

EUROPEAN SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030



MAY 2026 |



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FOREWORD BY THE BOARD AND TEAM

Across Europe and Central Asia, sex workers are facing an increasingly hostile and unstable political environment. Criminalisation, policing, surveillance, xenophobia, racism are intensifying as far-right and authoritarian politics gain ground. Coordinated anti-rights movements are rolling back bodily autonomy, LGBTQI+ rights, reproductive justice, migrants' rights, and the space for civil society to organise.

These global political shifts are not felt equally: **migrant, trans, racialised, and undocumented sex workers are facing the sharpest impacts through border violence, detention, digital surveillance, racial profiling.** These translate in exclusion from justice, health care, and social protection. Armed conflict, economic crisis, climate-related displacement, and rapid technological change are further deepening precarity and exposing sex workers to new and overlapping risks.

Yet even in this moment of converging crises, **sex workers continue to organise, resist, and lead.** Across the region, sex worker-led movements are responding to emergencies, defending their communities, and advancing human rights through courts, advocacy, and collective action. Momentum for decriminalisation is growing, with increasing recognition from human rights bodies and allies that criminalisation fundamentally undermines safety, dignity, and equality.

ESWA has been tested by these external pressures and by the growing risks faced by our members. We remain **resilient, united, and grounded in sex worker leadership** - but we are also clear-eyed about the need to adapt. This political moment demands new ways of working: faster responses to emergencies, stronger collective protection, and strategic action in the face of legal and political backlash.

This Strategic Plan for 2026–2030 reflects that shift. It builds on ESWA's achievements while repositioning our work for a more volatile context. We reaffirm Racial Justice and Gender Equality as core commitments, and introduce Economic Justice as a third overarching priority. Our Strategic Priorities are simplified and streamlined into three pillars: Access to Justice, Digital Rights, and Access to Health; supported by strengthened Approaches: Movement Building, Research, Campaigning and Strategic Litigation. Solidarity and resilience remain our foundation.

In a time of fragmentation, repression, and fear, ESWA's strength lies in collective power across borders, identities, and movements. Together, we will continue to defend, protect, and advance the rights, safety, and dignity of all sex workers across Europe and Central Asia.

**In solidarity,
THE ESWA TEAM AND BOARD.**

1. WHO WE ARE

The European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (ESWA) is a sex worker-led regional network dedicated to promoting and defending the human rights, safety, and wellbeing of all sex workers in Europe and Central Asia. Through advocacy, research, movement building, and strategic litigation, we challenge the structures of criminalisation, stigma, racism, and discrimination.



2. VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION:

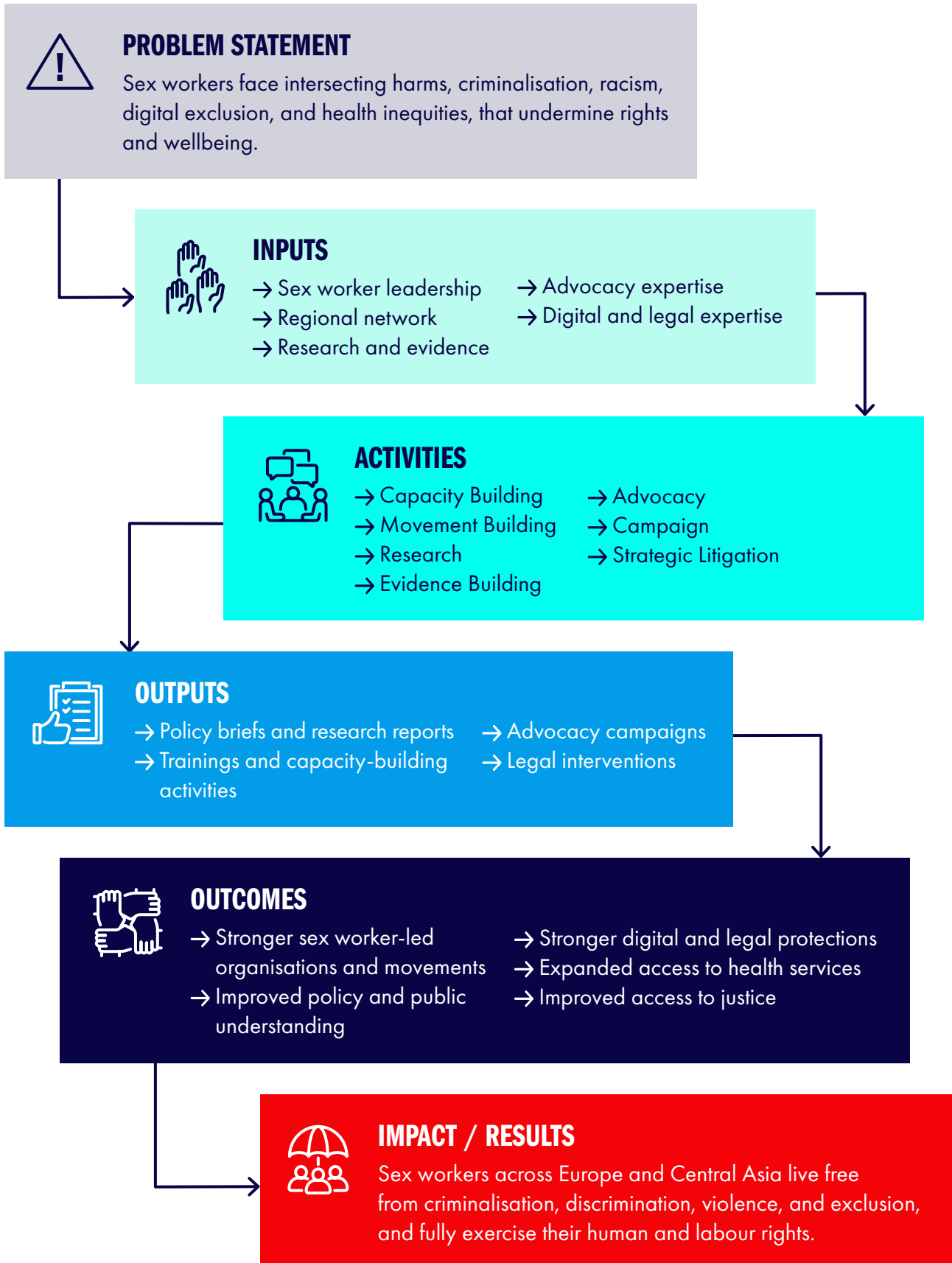
ESWA's vision is of a world where all sex workers are respected and their rights are upheld and where gender, racial, social and economic equality and freedom of movement are a reality; enabling individuals to start, continue or leave sex work safely, free from violence, coercion and exploitation.

OUR MISSION:

ESWA is a network of sex worker organisations and their allies that work together to support the development of national and international law, policy and practice, which respects and upholds the human and labour rights of sex workers throughout Europe and Central Asia.



3. THEORY OF CHANGE



4. STRATEGIC APPROACHES

ESWA's Strategic Approaches build on the foundations laid in our previous Strategic Plan. We remain committed to strengthening sex worker-led movements across Europe and Central Asia, producing rigorous and community-informed evidence, and advancing bold advocacy and campaigning for decriminalisation and human rights. At a time of intensifying political backlash, shrinking civic space, and escalating legal threats, we are also expanding our toolkit. For 2026–2030, we formally integrate Strategic Litigation as a core approach, recognising the power of courts and legal mechanisms to secure long-lasting structural change and defend hard-won rights.

Together, these approaches combine grassroots power, evidence generation, public mobilisation, and legal action to respond to immediate threats while building durable protections for the future.

1. MOVEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING

We strengthen ESWA members through leadership development, organisational support, peer exchange, and sustainable capacity-building. We invest in regional solidarity and cross-border collaboration, ensuring that sex worker-led organisations have the tools and resources to thrive in increasingly hostile environments.

2. RESEARCH & EVIDENCE BUILDING

We produce and support community-led, evidence-based research that documents lived realities, exposes rights violations, and challenges misinformation. By centring sex workers' knowledge and expertise and generating rigorous, independent, and intersectional evidence, we contribute to public understanding, inform academic and policy debates, and build a durable evidence base for structural change.

3. ADVOCACY & STRATEGIC LITIGATION

We lead bold, rights-based campaigns that mobilise allies, influence European and national policy spaces, and counter anti-rights agendas. Alongside advocacy, we pursue strategic legal action to challenge harmful laws, secure rights-affirming jurisprudence, and build stronger legal protections. By combining public campaigning with targeted litigation, we aim to create both immediate impact and long-term structural change.

