**Call for input to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the Human Rights Council on prostitution and violence against women and girls**

From:

Counselling centre PROUT Beratung.Hilfe.Sexwork

In:

Germany, Baden-Württemberg, Tübingen & Reutlingen

In the following, we - PROUT Counselling Centre - answer the questions posed. First of all: We are formulating an input based on the questions given to us, some of them we consider to be very tendentious. The answers relate primarily to the situation in rural areas in southern Germany. In addition, our information on the target group relates to the people we meet during our work. This is only a small insight into a very large phenomenon that varies greatly around the world. At the same time, some questions could only be answered in a larger, social context in order to emphasise the complexity of the phenomenon.

One more comment at the beginning: We are talking about sex work and prostitution, which are the legal forms of offering sexual services in Germany. Human trafficking and coercion are rarely part of our work, which is why we cannot use prostitution and human trafficking as synonyms. Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a clear violation of human rights and should not be tolerated. In our work, we have nothing to do with children/girls who prostitute themselves or are being forced into prostitution.

1) There is little visibility of sex work in our region, even legal brothels and flats are mostly located in residential buildings. There is neither street prostitution nor red light districts. Tübingen is a city mostly populated by students, so we suspect that in addition to sex work/prostitution to obtain drugs or housing, there is also a higher proportion of young women who finance their studies with sexual services. They earn extra money as sugar babies, by selling lingerie or sexual services online. There are probably also many people - especially men - who are not registered and who work in sex work/prostitution or use it as a sideline. With these forms of sex work, it remains questionable whether these people would describe themselves as sex workers/prostitutes.

2) The clients we look after in our work usually belong to one of two categories.

They either work in a brothel in the region or only come here to work. They have all attended school but would earn less in their countries of origin than in sex work/prostitution. They often support their families financially.

Or they are German nationals who work both in brothels and as escorts. For them, too, the financial aspect combined with difficulties on the regular labor market is a reason to pursue this work. Both organize their work largely themselves, although they are usually dependent on the available infrastructure (advertising platform, brothels).

Nationalities: Spain, Hungary, Romania, German

4) / 5) / 6) When dealing with issues of violence, it would certainly be easier to look at the direct forms of violence (physical, sexualized, emotional, etc.) and the perpetrators. Obviously and regrettably, there are violent customers and pimps. Additionally, there is psychological violence caused by stigmatization and discrimination by authorities, the state and the police. Also, there are violent individuals in the sex work/prostitution system and of course there are affected individuals. They must be protected, there is no question about that.

When it comes to preventively counteracting violence, the social structure that may give rise to this violence should be considered as well. This includes the legal situation in the respective country. In Germany, the legal situation also contributes to the perpetuation of discrimination in that sex workers need a license from the state in order to legally pursue their work. Few other professions require a state license, apart from sufficient qualifications.

The prevailing ideas in relation to patriarchy, capitalism and the influence of religion and morality add to the social problems.

The ongoing stigmatization of sex workers/prostitutes in society leads to them being portrayed as something else. Their identity is reduced to their activity, which excludes them from the community or makes them invisible within the community. For example, sex workers cannot simply come out without risking far-reaching conflicts with those around them. By concealing their activity, they are forced to lead a double life.

This social marginalization and ostracization decreases the respect for sex workers/prostitutes because neither their work nor the individual who carries out this work is recognized.

Devaluing narratives about sex workers/prostitutes also lead to a change in behavior towards them.

From an intersectional perspective, women in sex work and prostitution therefore suffer from classism and sexism, and insofar as they are (B)PoC also from racism. Multiple marginalization increases the risk of violence.

The problem is therefore not the activity itself but the social evaluation of this activity and the intersectionality of discrimination against sex workers/prostitutes.

7) The assumption that pornography would fuel the exploitation of people in sex work does not seem so easy to substantiate. Many men in Germany consume porn, and there is probably a large overlap between porn consumers and customers of sexual services. However, the fact that both are problematic and lead to the exploitation of sex workers seems to us to be an under-complex view of pornography.

8) Yes, that is possible. Consensus first of all means that there is consent to a sexual service. The framework conditions are negotiated by the consenting people. This can include the duration, price, and practices of the service. This is not about private sexual contact but about a commercially negotiated service.

11) Fortunately, there are counselling services for sex workers in many cities in Germany. There are both counselling centers that support sex workers in all kinds of matters. There are also counselling services that focus exclusively on quitting. In particular in larger cities, there are also exit and shelter flats. There are also counselling centers that focus exclusively on people affected by human trafficking and sexual exploitation. These counselling centers are usually well networked.

12) Bureaucracy, especially access to social benefits

Infrastructure is too poor/lacking (shelters for victims of violence and human trafficking)

Poor financial resources for counselling services

13) For Germany/In general: gender-sensitive education & sexual education, campaigns for more respect for sex workers, anti-discrimination, legislation that creates and protects rights, multi-perspective explanations for problems in prostitution (patriarchy & capitalism)

Our observation in Sweden: The Nordic model restricts people's rights to make a free choice of profession. However, it cannot be observed that sex workers are protected from violence. Rather, the position of sex workers deteriorates, their dependence on third parties increases and their negotiating position is weakened. What remains are clients who have fewer inhibitions about coming into conflict with the law.

15) Broad networks of advice centers, promotion of networking and self-organization of sex workers, integrating them into political decisions, funding and equipment of advice centers, no introduction of the Nordic model, adapt the legal situation so that secure structures can be established and the negotiating position of sex workers is strengthened

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