

**SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ADVOCACY NETWORK  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE  
AND CENTRAL ASIA**



**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2018 - 2022**



## I. BACKGROUND

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### SWAN

The Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) is a sex worker-led regional network in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that advocates for the human rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. SWAN was founded in 2006 and was officially registered as the SWAN Foundation in January of 2012.

#### *Governance and values*

SWAN's member organizations either work with or are led by sex workers and sex worker leadership is an organizing principle of the network. SWAN's work is overseen by a democratically elected Management Committee. SWAN operates with the following values:

- We recognize the right of sex workers to take agency in their lives, health and decision-making.
- We commit to actively involve sex workers in all levels of SWAN governance and to the protection of human rights.
- We recognize sex work as work, which is an unforced sale of sexual services between consenting male, female and trans adults.
- We seek to address the needs and engage the strengths of the diverse range of people who are sex workers, recognizing their intersectionality with other population groups (such as, migrants, people who use drugs, people living with HIV, LGBTI people and others) as well as their diverse range of work environments and lived experience.
- We prioritize support of sex worker-led initiatives and also support their allies to address the needs of sex workers.

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## ***SWAN Achievements***

Before SWAN was established, though there were some sex worker-led national initiatives in countries, there was no sex worker movement in the region. But, by the time of the inception of this strategic plan, SWAN had already succeeded in creating a platform that empowered sex workers, amplified their voices, provided practical tools and support for their work and advocated around their needs at the regional and global level.

## **SWAN's Strategic Planning Process**

To develop this strategic plan, SWAN commissioned research among its members and partners to assess its past work, and learn about priorities for future work. Organizations from 12 different countries responded and a total of 124 people were consulted of whom 95 were sex workers. A report on SWAN's 2014 – 2017 Strategic Plan, was drafted and distributed. Using information from this report as well as their own knowledge and opinions, SWAN's Management Committee gathered for a 3 day planning session after which it worked with the SWAN staff and an external consultant to create this strategic plan for 2018 – 2022. The plan was endorsed by SWAN membership on June 4th, 2018.

## Problems Faced by Sex Workers in CEECA

Despite the achievements of SWAN, sex workers in the region continue to face a myriad of problems that lead to violation of their rights and that endanger their health and wellbeing. These include:

- Sex workers still face **stigma** in medical settings, from decision-makers and from society at large.
- Laws, policies and practices, especially those **criminalizing sex workers** and/or their clients continue to contribute to rights violations and vulnerability.
- **Sex work is not recognized as work** which makes it impossible for most sex workers to enjoy the benefits and protections afforded to workers.
- **Working conditions** continue to be unsafe and unjust, and put sex workers at risk for rights violations and make them vulnerable to health problems.
- The **violation of human rights** and freedoms of sex workers is still pervasive throughout the region.
- Sex workers continue to face **discrimination and violence**.
- Sex workers face **limited access to high quality health and social support services**.
- **Meaningful involvement** of sex workers in local, national and international policy-making remains limited though it can be a key to addressing many of these problems.

## II. OVERVIEW



### III. MISSION, GOAL & OBJECTIVES

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#### **Mission:**

SWAN is a regional network of sex worker-led organisations, and their allies that works to create societies in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia where:

- sex work is depenalized and decriminalized;
- sex workers can live and work free from violence, stigma and discrimination;
- sex workers are empowered and actively engaged in issues that directly affect their lives and health.

#### **Goal:**

Sex workers will enjoy human rights, safety, well-being, health and dignity in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

#### **Strategic Objective 1:**

To build the capacity of national and local sex worker-led initiatives and their allies to promote and advocate human rights- and evidence-based policy and programming.

#### **Strategic Objective 2:**

To advocate for regional and global stakeholders to increase the degree to which they meaningfully involve sex workers and address their needs in their programming around rights and health in the CEECA region.

#### **Strategic Objective 3:**

To strengthen SWAN as a sustainable, well-governed network responsive to its members' needs.

## IV. AREAS OF ACTION AND TYPES OF ACTIVITY

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### **Strategic Objective 1: To build the capacity of national and local sex worker-led initiatives and their allies to promote and advocate human rights- and evidence-based policy and programming.**

#### **1.1 Enabling exchange of experience and learning between SWAN members**

- Identifying, documenting and disseminating good practices of SWAN members through brief news stories and more in-depth reports.
- Giving members opportunities to meet (face-to-face or through online channels like webinars or skype calls) including by taking advantage of situations when SWAN members may be gathered for other purposes (such as conferences for example) to meet for SWAN purposes.
- Improving use of social media to encourage sharing and communication between members (see Activity 3.4 on communication).
- Facilitating mentorship or internship programs which enable groups to learn from each other.

#### **1.2 Providing training and technical assistance to members**

- Assessing members' needs.
- Assisting members to find the experts they need.
- Developing tools for members to use to build their capacities.
- Fundraising to address member technical assistance needs.
- Evaluating the impact of technical assistance provided through SWAN.
- Topics may include:
  - Engaging with human rights mechanisms such as: CEDAW; Universal Periodic Review; the Committee on Torture; the Committee on Social and Economic Rights;
  - Using the SWIT (and TransIT, IDUIT, MSMIT);
  - Meaningful engagement in country level Global Fund processes;

- Involvement in Budget advocacy;
- Stigma;
- Meaningful engagement in law and policy changes (sex work laws, anti-discrimination, policies affecting health etc);
- Community mobilization;
- Working with communication tools (visibility, promotion, advocacy);
- Human rights abuse documentation and advocacy.

