



Only Rights Can Stop the Wrongs

NSWP STATEMENT

NSWP SUPPORTS LAW REFORM FOR THE DECRIMINALISATION OF SEX WORK IN MALTA

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) strongly supports efforts to decriminalise sex work that have been put forward by the Government of Malta. We reiterate the need for a human rights-based approach to sex work and encourage the Maltese government to continue with the law reform towards the full decriminalisation of sex work.

NSWP is a global network of sex worker-led organisations, with 314 members in 96 countries, that exists to uphold the voice of sex workers globally and connect regional networks advocating for the rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. It advocates for rights-based health and social services, freedom from abuse and discrimination, and self-determination for sex workers.

Decriminalisation refers to the removal of criminal and administrative laws that punish the sale of sex, the purchase of sex, third party engagement, or facilitation of sex work and other activities related to sex work. Decriminalising sex work is a crucial first step to ensuring that sex workers can benefit from labour rights, social protection, and access to justice. Evidence has shown that decriminalisation significantly reduces sex workers' vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and perceived dependence on third parties for safety while working.

The experiences of our global membership and a substantial body of evidence clearly show that sex workers' rights – the right to work and to free choice of employment, the right to social protection, freedom from violence, and access to justice – are all violated when their work is criminalised, and their voices are excluded. The detrimental impacts of the criminalisation on the health, safety, and human rights of sex workers are well-documented. The criminalisation of sex work impedes sex workers' access to sexual and reproductive [health services](#), to [justice](#), to [labour rights](#) and to [social protection](#) while perpetuating sex workers' marginalisation, exclusion, and vulnerability to [violence and HIV](#).

The criminalisation of sex workers' clients, or 'Nordic Model' approach, while 'framed' as a strategy to promote gender equality and combat human trafficking, in [reality](#) reduces sex workers' economic stability, drives sex workers away from support services and increases their vulnerability to violence, discrimination, and exploitation.



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NSWP encourages the Maltese government to listen to and engage sex workers in policy discussions, as has been done successfully with LGBTI community members in Malta. We applaud the efforts of Equality Parliamentary Secretary Rosianne Cutajar who has spoken out against the Nordic Model and [positioned herself clearly in support of decriminalisation in Malta](#). We urge the Maltese government to continue to pursue a rights and evidence-based approach, despite the opposition from fundamental feminist and abolitionist voices promoting the Nordic Model.

NSWP recommends:

- The full decriminalisation of all aspects of sex work, including sex workers, clients and third parties
- Meaningfully involving sex workers in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of services for them
- Aligning sex worker programming with international guidelines, including [Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: practical approaches from collaborative interventions](#).