



Hydra's Mission, Demands and Vision

Hydra's basic and central demand is for sex workers and their rights to be respected and protected like (those of) any other persons. In order to reach this goal, Hydra believes it is crucial to end social stigma, which is the basis of all violence against sex workers, of the discrimination they face, of paternalising and silencing discourses and practices, of exclusion and of unfair treatment. Stigma is, on the other hand, massively reinforced through criminalisation and through special laws and regulations, as well as through discourses and positions that deem sex workers to be victims. Therefore, such measures and attitudes must be confronted and eliminated.

Hydra stands for the legal recognition of sex work as labour, like any other job. This includes its equal recognition as freelance activity, the improvement of sex workers' rights as self-employed persons as well as employees, and the abolition of restriction areas and of discriminatory laws and tax regulations.

Hydra struggles for sex work to be recognised as qualified, skilled and demanding service work. Prostitutes, whores, sex workers, callboys, callgirls, escorts, or whichever name they wish to make use of, should enjoy respect and appreciation and be valued for the activity they undertake.

Hydra demands that violence and sexual abuse against sex workers be socially abhorred like that against any other person. The right to sexual self-determination is a human right. Sex work means deciding when, how, under what conditions, and to whom sexual services are provided.

Hydra strives for health awareness and safer sex to become a given in sex work and everywhere, also crucially amongst clients of sex workers who often wish to engage in unsafe practices.

Hydra maintains that sex work should only take place under as autonomous and fair conditions as possible. Paid work can only be safe, gratifying and health- and resource-conserving if it takes place under as fair conditions as possible, free from violence and coercion. Exploitation is an inherent element of all wage labour. However, the struggle for better working conditions is possible and fundamental. This is true for sex workers as much as for other workers, employees and freelancers.

Hydra insists that everyone has the right to decide autonomously whether they want to work in the sex industry or not and when they want to stop doing it. Social stigma makes it hard for people who

have worked in the sex industry to change jobs, whilst sex work is wrongly understood as unskilled activity.

Hydra demands anti-trafficking measures to focus on the protection of those affected by trafficking, without undermining and curtailing the rights of sex workers. Sex work and trafficking are not the same and must be treated and discussed as different issues. The common conflation of the two is counterproductive and pointless for victim-protection as well as for the improvement of working conditions within sex work.

Hydra demands that sex workers be actively involved in discussions about issues relevant to them. They know the best about what is in their interest and what may or may not impeach their dignity. Sex workers are subjects who have voice and agency and must be taken seriously as such. Debates about sex work must be held with them, not about them.

How does Hydra work?

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives Hydra engages in work at different levels:

Self-commitment:

By signing what is known as the St. Pauli Protocol, Hydra has committed to recognise sex work as a qualification and to prioritise, in the case of otherwise equal qualification, the employment of people with sex work experience over those without it. This is in accordance with Hydra's demand for better opportunities on the labour market for sex workers.

Lobbying and public relations:

Hydra advocates for the rights and interests of people in sex work, and for the aforementioned objectives by means of political lobbying, campaigning and networking at national and international levels.

Individual counselling:

Hydra offers individual counselling and support on all aspects of sex work. We provide orientation and inductions for people already working or wishing to start sex work, as well as support for those wishing for occupational change. We also provide counselling and support for those individual problems and difficulties that may arise in relation to the activity of sex work – whether financial, psychosocial or strictly work-connected. We work anonymously, confidentially and free of charge. Our counselling work is based on the acceptance of diverse life plans, whether within or beyond sex work, as well as on the respect for people of all genders, sexual orientations or migratory backgrounds. Hydra's staff are experienced advisors and counsellors who support and attend to their clients in a flexible, transparent and professional way.

Peer-to-peer approach

Hydra's approach is consistent with our appreciation and recognition of the professional and unique knowledge held by sex workers. Furthermore, we acknowledge the crucial role of shared experience for building trust amongst sex workers. Therefore, sex workers take on and provide a number of tasks and services. These include workshops, in which a diverse team of sex workers provide group peer-to-peer counselling and knowledge exchange to other sex workers at work venues around the capital. If

requested, our counselling services are carried out by members of staff with sex work experience, especially inductions and orientation in sex work. Our outreach work is also regularly carried out together with additional freelance sex workers under contract.

Outreach:

Hydra reaches out to sex workers in Berlin at their different work venues and places (street, flats, brothels, walk-in-venues, sex cinemas, nude bars etc.) in order to provide information about Hydra's services, to exchange experiences, information and knowledge about sex workers' rights, sexual health and safer sex and much more.

Sexual health promotion:

Hydra promotes sexual health and STI prevention by reaching out to sex workers and clients via classical outreach, media actions, brochures and DVDs, peer-to-peer workshops, events and presentation as well as individual counselling. The goal is to endorse responsible handling of the risks of sex work amongst both sex workers and their clients.

Hydra is a member of:

- NSWP (Global Network of Sex Work Projects)
- ICRSE (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe)
- BuFaS e.V. (Bündnis der Fachberatungsstellen für Sexarbeiterinnen und Sexarbeiter)
- LABAHS e.V. (Landesverband Berlin von Organisationen, die in den Bereichen Aids, Hepatitiden und STI tätig sind)
- KOK e.V. (Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Frauenhandel und Gewalt an Frauen im Migrationsprozess)
- DPWV (Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, Landesverband Berlin e. V.)

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