

# The ICRSE Network: Working Together Across Europe

By Petra Timmermans

One of the main goals of the Brussels conference was to create a Europe-wide network for sex workers' rights, and since the conference, that has been the major focus of our work. However, a network is a strange thing to talk about. It isn't a single organisation with a specific local focus, and it isn't one person responsible for answering phone calls and sending e-mails. A network must have shared goals, and a commitment from its members to work together and to support each other in order to reach those goals. In the year that followed the conference, the organisations and individuals who constitute the ICRSE Network have shown their commitment amply.

Two workshops were held at the Brussels conference to discuss forming a network. The workshops were attended by sex workers and allies, some of whom had experience in other networks, and others who had a rich knowledge about presenting and sharing information. Participants shared their concerns about how sex workers would get access to information-sharing and discussed some of the difficulties. For example, sex workers and their allies often fight similar battles locally, in isolation from each other. Participants had a clear desire to find creative ways to reach as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

With an increasing reliance on Internet communications, some participants offered ideas about how to reach sex workers who do not necessarily use the Internet on a regular basis. For example, mobile phones could be used. Other topics discussed were how to best communicate across different languages; how to effectively link into existing regional and international sex-work and ally networks; how to lead proactive and sex-work-positive information campaigns; and, finally, how to achieve these goals with uncertain funding. A long list of needs and wishes were drawn up, some of which we have been able to put into motion.

An e-mail listserv was established for conference participants to continue sharing information. Although the main language used on the listserv is English, participants do send information in their

first language. In some cases, members translate messages for each other, or use online translation programmes such as AltaVista Babel Fish (**Web:** <http://babelfish.altavista.com>).

In 2006 ICRSE received funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI) to redesign our website to enable members to upload information and announcements. The ICRSE website is continually being developed, with more changes are expected through 2007.

Next we will need to help Network members learn how to make use of our website's full potential. A website development group has been established to scrutinise and determine the website's facilitative role, and look for ways to further promote, develop and improve it. The group is also looking for alternative technologies for activism and information-sharing. Starting in 2007, regional representatives now play a more important role in posting information in languages from their region on the website and facilitating communication between languages, creating more opportunity for a diversity of sex workers' voices.

Since the conference in Brussels, the Network's members used the ICRSE website and e-mail listserv to appeal support for letter-writing campaigns, and for protests against laws and policies that discriminate against sex workers and the treatment of sex-worker murders by governments and media. Members also used the Network to disseminate international news reports, to promote local events such as art festivals and book launches, and to organise international participation in annual events such as:

- **International Sex Workers' Rights Day** – March 3<sup>rd</sup>
- **Pute Pride** (Paris) – March 17<sup>th</sup>
- **International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers** – December 17<sup>th</sup>

Since the ICRSE Network launch in October 2005, the Network's members have attended, organised, and otherwise took part in numerous international conferences and meetings. Many of these

forums provided excellent opportunities where members presented *The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto* and the *Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe*. Among these events were:

- **Sex Work Matters: Beyond Divides Conference**  
– *New York City, USA, March 29 - April 1, 2006*
- **95<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference Fringe Meeting on Sex Work** – *Geneva, Switzerland, May 31 - June 16, 2006*
- **Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers** – *Johannesburg, South Africa, June 22-24, 2006*
- **Meeting with United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on Violence Against Women**  
– *The Netherlands, July 2-11, 2006*
- **United Nations Population Fund Consultation on Sex Work** – *Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 16-19, 2006*
- **First Meeting of the Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia** – *Budapest, Hungary, September 6-10, 2006*
- **2006 Taipei City International Conference on Sex Industry Policies** – *Taipei, Taiwan, November 24-30, 2006*
- **Sex Work: A Profession in Need of Representation of Interests? European Trade Unions in Debate with Sex Workers** – *Berlin, Germany, December 7-8, 2006*

(For a full list of these events with summaries, see *Appendix H: A Year for Networking: Promoting the ICRSE Worldwide*, p. 109.)

