ICRSE Strategic Plan 2008-2009

ICRSE
International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
SEXWORKEUROPE.ORG
1. INTRODUCTION

Across Europe, including Central and East Europe and Central Asia, repressive policies on migration, public order and morality impact on the vulnerability of sex workers, often with negative consequences for their health and safety. Anti-prostitution and anti-migration policies negatively affect the rights and health of sex workers, whereas increasing emphases on citizen security, law and order and closing borders have impeded the growth of rights movements in general.

For these reasons a group of Dutch sex workers and allies (SIGN) formed in 2002 and began talking about organising an international conference to challenge the growing neoconservative political debate on sex work and trafficking. It was decided that although there were a lot of similarities regarding the vulnerable position of sex workers all around the world, the differences and resources between regions were too complex to organise a global conference at that time; instead SIGN chose to focus on the European context.

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) was established as the legal entity in the Netherlands in 2004 to create a European network of sex workers and allies and as the organisers of the 2005 European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels, Belgium.

The conference brought together 120 sex workers and 80 allies from 28 countries from within Europe and reflected the diversity among sex workers - across national and migrant sex workers - documented and not; across gender and sexual orientation; across diverse working situations and experiences; across diverse experience of drugs and HIV status. Participants at the conference laid the foundations for a strong network of sex workers rights advocates in Europe. The ICRSE Network includes sex workers and allies who are working in the fields of health, human, labour and migration rights who can challenge repressive policies around sex work, migration and trafficking, lobby for the rights of sex workers through cross-communication and information sharing about local, national, regional and global situations, provide a forum for future advocacy, support capacity building and policy development opportunities and promote advocacy tools, such as the Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe and the Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto (both documents were elaborated and endorsed at the conference).

In the short time since the conference the ICRSE Network has become an important regional network. Along with the translation and promotion of the ICRSE foundational documents, the Declaration and Manifesto, the ICRSE actively supports network members to collaborate on several political fronts, including, promoting positive images and news about our activism and advocacy achievements, supporting national campaigns to oppose policy proposals that threaten to undermine the rights of sex workers, fighting and highlighting human rights abuses that are the result of anti-trafficking policies, opposing policy proposals developed at all government levels through letter writing campaigns and petitions, drafting alternative documents and linking regional members to global action.
campaigns and events in solidarity with other regional networks. The ICRSE website www.sexworkeurope.org is a key tool in our network communications and it is an important resource for the public and other advocates. Regional communication is supported by a network listserv and this has become a vital link for actions which require a quick and coordinated response. Along with other regional partners members of the ICRSE network have either directly participated or supported colleagues in international meetings and events, including this years International AIDS Conference 2008, IHRA 2007 and 2008, Desiree Alliance Conference 2008, and OSI sponsored global network meetings in Cambodia and Malaysia. In 2007 the ICRSE entered into a formal support partnership with the SWAN network and to date we have lead advocacy workshops for sex workers in Ukraine, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia. Finally, the fabulous Brussels conference DVD “Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes”, has been screened to public audiences including in Taiwan, the USA, the Netherlands, and Italy.

In a climate of increased repression by governments on the rights and freedoms of sex workers and the conflation of sex work and trafficking has resulted in policies and law that impose unacceptable levels of regulation on sex workers in Europe, threaten their health and rights and lead to the deportation of many migrant workers. With recent changes such as the criminalisation of clients in the UK, Finland, Lithuania and Norway or introduction of the law prohibiting passive soliciting in France, the advocacy role of the ICRSE Network becomes ever more important.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2.1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) strives to raise awareness about the social exclusion of female, male and transgender sex workers in Europe, to promote the human and civil rights of all sex workers at national, regional and global levels and to create strong alliances between sex workers, allies and other civil society organisations. The ICRSE maintains strong links with existing sub-regional, regional and global networks, supports the further development of nascent groups and networks of sex workers and provides a platform for the voices of sex workers in Europe to be heard in local, regional and global policy debates.

2.2 AIMS OF ICRSE

The main aims of the ICRSE foundation are to bring sex workers and their allies together on a European and international level:

• to further the social acceptance and respect for sex workers
• to promote their civil and human rights
• to organise the support of allies.