5. OVERARCHING THEMATIC PRIORITIES

ESWA's overarching thematic priorities are grounded in **intersectional feminism**, a framework that recognises that systems of oppression do not operate in isolation, but intersect and compound one another. As legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw first articulated, intersectionality describes how structures of power such as racism, patriarchy, and class inequality overlap to produce specific forms of marginalisation that cannot be understood through a single-axis lens.

For sex workers across Europe and Central Asia, oppression is rarely singular. Criminalisation intersects with racism, migration control, transphobia, misogyny, poverty, and labour precarity. Migrant, trans, racialised, undocumented, disabled, and working-class sex workers experience layered forms of exclusion that demand structural responses.

Our three overarching thematic priorities reflect this analysis:

1. RACIAL JUSTICE

We confront racism, xenophobia, and systemic discrimination that disproportionately harm Black, Romani, migrant, and racialised sex workers. This includes challenging border regimes, racial profiling, discriminatory policing, and exclusion from services and protection mechanisms.

2. GENDER EQUALITY

We ground our work in feminist principles that centre bodily autonomy, women's and LGBTQI+ rights, and freedom from gender-based violence. We reject frameworks that instrumentalise "protection" to justify repression, and instead advance sex workers' self-determination and leadership.

3. ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We address systemic economic inequalities including poverty, austerity, labour exploitation, and exclusion from social protection that shape sex workers' livelihoods and safety. We recognise sex work within broader struggles for labour rights, redistribution, and economic dignity.

Together, these pillars reflect ESWA's commitment to confronting the structural foundations of inequality, across race, gender, and class, while building collective power and solidarity across movements.

6. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND PATHWAYS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Criminalisation remains the single greatest barrier to sex workers' access to justice in Europe. Whether through direct criminalisation, "end demand" models, administrative sanctions, or local by-laws, punitive legal frameworks push sex work into unsafe conditions, legitimise police harassment, and deter sex workers from reporting violence or abuse. Criminalisation also undermines access to labour protections, housing, healthcare, and social security, reinforcing cycles of precarity and exclusion.

Sex workers, in particular migrant sex workers, are at heightened risk of various forms of harms including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, from a variety of perpetrators, including police. ESWA understands criminalisation to be a driver of violence against sex workers. Sex workers' safety and access to justice for sex workers victims of violence can not be separated from our demands for labour rights and migrants rights, nor can these goals be achieved through reliance on carceral systems which expand police powers. ESWA advocates for a transformative justice approach as an alternative to traditional policing and criminal justice systems in addressing the violence, harm, and abuse faced by marginalised communities, including sex workers. Transformative justice focuses on enhancing capacities and resilience among communities, towards community based models of safety, including through the redistribution of resources allocated to criminal justice architecture.

ESWA recognises the decriminalisation of sex work as a necessary foundation for justice, safety, and equality for sex workers. This includes challenging laws that criminalise clients, third parties, or associated activities, as well as regulatory regimes that function as de facto criminalisation. ESWA supports rights-based legal frameworks that recognise sex work as work, protect freedom of association and movement, and ensure access to labour and social protections without stigma or exceptionalism.

In recent years, ESWA has contributed to national, regional and global advocacy opposing the expansion of punitive models, including engagement with EU institutions, European Court of Human Rights, UN mechanisms, and national governments. ESWA supports sex worker-led organisations to document the harms of criminalisation, engage in strategic advocacy, and intervene in legal reform processes.



1

→ **PATHWAY 1:**

WE DEMAND DECRIMINALISATION AND LABOUR RIGHTS!

- Advocate for the full decriminalisation of sex work.
- Challenge punitive and discriminatory laws, policies and practices.
- Promote a labour right approach to sex work and inclusion in union and workers' movement.

2

→ **PATHWAY 2:**

SEX WORKER VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, AND OTHER HARMS, DESERVE JUSTICE.

- Strengthen recognition of sex workers under victims' rights and violence prevention frameworks.
- Promote evidence-based violence prevention and response interventions for sex workers, in line with a transformative justice approach.
- Advocate for the rights of sex workers' in closed settings, prisons and detention centers.