A network is a collection of groups and individuals who recognise that there is more strength in numbers. Working together enables sex workers and their allies throughout Europe to support activities happening on a local level, as well as to strategise for broader collective endeavours. Isolation is something many sex workers are familiar with, but there will always be times when we need help from our friends and allies. The ICRSE Network brings friends and allies together. □

♥ Petra Timmermans is a sex-worker-rights activist and the ICRSE Network Coordinator. She lives in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



PHOTO: (Web: <http://www.kameda-lab.org>)

*continued from p. 64...*

## The European Union

Citizens of the EU are free to live, work, study and retire in any EU country. You can travel across most of the EU without carrying a passport and without being stopped for checks at the borders. Wherever they are in the EU, EU citizens must have equal access to justice. EU member countries must therefore apply the EU's laws in the same way. Court rulings in one country (e.g. with regards to marriage, separation, divorce, child custody, and other kinds of civil disputes) can be enforced in another.

The European Parliament is elected every five years by the people of Europe. The current Parliament elected in 2004 has 785 members from all 27 EU member countries. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) do not sit in national blocks, but in seven Europe-wide political groups. The main job of Parliament is to pass European laws. It shares this responsibility with the Council of the European Union.

The Council consists of ministers from the national governments of all the EU countries. Each country has a number of votes in the Council which broadly reflects the size of their population. Meetings are attended by whichever ministers are responsible for the items to be discussed: foreign ministers, ministers of finance, ministers for agriculture, etc.

The European Commission represents and upholds the interests of Europe as a whole, independent of national governments. The Commission proposes new EU laws to the Parliament and Council, and ensures that members abide by EU laws and treaties. The Commission has 27 representatives — one from each EU country.

The Court of Justice ensures that EU law is equal for everyone, and that all EU countries interpret and apply EU laws in the same way. National courts may not deliver different rulings on the same issue. The Court (located in Luxembourg) has one judge from each EU member country.

In 2002 the EU introduced its new currency—the euro—in 12 member countries. The euro is managed by the Central Bank which sets interest rates and maintains price stability to control inflation. The Central Bank makes decisions independent of government. For more information on the euro, visit: <http://www.euro.ecb.int>



# Appendix H: A Year for Networking – Promoting the ICRSE Worldwide

Compiled by A. Sorfleet and Petra Timmermans

The ICRSE Network launched in October 2005. Since then, network members have attended, organised, and otherwise taken part in numerous international conferences and meetings. Many of the forums provided excellent opportunities for the network to present The Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto and the Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe. Among these occasions are some of the events listed below.

## Sex Work Matters: Beyond Divides Conference

New York City, USA

March 29 - April 1, 2006

(Web: <http://sexworkmatters.net>)

Organised by colleagues of New School University and the City University of New York, this conference provided a forum where scholars, activists and analysts explored theoretical, sociological, political and economic dimensions of sex work in a globalised world. Dialogue about sex work has been polarised – either all prostitution is exploitative and must be abolished, or prostitution is work that must be recognised as a legitimate profession where workers are entitled to legal protections. This event was free and open to the public. Roundtable and panel discussion topics included:

- Sex work matters: Opportunities and challenges in sex-work activism and research
- Multiple roles: Sex workers, activists and academics
- Sex work and the state
- Policing violence and sex workers
- Researching sex work: Issues in methodology
- Sex-worker outreach and activism
- Issues of identity and intimacy in sex work
- Decriminalisation and beyond

## 4<sup>th</sup> European Social Forum

Athens, Greece, May 4-7, 2006

(Web: <http://athens.fse-esf.org>)

The European Social Forum was claimed to be “a major event in the movement against neo-liberal globalisation and war, deregulation of labour and poverty, climate change and environmental destruction, violation of democratic rights and sexism, racism and the threat of the far right.” Thousands of activists from around Europe met to discuss perspectives of this “Movement of the Movements,” to network and to organise solidarity. As a result, the *Declaration of the Assembly of the Movements of the 4<sup>th</sup> European Social Forum* was produced. Topics at the forum included:

- What is wrong with current anti-trafficking politics? A migrant and labour rights perspective for a new European agenda

- Reforms of the social insurance system and the struggles of workers against restrictions of their rights
- Labour relations and collective agreements
- Social equalisation: struggles for social and political rights against social exclusion of migrants and refugees
- European citizenship and migration
- Migrations and development: recognising migrants’ contribution to destination countries and to the development of countries in the South
- Universal social standards, rights and freedoms in Europe: The Basic Income Project
- Human trafficking: Aspects of a contemporary slave trade
- Migrant labour and migrant struggles in the process of precariousness
- The trafficking of human beings: Is there coherence amongst policies in Europe in order to fight female trafficking effectively?



