

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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## **ABOUT 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.

### **Our Mission:**

SWAN is a regional network of sex worker-led organisations, and their allies that works to create societies in Central-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.



## **Our Values:**

SWAN's member organisations either work with or are led by sex workers and sex worker leadership is an organising 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 but also support their allies address the needs of sex workers.

## **Our Goal:**

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

## OUR ACTIVITIES IN 2018

This Annual Report shows SWAN's work in diverse areas in order to achieve our objectives as laid out in our Strategic Plan 2018-2022.



### 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

One of the fundamental purposes of our network is to serve as a platform for learning and sharing between our members. We act upon it through identifying, documenting and disseminating good practices of SWAN members, facilitating mentorship or internship programs, and organising trainings and meetings which enable groups to share their experiences and learn from each other.



Our [website](#), list serve and social media accounts ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) continuously store and share brief news stories and more in depth reports on the ongoing trends and activities in the region and globally, as well as examples of good practices of our members, meetings and trainings SWAN organised or participated in, and key dates to mark (i.e. 17th of December, The International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers).

**In March**, SWAN organised a regional convening with the framework of our Global Fund capacity building program, focusing on Transition and Sustainability. Representatives from 4 countries which still have Global Fund grants (Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Georgia and Kazakhstan) participated in the meeting. The group exchanged experiences and shared further plans for engaging with Global Fund nationally.. The discussion continued around ways of staying accountable to the sex worker community and to build capacities of activists to understand the Global Fund and the transitioning period.





**In December**, SWAN facilitated an exchange visit between Tais Plus from Kyrgyzstan and **OPSI** from Jakarta, Indonesia, both sex worker-led organisations, working in similar religious contexts. Tais Plus learned about different approaches for community mobilization, possible ways of collaboration with high educational institutions, research centers and how sex workers can benefit from such collaboration, as well as possible ways of collaboration with Muslim organisations.

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

In 2018, through combining resources from different programs and projects, SWAN provided extensive training and support to its members in several areas tailored to their needs. Through the Sex Workers' Networks Consortium, led by NSWP, we continued our support to community mobilization and development of national work plans for roll-out of Sex Worker Implementation Tool (**SWIT**) in 5 countries Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

**In Ukraine**, **Legalife - Ukraine** worked on mentoring and building leadership skills of activists from 14 branches in different regions in the country. They also worked on advocacy and amplifying sex worker voices around decriminalisation of sex work.

**In Georgia**, SWAN worked throughout the year with the local sex worker-led group, Women for Freedom (WfF), through **in-country visits**, and online channels to develop an Organisational Strategy, an Advocacy Strategy and set the basis for developing additional documents such as: Work Plans, Rules of Operation and membership formats. SWAN and NSWP also provided technical assistance in Global Fund related activities, and the process of community elections for Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) as well as application processes for CCM. The sex worker nominee was not elected to the CCM this time, but a seat for the meetings without voting rights was secured.



**In Kazakhstan**, SWAN, Regional GF expert and NSWP provided technical assistance to [Amelia](#), the sex worker-led organisation in the process for community elections for the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) as well as the application processes for CCM. The sex worker nominee was elected to the CCM as representative for the sex work community in Kazakhstan.

**In Kyrgyzstan**, SWAN provided support for implementation of Tais Plus' national plan for building leadership skills of activists and capacities to engage in Global Fund country processes, community mobilization and scaling-up of services for sex workers in South and North Kyrgyzstan.

**In Russia**, SWAN supported [Silver Rose](#) in the development of a 4-day intensive training program on "Community empowerment - resource mobilisation" where more than 20 sex workers from different regions in Russia participated.



**In 2018 SWAN provided technical assistance in North Macedonia and Ukraine in their national advocacy activities for decriminalisation:**

**In North Macedonia**, a [working group](#) was established between [HOPS](#), [STAR-STAR](#), Coalition Margins and SWAN and a joint commitment for advocacy for full decriminalisation was endorsed. During 2018, the working group created a 3-year national advocacy plan, organised two community trainings on decriminalisation and leadership as well as a round table with key stakeholders “Decriminalisation of sex work in Macedonia”, and supported [sex workers’ march](#) for 17th of December with the main message “Decrim Now”.



