2 June is international Sex Workers Day!

In commemoration of sex workers and their allies who staged a sit-in at a Church in Lyon, France in 1975, June 2nd is celebrated as International Sex Workers Day.

The action was in protest against increasing numbers of arrests of street sex workers, police harassment of them and the lack of interest shown by police in solving crimes committed against them. The sex workers and supporters challenged the police to come and arrest anybody who they could identify as a sex worker, making the point that most sex workers are ordinary people doing a job and cannot be told apart from others. Inspired by this action sex workers all over the world started organizing, giving rise to the modern sex workers rights movement.

Some highlights from ICRSE members:

Netherlands: A celebration gathering took place by the statue of 'Belle'

Austria: Lefoe’s campaign “Sexworkers lust for… their rights!” closes with a party.

Germany: Madonna e.V. celebrated their 15th anniversary with sex positive performances and a singer.

Switzerland: A public action is held in Bern

Sexwork Europe.org New Look!

We are always trying to improve our beautiful sexworkEurope website. Your comments and suggestions do help. The site is changing all the time to make it easier for you to participate and locate the information you need!

Latest changes: we have expanded our resource section to include a video library. Videos can be directly uploaded or linked from any of the popular hosting sites. Recent videos include some great work from the APNSW!

Archive: If you have missed any of our great articles don’t worry they are all available in the website archive or you can use the search function.

Multi-language content: some of the content on the ICRSE website is translated. The translation project is ongoing and we could really use your support to make more of sexworkEurope available to more people.

Also check out the Declaration and Manifesto now available in 14 languages!
ICRSE Network members are active!

Since our last issue ICRSE Network members have been very involved in sex workers rights actions, meetings and advocacy.

and Lefoe believes the campaign has had an impact in Austria.

In September ICRSE members were joined by SWAN members at the Correlation Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. Conference workshops included discussions around sex work, drug use and Roma and migrant communities. A side meeting was held to introduce conference participants to the ICRSE and SWAN and to start planning for the 2007 17 December anti-violence campaigns.

Sex Workers and Allies took to the streets of Paris, France to protest the denounce the effects of Domestic Security Act (known as LSI) introduced in 2002. Many ICRSE member organisations took part in the “Racolage Passif = Repression Active” protest. A new coalition and website was also created to work on future actions.

If you have been visiting our website you would have also seen news about a new program that has been set up in London by sex workers for sex workers. X-talk aims to support migrant sex workers through providing English lessons that are useful for work.

X-talk is free and supported by the IUSW.

Many times the news on the sexworkeurope.org site is about events and activities. In 2007 the news was about events and campaigns in more than 11 countries in Central East Europe and Central Asia.

The 2007 SWAN campaign launched on 1 Dec., International Aids Day and included activities for 10 Dec., Human Rights Day, and ended on Dec. 17, Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers.

The second workshop day focused on learning how to create simple e-cards for the campaign dates using MS Word, a program that most people have.

The results of the e-card campaign are great. The cards can be found on the SWAN & ICRSE websites. 2007 was a fantastic year for SWAN Network campaign collaboration!

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SWAN and ICRSE in Budapest, Hungary & Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

In August a small group of sex worker advocates form the SWAN Network called the Super SWANs met to plan for the 2007 December 17 campaign. ICRSE Coordinator Petra Timmermans, was there in an ICRSE supporting role.

We had one workshop day to plan the campaign which in the end was quite ambitious.

Each Super SWAN took on the responsibility for informing other network members about the campaign and checking in with them as things progressed. As a result activities were held in more than 11 countries in Central East Europe and Central Asia.

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Network members...continued

activism happening in other regions. Celebrating the achievements of our colleagues globally connects the ICRSE network in solidarity with sex worker activists everywhere.

Sex workers in the USA held the 5th annual San Francisco Sex Worker Festival. Packed with events, discussions, art and culminating in the “Sex on Wheels Bike Tour” through San Francisco with stops along the route describing historical moments and figures from sex work history.

The Brussels DVD “Ni Coupables, Ni Victimes” was also screened during the arts festival and in September it was shown in Taiwan at the Sex Workers Film Festival sponsored by COSWAS (Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters).

Finally, ICRSE members in the Netherlands are very excited about the new statue in honour of sex workers.

“Belle” was an initiative of Mariska Majoor and the Prostitution Information Centre in Amsterdam. Dutch ICRSE members and a few guests who could make it from other countries were present for the unveiling ceremony.

Eight sex workers had the honour of revealing “Belle” to an enthusiastic audience.

OSI sponsored ICT meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia December 2007

It was high gear brainstorming and information sharing for participants at the Advancing Global sex worker health and rights advocacy through improved ICT meeting.

We talked about coordinating a working communication strategy that could be tailored to meet local, national, regional and global campaigns.

One opportunity we thought would be a great way to learn how to work better together using ICT was the upcoming AIDS Conference in Mexico City in August 2008. If we can make it work for Mexico then we can make it work for any other international campaigns too.