## Protecting Workers in the Sex Industry: What Could Unions Do? 95<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference Fringe Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

May 31 - June 16, 2006

(Web: <http://www.ilo.org>)

The 95<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference (ILC) is the annual meeting of the 178 member states of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Held at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva, the conference was a forum for heads of state, government officials, labour ministers and senior representatives of workers and employers to discuss a host of issues, such as changing patterns in the world of work, child labour, occupational health and safety, technical cooperation initiatives, employment relationships, labour inspection and the application of international labour standards worldwide. The 95<sup>th</sup> ILC also provided an opportunity for trade unions in Europe with sex-worker locals to hold a fringe meeting to discuss future steps unions could take to protect workers in the sex industry. (For a report on this fringe meeting, see Appendix I: *Trade Unions Talk Sex Work*, p. 114.)

The International Labour Organisation is the United Nations (UN) specialised agency which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally-recognised human and labour rights. It was founded in 1919 and is the only surviving major creation of the *Treaty of Versailles* which brought the League of Nations into being. It became the first specialised agency of the UN in 1946.



...continued on p. 110. ↪

↳ continued from p. 109...

The ILO formulates international labour standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations which have established minimum standards for basic labour rights: freedom of association, the right to organise, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, and other standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work-related issues. It provides technical assistance primarily in the fields of:

- vocational training and vocational rehabilitation
- employment policy
- labour administration
- labour law and industrial relations
- working conditions
- management development
- cooperatives
- social security
- labour statistics and occupational health and safety

The ILO promotes the development of independent employers' and workers' organisations and provides training and advisory services to those organisations. Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique three-part structure where workers and employers participate as equal partners with governments in its work.

### **Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers**

*Johannesburg, South Africa, June 22-24, 2006*

(Web: <http://www.soros.org>)

This meeting was organised and sponsored by Open Society Institute (OSI)'s Sexual Health and Rights Project and Law and Health Initiative. Sex workers, service providers, human rights advocates, researchers and others discussed how legal and regulatory environments affect sex workers' health and human rights.

The meeting addressed the growing backlash against sex-worker-health strategies that focus on dignity and human rights for sex workers. In some countries, HIV-prevention projects that promoted sex workers' empowerment, condom use and human rights have had their funding eliminated.

The meeting intended to build connections between sex workers' groups and allied professionals to promote sex workers' self-advocacy as well as joint-advocacy for rights-based policy development globally.

The 35 participants included sex workers, service providers, researchers, legal and policy experts, and human rights activists. The conference objectives were:

- to reach a common understanding of the elements that regulate sex work globally and map the various regimes of official control
- to formulate core principles for public health, human rights and harm reduction approaches to sex work
- to explore issues which arise within and between constituencies in order to reduce barriers, expand common principles and increase shared goals

OSI provided resources for participants which included:

- case studies of different jurisdictions with specific legal and regulatory frameworks
- a resource guide to donor support for sex-worker policy and service initiatives
- materials and research related to sex workers' health and rights on compact disc

OSI has published the meeting's recommendations in a report titled: *Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers: A Report from Johannesburg, South Africa.*

OSI is a private operating and grant-making foundation which aims to build free and open societies — to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal and social reforms. On a local level, OSI funds and implements a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health, independent media, and arts and culture. At the same time, OSI works to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses.

### **Meeting with United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women**

*The Netherlands, July 2-11, 2006*

(Web: <http://www.unhchr.ch>)

The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations' Human Rights Council on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, Yakin Ertürk, met with representatives from government, non-governmental organizations, UN officials and victims of gender-based violence during her fact-finding mission to The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht to gather first-hand information on domestic violence, violence against immigrant, asylum-seeking and refugee women, and violence against women in the context of human trafficking and prostitution. Findings and recommendations from her meetings were presented in a report to the UN Human Rights Council. The Special Rapporteur expressed concern that, "gender equality issues are increasingly associated with immigrant women." Ertürk also called for the empowerment of women working in prostitution, which is a legal profession in The Netherlands.