**In Ukraine**, SWAN supported sex work activists in their preparations for the public hearing in the Ukrainian Parliament initiated around the introduction of laws on criminalising clients of sex workers. SWAN wrote an open letter to Ukrainian MPs, and participated at a round table on “Decriminalisation of sex work in Ukraine”. SWAN Executive Director and ICRSE Advocacy Officer supported the

activists in their arguments and provided examples and evidence of the negative consequences of the criminalization of clients in other countries, as well as explanations on various legal models and their impacts on sex workers' lives and livelihoods.

Through **the Fast Track HIV/TB Cities Initiative** SWAN provided in-country and online support and funds for communities to conduct community mobilization, organisational strengthening, strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders in 5 Cities in the region - Odessa, Almaty, Tbilisi, Balti and Sofia. In the past 3 years this program was the only opportunity for SWAN to support sex workers and community mobilization work in Moldova and Bulgaria.



**In Moldova**, SWAN organised a 4-day **community mobilization and SWIT training**, facilitated by sex work activists from Ukraine, as continuation of SWAN's work in the last two years. The first two days a SWIT training was conducted with staff from the NGO TDV (**Tinerii pentru Dreptul la Viață**) and 5 representatives from the sex work community. The last 2 days were dedicated to community



mobilization with the sex worker community. At the end of the meeting, sex workers in Moldova developed a draft action plan for 2019 and brainstormed ideas how to mark the 17th of December.

**In Bulgaria**, SWAN facilitated a 3-day community mobilization and human rights documentation training in Sofia where there is no sex worker-led group. The training was a good opportunity for SWAN to meet the sex worker community in Sofia, and potential allies and partners. SWAN worked closely with sex workers on development of the tool for documenting human rights violations in Sofia. Experiences from the region on Human Rights Abuse Documentation Project (HRADP) and community mobilization were also shared.

## **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**

To publish new resources that help to strengthen the common language used amongst our members and provide necessary information to keep our movement dynamic and up to date has always been one of our priorities. In order to keep up with this objective, SWAN started working on two new briefing papers in 2018. Community consultations and desk research were conducted to develop two briefing papers called Sex Work Legal Frameworks in CEECA and NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US! A brief guide on meaningful involvement of sex workers and their organisations in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA). Final versions of both papers are scheduled to be published in 2019.



The previous resources SWAN produced are being put to good use when there is a need to draw information from. One example of this is that in October, SWAN submitted to the thematic report on women deprived of liberty to the 41st session of the Human Rights Council to be held in June 2019. The submission was based on the findings and recommendations of SWAN's two community researches ([Arrest the Violence](#), 2009 and [Failure of Justice](#), 2015).

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

As a sex worker-led network, it is crucial for us to maintain and deepen the conversation with our member organisations, stay connected and support the national movements through amplifying their voices using our channels, links and advocacy opportunities. For this purpose SWAN organises and attends many local and international meetings throughout the year ensuring sex workers' voices and demands are heard.





One of the main events SWAN participated in 2018, is the International **AIDS Conference (AIDS2018)**, which was held in Amsterdam between 23 and 27 July. SWAN participated in 2 organising committees/working groups securing the visibility and participation of sex workers from the EECA region at the conference.

SWAN alongside with ICRSE, NSWP and the local sex worker led organisation **PROUD**, formed the Sex Worker Organising Committee that planned and supported a series of activities led and performed by and for sex workers: sex workers pre conference, participation and actions at main sessions, rich program and visibility through the Sex Workers Networking Zone in the Global Village, Sex Workers March in the city and presence in social media. More than 120 sex workers from 25 countries participated in a variety of workshops, panels and protests representing their community. The theme of the 2018 Conference was ‘Breaking barriers, building bridges’ and its focus was on HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

**SPEAKERS:**

- Manjula Ramaiah, ASHODAYA, India**  
(brothel closures and raids)
- Kelli Dorsey, St James Infirmary, United States**  
(new anti-trafficking laws in USA)
- Patrick Francois Waffo Lele, Revue Jeune de l'Ouest, Cameroon**  
(criminalisation of same sex practices and male sex workers)
- Cynthia Novaretti, APROATE, Mexico** (criminalisation of third parties and conflict of sex work and trafficking in legislation)
- Anna Kourekou, Red Umbrella Athens, Greece**  
(criminalisation of trans and migrant sex workers)
- Thierry Schaffhauser, STRASS, French Union of Sex Workers, France**  
(criminalisation of clients and resisting 'abolition')