Our brainstorming sessions came up with some creative ideas for Mexico2008 including, the framing message “Sex workers are not part of a problem, we are still part of the solution”, a clothesline with articles donated by sex workers with statements written on them, a ringtone about safe sex that people could download at the conference, a map of all the organisations around the world working on the rights of sex workers, a display showing how much money is being funneled into raid & rescue projects and to which organisations...

The participants at this meeting are currently supporting ICT tasks at the local level. It was an exciting meeting with loads of ideas and an abundance of commitment to future collaboration using technology for sex workers rights.
In October the ICRSE/SWAN network members Tais Plus hosted a 3 day meeting and workshop in Bishkek Kyrgyzstan.

On the first day we introduced the ICRSE and SWAN to local organisations and sex workers, also from other parts of Kyrgyzstan, including Osh and Jalal-Abad.

Tais Plus brought lovely red umbrellas to decorate the room and by the end of the meeting they were props for picture memories.

On the second day Tais Plus arranged for us to have a workshop at their drop-in centre. We talked about rights and worked collectively on a project for 17 December 2007.

There were about 15 sex worker participants and the workshop language was Russian.

Together we made a newsletter on paper using markers and collage.

The themes of the newsletter were 'Me and My Rights', 'My vision For My Future', and 'Violence and My Life' and "How I Manage Conflict".

The group was divided for the themes and did interviews with each other. The interview material was presented to the whole group and became the bulk of the content for the newsletter.

Participants also created collages around the four themes of the newsletter.

Finally, we took some group photographs for the newsletter. The one on the front page is a group picture which I altered to look like we were in front of the Bishkek government building for our mock demonstration (since demonstrations are not permitted in Bishkek!)

I was overwhelmed by their energy and commitment to this project.

The idea was to not only have a paper version for the newsletter hanging at Tais Plus but to also have an electronic version for Tais Plus to be able to send to the participants and to use for their 17 December campaign.

The completed newsletter in Russian was digitised and is available on the SWAN website and ICRSE website as a downloadable pdf.

Petra Timmermans
ICRSE receives operational funding from OSI!

Thanks OSI, SHARP! The Sexual Health and Rights Program (SHARP) an Open Society Institute (OSI) program has awarded the ICRSE a operational funding grant to cover the basic expenses of running our network.

The grant of €19,000 will cover professional fees, administration expenses, website costs and make it possible for the Advisory Group members to meet.

SHARP funding has been crucial to sex worker rights organising! SHARP also supports our efforts through the APNSW, NSWP and SWAN Networks and has provided funding to numerous organisations and initiatives that are working to improve the health and rights of sex workers internationally.

SHARP support also made recent meetings in Johannesburg, South Africa (2006) and the Phnom Penh, Cambodia meeting highlighted in our last newsletter and the more recent Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia meeting (see article this issue).

If you want to know more about the SHARP program at OSI, learn more about funding opportunities and check out their great resources then visit their website.

Barbie says no to sex worker discrimination! - DIY

Protesting in public may be too big a risk for you but not for Barbie or Ken, they are used to the paparazzi!

As part of our 17 December campaign 2007 we are inviting you to get creative. Inspired by the Barbie projects of the APNSW we thought that making our own Barbie doll protests would be a great way for sex workers to get their messages out to the public and have fun at the same time.

Beg, borrow or steal a doll or two, dress them up and make a protest sign for them! You can find some examples of protest slogans here or make your own in your language.

This year images are being collected by Ruth Morgan Thomas at Scot-Pep. Scot-Pep has already been busy putting their demo doll collection together. Here are a few examples for inspiration!

Activism is easy and fun. Petra
Be relentless,
Be everywhere,
Be recognisable!

September was a month of action that showed us all why our networks and joint collaboration are so important to advocating for sex workers rights. In 2006 UNAIDS solicited the contributions of sex workers and health and rights advocates at a meeting in Brasil for a new UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and Sex Work. The resulting draft document released in April of this year was a slap in the face for sex workers.

In May we began mobilising globally in opposition to the the draft guidelines:

- May 2007: Sex Worker representatives fought against accepting the draft at the Public Coordinating Board (PCB) meeting.
- June 2007 The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network submitted a document arguing against the draft that was endorsed by 42 organisations.

In 2007 The Working Group on Sex Work Policy was formed and began redrafting the Guidance Note.

- Sept 2007 The Working Group held a meeting in Delhi with the support of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, to reformulate the UNAIDS Guidance Note.
- Sept 2007 The Global Working Group on Sex Work Policy presented their rewriting of the Guidance Note to UNAIDS
- Dec 2007 Meena Seshu addressed this issue at the UNAIDS Reference Group meeting and also in Dec. at 21st PCB meeting a commitment was made to reconcile the two documents.

Sex Workers and our allies should be proud of these efforts & of our successful international collaboration on this initiative!

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About the ICRSE...

The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) was established in 2004 and is registered in the Netherlands.

The main goals of the foundation are to bring sex workers and their allies together on an 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 foundation also works on ending the sexual stigma of women, gays and lesbians and transgender people and in general to promote their self-determination.