### **Revising Prostitution Policy: Creating Space for Sex Worker Rights and Challenging Criminalisation**

*Las Vegas, USA, July 9-12, 2006*

(Web: <http://www.desireealliance.org>)

The conference on prostitution laws and policies ended with a rally July 13<sup>th</sup> outside the Las Vegas Regional Justice Centre to support sex workers' rights and legalised prostitution in the USA.

Organised by the Desiree Alliance, this conference was sponsored by the University of Nevada and the Women's Research Institute of Nevada. A coalition of health professionals, social scientists, professional sex educators, sex professionals and their supporting networks, Desiree Alliance is a Project of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs (SEE), a non-profit organisation. Goals of the Alliance include:

- to improve understanding of the sex industry and its human, social and political impacts
- to build leadership and constructive activism in the sex worker population to advocate for sex workers' human, labour and civil rights
- to promote ethical and unbiased research into sexual subcultures
- to promote saner and more sensible policies relating to adult sexual health and behaviour
- to educate and empower the public to have healthy and rational attitudes about sexuality.

### United Nations Population Fund Consultation on Sex Work

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 16-19, 2006

(Web: <http://www.unfpa.org>)

A consultation on the subject of sex work was held by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA works to ensure universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health to all couples and individuals. UNFPA supports countries by using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that: every pregnancy is wanted; every birth is safe; every young person is free of HIV/AIDS; and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. Specific goals of UNFPA include:

- universal access to reproductive health services by 2015
- universal primary education and closing the gender gap in education by 2015
- reducing maternal mortality by 75 per cent by 2015
- reducing infant mortality
- increasing life expectancy
- reducing HIV-infection rates

### Network of Sex Work Projects Meeting

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 16-19, 2006

(Web: <http://nswp.org>)

The meeting had two goals: 1. to identify priority issues for global advocacy; and 2. to review the role and structure of the NSWP and make recommendations about ways to improve or reform it. Proposals for a new NSWP structure and two mission statements were drafted to be circulated for feedback from the regions.

Financial support for the meeting was provided by the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS and the local host organisation was Davida, Rio de Janeiro. Participants in the NSWP meeting included representatives from 14 networks and sex-work organisations who could stay on after the UNFPA meeting, as well as representatives from Africa and Europe. A report is available from the NSWP website.

Formed in 1991, NSWP is an informal alliance of sex workers, supportive individuals and organisations that provide services to sex workers. With members in more than 40 countries, the NSWP aims to:

- promote sex workers' health and human rights, including the right to work in a safe environment, free from abuse, violence and discrimination
- advocate for policy reform at regional and global levels
- facilitate opportunities for sex workers to be heard at relevant international forums, and
- develop partnerships with technical support agencies to work on independently-financed projects.

### 1st Meeting of the Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Budapest, Hungary, September 6-10, 2006

(Web: <http://www.tasz.hu>)

At this international meeting, Sex Work Advocacy Network In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SWAN) members discussed the future of the network and participated in seminars about working with media on sex-work issues and the role media can play in advocating for sex workers' rights. Representatives from SWAN-member non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 15 countries participated, along with a technical coordinator from the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union.

### Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Paris, France, September 13, 2006

(Web: <http://assembly.coe.int>)

At a hearing organised by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) discussed with experts the variety of legal situations that exist for prostitution within the Council's 46 member-states. A resolution was proposed to address the fact that differing attitudes toward sex work hinder the international cooperation needed to fight forced prostitution (the only form of prostitution unanimously condemned in Europe). According to PACE Chairperson Minodora Cliveti, "Prostitutes — most of whom are women — are usually faced with stricter penalties than the clients in those countries which criminalise prostitution."

In addition to the the topic of discrimination against women, the hearing also addressed public-health issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention and drug use. The hearing was open for NGOs, media and the public to ask questions and offer comments. Sex workers' perspectives were provided by Chris Student (European Network of Male Prostitutes) and Terry Van der Zijden (Trades Union of Prostitutes, The Netherlands). The committee has prepared a report of the hearing titled, *Prostitution: Which Stance to Take? An affront to human dignity, or a profession like any other?*

### Violence and Patriarchy: A European Campaign Against Violence on Women

Trieste, Italy, October 6-7, 2006

(Web: <http://www.european-left.org>)

Organised by the European Left Feminist Network (EL-FEM), the purpose of this international conference was to analyse, propose solutions to and fight the abuse of women — sexual, physical and emotional — and to examine the existing link between abusive behavior and patriarchy, including the feminisation of poverty, domestic violence and prostitution.