**IMPACT**  
OF PUNITIVE LAWS,  
POLICIES AND PRACTICES  
ON SEX WORKERS'  
VULNERABILITY TO HIV  
AND RESPECT OF THEIR  
HUMAN RIGHTS

JOIN SIX SEX WORKER  
SPEAKERS TO DISCUSS  
CURRENT LEGAL  
FRAMEWORKS  
REGARDING SEX WORK  
IN THEIR COUNTRIES

**MONDAY 23rd JULY**  
14:45 - 16:45  
HALL 11B

#SexWorkersAtAIDS2018

próud ICRSE SWAN nswp  
supported by aidsfonds PITCH

**SPEAKERS:**

- Jules Kim**  
Scarlet Alliance, Australia
- Zinenani Lucy Majawa,**  
Female Sex Workers Association, Malawi
- Shahnaz Islamova**  
Shah-Aiym, Kyrgyzstan
- Merrisa Quan**  
GSWG, Guyana

**IMPACT**  
OF PUNITIVE LAWS,  
POLICIES AND PRACTICES  
ON SEX WORKERS'  
VULNERABILITY TO HIV

JOIN FOUR SEX WORKER  
SPEAKERS TO DISCUSS HOW  
THEY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY  
CHALLENGED THE LEGAL  
FRAMEWORK REGARDING  
SEX WORK IN THEIR  
COUNTRIES

**WEDNESDAY 25th JULY**  
18:30 - 20:00  
Global Village Session Room 1

#SexWorkersAtAIDS2018

próud ICRSE SWAN nswp  
supported by aidsfonds PITCH



More detailed information about the key activities of sex workers including challenges identified and recommendations to the International AIDS Society (IAS), policy makers and donors for greater and more meaningful inclusion of sex workers at IACs can be found in the following [report](#) of the Committee.

The second working group was the EECA Regional Committee which joined forces of all regional key population networks around regional similarities and challenges, intersection of populations and solidarity: Eurasian Coalition on Male Health ([ECOM](#)), East Europe and Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV ([ECUO](#)), EECA Sex Workers' Alliance, Eurasian Harm Reduction Association ([EHRA](#)), Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs ([ENPUD](#)), Eurasian Union of Adolescents and Youth "[Teenergizer](#)", Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS ([EWNA](#)) and Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN). This regional committee organised its own activities in the framework of the campaign "[Chase the virus, not people!](#)" The aim of the campaign was:

- to draw attention to the problems of key population groups, against the backdrop of the catastrophic situation with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in EECA to attract comprehensive support of the region by the global community;
- to increase the priority of actions to overcome the discrimination and stigmatization of vulnerable communities as a key condition for an effective response to the HIV epidemic in EECA countries.





The campaign was announced at a press conference at the start of the International AIDS Conference 2018 in Amsterdam. [SWAN Management Committee Chair spoke](#) on behalf of sex workers community. Activities of the campaign were carried out through different actions, protests, messages during the main program, social media and the activities within the EECA Regional Networking Zone. The campaign is being continued as a key regional activity, to remind main stakeholders about the commitments they took to overcome HIV related problems, stigma and discrimination in the region.

SWAN board members, staff members or sex worker spokespeople attended a series of other meetings where sex workers voices were shared or amplified. Some of them are:

- Regional meeting “A dialogue between civil society and donors - Averting a health and rights crisis in South Eastern Europe - Building Partnerships to Sustain HIV Prevention Services for Key Populations”, January 2018, Belgrade/Serbia;
- Addressing Human Trafficking and Exploitation in the Sex Industry through Community organising “ - Donor- Advocate Meeting, February 2018, Bangkok/Thailand;
- [Regional technical meeting on HIV and Migration](#), UNFPA, February 2018, Astana/Kazakhstan;
- UNFPA regional meeting on Young Key Population Tool, May 2018, Skopje North Macedonia;
- AidsFonds meeting on creating online intervention tools for sex workers and MSM population (Turning the Tide Project), May 2018, Kiev/Ukraine and July 2018, Amsterdam/Netherlands;
- [64th session](#) of the UN Committee Against Torture; July 2018, Geneva/Switzerland;
- [16th International Youth Conference](#) “European Values for the Future of SEE countries”, September 2018, Krusevo/North Macedonia.

## 2.3 Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders

As a regional network of marginalised communities, SWAN strongly values cooperation, partnerships and solidarity with other regional and global networks and NGOs representing key populations. In 2018, SWAN continued to work closely with its partners across the region and globally.

