With this statement, ESWA expresses deep concern and disappointment regarding the recent abrupt decision of payment platform Stripe to cease working with Wishtender, an online platform utilised by sex workers. The lack of transparency surrounding Stripe’s decision is concerning as it obstructs accountability. Furthermore, the abrupt nature of Stripe’s action has generated considerable stress and uncertainty amongst sex workers who feared the loss of their resources and the platform they relied upon.

Regrettably, sex workers are all too familiar with the discriminatory practices across various online and offline platforms. They frequently encounter bans or shadowbans on social media platforms and are systematically excluded from payment platforms and financial services such as PayPal or traditional banking, often with no recourse to recover their earnings. The decisions made by financial services providers to disassociate from platforms used by sex workers have serious consequences for the well-being of these individuals, who often rely on those platforms for their livelihoods.

The repercussions of excluding platforms used by sex workers from financial services demonstrate the precarious circumstances faced by many “self-employed” or “informal” workers in the sex industry. For numerous individuals, working digitally or otherwise, engaging in the sale of sexual services may be the most viable and accessible means of financial support. Workers in the gig economy, including content creators and sex workers, often lack access to state social safety nets and may
have limited options for accessing unemployment benefits, sick pay, or healthcare benefits. Abrupt decisions such as Stripe’s to sever ties with platforms utilised by sex workers for advertising cause significant distress for those who rely on these platforms for their livelihoods.

In light of these developments and challenges, we repeat our demands:

- Sex workers deserve equal treatment from financial services. Therefore, there must be a firm commitment from businesses and policymakers to develop, implement, and enforce robust anti-discrimination policies as a top priority.

- All financial services must prioritise protecting the human rights of all individuals, including sex workers, racialised people, migrants, LGBTQI+ individuals, and other marginalised populations.

- Sex workers and other stakeholders must be meaningfully consulted in the drafting of public and private sector policies that regulate financial services.

- Financial services providers must revoke their anti-sex work policies and issue public apologies to sex worker communities for the discrimination they have faced. Additionally, platforms and other digital services must establish accessible and transparent compensation mechanisms for sex workers who have experienced mistreatment and loss of earnings due to discrimination.

EUROPEAN SEX WORKERS’ RIGHTS ALLIANCE