3

→ **PATHWAY 3:**

SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS.

- Challenge racial profiling, surveillance architecture, and immigration enforcement targeting sex workers.
- Promote the rights of migrant sex workers.
- Challenge conflation of sex work and trafficking and promote rights-based anti-trafficking initiatives.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ACCESS TO HEALTH

Access to health is a fundamental human right. Yet for sex workers across Europe and Central Asia, it remains systematically obstructed by criminalisation, stigma, racism, migration control, transphobia, poverty, and punitive drug policies.

Health inequities are not caused by sex work itself. They are produced by structural exclusion, hostile legal frameworks, discriminatory practices, and chronic underinvestment in, and misrecognition of community-led responses. Sex workers face barriers at every level of the health system: fear of arrest or deportation when seeking care, denial of services, breaches of confidentiality, moral judgement, and exclusion from national HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) strategies. Migrant, racialised, trans, undocumented, disabled, and drug-using and disabled sex workers experience compounded harms, including detention, pathologisation, surveillance, and forced treatment.

Community-led initiatives have historically stepped into the spaces where the institutional health system fails, acting as a last barrier of support for those structurally left behind. Sex worker-led organisations have consistently demonstrated that community-led health responses are effective and trusted, improving uptake, strengthening prevention and leading to better health outcomes. ESWA advocates for the meaningful inclusion of sex workers in service design and delivery, recognizing peer health services as a crucial step to improve linkage to care.

While the success of community-led services depends on the safety, trust, and understanding they provide, this closeness often blurs the line between peer and service-user. Sex workers doing community outreach have a high risk of activist burnout and vicarious trauma, often internalizing the structural violence experienced by the community. In the new Strategic period, ESWA is committed to strengthening and supporting community-led service providers, facilitating training to prevent trauma and investing in community resilience.

This Strategic Priority commits ESWA to advancing structural change alongside practical solutions. We will challenge laws and practices that undermine access to care, strengthen sex worker-led health models, advocate for inclusive HIV and SRH strategies, and expand trauma-informed and mental health support. Health justice is inseparable from racial, gender, and economic justice and from the dignity, autonomy, and safety of all sex workers.



1

→ **PATHWAY 1:****DISABLED SEX WORKERS AT THE CENTER OF OUR MOVEMENT**

- Build evidence on the diverse experiences of disabled, neurodivergent and chronically ill sex workers, highlighting systemic barriers and enabling factors to participation.
- Centre disabled sex workers in ESWA's data collection, needs assessments, and evidence generation, challenging their systematic exclusion from research.
- Document the effects of stigma, discrimination and exclusion on the mental health of sex workers.

2

→ **PATHWAY 2:****SEX WORKER LEADERSHIP IN HIV & SRH SERVICES**

- Promote community leadership in clinical, pharmaceutical and other health environments, recognising community-led health organisations as a critical linkage to institutionalised care.
- Integrate sex workers' experiences of sexualised substance use into sexual health responses addressing chemsex, ensuring inclusion in peer-led and community spaces.
- Build evidence on the structural barriers and exclusion in maternal and reproductive healthcare for sex workers, including contraception, antenatal and postpartum care, and parental support.

3

→ **PATHWAY 3:****INVESTING IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

- Advocate for recognition, resources, and sustainable funding for peer support and burnout prevention as essential to community work.
- Strengthen organisational resilience within member organisations to address the structural drivers of burnout, vicarious trauma, and emotional labour in peer and community work.
- Establish accessible and inclusive spaces for community knowledge-sharing, mutual support, collective reflection and solidarity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: DIGITAL RIGHTS

Digital spaces are central to sex workers' livelihoods, expression, and community-building. Yet they are increasingly shaped by surveillance and control. Across Europe and Central Asia, heightened monitoring of social media and online platforms (particularly those hosting adult content) has led to growing restrictions, including platform bans, shadow banning, payment processor exclusions, and the introduction of age assurance mechanisms and access barriers. These measures are often justified under narratives of "online safety," anti-trafficking, or child protection, but in practice they frequently undermine sex workers' rights and safety.

