

Empowerment of Sex Service Providers* through alternative participatory methods (*all genders included)

- Description of the project

Sex work/prostitution is a difficult phenomenon to quantify, as it is not regulated or banned in most EU Member States, and there are few or nonreliable statistical surveys.

A report by the Fondation Scelles from 2016¹ shows that around 103,000 people were engaged in sex work between 2012 and 2015 in the countries with official statistical surveys. If you include the countries without statistical surveys, the estimated number multiplies by five.

According to statistics from various specialized counseling centers for sex service providers in Austria and Germany², most sex service providers come from Romania and Hungary and migrate between Germany and Austria, where sex work is regulated very differently.

Because of migration, sex service providers often do not know the structures of the "foreign" system. The resulting lack of information favors the **exploitation** of sex service providers and could make them dependent on brothel operators.

It is our goal to empower sex service providers through knowledge and information so that they can carry out their work as autonomously and independently as possible. In this sense, we understand "professionalization" as a transfer of information that should take place beyond conventional educational spaces and formats via the approach of "community education" (peer learning). Therefore, it is important to work directly with sex service providers because we believe that this is the only way to improve resources, methods, and measures.

Stigmatisation, language barriers, lack of training, or lack of recognition of professional qualifications and diplomas are obstacles that sex service providers face when trying to gain access to the labor market and further training or participate in social life. This leads to further social isolation and marginalisation, a reality that is often passed on to future generations.

Through the exchange of experience and knowledge with representatives of our partner organizations, we hope to learn methods and develop ideas to support sex service providers. An aim of this project partnership is to provide this marginalised group with access to information, education, and further development, thereby improving their social situation and integration.

Duration of the Project: 1.9.2020 – 31.8.2022

Project co-ordinating agency: SXA-Info, Lendplatz 38, 8020 Graz, Austria

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¹ http://www.fondationscelles.org/pdf/RM4/1_Book_Prostitution_Exploitation_Persecution_Repression_Fondation_Scelles_ENG.pdf

² <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/agenda/frauen-und-gleichstellung/prostitution.html> <https://www.prostituiertenschutzgesetz.info/beratungsstellen/>

Priorities in the application:

- Social inclusion
- Improving access to training and qualification for all
- Inclusion and Equality
- Access for disadvantaged people
- Migration issues

Strategic partnership:

Since sex service providers are very mobile and work transnationally, it is important to carry out the project across borders. We, too, set off to countries whose laws, languages or culture we may not know in order to remove the hurdles and improve opportunities for professionalising sex service providers on a European level.

Project partners:

The project team consists of competent organizations, associations for rights of women and sex workers, all of which have the required profile for carrying out the project activities and complement each other well. Each institution brings its own content-related input to the project, organizes a transnational meeting and is responsible for translations and dissemination.

 SXA	Austria: SXA-Info Information und Beratung für Sexarbeiterinnen und Multiplikator_innen - Co-ordinating agency
 Treffpunkt und Beratungsstelle für SEXARBEITERINNEN	Germany: Madonna e.V. Verein zur Förderung der beruflichen und kulturellen Bildung von Sexarbeiterinnen gem. e.V.
	Hungary: Szexmunkások Érdekvédelsmi Egyesülete Association of Hungarian Sexworkers
	Romania: Asociatia SWC Sexwork Call Romania (self-organisation of sex workers)

What we are planning:

- Exchange regarding professionalization of sex service providers and the necessary acquisition of knowledge and key competences
- Get to know the country-specific parameters and laws
- Discuss the differences and similarities
- Exchange on good practice models
- Creation of quality criteria
- Summary of the results
- Dissemination of the results
- Consolidation of a transnational cooperation
- Receive feedback and input from SDL, e.g. with regard to a transnational concept of suitable methods and formats for their professionalization

Goals:

- Social participation of sex service providers
- Empower sex service providers as responsible individuals
- Prevention against (more) stigmatization, exclusion, coercion and human trafficking
- Prevention against poverty
- Self-care and self-responsibility
- Health education

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Additionally:

- To strengthen and train ourselves in our work as consultants => Through peer learning (suggestions for new ideas, methods, practices and tools) The concept of peer learning enables the people involved to slip into different positions: We are learners, coaches, partners, feedback providers, etc.
- By disseminating the project results (collecting evaluated and analyzed best practices) multipliers will become informed about the difficult circumstances surrounding the migration of self-employed people and how to best support them in their transition out of their precarious living conditions.

Transnational project meetings:

1st meeting and kick-off event: planned: in Graz => took place online: 29. – 30.9.2020

Contents: getting to know each other; getting to know the Erasmus+ project specifications; exchange of country-specific regulations and measures.

The aim was and is to develop a trusting project partnership, to clarify all questions of financial project management and performance expectations, as well as to get an overview of the various legal and social initial situations that sex service providers encounter in the participating countries.

2nd meeting: planned in Romania

Contents: create an analysis of the target group; exchange of experiences regarding social work with SDL; discuss the requirements of education and skills of SDL migrating across Europe; definition and planning of dissemination activities in networks and working groups.

Objective: To publicize project partnership and project plans to various interest groups and to sensitize agents from social, health and educational sectors to the social importance of our goals.

3rd meeting: planned in Hungary

Contents/objective: participatory methods and the determination of informally acquired competences are the focus; creation of quality criteria for participatory educational work. These should serve as a basis for the evaluation of best practice models and determine if they can be applied and transferred to the participating countries.

4th meeting: planned in Germany

Content/objective: to assemble acquired knowledge and experience in a catalogue. Excerpts should be translated into the national languages and then distributed. Discussion on whether further cooperation is possible or how it could be designed. Also, how could a possible development plan for transnational professionalization be implemented in a follow-up project?