The ICRSE Network includes individual sex workers, sex worker organisations as well as allies and ally organisations that are working in the areas of migrant, human, and labour rights, especially those who include the recognition and promotion of sex worker rights as
part of their agenda. Further to the general aims of the ICRSE foundation the aims of the ICRSE Network established at the Brussels conference are to:

- Promote the sharing of information that will work for the rights of sex workers, help future collective activism, improve our ability to respond effectively to local situations and continue the promotion of positive images.
- facilitate the linking of sex worker activism and politics to the activism and politics being done by other organizations at the local, national and international levels.

3. ACTIVITIES

The ICRSE will enable communication and promote action that furthers the aims of the ICRSE through:

- maintaining a dynamic and interactive website and listserv to inform the public and enable members to share information and collaborate on campaigns furthering the rights of sex workers in Europe and globally.
- maintaining and developing a strong and diverse membership.

3.1 MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS

The ICRSE has identified 5 main areas of focus for activism and advocacy over the coming years:

- to oppose the criminalisation of clients as a means of reducing demand for sexual services or as an effective anti-trafficking measure and challenging the conflation of trafficking and sex work;
- to raise awareness about the violence experienced by sex workers;
- to promote the recognition of sex work as a means of generating income;
- to promote a positive and realistic image of sex work and sex workers and our right to self-determination and
- to raise awareness about inequality in accessing services and the impact on health and rights of sex workers.

3.2 2009 PRIORITY AREAS

From these the ICRSE Advisory Group identified two priority areas that will be the focus of our activities for the next two years - opposing the criminalising of clients and the conflation of trafficking and sex work and building on our anti-violence campaigns around 17 December, International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, in solidarity with our colleagues from global networks.

Given the rapid changes that can happen in sex work policy and its impact upon sex workers the priorities will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that they remain relevant.

4. ACTIVITIES

4.1 COMMUNICATION

Enabling effective communication will continue: by maintaining and developing ICRSE communication and ICT tools to ensure:
• the ICRSE website - sexworkeurope.org is kept current with updates of resources, events, achievements and campaigns promoting sex workers rights.
• ICRSE members only areas on sexworkeurope.org are maintained and developed
• the listserv for ICRSE members is maintained and updated
• communications and requests for information from members and other interested individuals and institutions are responded to
• communication and information sharing with other sex workers rights networks is maintained and further developed
• the coordination of the ICRSE priority campaigns

Ongoing ICT activities also include providing tips for members on how to use the site better, promoting the Declaration and Manifesto as advocacy tools, and continuing to improve localisation.

**Timeline:**
December 2008
ICT project - Recruit Joomla technical support person (contingent on OSI ICT Grant)
January to December
regularly maintaining and updating the sexworkeurope.org website and responding to requests for information, organising quarterly AG conference calls using Skype, Further developing of member only areas, organising AG meeting in Amsterdam.

### 4.2 Membership

Strengthening membership: by maintaining and developing ICRSE network membership through:
- developing ICRSE a network membership promotion campaign for 2009, with a special focus on encouraging membership from Central and Eastern Europe.
- further encouraging current and new members to register through the website
- developing and promoting members only areas on sexworkeurope.org
- supporting the advocacy work of SWAN (Sex Work Advocacy Network CEE/CA)

Ongoing membership activities also include further strengthening our ties with other sex worker rights networks and engaging with civil society organisations to promote sex workers rights within their agendas and supporting network member participation attending international events which promote sex workers rights.

**Timeline:**
January to March
develop technical components for registration and member profiles and develop the promotional campaign for membership

April to December
membership drive

**Specific activities for our 2 priority areas for 2009**

### 4.3 Opposing the Criminalisation of Clients

To oppose the criminalisation of clients as a means of reducing demand for sexual services or as an effective anti-trafficking measure and challenging the conflation of trafficking and sex work by:
- building an evidence base of the impact on sex workers living and working conditions and of methods of resisting criminalising clients and the conflation of trafficking and sex work.
- create a collection on our website bringing together current knowledge and resources on this issue
• create new tools for ICRSE network members to contribute to the evidence base
• encourage current sex worker rights bloggers to comment on this issue and link to our evidence base
• draft briefing papers which summarise the evidence gathered and successful methods of resistance as advocacy tools to develop an ICRSE campaign and collaborate with other networks on this issue.