At the same time, the enforcement of legal instruments such as the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the AI Act redefine platform governance. Sex workers' perspectives are essential in this context: without their meaningful inclusion, regulatory frameworks risk reinforcing censorship, overreach, and systemic discrimination, particularly through automated content moderation, biometric surveillance, and risk-scoring systems powered by artificial intelligence. There is also growing concern around "simplification" agendas that seek to weaken or roll back key protections within frameworks like the DSA and the GDPR, potentially exposing sex workers to greater harm, surveillance, and exclusion.

Across the region, there is also a growing push to criminalize aspects of online sex work. Models that penalize digital facilitation of sex work are increasingly influencing policy debates at the EU level. These approaches threaten to further restrict access to digital tools, income streams, and safer working conditions.

Sex workers are simultaneously at heightened risk of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including non-consensual intimate image sharing (NCII), sextortion, and other evolving forms of abuse. Despite this, they are often denied recognition as legitimate victims, excluded from protection mechanisms, and deprioritized in policy responses.

ESWA's previous research on platform censorship, financial exclusion, and the impact of FOSTA/SESTA-style policies in Europe has demonstrated that digital repression does not reduce harm; it pushes sex workers into more precarious conditions and undermines safety strategies. Racialised, migrant, and trans sex workers are disproportionately targeted by content moderation systems and financial surveillance.

This Strategic Priority commits ESWA to defending sex workers' digital rights as fundamental rights. We will challenge harmful narratives and discriminatory regulation, advocate for rights-based implementation of digital laws, address technology-facilitated violence, and strengthen community-led digital organising and innovation.



1

→ **PATHWAY 1:**

PLATFORM RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Advocate for fair digital labour rights, including fair access to banking and payment systems.
- Challenge discriminatory platform practices, algorithmic bias, sex worker erasure, and AI-driven content moderation.
- Call for meaningful enforcement and pursue strategic litigation to ensure platform accountability.

2

→ **PATHWAY 2:**

PRIVACY AND SAFETY

- Oppose surveillance, facial recognition, predictive policing, and data-sharing practices targeting sex workers.
- Challenge harmful narratives around trafficking, CSAM, child protection, and age assurance that undermine sex workers' digital rights.
- Promote online child protection and combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including non-consensual intimate image sharing, sextortion, and other emerging forms.

3

→ **PATHWAY 3:**

HARNESS COMMUNITY AND TECH INNOVATION

- Support community-led digital organising
- Invest in peer-led digital security training and capacity building.
- Position ESWA as a key stakeholder in digital rights by centering sex workers' perspectives, strengthening existing alliances and forging new partnerships across the digital rights ecosystem.



7. CONCLUSION

Over the course of the previous strategic period, ESWA solidified its position as the leading organisation for data, research, and training for sex workers' rights across Europe and Central Asia. We established meaningful partnerships and became an ubiquitous voice in European policy spaces.

Guided by our core values of self-determination and autonomy, our commitment for the next five years remains rooted in the principle of "nothing about us without us."

We will continue to promote participatory, peer-led research as the foundation of our evidence-based advocacy. We will ensure that the lived experiences of sex workers are the primary catalyst for legal reform and the decriminalisation of our work.

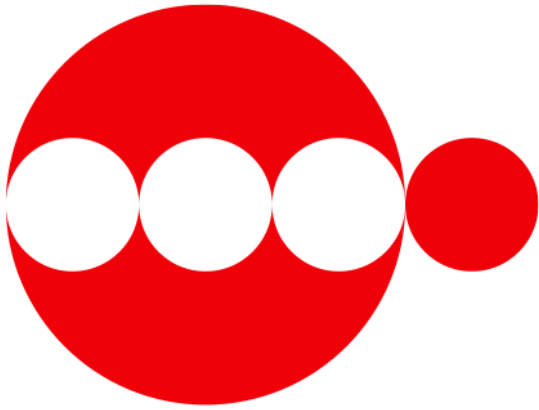
Having expanded our reach and visibility, we now turn our focus inward to our community.

In line with our mission to build a strong, intersectional movement, we are directing our energy toward building and strengthening our community from within. We will dedicate space for building collective power and resilience in our community.

We will continue celebrating and centering the voices of sex workers as we continue to fight for a world where our rights are recognised, our safety is guaranteed, and our voices are heard.

**With care and solidarity,
THE ESWA TEAM AND BOARD.**





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