...continued on p. 112. ↪



PHOTO: "twskyline" (Web: <http://www.flickr.com>)

**Sex Workers Protest – September 6, 2006**

## Taipei sex worker leader dies

**TAIPEI CITY** – On August 3, 2006, Xiou-Qin Kuan – sex worker activist and former leader of the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (COSWAS) – threw herself into the ocean near her childhood town. Her body was found two days later.

Xiou-Qin had been running an underground brothel with a few of the previously-licensed prostitutes who lost their right to work when Mayor Chen Shui-bian revoked their licences in 1997. A very caring person, Xiou-Qin had been helping keep quite a few of her colleagues afloat financially during this time of great difficulty.

Recent obscenity sweeps launched by the DPP Government—amidst investigations into corruption on the part of the President and his family—had made it extremely hard for Xiou-Qin and her friends to conduct business as usual.

A memorial service for Xiou-Qin was held on August 29, 2006. Other memorial events included a photo exhibition and a screening of the film, *Life of Xiou-Qin*.

Since Xiou-Qin's death, COSWAS has organised a series of actions; not only to remember Xiou-Qin and her work, but also to galvanize various forces to protest against hypocritical politicians and their expedient policies, and to push for the decriminalisation of sex work.

On August 23, 2006, sex workers along with COSWAS members and other labour organisations protested in front of the Presidential Palace to call for the decriminalisation of sex work, and to demand that President Chen be responsible for the process.

The incumbent President is none other than the former mayor of Taipei who initiated this nightmare for sex workers. More than a hundred people turned up to chant slogans, demanding his apology and resignation. A short scuffle with police resulted.

There was a demonstration on September 5, 2006, staged in front of Taipei City government buildings to protest Mayor Ma Ing-Jiou's policy to increase obscenity sweeps.

On September 6, 2006, another demonstration was held in front of the office of Executive Yuan to protest the Premier's law-and-order policy to eliminate criminal elements. In the past, such "elimination" policies have targeted helpless sex workers, rather than hard-core criminals. □

↳ continued from p. 111...

## 2006 Taipei City International Conference on Sex Industry Policies

Taipei, Taiwan, November 24-30, 2006

(Web: <http://coswas.org>)

The conference examined illegal prostitution (soliciting, facilitating and selling sex is illegal in Taiwan) as a political theme that politicians must address. Designed to be an exchange between foreign guests, representatives from Taiwanese NGOs and Taipei City government officials; the participants discussed models and policies for the sex industry from Sweden, The Netherlands and New South Wales, Australia. Twelve experts were invited from the three countries, including the Swedish politician Maria Carlshamre. Conference events included:

- Urban planning and commercial sex display
- Sex workers' cultural festival
- Sex and politics cultural night
- Rally and street protests

Sponsored by the City of Taipei, the conference was held during an election campaign. Conference organisers (COSWAS) took advantage of the increased media attention and raised the issue of decriminalisation.

Licensed prostitutes, activists and many other supporters formed COSWAS on Labour Day, May 1, 1999, to promote a public awareness of, and support for, the rights and working conditions of sex workers and the decriminalisation of sex work.

## Sex Work: A Profession in Need of Representation of Interests? European Trade Unions in Debate with Sex Workers

Berlin, Germany, December 7-8, 2006

(Web: <http://www.verdi.de>)

Organized by the Hans Böckler Foundation in cooperation with Verdi (United Services Trade Union), experts at the conference discussed:

- workers' rights for sex workers
- common interests of trade unions and sex workers: first impressions
- the European sex workers' movement
- the labour movement and prostitution
- women's movement and sex work in Germany
- overview of the situation in the seven countries represented at the conference
- legalising sex work and the struggle against trafficking of women
- reports on the situation of participating countries from the points of view of sex workers and trade unionists.