### ■ NSWP and ICRSE joint activities/projects:

SWAN is part of a consortium of networks, led by NSWP for the implementation of the RCNF and GF RCNF grants. The Consortium consists of African Sex Worker Alliance ([ASWA](#)), Latin American Platform of People who do Sex Work ([PLAPERTS](#)), Asian Pacific Network of Sex Workers ([APNSW](#)), International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe ([ICRSE](#)) and SWAN. Through this consortium SWAN has been able to establish better links with other regional sex workers' rights networks and collaborate on joint work plans as well as exchange experiences and information.

Another strong relationship SWAN developed is with ICRSE. Our overlapping membership leads both networks to be in a constant collaboration through joint in-country training, exchanging information, providing translation for members and drafting joint statements.

In 2018, SWAN published a [news](#) on its members' activities to mark 17th of December and contributed to [NSWP's statement](#) on the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. A joint [statement](#) was written by SWAN and ICRSE on the 3rd of June to mark the International Sex Workers' Rights Day.





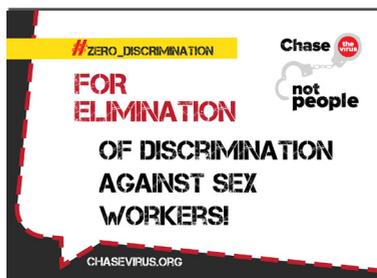
SWAN also worked very closely with ICRSE and NSWP on organising participation of sex workers at the International AIDS Conference (AIDS2018).

■ **SWIFA Alliance:**

NSWP and other global stakeholders formed the Sex Worker Inclusive Feminist Alliance: SWAN and other regional sex worker networks receive information and communicate back to NSWP about any information/news to be shared with this new initiative.

■ **Collaboration with regional key population networks (EHRA, ECOM, ENPUD, EWNA) on joint campaigns, projects and fundraising:**

SWAN worked closely with other EECA networks on the campaign “Chase the Virus, Not People” and represented sex workers’ voice in the region. A promotional [video](#) was produced and widely shared through our social media accounts.



The same networks also formed a consortium and applied for a regional GFATM grant together, but the application was not successful.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

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

Sex worker-leadership and meaningful involvement of sex workers is a core element of our organisation. In 2018, SWAN continued to improve its governance with the launch of documents and resources which will guide our work over the next 5 years.

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



After extensive consultation process and collaborative work with members and Management Committee we are happy to announce our new organisational Strategy 2018-2022. The new 5 year [strategy](#) outlines our mission, values, goals and strategies of work.

As a step forward to strengthening the work and accountability of the Secretariat, in 2018 we developed our first [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) framework based on its new Strategic Plan. The framework will allow the Secretariat to follow the implementation of its Strategic Plan with more accuracy and details, as indicators are set and a system developed for qualitative data collection. The M&E framework will enable us to report more accurately to donors, our members and other stakeholders and it will give us a more systematic way of inputting relevant data into funding applications.



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

This year we also completed our team with a new Communication Officer: Yigit Aydin joined SWAN Secretariat as Communication Officer. Yigit is a founding member of Red Umbrella Turkey and current Administration and Finance Officer of ICRSE. SWAN social media accounts were revised and updated to improve SWAN's online presence. Number of monthly tweets, and Facebook posts increased substantially where the work of SWAN and its members' were promoted widely.

For example, at the end of 2018, after 6 months of engagements we saw how:

- SWAN Facebook page reached 732 likes, an increase of 300 since June 2018.
- SWAN Twitter account reached 2126 followers, an increase of 1000 since June 2018.

Another step that SWAN took this year was a response to an in country situation, where laws on NGOs were tightened which caused some of the other international NGOs to relocate out of Hungary. SWAN hired a consultancy firm to conduct an environmental assessment to determine which countries would best suit the network should any new changes in Hungarian law force the organisation to consider moving the Secretariat or re-registering.

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

**In 2018 SWAN activities were funded by the following donors:**

- ◆ Open Society Foundations;
- ◆ Red Umbrella Fund;
- ◆ Robert Carr Civil Society Foundation;
- ◆ The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: Alliance for Public Health Ukraine: Regional GF EECA Cities Initiative;
- ◆ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);

We thank our donors and partners for all the support in the past year.