### **1.3 Developing and/or disseminating original research and briefings for use in advocacy work**

- Highlighting key gaps in information needed for advocacy and decision making around sex workers' needs.
- Selecting the format of communication that serves the established advocacy purposes best (i.e position paper, research report, video material, etc.).
- Topics may include:
  - Meaningful involvement;
  - Legal environment;
  - Human rights;
  - Stigma and discrimination;
  - Access to health;
  - Violence;
  - Labor rights;
  - Trafficking.

### **1.4 Supporting individual members**

- Providing technical support to individual members to mobilize and organize the sex worker community in their localities or countries.
- In countries where SWAN does not have members, SWAN will promote community mobilization when opportunities arise.

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### 1.5 Coordinating response in case of emergency situations

- In close cooperation with local activists, SWAN will help garner international support when needed and requested to respond to specific emergency situations.

## **Strategic Objective 2: To advocate for regional and global stakeholders to increase the degree to which they meaningfully involve sex workers and address their needs in their programming around rights and health in the CEECA region.**

### 2.1 Building and documenting consensus among sex workers on priorities and positions

- Developing **position papers** on topics such as:
  - Meaningful involvement;
  - Legal frameworks (legalization, decriminalization, depenalization, criminalization of clients);
  - Diversity in working environments;
  - Intersectionality;
  - using international conventions addressing the informal labor sector.
- Consulting with sex workers to build consensus on **priorities to be raised in relation to specific opportunities** for influence such as events, funding opportunities or in relation to communications with specific stakeholders (for example, defining SWAN's demands from the multi-country GF program).
- **Mapping of sex worker-led initiatives and their capacities, needs and involvement in decision-making structures** (like CCMs).

### 2.2 Making the voices of sex workers heard and influential

- **Building skills of sex workers** to present and negotiate their priorities at the regional and global level.
- Enabling participation and **representation of sex workers** in dialogue with regional and global

stakeholders in key meetings, conferences and opportunities for dialogue and their accountability to those they represent [Linked to Activity Areas 3.1 (Accountability) and 3.4 (Communication)].

### 2.3 Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders including:

- regional and global sex worker-led networks
- regional key population initiatives
- technical partners (UN Agencies), other stakeholders like the Global Fund.
- Initiating calls or meetings with the key stakeholders listed above to discuss **cooperation related to SWAN's new strategic plan** and periodically following up with them to address new challenges and opportunities.
- **Building solidarity with regional key population networks**, *perhaps even initiating a memorandum of understanding* addressing meaningful involvement (especially concerning non-tokenistic representation) and other common priorities (such as decriminalization, rights based policies, etc.).
- Cooperating with regional key population networks **to address intersectional populations** including for example, planning joint capacity building activities around the **Implementation Tools** with other regional key population networks.
- **Securing support of regional partners for cooperation with SWAN members** in country-level programs or activities (or with country representative offices of partners) that SWAN members can contact.
- **Promoting action on the key recommendations of SWAN publications** to regional partners with a specific request that they disseminate them to their members, programs, national offices.
- **Promoting knowledge of good practices by SWAN members.**
- **Holding** stakeholders accountable on adherence to evidence- and rights- based policies and practices and meaningful engagement of sex workers (“Watchdog” function).

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## **Strategic Objective 3: To strengthen SWAN as a sustainable, well-governed network responsive to its members' needs.**

### **3.1 Maintaining good governance of SWAN as a sex worker-led network**

- Maintaining **SWAN's status as a sex worker-led organization.**
- Maintaining **accountability to members** by:
  - regularly reporting on progress in accordance with the M&E framework for the strategic plan;
  - offering opportunities for input from members and providing feedback to members on key meetings/discussions with regional stakeholders;
  - offering opportunities for input from members and providing feedback to members on Management Committee calls/meetings.
- **Encouraging new people to become MC members by:**
  - emphasizing the benefits of being a member such as: professional growth, gaining regional perspective, attendance to international meetings etc.;
  - expressing that less experienced activists are also welcome to run.
- **Strengthening the functioning of the Management Committee by:**
  - Evaluating and **improving the induction process for new MC members;**
  - Emphasizing the honor and responsibility and opportunities related to serving on the MC;
  - Implement pairing of new MC members with “older” MC members as mentors;
  - Reviewing and **improving procedures regarding MC meeting agendas and reporting** so that member and MC input can be ensured (and interest in decision-making can be built);
  - Emphasizing the **importance of commitment to be a responsive MC member**, responding carefully and in a timely manner to requests for feedback from the secretariat.

### **3.2 Strengthening the SWAN secretariat by:**

- Evaluating and revising staff job descriptions as needed;

- Performance evaluations;
- Increasing the amount of time allocated to communications;
- Increase the portion of the secretariat staff that are sex workers and build staff capacities as needed.

### **3.3 Improving communication and increasing visibility about the needs and achievements of SWAN and its members**

- Evaluating and updating the **communication strategy** to address:
  - SWAN accountability to members;
  - SWAN's objectives related to building member capacity (Strategic Objective 1);
  - Strategic communication with regional and global partners (Strategic Objective 2).
- **Modernizing and increasing use of social media.**

### **3.4 Ensuring sustainable funding through enhanced fundraising efforts and diversification of funding sources**

- Diversifying SWAN donors.
- Demanding and contributing to meaningful involvement of sex workers in regional funding opportunities including but not limited to the Global Fund.

## V. IMPACTS

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The expected impacts of SWANs work include:

- Increased meaningful involvement in local, national and international policy-making;
- Increased respect for their human rights and freedoms;
- Better laws, policies and practices;
- Access to high-quality health and social support services;
- Decreased stigma, discrimination and violence;
- Sex work has greater recognition as work;
- Better working conditions;
- Sex workers are empowered and experience less stigma.