

Why Do Human Rights Organisations Support

Sex Workers' Rights?

Amnesty International



[Amnesty International's policy](#) is the culmination of extensive worldwide consultations, a considered review of substantive evidence and international human rights standards, and first-hand research carried out over more than two years. **It recommends the decriminalisation of consensual sex work, including those laws that prohibit associated activities** – such as bans on buying, solicitation and general organisation of sex work. This is based on evidence that these laws make sex workers less safe and provide impunity for abusers, with sex workers often too scared of being penalised to report crime to the police. **Laws on sex work should focus on protecting people from exploitation and abuse, rather than trying to ban all sex work and penalise sex workers.**

Human Rights Watch



Human Rights Watch has conducted research on sex work around the world. The research, including extensive consultations with sex workers and organisations that work on the issue, has shaped the [Human Rights Watch policy on sex work](#): **Human Rights Watch supports the full decriminalisation of consensual adult sex work. Criminalising adult, voluntary, and consensual sex – including the commercial exchange of sexual services – is incompatible with the human right to personal autonomy and privacy.** Swedish model-style laws actually have a devastating impact on people who sell sex to earn a living. Because its goal is to end sex work, it makes it harder for sex workers to find safe places to work, unionise, work together, support and protect one another, and advocate for their rights. It stigmatises and marginalises sex workers and leaves them vulnerable to violence and abuse by police, as their work and their clients are still criminalised.

ILGA Europe



Based on available evidence and the testimonies from LGBTI sex workers, and in line with statements of UN agencies and other international organisations, [ILGA-Europe state that](#) **decriminalisation is a cornerstone of the protection of sex workers' human rights**. Decriminalisation of sex work removes significant barriers to realising the human rights of LGBTI people who engage in sex work. It contributes to reducing police violence and abuse, and facilitates access to police protection and justice. Indeed, where criminal prosecution of sex work is removed, it becomes easier for sex workers to report crimes to the police and seek redress, without the fear of facing potential prosecution themselves.

Transgender Europe



[TGEU recognises](#) that sex work is a trans rights issue. Trans people engage in sex work for a variety of reasons, most commonly because they live in a transphobic environment and face structural barriers to education and employment, and thus have limited economic and employment opportunities. **Trans sex workers are burdened by laws that are both transphobic and anti-sex worker**, and being under extreme economic pressure they are unable to escape persecution. At the same time, non-sex worker trans people are frequently perceived as sex workers and their social inclusion and acceptance are undermined by whorephobia. **TGEU calls for the full decriminalisation of sex work**, including the decriminalisation of sex workers, clients, third parties, families, partners, and friends and all operational aspects, such as soliciting, advertising, selling, and purchasing sexual services (indoors and/or outdoors) or working collectively with other sex workers.

International Planned Parenthood Federation



[Sexual Rights: IPPF Declaration](#): Sexuality is a natural and precious aspect of life, an essential and fundamental part of our humanity. For people to attain the highest standard of health, they must first be empowered to exercise choice in their sexual and reproductive lives; they must feel confident and safe in expressing their own sexual identity. **All persons, including sex workers of all genders, have the right to be free from the risk of violence created by stigma and discrimination based on their sex, sexuality or gender**. All persons, including **sex workers, have the right to safe working conditions**, access to health services, and the support and protection necessary to be able to insist on safer sex practices with all partners and clients.

La Strada International



The call for criminalisation of clients of sex workers is made in the name of preventing and combating trafficking in persons. Unified in the LSI NGO Platform – United against human trafficking in Europe, the members and partners of [La Strada International](#) have supported many women and men who were trafficked in the sex industry in the past nearly two decades. **They know from experience that criminalisation does not solve any of the problems that our clients face, nor does it prevent or stop human trafficking.** They do recognise that the sex industry is one of the economic sectors in which human trafficking occurs, as it does in other sectors, particularly those where workers are invisible, unprotected, excluded and disempowered. Therefore, La Strada International believe that **sex workers' rights organisations**, just as trade unions, **are important allies in the efforts to protect workers from exploitation, violence and abuse and to prevent trafficking in human beings.**

European Aids Treatment Group



[EATG has expressed](#) profound **concern that the current criminalisation and legal oppression of sex work undermines, rather than supports, the reach and impact of health programmes for sex workers.** Therefore, EATG supports the demand from sex workers' rights organisations and networks to end the criminalisation and legal oppression of sex work, including sex workers, their clients and third-parties (those managing, facilitating or helping sex workers including friends, partners and family members).

Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants



In their position paper: [Safeguarding the human rights and dignity of undocumented migrant sex workers](#), **PICUM** outline the harmful impact of the criminalisation of sex work and conclude that **legal frameworks criminalising the purchase and facilitation of sex work impact negatively on undocumented sex workers.** Criminalisation places power in the hands of exploitative managers, dangerous clients, and abusive police officers. These harms are exacerbated if a sex worker has an irregular immigration status. **Migrants and people of colour – cis and transgender migrant women of colour in particular – are disproportionately subject to police harassment and targeted for immigration enforcement, including as a result of anti-trafficking initiatives.**

Equinox - Initiative for Racial Justice



In their Policy paper [Towards Gender Justice](#), Equinox recognises that **criminalisation and legal oppression of sex work in many European states has exacerbated and enabled violence against sex workers by creating a number of barriers to the reporting of, and seeking support and redress for, violence against sex workers**. Migrant and racialised sex workers are estimated to comprise the majority of the sex worker population in Western Europe and a significant proportion of the community in Central and Eastern Europe.

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women



[GAATW gave a statement](#) to the Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons on 1 July 2022 in Vienna. They noted that in states which hold the ideological position that all sex work is inherently exploitative, the 'means' element is removed from the definition of trafficking. This enables state actors to disregard evidence that a woman has consented to sex work, and deem all women who willingly provide sexual services in exchange for money to be victims of trafficking. The Travaux Préparatoires of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol demonstrate that the purpose of the Protocol was not to criminalise sex work. **Investigating consensual adult sex work as trafficking, and treating sex workers as victims, takes precious resources away from dealing with real situations of trafficking. It also leads to human rights violations of sex workers who are arrested and forced into 'rehabilitation' programmes against their will.**

