease' in need of regulation and control. In Tajikistan, HIV testing enforced by the police during raids echo a similar human rights violation to those in Macedonia in 2008 in Greece in 2011.

Intersecting laws that criminalise certain behaviours, for example same-sex relationships and drug use, also affect sex workers across Europe and Central Asia. Restrictive regulations framing drug use as a criminal offence rather than as a public health issue (as is the case in Georgia, Kazakhstan,



Russia, and Ukraine), or penalising same-sex relationships (through criminal laws, as in Northern Cyprus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, or laws prohibiting ‘promotion of homosexuality’ introduced recently in Moldova and Russia) negatively affect the living and working conditions of sex workers who use drugs and cisgender male and transgender sex workers. Through this intersection of laws, these communities of sex workers face high levels of state harassment and prosecution.

Sex workers aspire to having their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled, and this provides great opportunities for cooperation, partnership and creation of strategic alliances with other rights-based movements as well as with a wide range of individuals including academics and policy makers who support this goal. Sex worker organisations continue to develop across the region and have undoubtedly affected change at levels of policy and practice.

II. ICRSE

History of ICRSE

- ICRSE is a sex worker-led organisation that was founded in Amsterdam in 2004.
- ICRSE organised the Brussels Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration. The conference took place in October 2005 with the participation of 120 sex workers and 80 allies, and resulted in the Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, the Manifesto and Demands as main outcomes of the conference.
- ICRSE operates as a regional network for sex workers’ rights in Western, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the membership is currently comprised of 80 organisations (sex worker-led organisations, service providers, LGBT rights organisations, and harm reduction organisations) in 26 countries, as well as 150 individuals (sex workers, human rights activists, and academics).



Main achievements in the previous period:

- Strategic Plan for the period 2011–2014 was developed in 2011.
- In 2012, the website www.sexworkeurope.org was created, which serves as a valuable resource for members and other stakeholders.
- In July 2013, ICRSE organised events in 36 cities on four continents to protest the murders of Dora and Jasmine, sex workers who were murdered in Turkey and Sweden.
- ICRSE obtained the signatures of 96 academics and researchers as well as 560 organisations critical of the Honeyball resolution¹ in the European Parliament.
- ICRSE has developed several resources for the protection of sex workers' rights in Europe, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe; the ICRSE Manifesto and Demands; an Activism and Advocacy Toolkit against the Criminalisation of Clients; a Community Report on Structural Violence and most recently the briefing paper "Underserved. Overpoliced. Invisibilised. LGBT Sex Workers Do Matter", which initiates a series of advocacy documents focusing on the intersection of the sex workers' rights struggle and other rights as social struggles, such as those by members of LGBTI communities, migrants, workers, or women.

III. VISION, MISSION and CORE VALUES

ICRSE's vision is of a world where sex work is recognised as work; where all sex workers are respected and their rights are upheld; and where gender, racial, social and economic equality and freedom of movement are a reality enabling individuals to start, continue or leave sex work safely, and free from violence and coercion.

ICRSE's mission: ICRSE is a network of sex worker organisations and their allies that work together to support the development of national and international law, policy and practice, which respects and upholds the human and labour rights of sex workers throughout Europe and Central Asia.



ICRSE Core Values:

- Recognise sex work as work
- Support sex worker self-determination and self-organising
- Oppose the criminalisation of sex work

IV. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The strategic plan is a roadmap to establishing ICRSE as a recognised player in the European policy-making arena and supporter of the member organisations in their advocacy initiatives at the national and local levels.

Strategic Direction 1: Advocacy and Campaigning

Driven by the needs of its members and in line with the ICRSE Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers and Sex Worker Manifesto, ICRSE will continue to step up its advocacy and campaigning efforts at the national and regional levels. With the need for support for sex workers ever increasing and the worrying political trends developing across Europe, advocacy will continue to be the primary focus for ICRSE and maximum efforts will be invested in the next four years for positive changes to be achieved in policies and practices regulating and affecting sex workers.

ASSOCIATED STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ICRSE is a respected partner in the European political arena and national legislatures and effectively advocates for the human and labour rights of sex workers.

Strategic Direction 2: Strengthening ICRSE Membership

ICRSE holds a unique role in the view of sex worker-led organisations throughout Europe. As highlighted in the survey conducted during the development process of this strategic plan, this is one of the key strengths of ICRSE that should be built upon.



