

We, the undersigned organisations, warmly welcome the Comment of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the Protection of the human rights of sex workers.

Signed by:

International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN)

Transgender Europe (TGEU)

La Strada International

Equinox

AIDS Action Europe

The European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe)

Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network

European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (ESWA)

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

European Aids Treatment Group (EATG)

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The undersigned organisations are leading civil society networks and human rights organisations with a range of expertise that allows us to address issues affecting the rights of sex workers through an intersectional lens. We see the Commissioner for Human Rights' Comment as a very timely and important step forward in recognising the human rights of all sex workers in their diversity in Europe and the crucial work of frontline sex workers' rights defenders.

The issue of sex workers' rights has for many years been sidelined in Europe or only briefly referred to in various contexts. We therefore welcome the very clear message of the Commissioner's Comment, which calls for policies that put the human rights of sex workers at the centre of policy making on sex work and calls for greater participation of sex workers in the development of policies that directly affect them.



In Europe today, we see a tendency for states to criminalise sex work. The call for criminalisation justifies greater investment in the criminal legal system and the police and diverts funding away from communities doing essential work in supporting people facing stigma, discrimination, and violence, away from social and human rights-based responses. Criminalisation increases risks of violence, discrimination, homelessness and other harms against sex workers. We stand firmly behind the Commissioner's position that full decriminalisation of sex work can best lead to real protection of the human rights of sex workers. The Comment was developed based on a large body of existing research and evidence and informed directly by people selling sex and sex workers' rights defenders.

We are convinced that the Comment will support the legitimacy of sex workers' rights defenders, who often face backlash, and will help to more effectively address the human rights violations that sex workers face. We also hope that the Comment will encourage states to better consider the human rights implications of policies that can directly affect the rights of often the most vulnerable people in our society, sex workers in all their diversity.

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