Participants in the debate included representatives from the following organisations:

- *Bund Demokratischer Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler* (Federation of Democratic Scientists)



- *Bundesverband Sexuelle Dienstleistungen* (Federal Association for Sexual Services)
- *Comisiones Obreras (CCOO)* (Union Confederation of Workers Commissions), Catalonia, Spain
- *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) Frauen* (Confederation of German Trade Unions Women)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC/EGB), Brussels, Belgium
- European Federation of Food, Agriculture, Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT)
- European Private Services Union (EPSU/EGÖD)
- Hydra, Berlin, Germany
- International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
- International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW), GMB Branch, UK
- La Strada, Poland
- *Mitternachtsmission* (Midnight Mission), Dortmund, Germany
- *Prostitution Kollektiv Reflektion* (Prostitution Collective Reflection), Basel/Bern/Zürich, Switzerland
- *De Rode Draad* (The Red Thread), *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging* (Netherlands Federation of Trade Unions)
- Sophie, *Volkshilfe* (People Assistance), Vienna, Austria

### Correlation European Network Social Inclusion and Health Seminar Series

(Web: <http://www.correlation-net.org>)

Many people in the EU cannot get access to basic health, or social services. They are not one group or category of people, but often they share common disadvantages like being homeless, stigmatised, involved in risky behaviour; having low social or economic status; they may be excluded socially, be in conflict with the law, or may have entered the country illegally or be a member of an ethnic minority. Many use drugs or are involved in sex work. These conditions pose a threat to these people's health and well-being, as well as to public health in general. This seminar series was intended to bring a broad range of experts (decision-makers, service users, service providers, grassroots organisations and researchers) together to share their experience and discuss:

- **Internet** – September 29-30, 2006, Prague, Czech Republic
- **Policy** – October 26-28, 2006, Dublin, Republic of Ireland
- **Empowerment** – November 16-18, 2006, Turin, Italy
- **Outreach** – March 1-3, 2007, Helsinki-Tallinn, Finland

### Women into Work: Women, Human Rights and Prostitution Symposium Seminars

(Web: <http://www.wiw.org.uk>)

Since *Paying the Price: A Consultation Paper on Prostitution* was published by the UK Home Office in 2004, and the subsequent Home



PHOTO: Quentin Deltour (*Espace P*)

**Stopping for a moment to take stock of the day's events.**

Office publication of *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy* in January 2006, the debate about the impact of prostitution legislation in both the UK and Europe has intensified.

The purpose of the Women Into Work (WIW) seminars was to bring high-level individuals together to debate prostitution and human rights in an effort to influence policy. Seminar topics included:

- **How can we end child sexual exploitation?**  
– Durham, UK, October 10, 2006
- **When can “sex work” be a free choice?**  
– Manchester, UK, November 14, 2006
- **Legislation to ensure human rights**  
– Vienna, Austria, January 16-17, 2007
- **Victims of trafficking and migrant sex workers**  
– Sheffield, UK, March 21, 2007
- **Zero tolerance: Solution or oppression?**  
– London, UK, May 16, 2007

A report from the seminars offers significant, additional information for organisations in the UK and Europe that provide services and support for women in the sex industry.

Women Into Work is a trans-national development partnership project which aims to involve disadvantaged women in identifying barriers and promoting innovative solutions to unemployment (or low-paid employment) using peer research. WIW partners jointly develop tools to combat the discrimination such women face to be disseminated across Europe through a variety of forums.

WIW partners include the Hallam Centre for Community Justice (Sheffield Hallam University), UK Prison Service, UK National Probation Service, Job Centre Plus and volunteer organisations that provide services for vulnerable women (*i.e.* homeless, drug users, refugees, prostitutes, and others in conflict with the law). In addition, two trans-national partners from Greece and Austria who focus on domestic violence against women and prostitution/trafficking legislation are also involved.

Funded through the European Social Fund, WIW is managed by Supporting Others through Volunteer Action (SOVA)—a leading UK volunteer mentoring organisation that works with the criminal justice system. SOVA's mission is to increase the effective involvement of local communities in crime reduction, rehabilitation of offenders and community safety. SOVA works to strengthen communities by involving local volunteers in promoting social inclusion and reducing crime. (Web: <http://www.сова.org.uk>) □