Being recognised as a sex worker-led and member-driven network, ICRSE will invest resources to develop, expand and organise its members' base. To strengthen the membership of ICRSE, objectives will focus on the expansion of membership and the strengthening of existing and new communication channels between members and on the improvement of the ICRSE Secretariat's response to members' requests for support. A continuous process will be developed and maintained that seeks to identify changing needs of ICRSE members and ensure a timely response by ICRSE within available resources.

ASSOCIATED STRATEGIC GOAL 2: A cohesive and vibrant sex worker-led movement in Europe which vocally advocates for the human and labour rights of sex workers.

Strategic Direction 3: Sustainable Capacity Building

In order to be able to implement its mission and to achieve its goals and objectives, ICRSE must develop its own organisational capacities to ensure the network is transparent, accountable and sustainable. The network has been chronically underfunded, understaffed and under-resourced yet the personal motivation and eagerness of individuals (staff, consultants, volunteers and members) have made possible the achievements to date. However, in order to build on this, ICRSE needs systematic organisational strengthening that will ensure that the networks' capacities, knowledge and skills are developed and accountability to members maintained.

ASSOCIATED STRATEGIC GOAL 3: ICRSE is a strong and sustainable network that provides expertise and guidance in the fight for sex workers' rights throughout Europe.

The strategic planning process has identified 14 strategic objectives that will contribute to the achievement of the strategic directions and goals as presented in table 1.



Table 1: ICRSE Strategic Directions, Goals and Objectives

<p>ICRSE Vision</p>	<p>ICRSE’s vision is of a world where sex work is recognised as work; where all sex workers are respected and their rights upheld; and where gender, racial, social and economic equality and freedom of movement are a reality and enable individuals to start, continue or leave sex work safely, and free from violence and coercion.</p>	
<p>ICRSE Mission</p>	<p>ICRSE is a network of sex worker organisations and their allies that work together to support the development of national and international law, policy and practice, which respects and upholds the human and labour rights of sex workers throughout Europe and Central Asia.</p>	
<p>Strategic Directions</p>	<p>Strategic Goals</p>	<p>Strategic Objectives</p>
<p>Advocacy and Campaigning</p>	<p>1. ICRSE is a respected partner in the European political arena and national legislatures and effectively advocates for the human and labour rights of sex workers.</p>	<p>1.1 To develop a four-year targeted ICRSE Advocacy Strategy in line with member priorities 1.2 To monitor relevant policies and political shifts that may impact on sex work in member countries and at national and international level</p>



<p>Advocacy and Campaigning</p>	<p>1. ICRSE is a respected partner in the European political arena and national legislatures and effectively advocates for the human and labour rights of sex workers.</p>	<p>1.3 To build strategic alliances with relevant organisations, networks and rights-based movements</p> <p>1.4 To identify and lead regional campaigns</p> <p>1.5 To provide support to national-level advocacy initiatives</p>
<p>Strengthening ICRSE Membership</p>	<p>2. A cohesive and vibrant sex worker-led movement in Europe which vocally advocates for the human and labour rights of sex workers.</p>	<p>2.1 To increase the membership and to actively encourage membership applications from countries in which ICRSE doesn't currently have members</p> <p>2.2 To maintain and improve effective communication mechanisms for members through in-country meetings and online tools</p> <p>2.3 To establish and maintain a tiered membership structure and associated membership communication</p>



<p>Strengthening ICRSE Membership</p>		<p>2.4 To mobilise members' joint action on arising issues that affect sex workers nationally, regionally and globally</p> <p>2.5 To build the capacity of member groups according to their needs as identified in this strategic planning process</p>
<p>Sustainable Capacity Building</p>	<p>3. ICRSE is a strong and sustainable network that provides expertise and guidance in the fight for sex workers' rights throughout Europe.</p>	<p>3.1 To develop and utilise strategic governance documents</p> <p>3.2 To strengthen organisational and HR capacities</p> <p>3.3 To develop a fundraising strategy</p> <p>3.4 To monitor and evaluate ICRSE activities and outcomes against the stated goals and objectives as identified in this Strategic Plan</p>

REFERENCES

¹ Report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0071+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

ICRSE

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Workers in Europe

www.sexworkeurope.org