**Timeline:**

January to March
developing campaign framework

April to June
develop tools for building evidence base on the impact of criminalising clients on the work and lives of sex workers and draft 'how-to' guidance for gathering evidence and for uploading to website.

July to September
Launch tools for building evidence base and invite network members to write a monthly article for the website on this issue and identify the key agencies and networks we want to target for this campaign

October to December
Draft briefing papers for dissemination based on evidence and resources gathered for website and for dissemination to key agencies and networks, review process and activity for campaign. As one of the identified ICRSE priorities our work on this issue will be ongoing.

4.4 Raising Awareness about Violence

II. To raise awareness about the violence experienced by sex workers and states failure to uphold sex workers right to be protected by:

For 2008 promoting collective action across Europe around 17 December, International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers with a special focus on the Italian situation.

Inline with previous 17 December campaigns we will:
• promote the history of 17 December
• promote an e-card campaign to key Italian members of parliament
• collate different national activities
• create a listing page of events across Europe
link to the Global campaign
Timeline:
Present to December 2008
Violence Awareness Campaign - Collaborate with Comitato per I Diritti Civili delle Prostitute (Italy) on 17 December messages, background to Italian situation, and creating list of key Italian officials for e-card campaign, promote the campaign and e-card concept to ICRSE members and update website.

For 2009 promoting collective action across Europe around 17 December, International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers with a special theme "People Care".

- work with communities and families on developing messages calling for safer working conditions and respect
- gather and include positive examples of protection being given to sex workers
- promote the history of 17 December
- promote an e-card campaign to key officials
- collate different national activities
- Create a listing page of events across Europe
- link to the Global campaign
- begin investigating an evidence base campaign on sex work and violence for possible 2010 activities.

Timeline:
January to March
- update and further develop press agency contacts, update and further develop list of politicians and policy makers

April to June
- gather information from communities and families to support 2009 campaign

July to September
- prepare 2009 campaign theme and identify examples of positive examples of protection being given to sex workers

October to December
- Draft announcement and background information for 2009 17 December campaign and theme "People Care", Launch 17 December campaign, promote the history of 17 December, promote an e-card campaign to key agencies and networks, collate different national activities, Create a listing page of events across Europe, link to the Global campaign

Alongside our communication, membership and focus activities daily ongoing tasks include: responding to general email and telephone requests, collating information for grant applications and reports, co-writing grant applications and reports, regular bookkeeping and administration and intra-communications with AG members.

5. ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

5.1 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

5.2 LEGAL STATUS

The ICRSE is legally constituted organisation registered with the Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Dossier number 34216253), and recognised by the tax department as a not-for-profit organisation (Stichting International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, fiscal number 8141.42.643).
5.3 Membership
The membership of the ICRSE is open to individuals and organisations of both sex workers and allies living and working in Europe. The Criteria for membership are as follows:

- Recognise sex work as work
- Support sex worker self-organising
- Oppose criminalization of sex work
- Endorsement of the Declaration and the Manifesto

Affiliate membership is possible for sex workers and allies outside Europe with some restrictions.

5.4 Management Structure
There is a duly appointed Executive Committee with an Advisory Group drawn from the ICRSE Network members. Both of these bodies require a majority of sex workers. Because of the international nature of the ICRSE, with members living in different countries, the AG maintains an internal email list and the bulk of communication happens through using ICT tools. The Chair and Treasurer of the ICRSE work closely with the Coordinator.

5.5 Personnel
The activities of the ICRSE are supported by a part-time paid coordinator. The coordinator is supported by the volunteer assistance of the Executive Committee and the Advisory Group and members of the ICRSE Network.

2007 Collaboration between ICRSE and SWAN Networks brings Red Umbrella power to Central East Europe and Central Asia! Here supporters and sex workers of HOPS Macedonia for 17 December.
## 6. FINANCE

### ICRSE PROJECTED BUDGET 2008 - 2010

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